

February 28, 2014

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (FFO)
Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Center for Florida**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), United States Department of Commerce (DoC).
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Center for Florida
- **Announcement Type:** Initial
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** 2014-NIST-MEP-FL-01
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.611
- **Dates:** Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, May 14, 2014. Paper applications must be received by NIST by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, May 14, 2014. Applications received after the respective deadline will not be reviewed or considered. The approximate start date for awards under this FFO is expected to be October 2014.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) (see Section VI.2.b. of this FFO) may take between three and five business days or as long as more than two weeks, and (2) applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of receipts over a period of up to two business days before learning via a validation or rejection whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application.

- **Application Submission Address:** See Section IV in the Full Announcement Text of this FFO.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NIST invites applications from eligible applicants for funding one (1) MEP center in the State of Florida. The objective of the MEP center is to provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the state of Florida. The MEP center will become part of the MEP national system of extension service providers, currently comprised of more than 400 centers and field offices located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.
- **Total Amount to be Awarded:** Approximately \$3,500,000 for a new award.
- **Anticipated Amounts:** NIST anticipates funding one (1) application at the level of approximately \$3,500,000 for an initial award for an MEP Center in the state of Florida. The project awarded under this FFO will have a budget and performance period of one (1) year. The award may be renewed on an annual basis in accordance with 15 CFR § 290.4. NIST may provide annual renewal funding at a higher or lower level in the future based on availability of funds.
- **Funding Instrument:** Cooperative Agreement
- **Who Is Eligible:** The eligibility requirements given in this section will be used for this competition only in lieu of those published in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR § 290.5(a)(1). Each award recipient must be a U.S.-based nonprofit institution or organization. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, nonprofit organizations include universities and state and local governments. An eligible organization may work individually or include proposed subawards or contracts with others in a project application, effectively forming a team. NIST will generally not fund

applications that propose an organizational structure that, in whole or in part, delegates or transfers to another person, institution, or organization the applicant's responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds. Existing MEP awardees who meet the eligibility criteria set forth in this section may apply. See Section III. of this FFO for more information on eligibility.

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** This Program requires non-Federal cost share of at least 50 percent of the total project cost for the first year of operation. Any renewal funding of an award will require non-Federal cost sharing as follows:

Year of Center Operation	Maximum NIST Share	Minimum Non-Federal Share
1-3	1/2	1/2
4	2/5	3/5
5 and beyond	1/3	2/3

- **Webinar Information Session:** NIST MEP will hold an information session for organizations that are considering applying to this opportunity. This webinar will provide general information regarding MEP and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST/MEP staff will be available on the webinar to answer general questions. During the webinar, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any project ideas during the webinar or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP. However, NIST/MEP staff will provide information about the MEP eligibility and cost-sharing requirements, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal during this webinar, and by phone and email. The webinar will be held approximately 14 business days after posting of this FFO and publication in the Federal Register. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at www.nist.gov/mep. The webinar will be recorded and a link to the recording will be posted on the MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentation will be available after the webinar on the MEP website. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar must sign up by contacting Diane Henderson at diane.henderson@nist.gov.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

NIST invites applications from eligible applicants for funding one (1) MEP center to provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the state of Florida. The MEP center will become part of the MEP national system of extension service providers, currently comprised of more than 400 centers and field offices located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

The objective of an MEP center is to provide manufacturing extension services that enhance productivity, innovative capacity, and technological performance, and strengthen the global competitiveness of primarily small- and medium-sized U.S.-based manufacturing firms in its service region. Manufacturing extension services are provided by utilizing the most cost effective, local, leveraged resources for those services through the coordinated efforts of a regionally-based MEP center and local technology resources. The management and operational structure of an MEP center is not prescribed, but should be based upon the characteristics of the manufacturers in the region and locally available resources with demonstrated experience working with manufacturers.

It is not the intent of this program that the centers perform research and development.

Information regarding MEP and these centers is available at www.nist.gov/mep.

The statutory authority for the MEP Program is 15 U.S.C. 278k, as implemented in 15 CFR part 290.

II. Award Information

- 1. Funding Instrument.** The funding instrument that will be used for the award is a cooperative agreement. The nature of NIST's "substantial involvement" will generally be collaboration between NIST MEP and the recipient organizations. This includes NIST MEP collaboration with a recipient on its progress and approving changes in the statement of work. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Chapter 5.C. in the Department of Commerce (DoC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, which is available at [http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/FINAL%20Master%20DOC%20Grants%20Manual%202013%20\(03.01.13\)_b.pdf](http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/FINAL%20Master%20DOC%20Grants%20Manual%202013%20(03.01.13)_b.pdf).
- 2. Funding Availability.** NIST anticipates funding one (1) application at the level of approximately \$3,500,000 for an initial award for an MEP Center in the state of Florida. The project awarded under this FFO will have a budget and performance period of one (1) year. The award may be renewed on an annual basis in accordance with 15 CFR Sec. 290.4. NIST may provide annual renewal funding at a higher or lower level in the future based on availability of funds.

III. Eligibility Information

- 1. Eligible Applicants.** The eligibility requirements given in this section will be used for this competition only in lieu of those published in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR § 290.5 (a)(1). Each award recipient must be a U.S.-based nonprofit institution or organization. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, nonprofit organizations include universities and state and local governments. An eligible organization may work individually or include proposed subawards or contracts with others in a project application, effectively forming a team. Existing MEP awardees who meet the eligibility criteria set forth in this section may apply. However, as discussed in Section III.3.b. below, NIST will generally not fund applications that propose an organizational or operational structure that, in whole or in part, delegates or transfers to another person, institution, or organization the applicant's responsibility for core MEP management and oversight functions.
- 2. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement.** Non-Federal cost sharing of at least 50 percent of the total project costs is required for the first year of operation. Any renewal funding of an award will require non-Federal cost sharing as follows:

Year of Center Operation	Maximum NIST Share	Minimum Non-Federal Share
1-3	1/2	1/2
4	2/5	3/5
5 and beyond	1/3	2/3

Non-Federal cost sharing is that portion of the project costs not borne by the Federal Government. The applicant's share of the MEP center expenses may include cash, services, and third party in-kind contributions, as described at 15 CFR § 14.23 or § 24.24, as applicable, and the MEP program rule, 15 CFR § 290.4(c). No more than 50% of the applicant's total non-Federal cost share may be third party in-kind contributions of part-time personnel, equipment, software, rental value of centrally located space, and related contributions, per 15 CFR § 290.4(c)(5). The source and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash, full- and part-time personnel, and in-kind donations, must be documented in the budget submitted with the application and will be considered as part of the evaluation review under Section V.1(c) of this FFO.

All non-Federal cost share contributions require a letter of commitment signed by an authorized official from each source.

Any cost sharing must be in accordance with the "cost sharing or matching" provisions of 15 CFR Part 14, *Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, and Commercial Organizations* or 15

CFR part 24, *Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments*, as applicable.

As with the Federal share, any proposed costs included as non-Federal cost sharing must be an allowable/eligible cost under this Program and the following applicable Federal cost principles: 1) Institutions of Higher Education: 2 CFR part 220 (OMB Circular A-21); 2) Nonprofit Organizations: 2 CFR part 230 (OMB Circular A-122); and 3) State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments: 2 CFR part 225 (OMB Circular A-87).

As with the Federal share, any proposed non-Federal cost sharing will be made a part of the cooperative agreement award and will be subject to audit if the project receives MEP funding.

3. Other

- a. **Pre-Applications.** NIST is not accepting pre-applications or white papers under this MEP funding opportunity.
- b. **MEP Core Management and Oversight Functions.** A Center, as a direct recipient of Federal financial assistance funds under an MEP cooperative agreement, must possess and maintain, at all times during an MEP award period, accountability to directly manage and execute all functions material and inherent to the successful operation of a Center, which include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 1) **Budget execution**, including the responsibility for determining and executing budget policy, guidance and strategy, and the determination of program priorities and associated budget or funding requests.
 - 2) **Policy implementation**, including the responsibility for determining the content and implementation of financial and program policies and procedures impacting the recipient's MEP project.
 - 3) **Human resources management**, including the responsibility for selecting individuals or contractors for Center employment, and the direction, control, and performance management of Center employees and contractors.
 - 4) **Strategic planning and project execution and management**, including the responsibility for:
 - a) **Strategic planning functions** such as the following: determination of project requirements, approval of a project implementation strategy, and the development and monitoring of agreements and statements of work with subrecipients, vendors and other strategic partners.
 - b) **Project execution and management functions** such as submission of required financial and technical reports, maintenance of a functioning financial management system that meets the provisions of 15 CFR 14.21 or 15 CFR Part 24.20, "Standards for Financial Management Systems," in order to ensure that costs charged against an MEP award are reasonable, allocable, and allowable under applicable federal costs principles; and adherence to the terms and conditions of the MEP award.

In extraordinary situations, the NIST Grants Officer may allow a recipient to temporarily outsource its management and oversight responsibilities under an MEP award. If an applicant is proposing such a structure, the applicant must include with its application a detailed explanation and accompanying documentation (*e.g.*, copies of contracts or other agreements) supporting its outsourcing request.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. **Address to Request Application Package.** The standard application package, consisting of the standard forms, *i.e.*, SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, SF-LLL, and the CD-511, is available at

www.grants.gov. For applicants without Internet access, the standard application package may be requested by contacting the NIST personnel listed below.

Diane Henderson, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 4800, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-4800 (Phone: 301-975-5105, email: diane.henderson@nist.gov).

2. **Content and Form of Application/Submission.** The requirements given in this section of the FFO will be used in lieu of those given in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR § 290.5(a).

The NIST MEP Operating Plan Guidelines are a resource framework for applicants to consider in developing their application. These guidelines are available at <http://nist.gov/mep/>. Complete applications must, at a minimum, include the following forms and documents:

- a. **Required Forms and Documents**

- (1) **SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.** The SF-424 must be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant organization. The FFO number 2014-NIST-MEP-FL-01 must be identified in item 12 of the SF-424. The list of certifications and assurances referenced in item 21 of the SF-424 is contained in the SF-424B. Applicants should enter budget information for the first year of the project in item 18 on the SF-424.
- (2) **SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.** The budget should reflect anticipated expenses for the first year of operation and is the SF-424A form that appears as part of the mandatory forms in the Grants.gov application package.
- (3) **SF-424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs.**
- (4) **CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying.**
- (5) **SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.** (if applicable)
- (6) **Technical Proposal.** The Technical Proposal is a word-processed document not exceeding 40 pages responsive to the program description (see Section I. of this FFO) and the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO). It should contain the following sections:
 - a) **Executive Summary.** The executive summary should briefly describe the proposed project, consistent with the evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO).
 - b) **Project Narrative.** A description of the proposed approach to establish an MEP center to provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the state of Florida (see Section I. of this FFO), sufficient to permit evaluation of the application, in accordance with the Project Narrative evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1.a. of this FFO).
 - c) **Qualifications of the Applicant and Program Management.** A description of the qualifications and proposed center operational or management activities of key personnel who will be assigned to work on the proposed project, and a description of program management plans, sufficient to permit evaluation of the application, in accordance with the Qualifications of the Applicant and Program Management evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1.b. of this FFO).
 - d) **Additional Information.** In addition, the Technical Proposal must contain selected requirements, which are included in lieu of those identified in 15 CFR 290.5(a)(3):

- i. A plan for the allocation of intellectual property rights associated with any invention or copyright which may result from the involvement in the Center's technology transfer consistent with the conditions of 15 CFR 290.9;
- ii. A statement that provides adequate assurances that the host organization will contribute the required cost share. *(Although the MEP regulation, 15 CFR 290.5 (a)(3)(ii), states that applicants should provide evidence that the proposed Center will be self-supporting after six years, this requirement does not apply to this FFO..)*
- iii. A statement describing linkages to industry, government, and educational organizations within its service region.
- iv. A statement defining the initial service region, including a statement of the constituency to be served and the level of service to be provided, as well as out-year plans.
- v. A statement agreeing to focus the mission of the Center on technology transfer activities within the service region and to share knowledge and best practices with MEP Centers in other service regions.
- vi. A proposed plan for the annual evaluation of the success of the Center by NIST, including appropriate criteria for consideration and weighting of those criteria.
- vii. A plan to focus the Center's technology emphasis on areas consistent with NIST technology research programs and organizational expertise.
- viii. A description of the planned Center sufficient to permit NIST to evaluate the application in accordance with the Evaluation Criteria found in Section V.1 of this FFO.

- (7) **Budget Narrative and Financial Plan.** There is no set format for the Budget Narrative; however, it should provide a detailed breakdown of each of the object class categories as reflected on the SF-424A (see Section IV.2.a.(2) of this FFO). It should include all expenses for the first year of operation and identify all sources of funds to pay these expenses.

This section will be evaluated in accordance with the Budget Narrative and Financial Plan evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1.c. of this FFO).

- (8) **Letters of Commitment for Non-Federal Cost Sharing.** Letters of commitment from all sources of non-Federal cost sharing, including the applicant, are required. Letters of commitment do not count toward the page limit. General "letters of support" are not required and will be counted toward the page limit for the Technical Proposal if included in the application. A summary listing of this support is allowed, but will count toward the page limit. It is inappropriate for any Federal employee to provide critique or feedback on project ideas, etc., and it is also inappropriate to ask Federal employees for a letter of support.

- (9) **Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.** If indirect costs are included in the proposed budget, provide a copy of the approved negotiated agreement if this rate was negotiated with a cognizant Federal audit agency. If the rate was not established by a cognizant Federal audit agency, provide a statement to this effect. The successful applicant will be required to obtain such a rate.

If submitting the application electronically via Grants.gov, items IV.2.a. (1) through IV.2.a.(5) above are part of the standard application package in Grants.gov and can be completed through the download application process. **Items IV.2.a.(6) through IV.2.a.(9) must be completed and attached by clicking on "Add Attachments" found in item 15 of the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. This will create a zip file that allows for transmittal of the documents electronically via Grants.gov.** Applicants should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions at www.grants.gov to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. A receipt from Grants.gov indicating an application is received does not provide information about whether attachments have been received. If submitting an application by paper, all of the required application documents should be submitted in the order listed above.

b. Application Format

- (1) **Double-sided copy.** For paper submissions, print on both sides of the paper (front to back counts as two (2) pages).
- (2) **E-mail submissions.** Will not be accepted.
- (3) **Facsimile submissions (fax).** Will not be accepted.
- (4) **Figures, graphs, images, and pictures.** Should be of a size that is easily readable or viewable and may be landscape orientation.
- (5) **Font.** Easy to read font (11-point minimum). Smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible.
- (6) **Line spacing.** Single.
- (7) **Margins.** One (1) inch top, bottom, left, and right.
- (8) **Number of paper copies.** For paper submissions, one (1) signed stapled original and two (2) stapled copies. If original application is in color, the two (2) copies must also be in color. If submitting electronically via Grants.gov, paper copies are not required.
- (9) **Page layout.** Portrait orientation only (except figures, graphs, and pictures (see Section IV.2.b.(4))).
- (10) **Page Limit.** Forty (40) pages.

Page limit includes: Table of contents (if included), Technical Proposal with all required sections, budget narrative, resumes, figures, graphs, tables, images, and pictures, general letters of support or summaries thereof, if included.

Page limit excludes: SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs; SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs; SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying; Letters of Commitment for Non-Federal Cost Sharing; and Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.

- (11) **Page numbering.** Number pages sequentially.
- (12) **Paper size.** 21.6 by 27.9 centimeters (8 ½ by 11 inches).
- (13) **Application language.** English.
- (14) **Staple paper submission.** For paper submissions, staple the original signed application and each of the two (2) copies securely with one (1) staple in the upper left-hand corner.
- (15) **Typed document.** All applications, including forms, must be typed.

3. **Submission Dates and Times.** Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, May 14, 2014. Paper applications must be received by NIST by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, May 14, 2014.

Applications not received by the specified due date and time will not be considered and will be returned without review. NIST determines whether applications submitted by paper have been timely received by the deadline by the date and time receipt they are physically received by NIST at its

Gaithersburg, Maryland campus. For electronic submissions, NIST will consider the date and time stamped on the validation generated by www.grants.gov as the official submission time.

NIST strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the last minute to submit an application. NIST will not make any allowances for late submissions, including but not limited to incomplete Grants.gov registration, delays in mail delivery caused by Federal Government security screening for U.S. Postal Service mail, or for delays by guaranteed express mailing and/or couriers. To avoid any potential processing backlogs due to last minute Grants.gov registrations, applicants are highly encouraged to start their Grants.gov registration process at least four (4) weeks prior to the application due date.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) (see Section VI.2.b. of this FFO) may take between three and five business days or as long as more than two weeks, and (2) applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of receipts over a period of up to two business days before learning via a validation or rejection whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application.

4. Intergovernmental Review. Applications under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372.

5. Other Submission Requirements

a. Applications may be submitted by paper or electronically.

(1) Paper applications must be submitted in triplicate (an original and two copies) and sent to the NIST personnel listed below.

Diane Henderson, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 4800, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-4800. (Phone: 301-975-5105)

(2) Electronic applications must be submitted via Grants.gov at www.grants.gov, under announcement 2014-NIST-MEP-FL-01.

a) Submitters of electronic applications should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. A receipt from Grants.gov indicating a application is received does not provide information about whether attachments have been received. For further information or questions regarding applying electronically for the 2014-NIST-MEP-FL-01 announcement, contact Christopher Hunton by phone at 301-975-5718 or by e-mail at christopher.hunton@nist.gov.

b) Applicants are strongly encouraged to start early and not wait until the approaching due date before logging on and reviewing the instructions for submitting an application through Grants.gov. The Grants.gov registration process must be completed before a new registrant can apply electronically. If all goes well, the registration process takes three (3) to five (5) business days. If problems are encountered, the registration process can take up to two (2) weeks or more. Applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number (See Section VI.2.b) and must maintain a current registration in the Federal government's primary registrant database, the System for Award Management (<https://www.sam.gov/>), as explained on the Grants.gov Web site. After registering, it may take several days or longer from the initial log-on before a new Grants.gov system user can submit an application. Only authorized individual(s) will be able to submit the application, and the system may need time to process a submitted application. Applicants should save and print the proof of submission they receive from Grants.gov. If problems occur while using Grants.gov, the applicant is advised to (a) print

any error message received and (b) call Grants.gov directly for immediate assistance. If calling from within the United States or from a U. S. territory, please call 800-518-4726. If calling from a place other than the United States or a U. S. territory, please call 606-545-5035. Assistance from the Grants.gov Help Desk will be available around the clock every day, with the exception of Federal holidays. Help Desk service will resume at 7:00 a.m. Eastern Time the day after Federal holidays. For assistance using Grants.gov, you may also contact support@grants.gov.

- c) To find instructions on submitting an application on Grants.gov, Applicants should refer to the “Applicants” tab in the banner just below the top of the www.grants.gov home page. Clicking on the “Applicants” tab produces the “Grant Applicants” page.

In addition to following the “Steps” and instructions described in the “Applicant Actions” section and its sub-categories, further detailed instructions are described in “Applicant Resources” and all of its subcategories. This appears in the box near the top left of the Grant Applicants page. Applicants should follow the links associated with each subcategory.

Applicants will receive a series of receipts during a process of up to two business days before the application is either validated as electronically received by the Federal agency system, or rejected by it. Closely following the detailed information in these subcategories will increase the likelihood of acceptance of the application by the Federal agency’s electronic system.

Applicants should pay close attention to the instructions under “Applicant FAQs,” as it contains information important to successful submission on Grants.gov, including essential details on the naming conventions for attachments to Grants.gov applications.

All applicants, both electronic and paper submitters, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicants’ schedules for delivery of their application. Submitters of electronic applications are advised that volume on Grants.gov may be extremely heavy on the deadline date, and if Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit applications in paper format. Submitters of paper applications should allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that Federal Government security screening for U.S. Postal Service mail may delay receipt of mail for up to two (2) weeks and that guaranteed express mailings and/or couriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

Refer to important information in Section IV.3. Submission Dates and Times, to help ensure your application is received on time.

- b. Amendments.** Any amendments to this FFO will be announced through Grants.gov. Applicants can sign up for Grants.gov FFO amendments or may request copies from Diane Henderson by telephone at (301) 975-5105 or by email to diane.henderson@nist.gov. Since this opportunity is also announced in the *Federal Register*, any amendments to that notice will be published in the *Federal Register*. Copies of the *Federal Register* announcement and any amendments published in the *Federal Register* can be found at <https://www.federalregister.gov/> and may also be requested from Diane Henderson.

V. Application/Review Information

The evaluation criteria, selection factors, and review and selection process provided in this section will be used for this competition only in lieu of those provided in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR §§ 290.6 and 290.7.

1. **Evaluation Criteria.** The evaluation criteria that will be used in evaluating applications and assigned weights, with a maximum score of 100, are listed below.

a. **Project Narrative. (60 points; Sub-criteria i– iii will be weighted equally)** The extent to which the applicant’s proposal demonstrates how the applicant will efficiently and effectively establish an MEP center to provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the state of Florida will be evaluated. Reviewers will consider the following topics when evaluating the Project Narrative:

i. **Market Understanding.** Reviewers will assess the strategy proposed for the Center to define the target market, understand the needs of manufacturers, with an emphasis on the small- and medium-sized manufacturers, and determine appropriate services to meet identified needs. The following sub-topics will be evaluated:

(1) **Geographic Scope and Targeting.** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant

- delineates target service regions and manufacturers;
- makes use of appropriate quantitative and qualitative data sources and market intelligence to support proposed strategies and approaches to defining and segmenting the market; and
- aligns priority industries and regions with other state and regional priorities and investments.

(2) **Needs Identification and Service Offerings.** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant's proposed Center

- serves the region’s manufacturing base, industry types, and technology requirements;
- meets existing and emerging needs of manufacturers in the service region;
- makes use of multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative information to determine manufacturers’ needs and how to address them;
- makes use of resources, tools and services appropriate for the targeted small- and medium-sized manufacturers to meet identified needs of the region; and
- incorporates a range of complementary service providers and partners to deliver broad expertise and maximum value to manufacturing clients.

ii. **Center Strategy.** Reviewers will assess the strategy proposed for the Center to deliver services that meet manufacturers’ needs and generate impact. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center:

- incorporates the market analysis described in criterion (i) above to inform strategies, products and services;
- defines a strategy for delivering services that balances market penetration with impact and revenue generation, addressing the needs of manufacturers, with an emphasis on the small- and medium-sized manufacturers;
- defines a state or regional ecosystem in which the Center will operate, including universities, community colleges, technology-based economic developers, and others; and
- supports achievements of the MEP mission and objectives while also satisfying the interests of other stakeholders, investors, and partners.

iii. **Business Model.** Reviewers will assess the proposed business model of the Center and its ability to execute the strategy proposed in criterion (ii) based on the market understanding described in Section V.1.a.i. above. The following sub-topics will be evaluated:

(1) **Approach to the Market.** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center

- reaches area manufacturers;
- enables the use of delivery methods (direct delivery, third party, account management); and
- facilitates the engagement of manufacturers' leadership in strategic discussions related to new technologies, new products, and new markets.

(2) Products and Services. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center:

- engages expertise both from within the Center and from other sub-recipients and partners to make available a wide range of experts and services to manufacturers;
- delivers services to small- and medium-sized manufacturers to encourage adoption of new technologies, developing new products, and selling products in new markets;
- balances delivering process improvement services with services that will transform and grow manufacturers; and
- delivers advanced manufacturing technology to small- and medium-sized manufacturers and mechanisms for accelerating the adoption of technologies for both process improvement and new product adoption.

(3) Partnership Leverage and Linkages. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center:

- establishes a sustainable business model, incorporating investment from NIST, other public investors (federal, state, and local), small- and medium-sized manufacturing clients, and other sources; and
- makes use of effective resources or partnerships with third parties such as industry, universities, nonprofit economic organizations, and state governments likely to amplify the Center's capabilities for delivering growth services.

b. Qualifications of the Applicant and Program Management (20 points; Sub-criteria i and ii will be weighted equally). Reviewers will assess the ability of the key personnel and the management structure proposed to deliver the program and services envisioned for the Center. Reviewers will consider the following topics when evaluating the Qualifications of the Applicant and Program Management

i. Key Personnel and Organizational Structure. Reviewers will assess the extent to which:

- proposed key personnel have the appropriate experience and education in manufacturing, outreach and partnership development to support achievements of the MEP mission and objectives;
- proposed key personnel have the appropriate experience and education to plan, direct, monitor, organize and control the monetary resources of the proposed Center to achieve its business objectives and maximize its value;
- the proposed management structure (leadership and governance) is aligned to support the execution of the strategy, products and services;
- the proposed staffing plan flows logically from the specified approach to the market and products and service offerings.
- the organizational roles and responsibilities of key personnel and staff are clearly delineated;
- the proposed field staff structure sufficiently supports the geographic concentrations and industry targets for the region; and
- a workable governance structure is delineated, including an oversight Board with a membership representing small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the region.

ii. Program Management. Reviewers will assess the extent to which:

- the proposed methodology of program management and internal evaluation is likely to ensure effective operations and oversight and meet program and service delivery objectives;
- the proposed evaluation plan is aligned to support the execution of the proposed Center's strategy and business model; and
- the proposed approach aligns effectively with the proposed key personnel, staff and organizational structure.

c. Budget Narrative and Financial Plan. (20 points; Sub-criteria i and ii will be weighted equally)

Reviewers will assess the suitability and focus of the applicant's detailed one-year budget. The application will be assessed in the following areas:

i. Plans for Financial Cost Share. Reviewers will assess the extent to which:

- the applicant's funding commitments for cost share are identified and demonstrate stability and duration; and
- the applicant clearly describes the total level of cost share and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash and in-kind, within the proposed budget.

ii. Financial Viability. Reviewers will assess the extent to which:

- the proposed projections for income and expenditures are appropriate for the scale of services that are to be delivered by the proposed Center and the service delivery model envisioned;
- the proposal's narrative of each of the budgeted items explains the rationale for each of the budgeted items, including assumptions the applicant used in budgeting for the Center;
- the overall financial plan is sufficiently robust and diversified so as to support the long term sustainability of the Center; and
- the proposed financial plan is aligned to support the execution of the proposed Center's strategy and business model.

2. Selection Factors. The Selecting Official shall select applications for award based upon the rank order of the applications and may select an application out of rank based on one or more of the following selection factors:

- a. The availability of Federal funds.
- b. Relevance of the proposed project to MEP program goals and policy objectives.
- c. Reviewers' evaluations, including technical comments.
- d. The need to assure appropriate distribution within Florida and the surrounding region.
- e. Whether the project duplicates other projects funded by DoC or by other Federal agencies.

3. Review and Selection Process.

- a. **Initial Administrative Review of Applications.** An initial review of timely received applications will be conducted to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this FFO and the scope of the stated program objectives. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive may be eliminated from further review. However, NIST, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for an application that is missing non-substantive information that can easily be rectified or cured.

b. Full Review of Eligible, Complete, and Responsive Applications. Applications that are determined to be eligible, complete, and responsive will proceed for full reviews in accordance with the review and selection processes below:

(1) Evaluation and Review. Each application will be reviewed by at least three technically qualified reviewers, who will evaluate each application based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO). Each reviewer will assign each application a numeric score for each application. If a non-Federal employee reviewer is used, the reviewers may discuss the applications with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis, not as a consensus. Reviewers will assign each application a score, based on the application's responsiveness to the criteria above, with a maximum score of 100. Applicants whose applications receive an average score of 70 or higher out of 100 will be deemed finalists.

Finalists may receive written follow-up questions in order for the reviewers to gain a better understanding of the applicant's proposal. Once the reviewers have completed their review of the applicant's responses, a conference call or site visit may be deemed necessary. If deemed necessary, either all finalists will participate one-on-one with reviewers in a conference call or all finalists will receive site visits that will be conducted by the reviewers referenced in the preceding paragraph. Finalists will be reviewed and evaluated, and reviewers may revise their assigned numeric scores based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO) as a result of the conference call or site visit.

(2) Ranking and Selection. Based on the reviewers' final numeric scores, a rank order will be prepared and provided to the Selecting Official for further consideration. The Selecting Official, who is the Director of the NIST MEP Program, will then select funding recipients based upon the rank order and the selection factors (see Section V.2. of this FFO).

NIST reserves the right to negotiate the budget costs with any applicant selected to receive an award, which may include requesting that the applicant remove certain costs. Additionally, NIST may request that the successful applicant modify objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to award. NIST also reserves the right to reject an application where information is uncovered that raises a reasonable doubt as to the responsibility of the applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Date. Review, selection, and award processing is expected to be completed in September 2014. The earliest anticipated start date for awards made under this FFO is expected to be October 2014.

5. Additional Information

a. Application Replacement Pages. Applicants may not submit replacement pages and/or missing documents once an application has been submitted. Any revisions must be made by submission of a new application that must be received by NIST by the submission deadline.

b. Notification to Unsuccessful Applicants. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.

c. Retention of Unsuccessful Applications. For paper applications, one (1) of each non-selected application will be retained for three (3) years for record keeping purposes and the other two (2) copies will be destroyed. After three (3) years, the remaining copy will be destroyed. For electronic applications, an electronic copy of each non-selected application will be retained for three (3) years for record keeping purposes. After three (3) years, it will be destroyed.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. **Award Notices.** Successful applicants will receive an award from the NIST Grants Officer. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award is available at http://ocio.os.doc.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@os/@ocio/@oitpp/documents/content/dev01_002513.pdf and the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (January 2013), which may be updated by the time of award, are available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf

2. **Administrative and National Policy Requirements.**

a. **DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements.** The DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements, 77 FR 74634 (December 17, 2012), are applicable to this FFO and are available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/12/17/2012-30228/department-of-commerce-pre-award-notification-requirements-for-grants-and-cooperative-agreements>

b. **Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN), Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS), and System for Award Management (SAM).** All applicants for Federal financial assistance are required to obtain a universal identifier in the form of DUNS number and maintain a current registration in the Federal government's primary registrant database, SAM. On the form SF-424 items 8.b. and 8.c., the applicant's 9-digit EIN/TIN and 9-digit DUNS number must be consistent with the information in SAM (<https://www.sam.gov/>) and the Automated Standard Application for Payment System (ASAP). For complex organizations with multiple EINs/TINs and DUNS numbers, the EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers MUST be the numbers for the applying organization. Organizations that provide incorrect/inconsistent EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers may experience significant delays in receiving funds if their application is selected for funding. Confirm that the EIN/TIN and DUNS number are consistent with the information on the SAM and ASAP. **Please note that a federal assistance award cannot be issued if the designated recipient's registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is not current at the time of the award.**

Per 2 CFR part 25, each applicant must:

- (1) Be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) before submitting an application, noting the CCR now resides in SAM;
- (2) Maintain an active CCR registration, noting the CCR now resides in SAM, with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by an agency; and
- (3) Provide its DUNS number in each application or application it submits to the agency.

The applicant can obtain a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet. A DUNS number can be created within one business day. The CCR or SAM registration process may take five or more business days to complete. If you are currently registered with the CCR, you may not need to make any changes. However, please make certain that the EIN/TIN associated with your DUNS number is correct. Also note that you will need to update your CCR registration annually. This may take three or more business days to complete. Information about SAM is available at www.sam.gov. See also 2 CFR part 25 and the *Federal Register* notice published on September 14, 2010, at 75 FR 55671.

c. **Funding Availability and Limitation of Liability.** Funding for the program listed in this FFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. In no event will NIST or DoC be responsible for application preparation costs if this program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of agency priorities. Publication of this FFO does not oblige NIST or DoC to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

d. **Award Implementation.** Given the partnership nature of MEP Centers, and to clarify and support the project activities and budget, including cost sharing, NIST may ask recipients to provide copies of sub-tier agreements, including subawards and contracts over \$100,000. In addition, to better

understand and implement the national manufacturing extension network and partnership, NIST may ask recipients to provide an Operating Plan and Budget showing manufacturing extension service activity and costs in which the Center is engaged outside the Federal share and cost share for the project. NIST may request recipients to provide their proposed sub-recipient performance monitoring plans.

- e. **DoC Representation by Corporations Regarding an Unpaid Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Conviction Under Any Federal Law.** In accordance with the Federal appropriations law expected to be in effect at the time of project funding, NIST anticipates that the selected applicants will be provided a form and asked to make a representation regarding any unpaid delinquent tax liability or felony conviction under any Federal law.

3. Reporting

- a. **Reporting Requirements.** In lieu of the reporting requirements described in sections A.01 Financial Reports and B.01 Performance (Technical) Reports of the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions dated January 2013 (http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf) the following reporting requirements shall apply:

- (1) **Financial Reports.** Each award recipient will be required to submit an SF-425, Federal Financial Report into the MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS) on a quarterly basis for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 of each year. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of the reporting period.

- (2) **Performance (Technical) Reports.** Each award recipient will be required to submit a technical progress report into the MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS) on a quarterly basis for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 of each year. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of the reporting period. A final technical progress report shall be submitted within 90 days after the expiration date of the award. Technical progress reports shall contain information as prescribed in the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines (OMB Control Number 0693-0032). The NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines may be requested by contacting the NIST personnel listed below:

Diane Henderson, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 4800, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-4800 (Phone: 301-975-5105, email: diane.henderson@nist.gov).

- b. **OMB Circular A-133 Audit Requirements.** Single or program-specific audits shall be performed in accordance with the requirements contained in OMB Circular A-133, *"Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations,"* and the related *Compliance Supplement*. OMB Circular A-133 requires any non-Federal entity (*i.e.*, including non-profit institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations) that expends Federal awards of \$500,000 or more in the recipient's fiscal year to conduct a single or program-specific audit in accordance with the requirements set out in the Circular. Applicants are reminded that NIST, the DoC Office of Inspector General, or another authorized Federal agency may conduct an audit of an award at any time.
- c. **Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006.** In accordance with 2 C.F.R. Part 170, all recipients of a Federal award made on or after October 1, 2010, are required to comply with reporting requirements under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-282). In general, all recipients are responsible for reporting sub-awards of \$25,000 or more. In addition, recipients that meet certain criteria are responsible for reporting executive compensation. Applicants must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements should they receive funding.

4. **Performance Reviews.** NIST will perform program evaluations of the recipient as follows: (1) in an annual review, as required by 15 CFR Sec. 290.8, and, if renewed, (2) in an independent review during the third year of operation, at the sixth year, and at least every two years thereafter, as required by 15 U.S.C. Sec. 278k(c)(5).
5. **Post Client Project Follow-Up.** The recipient will be required to provide client and project data in the specified format to the organization identified by NIST/MEP in order for post-project follow-up data to be obtained (OMB Control Number 0693-0021).

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Questions should be directed to the following contact persons:

Subject Area	Point of Contact
Administrative, budget, cost-sharing, eligibility questions and other programmatic questions.	Diane Henderson Manufacturing Extension Partnership NIST Phone: 301-975-5105 Fax: 301-963-6556 E-mail: diane.henderson@nist.gov
Grants.gov - application submission	Christopher Hunton Administrative Support & Document Control Office NIST Phone: 301-975-5718 Fax: 301-975-8884 E-mail: christopher.hunton@nist.gov
Grant rules and regulations	Jannet Cancino Grants Management Division NIST Phone: 301-975-6544 Fax: 301-975-6319 E-mail: jannet.cancino@nist.gov

VIII. Other Information

Webinar Information Session: NIST MEP will hold an information session for organizations that are considering applying to this opportunity. This webinar will provide general information regarding MEP and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST/MEP staff will be available on the webinar to answer general questions. During the webinar, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any project ideas during the webinar or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP. However, NIST/MEP staff will provide information about the MEP eligibility and cost-sharing requirements, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal during this webinar, and by phone and email. The webinar will be held approximately 14 business days after posting of this FFO and publication in the Federal Register. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at www.nist.gov/mep. The webinar will be recorded and a link to the recording will be posted on the MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentation will be available after the webinar on the MEP website. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar must sign up by contacting Diane Henderson at diane.henderson@nist.gov.