

Comments for the proposed Manufacturing Technology Acceleration Centers.

- In development of the MTACs, NIST should consider leveraging the existing infrastructure within the national and state network of Manufacturing Extension Partnership Centers. Focusing the MTACs on leveraging the MEP system will ensure that the focus of the proposed Centers will remain on the SMEs, rather than large OEMs or large research institutions (labs, universities) where current federal investment tends to be focused.

- Flexibility should also be considered in designating successful MTAC models to allow for multi-regional, multi-state and multi MEPS. In addition, the function or technology focus for these MTACs should be flexible. In diverse industrial states like Pennsylvania and many others - economies that do not have a dominate technology or supply chain, the ability to allow for the flexibility of the MTAC to include broad or platform technologies as a focus of the Center is important in meeting SME needs. Large automotive, aerospace, defense, electronics supply chains are well defined and developed in many parts of the US, but in diverse industrial economies serving SMEs requires a different approach – one based on diffusing technologies to improve innovation and competitiveness that are firm/company specific and not only driven by OEM/supply chain technology acceleration. Allowing non supply chain focused MTACs recognizes the reality of modern SMEs need to develop proprietary products, invest in innovation and R&D and be part of multiple supply chains and industries.

- MTAC models should also give significant consideration to the interaction between universities, labs and research institutions. Several examples exist across the country that utilize "technology intermediaries" in non-profit ED organizations and private consulting organizations who work with and leverage university research. These intermediaries are individuals that have the ability to negotiate between defining the technology needs of SMEs and scouting for resources and technology solutions in universities and possibly labs. The role of these intermediaries should be paired with the MEP Centers to leverage the investment in the national network. Advantages that exist now in the system that could be utilized include tech scouting, innovation engineering, ideation services, and others.

- New MTACs should take advantage of past and current federal and state investments in advanced manufacturing initiatives and programs. Examples of this include the national network of manufacturing initiatives, job accelerators, MEP, state investments in manufacturing extension and other industry specific investments. Given the proliferation of recent manufacturing focused initiatives it will be important to show how MTACs fit into this ecosystem of services to be delivered to SMEs - not another silo, but how they link with existing successful programs and initiatives. Ways to demonstrate this integration would be to fund centers built on existing investment - MTACs based on awarded NNMI technology areas, existing or recent MEP Center consortia or manufacturing job accelerators. It is also recommended that specific outreach be made to the existing regional manufacturing initiatives as well as state government leaders in manufacturing. The recent National Governors Association Policy Academy on developing state based manufacturing strategies could be easily leveraged to gain support and feedback on the MTACs. The Policy Academy included 8 states that developed many strategies which are now being implemented and include many of the issues being

considered by this RFI.

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