

**NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)
Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)
State Partnership Support Program**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), United States Department of Commerce (DoC)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) State Partnership Support Program
- **Announcement Type:** Initial
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** 2021-NIST-MEP-STATE-PARTNERSHIP-01
- **Assistance Listing (CFDA Number):** 11.611, Manufacturing Extension Partnership
- **Dates:** Full Applications must be received at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, Wednesday, March 17, 2021. Applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered. Paper applications will not be accepted.

Applicants should be aware, and factor in their application submission planning, that the Grants.gov system closes periodically for routine maintenance. Applicants should visit [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for any scheduled closures.

NIST expects to complete its review, selection of successful applicants, and award processing by June 2021. NIST expects the earliest start date for awards under this NOFO to be July 2021.

Applicants are strongly urged to read Section IV.2.b., Attachment of Required Application Documents, with great attention. Applicants should carefully follow the instructions and recommendations regarding attachments and use the **Download Submitted Forms** and Applications feature on www.grants.gov to check that all required attachments were contained in their submission. Applications submitted without the required documents will not pass the Initial Administrative Review.

When developing the submission timeline, please keep in mind that: (1) all applicants are required to have current registrations in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and Grants.gov; (2) the free annual registration process in SAM.gov generally takes between three and five business days but

can take more than two weeks; and (3) applicants will receive e-mail notifications over a period of up to two business days as the application moves through intermediate systems before the applicant learns via a validation or rejection notification whether NIST has received the application. (See [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) for full information on application and notification through Grants.gov). Please note that a federal assistance award cannot be issued if the designated recipient's registration in SAM.gov is not current at the time of the award.

- **Application Submission Address:** Applications must be submitted using Grants.gov.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The NIST Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP) is seeking applications from eligible applicants to provide in-depth collaborative support in developing and advancing collaborative relationships between the NIST/MEP, MEP Centers, States and other stakeholders. This effort will help the MEP National Network to align programs and support systems to improve the competitiveness of the Nation's manufacturers and to support the continuous improvement, growth, sustainability, supply chains, and innovation and technology acceleration in manufacturing (See Section I. of this NOFO for the full program description).
- **Anticipated Amounts:** In Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21), NIST anticipates funding one (1) multi-year award, with a five-year (5) period of performance and a total maximum federal funding amount not to exceed \$5,000,000 over the entire five-year period of performance. If a proposal for a multiyear award is approved, NIST anticipates funding up to \$1,200,000 for the first, third, and fifth year of the program, which are deemed to the periods of increased activities, and \$700,000 for the second and fourth year for continued base level activities of the program. See Section II.3. of this NOFO for detailed information concerning the availability of NIST funding and for annual funding limitations for this program.
- **Funding Instrument:** Cooperative Agreement. See Section II.1. of this NOFO for additional information concerning the funding instrument for this award.
- **Eligibility:** Applicants must be a U.S.-based for-profit or not-for-profit institution or organization. An eligible applicant may work individually or may include proposed subawards to other organizations to carry out the activities described in the proposal.
- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** Non-federal cost share is not required for cooperative agreements issued pursuant to this NOFO.
- **Public Website, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Webinar:** NIST MEP will hold one webinar information session for organizations that are

considering applying for this funding opportunity. This webinar will provide general information regarding MEP and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST MEP staff will be available at the webinar to answer general questions. During the webinar, proprietary detailed or technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any specific project ideas during the webinar or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP. However, NIST/MEP staff will provide information about eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, program priorities and objectives, and the general characteristics of a competitive proposal during this webinar. The webinar will be held approximately fifteen (15) to thirty (30) business days after posting of this NOFO. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at <https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-state-partnership-support-project-fy-2021>. 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 register in advance by contacting MEP by email at mepnofo@nist.gov. Participation in the webinar is not required in order for an organization to submit an application pursuant to this NOFO.

Questions from applicants pertaining to MEP eligibility, cost-sharing requirements, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal will not be considered on an informal basis. Applicants must submit all such questions in writing to mepnofo@nist.gov. Answers to such written questions submitted to NIST/MEP may be made available to the public as part of an FAQ document, which will be periodically updated on the MEP website at <https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-state-partnership-support-project-fy-2021>.

Table of Contents

I.	Program Description	3
II.	Federal Award Information.....	7
III.	Eligibility Information	9
IV.	Application and Submission Information	10
V.	Application Review Information	23
VI.	Federal Award Administration Information	28
VII.	Federal Awarding Agency Contacts	31
VIII.	Other Information	32

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Program Description

The statutory authority for the NIST Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership

(MEP) State Partnership Support Project is 15 U.S.C. §§ 272(b)(1), (b)(4), and (c)(22). This program is not a Federal scientific research and development program, and it is not the intent of this program that the recipient will perform systematic scientific research. The use of the term “research” in this NOFO is intended to capture the requirement that the recipient investigate, examine and analyze the issues described in this NOFO.

1) Background Information

NIST MEP was founded on the premise that partnerships among NIST MEP and other public and private entities increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the National Network of manufacturing extension services. MEP’s ability to foster, develop and leverage these relationships permits MEP Centers to expand the reach and value of the program to the manufacturing industry. For over three decades, MEP has focused on accelerating the growth of the U.S. manufacturing base by improving the competitiveness of U.S. based manufacturers and reducing company operating costs, growing company profits, and encouraging technology deployment. Our understanding of and ability to align State policy goals and objectives with national policy goals, leverages the strength of each entity. Additionally, our ability to create partnerships with States can bring to manufacturers capabilities that they cannot access alone, providing a wide range of options to address challenges and offer practical solutions that get products to market faster, enhance operational performance, finance growth, manage risks and encourage innovation.

2) Program Overview

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) invites proposals from eligible and qualified organizations to support efforts of the NIST MEP Program, including MEP Centers and the entire MEP National Network™, to develop and enhance effective collaborative relationships with States and other stakeholders. Stakeholders include not only State-based partners but also sub-State partners that are based at the county, community, and city levels, as well as regional partners that extend beyond State boundary lines. The project activities will advance the MEP’s network of relationships with State stakeholders and partners to help MEP achieve its mission of improving productivity and technological performance in United States manufacturing by helping manufacturers identify and adopt new technologies for improved products, processes, business practices and the development of new products.

Partnerships are critical to the success of MEP. In particular, regional, State and local partners:

- Demonstrate leadership to generate action to address regional, State and

- local challenges and opportunities;
- Set priorities for economic development and complementary activities (e.g., workforce, technology, sustainability, etc.) in their jurisdictions;
 - Develop strategies and programs to advance those priorities; and
 - Represent opportunities to leverage State and local funds in support of the development and growth of small and medium-sized manufacturers.

NIST MEP has long recognized the value of these partnerships and sought to nurture and deepen the relationships with State leaders in both state executive branch agencies and State legislatures. This is a complex challenge, given the number of States, the differences in economies, markets, culture, political philosophies, spending priorities, the rapidly changing composition of elected and appointed officials, shifting trends in public policy priorities, and related considerations. Given the unique nature of the MEP National Network, success depends on the mutual understanding and alignment of regional, State and local policy goals and objectives with national policy to create a partnership that leverages the strength of each entity. It is important for all components of the MEP National Network to understand overarching State priorities relative to manufacturing and the implementation of such priorities at the State, regional and local levels.

3. Program Requirements

The purpose of the MEP State Partnership Support Program is to generate strategies, market intelligence, and analytical resources to support the efforts of MEP Centers, NIST MEP and the Nation's manufacturers to leverage all applicable resources available at the regional, State, and local levels that support or compliment the MEP mission of enhancing the productivity and technological performance of U.S. manufacturing. In order to leverage these resources, the following activities are required:

- Collecting and analyzing available data at the regional, State, and local levels to inform strategies, services, and performance. Data includes: State, regional, and local budget and policy priorities; State, regional, and local level manufacturing trends; and available State, regional, and local programs already existing that support manufacturing;
- Evaluating current practices and trends to inform MEP system program initiatives and policy decisions. In order to best leverage opportunities for investment or collaboration, it is important to understand the existing manufacturing ecosystems at the State, regional, and local levels;
- Developing and expanding the network of State, regional and local leaders supporting manufacturers, MEP Centers and the MEP mission;
- Ensuring that MEP Centers are effectively aligned with State, regional, and local priorities; and

- Increasing State support of the MEP mission and of State and local manufacturers.

NIST MEP anticipates that these base-level activities will occur during all five years of the cooperative agreement.

In addition to the annual base-level activities under the cooperative agreement, NIST MEP plans to work with the recipient to conduct more intensive, targeted activities in years one, three and five to proactively engage State, regional and local leaders. While the specifics and timing of the targeted activities will be jointly determined after award, the applicant should propose approaches that would accomplish the following:

- Target a selected number of States and regions with concentrations of manufacturers;
- Directly engage teams of State, regional and local leaders from diverse backgrounds to explore and inform their thinking about strategies to support and grow manufacturing;
- Convene forums where State and local leaders can interact with MEP Center leaders around strategies to support manufacturing;
- Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning among selected participants; and
- Provide exposure to research and leading thinkers regarding strategies that work to support manufacturers in key areas such as accelerating companies' technology adoption, increasing access to new markets, fostering innovative approaches; and effective supply chain practices.

Activities during the years of heightened intensity may include a combination of convening meetings, conducting targeted investigations and examinations of State, regional and local programs benefitting manufacturers, consulting with individuals or groups of participants, and other such activities that help to accomplish intended outcomes. Up to \$1,200,000 of MEP funding will be provided for the years of more intensive activities. (See Section II.3. of this NOFO.)

Note that the activities conducted under this cooperative agreement will occur in the context of NIST MEP's Strategic Plan, which includes the following key goals and objectives:

- **ENHANCE COMPETITIVENESS** - Enhance the competitiveness of the U.S. manufacturers, with particular focus on small and medium-sized companies;
- **SUPPORT PARTNERSHIPS** - Support national, state, and regional manufacturing, eco-systems and partnerships;

- **CHAMPION MANUFACTURING** - Serve as a voice to and a voice for manufacturing and manufacturers in engaging policy makers, stakeholders, and clients; and
- **DEVELOP CAPABILITIES** - Develop MEP's capabilities as a learning organization and high-performance system.

The NIST MEP Strategic Plan can be found at <http://www.nist.gov/mep/about/strategic-plan.cfm>.

II. Federal Award Information

1. Funding Instrument.

The funding instrument that will be used for the award issued pursuant to this NOFO is a cooperative agreement. The nature of NIST's "substantial involvement" will generally include collaboration with the recipient organization in developing and implementing the approved scope of work, in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.24.

2. Multi-Year Funding Policy.

When an application for a multi-year award is approved, funding in some cases will be provided only for the first year of the project. The recipient will be required to submit detailed budgets and budget narratives prior to the award or release of any continued funding. Continued funding for the remaining year(s) of the project will be awarded or released by NIST on a non-competitive basis, and may be adjusted, contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to the mission and priorities of the program, and the availability of funds. Continuation of an award to extend the period of performance and/or to increase or decrease funding is at the sole discretion of NIST.

3. Funding Availability.

In FY21, NIST anticipates funding one (1) award with a project performance period of five (5) years and a total maximum federal funding amount not to exceed \$5,000,000 over the entire five-year period of performance.

In accordance with the Multiyear Funding Policy in Section II.2. of this NOFO, NIST MEP funding will be up to \$1,200,000 for the first, third, and fifth years of the program, which are deemed to the periods of increased activities, and \$700,000 for the second and fourth years for continued base level activities of the program.

NIST MEP expects that the base-level activities will occur during all five years of the cooperative agreement. In addition, NIST MEP plans to work with the recipient to conduct more intensive, targeted activities in years one, three and five (to be determined jointly) to proactively engage state and local leaders. While the specifics and timing of this year-long program will be jointly determined after award, the applicant should propose approaches that would accomplish the objectives specified in Section I.

Maximum Year 1 Federal Funding	Maximum Year 2 Federal Funding	Maximum Year 3 Federal Funding	Maximum Year 4 Federal Funding	Maximum Year 5 Federal Funding	Total Maximum Federal Funding for 5 Year Award Period
\$1,200,000	\$700,000	\$1,200,000	\$700,000	\$1,200,000	\$5,000,000

4. Award Kick-Off Meeting.

The recipient will be required to attend a kick-off meeting, which will be held within the first 30 days of the start of the project period, to ensure that the recipient has a clear understanding of the program and project components. The kick-off conference will take place either at NIST/MEP headquarters in Gaithersburg, MD or virtual, during which time NIST will: (1) orient recipient personnel to the MEP program and plans for enhanced partnership relationships; (2) explain program and financial reporting requirements and procedures; and (3) identify available resources that can enhance the capabilities of the recipient.

The kick-off meeting will last no longer than one day and must be attended by the Project Manager and up to but not more than two additional key personnel who would play a significant role in managing the award. Applicants must include travel and related costs for the kick-off meeting as part of the budget for year one (1), and these costs should be reflected in the SF-424A. (See Section IV.2.a.(2). of this NOFO.) These costs must also be reflected in the budget table and budget narrative for year 1, which is submitted as part of the budget tables and budget narratives section of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(7). of this NOFO.) Representatives from key subrecipients and other key strategic partners may attend the kick-off meeting with the prior written approval of the Grants Officer. Applicants proposing to have key subrecipients and/or other key strategic partners attend the kick-off meeting should clearly so indicate in their budget narrative for year one of the project.

5. MEP Network-Wide Meetings.

NIST MEP typically organizes MEP Network-wide meetings approximately four times a year to share best practices, and discuss new and emerging trends, and additional topics of interest. These meetings are planned throughout the United States and typically involve 2-3 days of resource time and associated travel costs for each meeting. The Project Manager and two additional key personnel should attend these meetings.

Applicants must include travel and related costs for four quarterly MEP system-wide meetings in each of the five (5) project years (4 meetings per year; 20 total meetings over five-year award period). These costs must be reflected in the SF-424A (see Section IV.2.a.(2). of this NOFO). These costs must also be reflected in the budget tables and budget narratives for each of the project's five (5) years, which are submitted as part of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(7). of this NOFO).

6. Indirect (F&A) Costs.

NIST will reimburse applicants for proposed indirect (F&A) costs in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414. Applicants proposing indirect (F&A) costs must follow the application requirements set forth in Section IV.2.a.(8). of this NOFO.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be a U.S.-based for-profit or not-for-profit institution or organization. An eligible applicant may work individually or may include proposed subawards to other organizations to carry out the activities described in the proposal.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Non-federal cost share is not required for cooperative agreements issued pursuant to this NOFO.

3. Program Income

For purposes of this program, applicants should not budget program income to be used as non-federal cost share. Rather, the recipient and any subrecipients of an award issued pursuant to this NOFO must expend all program income (as defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.307) generated by the project using the "additive method" under 2 C.F.R. § 200.307(e)(2), with any excess program income to be disposed of pursuant to the "deductive method" under 2 C.F.R. § 200.307(e)(1).

4. **Prohibition on Profit and Fees.** A profit, fee, or other incremental charge above actual cost is not an allowable cost under this program.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

The application package is available at [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) under Funding Opportunity Number 2021-NIST-MEP-STATE-PARTNERSHIP-01.

2. **Content and Form of Application Submission.** Set forth below are the required content and form of applications submitted pursuant to this NOFO.

- a. **Required Forms and Documents.** The Application must contain the following:

- (1) **SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.** The SF-424 must be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant organization.

For SF-424, Item 8.d. Zip/Postal Code field, should reflect the Zip code + 4 (#####-####) format.

For SF-424, Item 12, should list the NOFO number 2021-NIST-MEP-STATE-PARTNERSHIP-01.

SF-424, Item 18, should list the total budget information for the duration of the project.

The list of certifications and assurances referenced in Item 21 of the SF-424 is contained in the SF-424B.

- (2) **SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs.**

The budget should reflect anticipated expenses for all five (5) years of the project, considering all potential cost increases, including cost of living adjustments. The budget should also include staff, travel and other costs associated with the Award Kick-off Meeting and the NIST/MEP System-Wide meetings as described in Sections II.4. and II.5., respectively, of this NOFO. The budget also must reflect the increased level of effort during Year 3 to support more intensive, targeted activities to proactively engage state and local leaders in activities that would accomplish the items specified in Section I. (See Section II.3. of this NOFO.)

- a) The applicant should reflect each year of the project, up to the first four (4) years, on the SF-424A form that appears as part of the mandatory forms in the Grants.gov application package. The second SF-424A form should be submitted to cover year five (5) of the project, and its submission details are found in in Section IV.2.a.(9). of this NOFO.
- b) In Section A, the Grant Program Function or Activity on Line 1 under Column (a) should be entered as Manufacturing Extension Partnership. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number in on Line 1 under Column (b) should be entered as “11.611”. The total budget amount for the term of the award should be listed in Section A, Line 1, Column (e).
- c) Section B, Column (1) of the SF-424A should reflect funds for the first year of the award. Section B, Column (2) of the SF-424A should reflect funds for the second year of the award. Section B, Column (3) of the SF-424A should reflect funds for the third year of the award. Section B, Column (4) of the SF-424A should reflect funds for the fourth year of the award.
- d) Section C should be blank. Non-Federal cost sharing is not required for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO.
- e) Section D requires a breakdown of the first year’s budget by quarter.
- f) Section E requires the budget estimate of federal funds needed for each year of the project. The budget estimate for the first year of the award should be entered in Section E, Line 16, Column (b). The budget estimate for the second year of the award should be entered in Section E, Line 16, Column (c). The budget estimate for the third year of the award should be entered in Section E, Line 16, Column (d). And the budget estimate for the fourth year of the award should be entered in Section E, Line 16, Column (e).

(3) SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (if applicable).

The SF-424B is required for all applicants that have not updated their System for Award Management (SAM.gov) entity registration since February 2, 2019 to include the Federal financial assistance certifications and representations (certs and reps). If an applicant has updated their SAM.gov entity registration since February 2, 2019 to include the certifications and representations, then the SF-424B is not required.

(4) CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying. Enter “2021-NIST-MEP-STATE-PARTNERSHIP-01” in the Award Number field. Enter the title of the application, or an abbreviation of that title, in the Project Name field.

(5) SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable).

(6) Technical Proposal. The five (5) year Technical Proposal is a word-processed document not exceeding 25 pages responsive to the program description (see Section I. of this NOFO) and the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this NOFO).

The proposal narrative should contain the following information:

- a. Table of Contents.** (Does not count toward the page limit).
- b. Executive Summary.** (Does not count towards page limit). The executive summary should briefly (usually no longer than two pages) describe the proposed project, consistent with the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1.a. of this NOFO).

Please note, if an applicant’s proposal is selected for funding, NIST may use all or a portion of the Executive Summary as part of a press release issued by NIST, or for other public information and outreach purposes. Applicants are advised not to incorporate information that contains business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information as part of the Executive Summary. See also 15 C.F.R. § 4.9(b) concerning the designation of business information by the applicant. (

- c. Project Narrative.** The project narrative must identify tasks, measurable milestones and outcomes in providing on-going partnership development and enhancement support for each of the five years. The narrative will be evaluated by technical reviewers in accordance with the Evaluation Criteria listed in Section V.1. of this NOFO. The project narrative must clearly articulate the following:

- 1) Research/Knowledge Development and Sharing**
 - a.** A plan for routinely tracking and analyzing information from a wide range of data sources on current state budgets, economic development and technology policy initiatives and investments, program evaluation practices, and other actions or trends that could impact the MEP National Network. This plan should also describe how this information will be shared with MEP leadership and staff.

- b. A strategy for sharing information with and providing technical assistance to the MEP National Network, individual Centers, and partners to build system capacity, address challenges, and proactively take advantage of emerging opportunities.

2) Network Building and Expansion

- a. A strategy for fostering collaboration and dialogue among NIST MEP, MEP Centers, MEP partners, industry, and the public to develop effective working partnerships and identify mutually beneficial opportunities for the MEP National Network.
- b. A description of how States and/or regions will be prioritized for attention, developing strategies to address opportunities and concerns, recommending effective communication strategies, and convening stakeholders as needed to facilitate partnership development.
- c. A plan to provide nationwide access to State and stakeholder relations and support services.
- d. An explanation of ideas and approaches to carry out the years of more intensive activities envisioned (in Years 1,3, and 5 for the purposes of this NOFO).

3) Key Personal and Organization Structure

- a. A list of the proposed key personnel that describes, for each, their education, experience in working with state government representatives and related organizations, and access to professional networks to carry out proposed activities and support achievement of the MEP National Network mission and project objectives. Resumes of Key Personnel must be included. Resumes are not included in the page count of the Project Narrative. Resumes included as part of the application must be a maximum of two pages each. Additional pages beyond the two pages per resume will not be considered during the evaluation of the application.
- b. A description of the proposed management structure and organizational roles that includes how the project will be

planned, directed, monitored, organized and overseen to achieve project objectives.

- c. A description of the proposed organizational structure that includes how the proposed services and project deliverables will be provided.

(7) Budget Narrative and Justification. In addition to the SF-424A form (see Section IV.2.a.(2). of this NOFO), applicants must provide a detailed budget table and budget narrative for each year of operation, fully explaining and justifying all proposed project funding (both revenue and expenses) in accordance with applicable federal cost principles. This budget must reflect the increased level of effort during Years 1, 3 and 5 to support convening more intensive, targeted activities to proactively engage state and local leaders in activities that would accomplish the items specified in Section I.

The written justification should include the necessity and the basis for the cost. Proposed funding levels must be consistent with the project scope, and only allowable costs should be included in the budget. Information on cost allowability is available in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200 (<http://go.usa.gov/SBYh>), which apply to awards in this program. The MEP budget table and budget narrative template are available on the MEP website, <https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-state-partnership-support-project-fy-2021>. The Budget Narrative does not count against the twenty-five (25) page limit of the Technical Proposal.

This section will be evaluated in accordance with the Budget Narrative evaluation criteria (See Section V.1.d.i. and Section V.1.d.ii. of this NOFO). It will also be reviewed to determine if all costs are reasonable, allocable, and allowable under 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Subpart E, Cost Principles.

Information needed for each category is as follows:

- a) **Personnel-** At a minimum, the budget justification for all personnel should include the following: job title, commitment of effort on the proposed project in terms of average number of hours per week or percentage of time, salary rate, total personnel charges for each identified position on the proposed project, description of the role of the individual on the proposed project and the work to be performed.
- b) **Fringe Benefits–** Fringe benefits for each position should be identified separately from salaries and wages and based on rates

determined by organizational policy. The items included in the fringe benefit rate (e.g., health insurance, parking, etc.) should not be charged under another cost category.

- c) Travel-** For all travel costs, the budget justification for travel should include the following: destination; names or number of people traveling; dates and/or duration; mode of transportation, lodging and subsistence rates; and description of how the travel is directly related to the proposed project. For travel that is yet to be determined, please provide best estimates based on prior experience. If a destination is not known, an approximate amount may be used with the assumptions given for the location of the meeting. Applicants must also include staff, travel and related expenses for the required Award Kick-Off and System-Wide meeting described in Sections II.4. and II.5. of this NOFO in the budget tables and budget narratives.
- d) Equipment-** Equipment, the cost, and a description of how it will be used and why it is necessary to the successful completion of the proposed project. Please note that any general use equipment (computers, etc.) charged directly to the award should be allocated to the award according to expected usage on the project. Applicants should provide at least two (2) quotes, if available, for equipment costing \$25,000 or more. If two (2) quotes are not available, please provide a statement as to why two (2) quotes are not available.
- e) Supplies–** Supplies are defined as All tangible personal property other than that described as equipment. Provide a list of each supply, and the breakdown of the total costs by quantity or unit of cost. Include the necessity of the cost for the completion of the proposed project.
- f) Contractual (i.e. Contracts)–** Each contract or subaward should be treated as a separate item. Identify the cost and describe the services to be provided and the necessity of the subaward or contract to the successful performance of the proposed project. Contracts are for obtaining normal goods and services.
- g) Construction–** Not an allowable cost under this NOFO.
- h) Other Direct Costs–** For costs that do not easily fit into the other cost categories, please list the cost, and the breakdown of the total costs by quantity or unit of cost. Include the necessity of the cost

for the completion of the proposed project. Only allowable costs can be charged to the award. Applicants should identify any subawards costs in this category and provide the necessity of the subaward to the successful performance of the proposed activities and/or product(s) developed.

(8) 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. If the successful applicant includes indirect costs in the budget and has not established an indirect cost rate with a cognizant Federal audit agency, the applicant will be required to obtain such a rate in accordance with Section B.06 of the [Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions](#) Dated November 12, 2020.

Alternatively, in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), applicants that do not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge indirect costs to an award pursuant to a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC), in which case a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement is not required. Applicants proposing a 10 percent de minimis rate pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f) should note this election as part of the budget portion of the application.

(9) SF-424A, Budget Information- Non-Construction Programs (for applications with five-year projects). The SF-424A form that appears as part of the mandatory forms in the Grants.gov application package covers the first four (4) years of the project. For projects covering five years, a second SF-424A form should be submitted to cover year five (5) of the project. A fillable SF-424A form can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html> near the top of the screen and labeled "Budget Information – Non-Construction Program SF-424A". Applicants should download the fillable SF-424A form, complete the information for year five (5) of the project and submit the completed form as an attachment, using the procedure described in Section IV.2.b., Attachment of Required Application Documents.

(10) Current and Pending Support Form. Any application that includes investigators, researchers, and key personnel must identify all sources of current and potential funding, including this proposal. Any current project support (e.g., Federal, state, local, public or private foundations, etc.) must be listed on this form. The proposed project and all other projects or activities requiring a portion of time of the Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI,

and key personnel must be included, even if no salary support is received. The total award amount for the entire award period covered, including indirect costs, must be shown as well as the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the project, regardless of the source of support. Similar information must be provided for all proposals already submitted or that are being submitted concurrently to other potential funders.

Applicants must complete the Current and Pending Support Form, using multiple forms as necessary to account for all activity for each individual identified in the PI, co-PI and key personnel roles. A separate form should be used for each identified individual.

Applicants must download the Current and Pending Support Form from the NIST website at <https://www.nist.gov/oaam/grants-management-division/current-and-pending-support> and reference the guidance provided as it contains information to assist with accurately completing the form.

(11) Resumes of Key Personnel must be included. Resumes are not included in the page count of the Project Narrative. Resumes included as part of the application must be a maximum of two pages each. Additional pages beyond the two pages per resume will not be considered during the evaluation of the application.

b. Attachment of Required Documents

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.(11) should be attached to field 15 of the SF-424 form by clicking on “**Add Attachment**”.

Following these directions will create zip files which permit 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 indicates only that an application was transferred to a system. It does not provide details concerning whether all attachments (or how many attachments) transferred successfully. Applicants will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received its application.

Applicants are strongly advised to use Grants.gov's "Download Submitted Forms and Applications" option, found at <https://www.grants.gov/help/html/help/Applicants/CheckApplicationStatus/DownloadSubmittedFormsAndApplications.htm> to check that their application's required attachments were contained in their submission.

After submitting the application, check the status of your application here: [CHECK APPLICATION STATUS](#). If any, or all, of the required attachments are absent from the submission, follow the attachment directions found above, resubmit the application, and check again for the presence of the required attachments.

If the directions found at <https://www.grants.gov/help/html/help/index.htm#t=GetStarted%2FGetStarted.htm> are not effective, please contact the Grants.gov Help Desk immediately. If calling from within the United States or from a U.S. territory, please call 800-518-4726. If calling from a place outside the United States or a U.S. territory, please call 606-545-5035. E-mails should be addressed to support@grants.gov. 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.

Applicants can track their submission in the Grants.gov system by following the procedures at the Grants.gov site (<http://go.usa.gov/cjamz>). It can take up to two business days for an application to fully move through the Grants.gov system to NIST.

NIST uses the Tracking Numbers assigned by Grants.gov and does not issue Agency Tracking Numbers.

c. Application Format

- (1) Paper, Email, and Facsimile (fax) Submissions.** Will not be accepted.
- (2) Figures, Graphs, Images, and Pictures.** Should be of a size that is easily readable or viewable and may be displayed in landscape orientation. Any figures, graphs, images, or pictures will count toward the page limits for the Project Narrative.
- (3) Font.** Easy to read font (10-point minimum). Smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible.

(4) Page Limit. The technical proposal is limited to twenty-five (25) pages double spaced, noting the limit of two (2) pages for the Executive Summary. Resumes are not included in the page count of the Project Narrative. However, if resumes are included, resumes must be a maximum of two (2) pages each.

(5) Page Limit Exclusions:

SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance;
SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs;
CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying;
SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities;
MEP Budget Tables and Narrative;
Indirect Cost Rate Agreement;
Current and Pending Support Form;
Resumes of Key Personnel (limit 2 pages per resume)
SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs for fifth year budget (if applicable).

(6) Page Layout. The Proposal must be in portrait orientation.

(7) Page size. 21.6 centimeters by 27.9 centimeters (8 ½ inches by 11 inches).

(8) Page numbering. Number pages sequentially.

(9) Application language. English. All documents must be in English, including but not limited to the initial application, any additional documents submitted in response to a NIST request, all reports, and any correspondence with NIST.

(10) Typed document. All applications, including forms, must be typed; handwritten forms will not be accepted.

d. 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.

e. Pre-Applications. Pre-applications will not be accepted under this NOFO.

f. Certifications Regarding Federal Felony and Federal Criminal Tax Convictions, Unpaid Federal Tax Assessments and Delinquent Federal Tax

Returns. In accordance with Federal appropriations law, an authorized representative of the selected applicant(s) may be required to provide certain pre-award certifications regarding federal felony and federal criminal tax convictions, unpaid federal tax assessments, and delinquent federal tax returns.

3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM).

Pursuant to 2 C.F.R. part 25, applicants and recipients are required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency, unless otherwise excepted from these requirements pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 25.110. NIST will not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time that NIST is ready to make a Federal award pursuant to this NOFO, NIST may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received at Grants.gov no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, Wednesday, March 17, 2021. NIST will consider the date and time recorded by Grants.gov as the official submission time. Applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered. Paper applications will not be accepted.

Applicants should be aware, and factor in their application submission planning, that the Grants.gov system is expected to be closed for routine maintenance at the following times. Applications cannot be submitted when Grants.gov is closed:

From 12:01 A.M. Eastern Time Saturday	To 6:00 A.M. Eastern Time Monday
[MONTH DAY], YEAR	[MONTH DAY], YEAR

When developing the submission timeline, please keep in mind that: (1) all applicants are required to have current registrations in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and Grants.gov; (2) the free annual registration process in the SAM.gov generally takes between three and five business days but can take more than two weeks; and applicants will receive e-mail notifications over a period of up to two business days as the application moves through intermediate systems before the applicant learns via a validation or rejection notification whether NIST has received the application. (See [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for full

information on application and notification through Grants.gov.) 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.

5. Intergovernmental Review

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

6. Funding Restrictions

Construction activities are not an allowable cost under this program. In addition, a recipient or a subrecipient may not charge profits, fees or other increments above cost to an award issued pursuant to this NOFO. Pre-award costs under this NOFO are subject to the prior written approval of the NIST Grants Officer.

7. Other Submission Requirements

a. Applications must be submitted electronically.

(1) Applications must be submitted at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

(a) Applicants should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions to ensure that all 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. For further information or questions regarding applying electronically for the 2021-NIST-MEP-STATE-PARTNERSHIP-01 announcement, contact the Grants.gov Help Desk at 800-518-4726.

(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. The typical registration process takes three to five business days. If problems are encountered, the registration process can take two weeks or more. Applicants must have a valid unique entity identifier number 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 individuals authorized as organization representatives 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, except for Federal holidays. Help Desk service will resume at 7:00 a.m. Eastern Time the day after Federal holidays. For assistance using Grants.gov, the applicant may also contact support@grants.gov.

- (c) To find instructions for submitting an application on Grants.gov, applicants should refer to the “Applicants” tab in the banner just below the top of the Grants.gov home page. Clicking on the “Applicants” tab produces two exceptionally useful sources of information, Applicant Actions and Applicant Resources, which applicants are advised to review.

Applicants will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received its application.

Applicants should pay close attention to the guidance under Grants.gov’s “[Applicant FAQs](#)”, as it contains information important to successful submission, including essential details on the naming conventions for attachments to applications.

All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicants’ schedules for delivery of their application. Applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov may be extremely heavy leading up to the deadline.

The application must be both received and validated by Grants.gov. The application is “received” when Grants.gov provides the applicant a confirmation of receipt and an application tracking number. If an applicant does not see this confirmation and tracking number, the application has not been received. After the application has been received, it must still be validated. During this process, it may be “validated” or “rejected with errors”. To ascertain whether the application was rejected with errors and the reasons for the rejection, the applicant must log in to Grants.gov, select “Applicants” from the top navigation, and select “Track my

application” from the drop-down list. If the status is “rejected with errors,” the applicant may still seek to correct the errors and resubmit the application before the deadline. If the applicant does not correct the errors, the application will not be forwarded to NIST by Grants.gov.

Refer to important information in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times, to help ensure the application is received on time.

- b. Amendments.** Any amendments to this NOFO will be announced through Grants.gov. Applicants may sign up on Grants.gov to receive amendments by e-mail or may request copies by e-mail from mepnofo@nist.gov.

V. Application Review Information

- 1. Evaluation Criteria.** The evaluation criteria, selection factors, and review and selection process for this program are set forth below.
 - a. Research/Knowledge Development and Sharing (30 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight). Technical reviewers will assess the extent to which:**
 - i. The proposed plan for routinely tracking and analyzing information from a wide range of data sources on current state budgets, economic development and technology policy initiatives and investments, program evaluation practices, and other actions or trends that could impact the MEP National Network is clear, reasonable and comprehensive, and provides for well-defined information-sharing with MEP leadership and staff; and
 - ii. The proposed strategy for sharing information with and providing technical assistance to the MEP National Network, individual Centers, and partners is clear and complete.
 - b. Network Building and Expansion (20 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight). Technical reviewers will assess the extent to which:**
 - i. The proposed strategy for fostering collaboration and dialogue among NIST MEP, MEP Centers, MEP partners, industry, and the public is clear and likely to develop effective working partnerships and identify mutually beneficial opportunities for the MEP National Network;
 - ii. The proposed approach for prioritizing States and/or regions for attention, developing strategies to address opportunities and concerns, recommending effective communication strategies, and convening stakeholders as needed to facilitate partnership development is comprehensive, sound and likely to succeed;

Page 23 of 34

- iii. The proposed plan to provide nationwide access to State and stakeholder relations and support services is reasonable and appropriate; and
- iv. The proposed explanation of ideas and approaches to carry out the years of more intensive activities envisioned (in Years 1,3, and 5 for the purposes of this NOFO) is innovative and thorough.

c. Key Personnel and Organizational Structure. (30 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight), Technical reviewers will assess the extent to which:

- i. The proposed key personnel have demonstrated and appropriate education, experience in working with state government representatives and related organizations, and access to professional networks to carry out proposed activities and support achievement of the MEP National Network mission and project objectives;
- ii. The proposed management structure and organizational roles are clearly defined and aligned to plan, direct, monitor, organize and oversee the implementation of the proposed approach to achieve project objectives; and
- iii. The proposed organizational structure flows logically from the specified approach to the proposed services and project deliverables.

d. Budget. (20 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight)

- i. The proposed budget projections are reasonable and appropriate for the scale of services that are to be delivered by the applicant over the five (5) year project plan; and
- ii. The proposal's narrative explains the rationale for each of the budgeted items, including assumptions the applicant used in budgeting for the overall project, and the proposed budget is aligned to support the execution of the proposed project consistent with the objectives of the project and to advance MEP National Network goals.

2. Review and Selection Process

Proposals, reports, documents, and other information related to applications submitted to NIST and/or relating to financial assistance awards issued by NIST will be reviewed and considered by Federal employees, or non-Federal personnel who have entered into conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering such information, when applicable.

a. Initial Administrative Review of Applications

Applications received by the deadline will be reviewed to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this NOFO and to the scope of the stated program objectives. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, and/or nonresponsive 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, the absence of which may easily be rectified during the review process.

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 process below:

(1) Merit Review. Each application will be reviewed by at least three (3) technically qualified individual reviewers who will evaluate each application based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this NOFO). Reviews will be limited to technical and cost matters, based on the evaluation criteria. A mix of Federal and non-Federal reviewers may be used. The reviewers' may discuss the applications with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis, not as a consensus, and will be supported by written technical comments. The reviewers may ask questions of some or all applicants in writing. Reviewers will assign each application a score, based on the application's responsiveness to the NOFO evaluation criteria, with a maximum score of 100.

Applicants whose applications receive an average score of 70 or higher out of 100 will be deemed finalists. If deemed necessary by NIST, all finalists will be invited to participate with reviewers in separate conference calls and/or all finalists will be invited to participate in an individual applicant conference that will be conducted by the same reviewers either at the applicant's location or virtually. Finalists will be reviewed and evaluated, and reviewers may revise their assigned numeric scores based on the evaluation criteria as a result of the conference call and/or site visit.

(2) Ranking and Subject Matter Expert Review. A rank order will be prepared based on the average of the reviewers' scores and assigned adjectival ratings in accordance with the following scale:

Fundable: (70-100)
Unfundable: (69 and below)

The Subject Matter Expert, who will be a NIST MEP federal employee, will review the evaluators' written technical comments and the ranking of the proposals and may recommend to the Selecting Official that awards be made out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors described in Section V.2. of this NOFO. In conducting his/her evaluation, the Subject Matter Expert may ask clarifying questions of an applicant. For any application designated as fundable by the merit reviewers, the Subject Matter Expert, in consultation with the NIST Grants Officer, may initiate pre-award negotiations with the applicant.

(3) Pre-award Negotiations. NIST reserves the right to negotiate the budget costs with any applicant selected to receive an award, which may include requesting that the applicant removes certain costs. Additionally, NIST may request that successful applicants 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. NIST may select some, all, or none of the applications, or part(s) of any application. The final approval of a selected application - and issuance of an award - will be by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final.

(4) Selection. The Selecting Official, which is the MEP Director or designee, will make final award recommendations to the NIST Grants Officer. The Selecting Official will take into consideration the results of the reviewers' scores and technical assessments, the written recommendation from the Subject Matter Expert, the relevance of the application to the program objectives described in Section I. of this NOFO, and all information obtained from the applicants during the application evaluation, and pre-award negotiation processes.

The Selecting Official will generally select and recommend the most meritorious applications for awards based on the technical comments, recommendation from the NIST MEP Subject Matter Expert, and/or one or more of the selection factors described in Section V.5. of this NOFO. The Selecting Official's recommendation to the Grants Officer shall set forth the basis for the selection decision.

NIST reserves the right to reject an application where information is uncovered that raises a reasonable doubt as to the responsibility of the applicant. NIST may select some, all, or none of the applications, or part(s) of any application. The final approval of a selected application and issuance of an award will be completed by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final.

(5) Selection Factors. The Selection Factors for this program are the following:

- a. Relevance of the proposed project to MEP program goals and policy objectives set forth in Section I of this NOFO;
- b. The availability of funding;
- c. Reviewers' evaluations, including technical comments; and
- d. Whether the project duplicates other projects funded by DoC or by other Federal agencies.

c. Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the NIST Grants Management Division (GMD) performs pre-award risk assessments in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.205, which may include a review of the financial stability of an applicant, the quality of the applicant's management systems, the history of performance, and/or the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities.

In addition, prior to making an award where the total Federal share is expected to exceed the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000), NIST GMD will review and consider the publicly available information about that applicant in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS). An applicant may, at its discretion, review and comment on information about itself previously entered into FAPIIS by a Federal awarding agency. As part of its review of risk posed by applicants, NIST GMD will consider any comments made by the applicant in FAPIIS in making its determination about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards. Upon completion of the pre-award risk assessment, the Grants Officer will make a responsibility determination concerning whether the applicant is qualified to receive the subject award and, if so, whether appropriate specific award conditions that correspond to the degree of risk posed by the applicant should be applied to an award.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Date

Review of applications, selection of successful applicants, and award processing is expected to be completed by June 2021. The earliest start date for awards under this NOFO is expected to be July 2021.

5. Additional Information

- a. **Safety.** Safety is a top priority at NIST. Employees and affiliates of award recipients who conduct project work at NIST will be expected to be safety-conscious, to attend NIST safety training, and to comply with all NIST safety policies and procedures, and with all applicable terms of their guest research agreement.
- b. **Notification to Unsuccessful Applicants.** Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail and will have the opportunity to receive a debriefing after the opportunity is officially closed. Applicants must request within 10 business days of the email notification to receive a debrief from the program office. The program office will then work with the unsuccessful applicant in arranging a date and time of the debrief.
- c. **Retention of Unsuccessful Applications.** Unsuccessful applications will be retained in accordance with the [General Record Schedule 1.2/021](#).

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

1. **Federal Award Notices.** Successful applicants will receive an award package from the NIST Grants Officer.
2. **Administrative and National Policy Requirements**
 - a. **Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements.** Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBq4>.
 - b. **Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.** The Department of Commerce will apply to each award in this program, the Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions in effect on the date of award. The current version, dated November 12, 2020, is accessible at [Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions](#) Dated November 12, 2020. Refer to Section VII. of this NOFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Grant Rules and Regulations, if you need more information.

- c. Pre-Award Notification Requirements.** The Department of Commerce will apply the Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements dated December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), accessible at <http://go.usa.gov/hKkR>. Refer to Section VII. of this NOFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Grant Rules and Regulations, for more information.
- d. Funding Availability and Limitation of Liability.** Funding for the program listed in this NOFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. NIST or the Department of Commerce will not be responsible for application preparation costs, including but not limited to if this program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of agency priorities. Publication of this NOFO does not oblige NIST or the Department of Commerce to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.
- e. Collaborations with NIST Employees.** If an applicant proposes collaboration with NIST, the statement of work should include a statement of this intention, a description of the collaboration, and prominently identify the NIST employee(s) involved, if known. Any collaboration by a NIST employee must be approved by appropriate NIST management and is at the sole discretion of NIST. Prior to beginning the merit review process, NIST will verify the approval of the proposed collaboration. Any unapproved collaboration will be stricken from the application prior to the merit review. Any collaboration with an identified NIST employee that is approved by appropriate NIST management will not make an application more or less favorable in the competitive process.
- f. Use of Government-Owned Intellectual Property.** If the applicant anticipates using any Government-owned intellectual property to carry out the work proposed, the applicant should identify such intellectual property. This information will be used to ensure that no Federal employee involved in the development of the intellectual property will participate in the review process for that competition. In addition, if the applicant intends to use Government-owned intellectual property, the applicant must comply with all statutes and regulations governing the licensing of Federal government patents and inventions, described in 35 U.S.C. §§ 200-212, 37 C.F.R. Part 401, 2 C.F.R. §200.315, and in Section C.03 of the [Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions](#) Dated November 12, 2020. Questions about these requirements may be directed to the Chief Counsel for NIST, (301) 975-2803, nistcounsel@nist.gov.

Any use of government-owned intellectual property by a recipient of an award under this announcement is at the sole discretion of the Federal

Government and will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis if a project is deemed meritorious. The applicant should indicate within the statement of work whether it already has a license to use such intellectual property or whether it intends to seek one.

If any inventions made in whole or in part by a Federal employee arise in the course of an award made pursuant to this NOFO, the United States Government may retain its ownership rights in any such invention.

Licensing or other disposition of Federal Government's rights in such inventions will be determined solely by the Federal Government, and include the possibility of the Federal Government putting the intellectual property into the public domain.

3. Reporting

a. **Reporting Requirements.** The following reporting requirements described in Sections A.01, Reporting Requirements, of the [Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions](#) dated November 12, 2020, apply to awards in this program:

(1) Financial Reports. Each award recipient will be required to submit an SF-425, Federal Financial Report on a semi-annual basis for the periods ending March 31 and September 30 of each year. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of the reporting period to the NIST Federal Program Officer, MEP Project Manager, Grants Officer and Grants Specialist named in the award documents. A final financial report is due within 120 days after the end of the project period.

(2) Performance (Technical) Reports. Each award recipient will be required to submit a technical progress report to the NIST Federal Program Officer, Grants Officer and Grants Specialist named in the award documents on a semi-annual basis for the periods ending March 31 and September 30 of each year. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of the reporting period. Technical progress reports shall contain information as prescribed in 2 C.F.R. § 200.328 (<http://go.usa.gov/xkVgP>) and [Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions](#) Section A.01.

(3) Patent and Property Reports. From time to time, and in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements and other terms and conditions governing the award, the recipient may need to submit property and patent reports.

(4) Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters. In accordance with section 872 of Public Law 110-417 (as amended; see 41 U.S.C. 2313), if the total value of a recipient's currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of an award made under this NOFO, then the recipient shall be subject to the requirements specified in Appendix XII to 2 C.F.R. Part 200, <http://go.usa.gov/cTBwC>, for maintaining the currency of information reported to SAM that is made available in FAPIIS about certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings involving the recipient.

b. Audit Requirements. The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Section D.01, and 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Subpart F, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, require any non-Federal entity (i.e., including non-profit institutions of higher education and non-profit organizations) that expends Federal awards of \$750,000 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 Subpart. Additionally, unless otherwise specified in the terms and conditions of the award, entities that are not subject to Subpart F of 2 C.F.R. Part 200 (e.g., for-profit commercial entities) that expend \$750,000 or more in DOC funds during their fiscal year must submit to the Grants Officer either: (i) a financial related audit of each DOC award or subaward in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards; or (ii) a project specific audit for each award or subaward in accordance with the requirements contained in 2 C.F.R. § 200.507. Applicants are reminded that NIST, the Department of Commerce 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 (Public Law 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. Also see the Federal Register notice published September 14, 2010, at 75 FR 55663 available here <http://go.usa.gov/hKnQ>.

VII. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

Questions should be directed to the following:

Subject Area	Point of Contact
Programmatic and Technical Questions	Michael Wilson Phone: 301-975-3346 E-mail: mepnofo@nist.gov with '2021-NIST-MEP-STATE-PARTERNSHIP-01' in subject line
Technical Assistance with Grants.gov Submissions	grants.gov Phone: 800-518-4726 E-mail: support@grants.gov
Grant Rules and Regulations	Gilberto Castillo Phone: 301-975-3726 E-mail: Gilberto.castillo@nist.gov

VIII. Other Information

1. Personal and Business Information

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

In addition, Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Federal Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. If an application contains

information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

2. Public Website:

NIST MEP has a public website, <https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-state-partnership-support-project-fy-2021>, that provides information pertaining to this Funding Opportunity¹. Any amendments to this NOFO will be announced through Grants.gov.

- 3. Frequency Asked Questions (FAQ).** Questions from applicants pertaining to eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal will not be considered on an informal basis. Applicants must submit all questions pertaining to this funding opportunity in writing to mepnofo@nist.gov with 2021-NIST-MEP-STATE-PARTNERSHIP-01 in the subject line. Questions submitted may be posted as part of an FAQ document, which will be periodically updated on the MEP website at <https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-state-partnership-support-project-fy-2021>.

4. Webinar Information Session:

NIST MEP will hold one or more webinar information sessions for organizations that are considering applying for this funding opportunity. These webinars will provide general information regarding MEP and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST/MEP staff will be available at the webinars to answer general questions. During the webinars, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any specific project ideas during the webinars or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP. However, NIST/MEP staff will provide information about the MEP eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal during this webinar. The webinars will be held approximately fifteen (15) to thirty (30) business days after posting of this NOFO. The exact dates and times of the webinars will be posted on the MEP website at <https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-state-partnership-support-project-fy-2021>.

¹ Refer to Section VII. of this NOFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Programmatic and Technical Questions, if more information is needed.

The webinars will be recorded, and a link to the recordings will be posted on the MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentations will be available after the webinars on the MEP website. Organizations wishing to participate in one or more of the webinars must register in advance by contacting MEP by email at mepnofo@nist.gov. Participation in the webinars is not required in order for an organization to submit an application pursuant to this NOFO.