



NIST MEP Center State Competition NOFO Informational Webinar

National Institute of Standards
and Technology (NIST)

Hollings Manufacturing Extension
Partnership (MEP)

Notice of Funding Opportunity
(NOFO) Number:
2022-NIST-MEP-01

Webinar Conducted February 14, 2022



MEP • MANUFACTURING
EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP®

NIST
National Institute of
Standards and Technology
U.S. Department of Commerce



Welcome!

- Thank you for joining us.
- The purpose of this webinar is to provide an overview of the MEP Center State Competition NOFO, offer general guidance on preparing applications, and answer questions related to the NOFO.



Webinar Guidelines

- Applicants are responsible for reviewing the NOFO in its entirety. We will not cover every aspect of the NOFO during this webinar.
- Proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted during the webinar.
- NIST MEP staff cannot provide feedback on any project ideas during or after the webinar.
- Please ask questions, but hold them until the end of the presentation.



Agenda

- 1 Overview
- 2 Eligibility, Estimated Funding, Cost Share, Period of Performance
- 3 Application Requirements
- 4 Evaluation Criteria, Merit Review, Selection
- 5 Point of Contact Information, Public Website, Questions



Program Purpose

- NIST MEP's mission is to enhance the competitiveness, productivity, and technological performance of U.S. manufacturing.
- The MEP National Network™ comprises NIST MEP, 51 MEP Centers located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, and its over 1,400 trusted advisors and experts at more than 385 MEP service locations, providing any U.S. manufacturer with access to the resources they need to succeed.



NOFO Purpose

- When an MEP Center has operated for 10 years, a competition must be conducted to select an eligible entity to operate the Center.
- The MEP Centers in Kentucky, Nebraska, Rhode Island, and South Dakota are nearing 10 consecutive years of operation.
- Through this NOFO, NIST is seeking applications from eligible entities to operate MEP Centers in the states outlined above.
- These new MEP Centers will become part of the MEP National Network™ and will provide manufacturing extension services to small and medium-sized manufacturers.



Statutory Authority

The statutory authority for NIST MEP is 15 U.S.C. § 278k.

“The Secretary ... shall establish a program to provide assistance for the creation and support of manufacturing extension centers for the transfer of manufacturing technology and best business practices.”





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Eligibility

- Per 15 U.S.C. § 278k(a)(5), eligibility is limited to United States-based nonprofit institutions, or consortium thereof, institutions of higher education, or state, United States territory, local, or Tribal governments.
- Per 15 U.S.C. § 278k(h)(2), incumbent MEP Centers that have received financial assistance for ten (10) consecutive years and that the Secretary determines are in good standing are eligible to apply under this NOFO.
- NIST generally will 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 Center management and Oversight functions.
- In addition, the applicant must have or propose an Oversight Board or Advisory Committee structure or plan for establishing a board structure within 90 days from the award start date (see next slide).

See page 10 of the NOFO for details.



Eligibility continued

In accordance with 15 U.S.C. § 278k(k), MEP Centers are required to establish either an Oversight Board or an Advisory Committee.

Oversight Board

- Except as provided immediately below, recipients will be required to establish and maintain an Oversight Board, which has fiduciary responsibility for the governance and operation of the recipient organization.

Advisory Committee

- A recipient of an MEP Center cooperative agreement that is an institution of higher education, state, local or Tribal governmental entity, where state or Tribal law or policy prohibits compliance with the Oversight Board requirement, may establish an Advisory Committee.

See page 5 of the NOFO for details.



Anticipated Funding Amounts by State

MEP Center Location and Assigned Geographical Service Area	Anticipated Federal Funding for Each Year of the Award	Total Anticipated Federal Funding for 5-Year Award Period
Kentucky	\$1,243,500.00	\$6,217,500.00
Nebraska	\$795,700.00	\$3,978,500.00
Rhode Island	\$1,204,300.00	\$6,021,500.00
South Dakota	\$712,200.00	\$3,561,000.00



50% Cost-Share Requirement

- MEP Centers must provide non-Federal cost share of at least 50% of the total annual allowable project costs.
- MEP Centers must meet this minimum cost-share requirement annually. There can be no carry over in excess cost share from one year to the next.
- Program income generated by an MEP Center may be used to meet the cost-share requirement.
- The applicant's share of the MEP Center expenses may include cash, services, and third-party in-kind contributions.
- The source and detailed rationale of the cost share must be documented in the budget tables and budget narratives submitted with the application.
- See pages 10-11 of the NOFO for details.



Period of Performance and Renewal Requirements

- Each award will have an initial project performance period of up to 5 years.
- Awards may be renewed on a non-competitive basis for an additional period of 5 years at the end of the initial project performance period.
- Renewal funding for MEP Centers is contingent upon successful annual reviews, as well as panel and Secretarial evaluations.
- Funding amounts may be adjusted (higher or lower) from year to year during an award.

See pages 2 and 36 of the NOFO for details.



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Application Requirements

Standard Forms & Technical Documents

Standard Forms

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
- CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying
- SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

Technical Documents

- Technical Proposal
- Resumes of Key Personnel
- Budget, Narrative, and Justification
- Indirect Cost Agreement
- Letters of Commitment
- Current and Pending Support Forms



Standard Forms

SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance

- Must be signed by an authorizing representative of the applicant
- Complete item 4 - State in which MEP Center is being proposed

SF-424A – Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs

- Must reflect anticipated expenses for the entire project, considering all potential cost increases, including cost of living.
- Must reflect each year of funding.
- A second SF-424A is necessary to cover the 5th year of the proposed budget.

CD-511 – Certification Regarding Lobbying

- Enter Funding Opportunity Number (2022-NIST-MEP-01) in the award number field

SF-LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

- Submit only if the form is applicable

See page 11 of the NOFO for details.



Technical Documents





Technical Proposal

The Technical Proposal must be:

- A word-processed document of no more than 25 pages
- Responsive to the program description and the evaluation criteria

The Technical Proposal should follow this format:

- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary
- Project Narrative
- Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel, Organizational Structure and Oversight Board or Advisory Committee

See pages 13-15 of the NOFO for details.



Technical Proposal continued

- **Executive Summary**

- Respond to the evaluation criteria
- Describe the proposed project in no more than 2 pages
- Name the State of the proposed MEP Center in the first sentence
- Do not to incorporate information that concerns business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information as part of the Executive Summary.

- **Project Narrative**

- Respond to the Project Narrative evaluation sub-criteria (Criterion A)
- Describe the proposed approach to establish and operate an MEP Center
- Identify tasks, measurable milestones, and outcomes in providing manufacturing extension services to primarily small and medium-sized manufacturers separately for each of the 5 years in the designated State



Technical Proposal continued

- **Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel, Organizational Structure and Oversight Board or Advisory Committee**
 - Respond to the evaluation sub-criteria (Criterion A)
 - Describe the qualifications and proposed Center operational or management activities of key personnel who will be assigned to work on the proposed project
 - Describe program management plans, including the proposed structure for executing the MEP Core Management and Oversight Functions
 - Description the established or proposed MEP Center Oversight Board or Advisory Committee, including a listing of the members and their organizational affiliation or intended members and a discussion of the governing documents



Resumes of Key Personnel

- Resumes for all key personnel assigned to the project must be provided.
- Resumes must be a maximum of 2 pages each.
- Additional pages beyond the 2 pages per resume will not be considered during the evaluation of the application.



Budget Narrative and Justification

- Applicants must provide an MEP Single-Year Budget Workbook for the first year of the award.
- Applicants must also provide an Award Budget Summary Table for years 1 through 5 of the award.
 - Both templates are available on the MEP website.
- The proposed budget will be evaluated in accordance with the Budget, Narrative, and Justification evaluation criteria outlined in this NOFO
- The budget 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, which can be reviewed online.

See pages 15-17 of the NOFO for details.



Indirect Cost Agreement

- If indirect costs are included in the proposed budget, provide a copy of the approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.
- If a rate has not been established by a cognizant Federal audit agency, provide a statement to this effect with the application.

See page 17 of the NOFO for details.



Indirect Cost Agreement

- If the successful applicant includes indirect costs in the budget and has not established an indirect cost rate with a cognizant Federal audit agency, then the applicant will be required to obtain such a rate.
- Applicants that have never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge indirect costs to an award pursuant to a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), in which case a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement is not required.



Letters of Commitment

Required Letters of Commitment:

- **For all applicants:** stand-alone letter from an authorized representative stating the total amount of cost share to be contributed by the applicant
 - This letter must cover all 5 years of the proposed MEP Center project.
- **For non-profit applicants:** A resolution from the fiduciary board authorizing submission of the MEP Center application to NIST
 - This letter must support the activities described in the application.

See page 18 of the NOFO for details.



Letters of Commitment continued

Recommended Letters of Commitment:

- Letter from an authorized representative of each third-party organization providing cash or in-kind contributions that are to be used as cost share
 - Letters from key subrecipients verifying the availability of resources
 - Letters from prospective key employees verifying their plans to join the applicant
 - Letters from key contractors verifying the availability of resources
- Applications without the recommended letters of commitment may be considered less favorably during the application review process.



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 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.
- A separate form should be used for each 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>

See page 19 of the NOFO for details.



Submission Guidelines

- Complete applications are due by April 26, 2022 at 11:59pm EST.
- Applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered.
- All applications must be submitted electronically at www.grants.gov.
- Awards are subject to the availability of funds and subject to the publication of an amended or a superseding NOFO under this program.





Evaluation Criteria





Evaluation Criteria

- The following evaluation criteria and weights will be used to review proposals:
 - **A. Project Narrative** (40 total points)
 - **B. Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel, Organizational Structure and Management; and Oversight Board or Advisory Committee** (30 total points)
 - **C. Budget, Narrative, and Justification** (30 total points)
- The maximum possible score is 100 points.

See pages 24-28 of the NOFO for details.



Evaluation Criterion A. Project Narrative (40 total points)

Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the applicant's Project Narrative demonstrates how the applicant's methodology will efficiently and effectively establish an MEP Center and provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small and medium-sized manufacturers in the applicable State-wide geographical service area.

Reviewers will consider the following topics when evaluating the Project Narrative:

A. i. Center Strategy (20 points)

A. ii. Market Understanding

1. Market Segmentation (5 points)

2. Needs Identification and Product / Service Offerings (5 points)

A. iii. Performance Measurement and Management (10 points)



Evaluation Criterion A.i.

Center Strategy

Reviewers will assess the applicant's strategy proposed for the Center to deliver services that meet manufacturers' needs, generate client inputs and support a strong manufacturing ecosystem.

Reviewers will assess the quality with which the applicant:

- incorporates the market analysis described in the criterion set forth in Section V.1.a.ii.(1) below 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 the Center's existing and/or proposed roles and relationships with other entities in the State's manufacturing ecosystem, including State, regional, and local agencies, economic development organizations, and educational institutions such as universities and community or technical colleges, industry associations, and other appropriate entities;



Evaluation Criterion A.i. continued

- plans to engage with other entities in Statewide and/or regional advanced manufacturing initiatives;
- supports achievements of the MEP mission and objectives while also satisfying the interests of other stakeholders, investors, and partners;
- will identify, reach, and provide proposed services to key market segments and individual manufacturers described above;
- will work with a manufacturer's leadership in strategic discussions related to new technologies, new products and new markets;
- leverages their experience in working with small and medium-sized manufacturers as a basis for future programmatic success; and
- will make effective use of resources or partnerships with third parties, such as industry, universities, community/technical colleges, nonprofit economic development organizations, and Federal, State and Local Government Agencies.



Evaluation Criterion A.ii.

Market Understanding

Reviewers will assess the strategy proposed for the Center to define the target market, understand the needs of manufacturers (especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)), and to define appropriate services to meet identified needs.

Reviewers will evaluate the proposed approach for regularly updating this understanding through the five years.

- The following sub-topics will be evaluated and given equal weight:

- 1. Market Segmentation**

- 2. Needs Identification and Product / Service Offerings**



Evaluation Criterion A.ii.1.

Market Segmentation

Reviewers will assess the quality and extent of the applicant's market segmentation strategy including:

- segmentation of company size, geography, and industry priorities including some consideration of rural, start-up (a manufacturing establishment that has been in operation for five or fewer years) and/or very small manufacturers as appropriate to the state;
- alignment with state and/or regional initiatives; and
- other important factors identified by the applicant.



Evaluation Criterion A.ii.2.

Needs Identification and Product / Service Offerings

- Reviewers will assess the quality and extent of the applicant's proposed needs identification and proposed products and services for both sales growth and operational improvement in response to the applicant's market segmentation and understanding assessed by reviewers under Evaluation Criterion A.ii.1. Market Segmentation.
- Of particular interest is how the applicant would leverage new manufacturing technologies, techniques, and processes usable by small and medium-sized manufacturers.



Evaluation Criterion A.iii.

Performance Measurement and Management

Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant will use a systematic approach to measuring and managing performance including the:

- quality and extent of the applicant's stated goals, milestones and outcomes described by operating year (year 1, year 2, etc.);
- applicant's utilization of client-based business results important to stakeholders in understanding program impact; and
- depth of the proposed methodology for program management and internal evaluation likely to ensure effective operations and oversight for meeting program and service delivery objectives.



Evaluation Criterion B. Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel, Organizational Structure and Management; and Oversight Board or Advisory Committee (30 total points)

Reviewers will assess the ability of the key personnel, the applicant's management structure and Oversight Board or Advisory Committee to deliver the program and services envisioned for the Center, assessing the following:

- i. Key Personnel, Organizational Structure, and Management**
- ii. Oversight Board or Advisory Committee**



Evaluation Criterion B.i.

Key Personnel, Organizational Structure and Management

Reviewers will assess the extent to which the:

- proposed key personnel have the appropriate experience and education in manufacturing, outreach, program management and partnership development to support achievements of the MEP mission and objectives;
- proposed management structure and organizational roles are aligned to plan, direct, monitor, organize and control the monetary resources of the proposed Center to achieve its business objectives;
- proposed organizational structure flows logically from the specified approach to the market and products and service offerings; and
- proposed field staff structure sufficiently supports the geographic concentrations and industry targets for the region.



Evaluation Criterion B.ii.

Oversight Board or Advisory Committee

Reviewers will assess the extent to which the:

- Oversight Board or Advisory Committee and its operations are complete, appropriate, and will meet the program's objectives at the time of award, or, if such an Oversight Board or Advisory Committee does not exist at the time of application or is not expected to meet these requirements at the time of award, the extent to which the proposed plan for developing and implementing such an Oversight Board or Advisory Committee within 90 days of award start date is feasible; and
- Oversight Board or Advisory Committee is engaged with overseeing and guiding the Center and supports its own development through a schedule of regular meetings, and processes ensuring Oversight Board or Advisory Committee involvement in strategic planning, recruitment, selection and retention of board members, board assessment practices and board development initiatives.



Evaluation Criterion C. Budget, Narrative, and Justification (30 total points)

Reviewers will assess the suitability and focus of the applicant's five-year budget and will consider the following:

- i. Budget**
- ii. Plan for Meeting the Award's Non-Federal Cost Share Requirements over 5 Years**



Evaluation Criterion C.i.

Budget

Reviewers will assess the extent to which:

- the proposed financial plan is aligned to support the execution of the proposed Center's strategy and business model over the five-year project plan;
- 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 within the context of the overall financial model over the five-year project plan;
- a reasonable ramp-up or scale-up scope and budget has the Center fully operational by the 4th year of the project; and
- the proposal's narrative for each of the budgeted items explains the rationale for each of the budgeted items, including assumptions the applicant used in budgeting for the Center.



Evaluation Criterion C.ii.

Plan for Meeting the Award's Non-Federal Cost Share Requirements over 5 Years

Reviewers will assess the quality of and extent to which the:

- applicant clearly describes the total level of cost share and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash and in-kind, in their proposed budget;
- applicant's funding commitments for cost share are documented by letters of commitment from the applicant, proposed sub-recipients and any other partners identified and meet the basic matching requirements of the program;
- applicant's cost share meets basic requirements of allowability, allocability and reasonableness under applicable Federal costs principles set for in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E;

(continues)



Evaluation Criterion C.ii. continued

Plan for Meeting the Award's Non-Federal Cost Share Requirements over 5 Years

Reviewers will assess the quality of and extent to which the:

- applicant's underlying accounting system is established or will be established to meet applicable Federal costs principles set forth in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E; and
- the overall proposed plan is sufficiently robust and diversified so as to support the long-term sustainability of the Center throughout the five (5) years of the project plan.



Merit Review and Selection





Merit Review

- Each application will be reviewed by at least three technically qualified individuals with appropriate professional and technical expertise relating to the topics covered in the NOFO.
- Merit reviewers will evaluate each application based on the evaluation criteria outlined in the NOFO and assign each application a numerical score with a maximum possible score of 100 points.

See page 29 of the NOFO for details.



Merit Review

- Applications receiving an overall average score of 70.00 points or higher will be deemed to be finalists.
- At the discretion of NIST MEP, applicants that are deemed to be finalists may be invited to participate in an applicant conference or site visit with the reviewers who are conducting the merit review of their application.



Selecting Official

- The Selecting Official, who is the NIST MEP Director or designee, will make final award recommendations to the NIST Grants Officer.
- The Selecting Official will generally select and recommend the most meritorious applications for awards based on the ranked score and technical comments from the merit review team.
- When making their selection, the Selecting Official may apply one or more of the selection factors on the next slide.



Selection Factors

The Selecting Official may consider the following factors in their recommendation for funding:

- (1) The availability of federal funds;
- (2) The type and percentage of funding and in-kind commitment from other sources such as 3rd party in-kind;
- (3) Relevance of the proposed project to MEP program goals and policy objectives;
- (4) Reviewers' evaluations and technical comments;
- (5) The geographical diversity and extent of the service area; and
- (6) Whether the application complements or supports other Administration priorities or projects supported by Department of Commerce or other federal agencies such as, but not limited to, Manufacturing USA;
- (7) Past performance on all federal awards.

See page 28 of the NOFO for details.



Federal Award Agency Review and Risk Assessment

The NIST Grants Management Division (GMD) will perform pre-award risk assessments on all applications recommended for funding by the Selecting Official.

During the risk assessment, GMD may consider:

- The financial stability of the applicant
- Quality of the applicant's management systems
- History of performance
- The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities
- Publicly available information about the applicant in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

See page 30 of the NOFO for details.



Anticipated Announcement and Award Date

- Review of applications, selection of successful applicants, and award processing is expected to be completed by the end of September 2022.
- The earliest start date for awards under this NOFO is expected to be January 2023.



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Federal Award Agency Contacts

Subject Area	Point of Contact
Programmatic and Technical Questions	Michael Wilson, Competition Manager Phone: 202-360-5942 E-mail: mepnofo@nist.gov with '2022-NIST-MEP-01' in the subject line
Technical Assistance with Grants.gov Submissions	grants.gov Phone: <u>800-518-4726</u> E-mail: support@grants.gov
Grant Rules and Regulations	Gilberto Castillo, Grant Officer Phone: 301-975-3726 Fax: 301-975-6368 E-mail: gilberto.castillo@nist.gov



Public Information

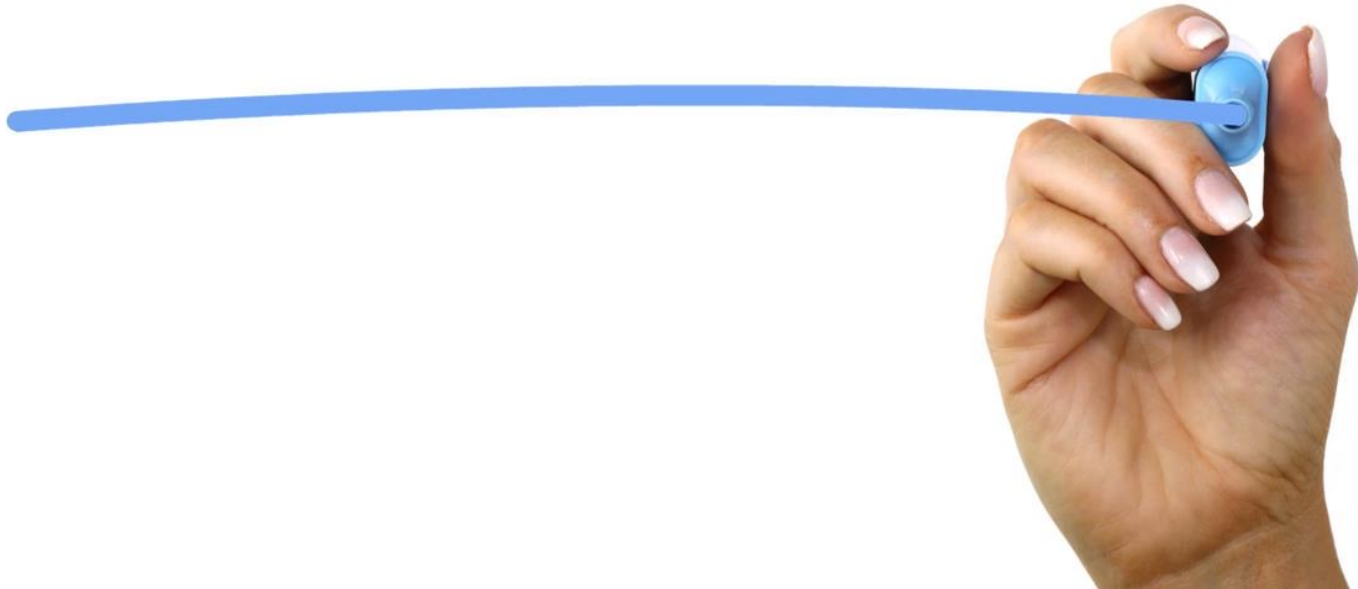
- NIST MEP has a public website that provides information pertaining to this Funding Opportunity:

<https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-center-state-competition-fy-2022>

- Any amendments to this NOFO will be announced through Grants.gov.
- Questions pertaining to this NOFO can be submitted to mepnofo@nist.gov with **2022-NIST-MEP-01** in the subject line.



QUESTIONS



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