

# **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:  
2024-NIST-MEP-01**

**Webinar Conducted: May 14, 2024**

This is a simplified version of the presentation for website purposes.



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.

# 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

# Overview

# **MEP National Network™**

A unique public-private partnership that delivers comprehensive, proven solutions to U.S. manufacturers, fueling growth and advancing U.S. manufacturing.

Our mission is to strengthen and empower U.S. manufacturers.

# Program Evolution

**1988-1999**

Optimize  
performance &  
accountability

**2000**

Deliver higher  
value added  
services

**2006**

Develop leaders  
to focus on  
strategic  
management

**2009**

Foster  
innovation  
develop & deploy  
technology

**2016**

Technology  
based  
economic  
development

**2022**

Next chapter:  
enabling adv mfg tech /  
Industry 4.0

# MEP National Network

Centers located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

Public-private partnership with local flexibility.

Federal funds, state investments, and private sector fees cover services.

Market driven program that creates high value for manufacturers.

Leverage partners to maximize service offerings.

Transfer technology and expertise to manufacturers.

# Our Partners

Economic  
development  
organizations

Federal agencies  
& laboratories

Industry leaders  
& think tanks

Manufacturing  
USA Institutes

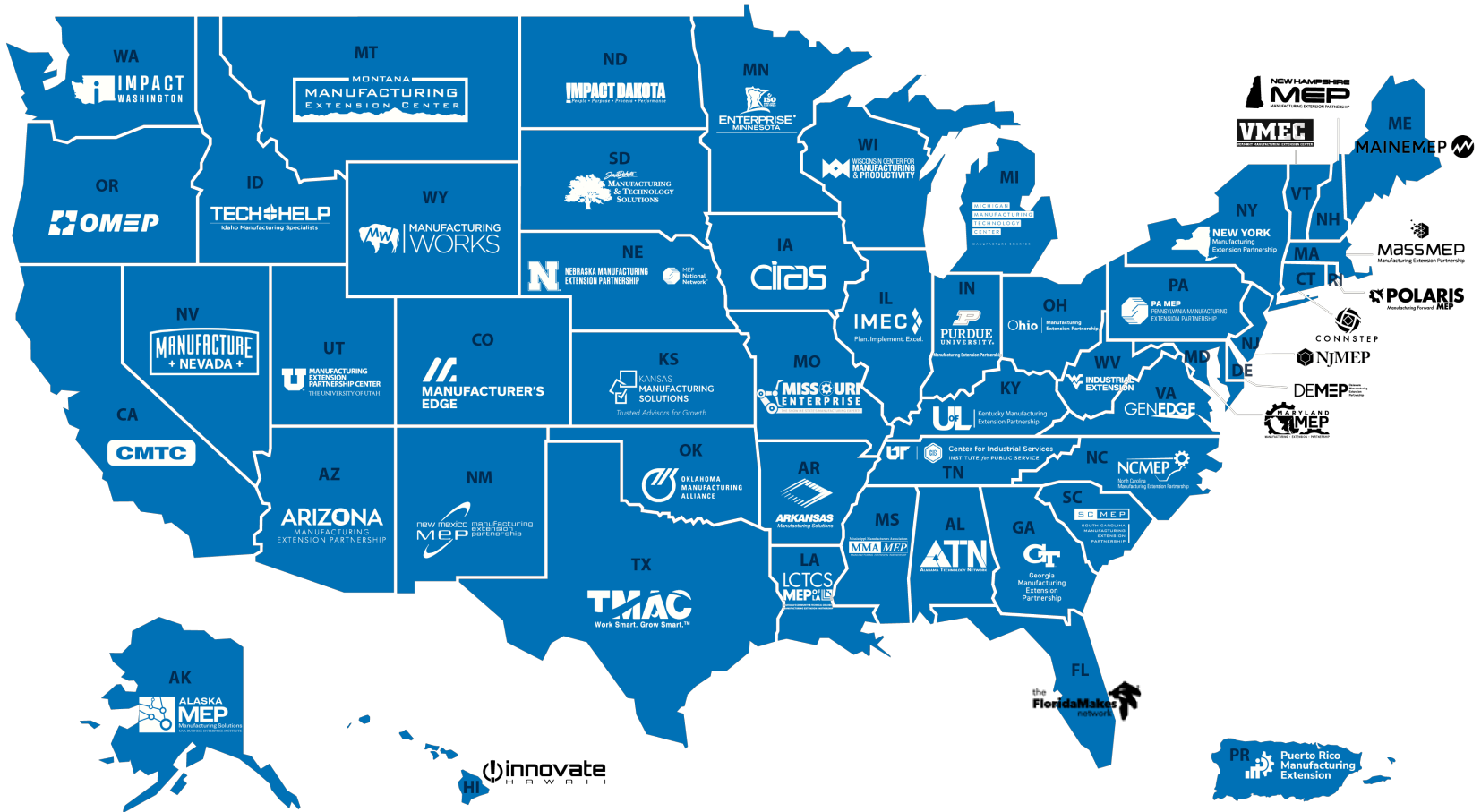
State & local  
government

Universities,  
community colleges  
& technical schools

Trade associations  
& other partners



# MEP National Network



# How Centers Work with Manufacturers

## **Initial Contact**

Group sessions, referral

## **Assessment**

Informal walk-through, detailed company analysis

## **Identify**

Find potential issues, define proposed project and approach

## **Negotiate**

Consult with company and sign contract with fee paid to Center

## **Project Execution**

Center staff, partners, and/or 3rd party consultants

## **Follow-Up**

Assures customer satisfaction and explore further opportunities

# Business Growth Services

ISO & Quality Management

Business Growth Services

Exporting & Reshoring

Workforce Development

Technology Scouting / TDMI

Adv Mfg Tech /Industry 4.0  
Services

Lean / Toyota Kata

Supply Chain / Supplier Scouting

Sustainability

Risk Mitigation

Cybersecurity Services

Food Industry Services

# 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.”

# 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 Center in Florida is nearing 10 consecutive years of operation.
- Through this NOFO, NIST is seeking applications from eligible entities to operate an MEP Center in the state of Florida.
- This new MEP Center will become part of the MEP National Network™ and will provide manufacturing extension services to small and medium-sized manufacturers.

# **Eligibility, Estimated Funding, Cost Share, Period of Performance**

# Eligibility

- Per 15 U.S.C. § 278k(a)(5), eligibility is limited to United States-based nonprofit institutions, institutions of higher education, State, United States territory, local, or tribal governments or a consortium thereof, 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.
- Please note that individuals and unincorporated sole proprietors are not considered “non-Federal entities” and are not eligible to apply under this NOFO. Although Federal entities are not eligible to receive funding under this NOFO, they may participate as unfunded collaborators.
- 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.

# 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

- Recipients that are a nonprofit organization will be required to establish and maintain an Oversight Board, which has fiduciary responsibility for the governance and operation of the recipient organization.
- The Oversight Board must be broadly representative of the state service area and/or other service area as defined by the Program Office stakeholders with a majority of the Oversight Board members drawn from small and medium-sized manufacturing firms. **(Refer to Section I.2 for more detail)**

## 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.
- The Advisory Committee must be broadly representative of state service area stakeholders with the majority of its members drawn from small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms and provide regular strategic, policy, and programmatic input directly to the designated representative of the recipient. **(Refer to Section I.2.c for more details.**



# Eligibility continued

- If an Oversight Board or Advisory Committee meeting the requirements of this section is not in place at the time an application is submitted, the applicant must submit a plan for establishing such structure, including Oversight Board or Advisory Committee membership criteria.
- An awardee will have up to 90 calendar days from the award start date to establish its Oversight Board or Advisory Committee, as the case may be.

# Anticipated Funding Amounts by State

MEP Center Location  
and Assigned Geographical Service Area

Florida

Anticipated Federal Funding  
for Each Year of the Award

\$5,319,200

Total Anticipated Federal Funding  
for 5-Year Award Period

\$26,596,000

# 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 carryover 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 as described in 2 CFR 200.306.
- The source and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash, full- and part-time personnel, and in-kind donations, must be documented in the Budget Narrative and Justification submitted with the application.

# **Application Requirements**

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## **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**

- Project Narrative
- Resume(s) of Key Personnel
- Budget Narrative and Justification
- Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- MEP Single Year Budget Workbook and Five-Year Budget Summary Table
- Resolutions and Letters of Commitment
- Current and Pending Support Form

# 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 (2024-NIST-MEP-01) in the award number field
- Enter the title of the application, or an abbreviation of that title, in the Project Name field

## **SF-LLL – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)**

**Refer to pages 12—13 of the NOFO**

# **Program Requirements & Technical Documents**

# Program Requirements

- Oversight Board or Advisory Committee
- Naming of Centers
- MEP Core Management & Oversight Functions
- MEP Resources



# Project Narrative

## **The Project Narrative must be:**

- A word-processed document of no more than 25 pages (double-spaced between lines)

## **The Project Narrative should contain the following information:**

- Cover Page
- Table of Contents (if included)
- Executive Summary (Two page limit)
- Project Approach and Project Execution Plan
- Qualifications
- Resume(s) of Key Personnel
- Budget Narrative and Justification

**PAGE LIMIT EXCLUDES: SF424, SF424A (part 1 & 2), CD511, SF-LLL, Resumes, Budget Narrative & Justification, Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, Letters of Commitment and Current & Pending Support Forms.**

Refer to pages 13-15 of the NOFO for details

# Project Narrative continued

- **Executive Summary (Not to exceed two pages)**
  - The executive summary should include information indicating how each evaluation criterion (see Section V.1. of this NOFO) and its sub-factors are addressed.
  - Identify the State of the proposed MEP Center in the first sentence
  - Executive Summary 1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph Format:
    - Purpose
    - Activities
    - Outcomes
    - Beneficiaries
    - Subrecipients

# Project Narrative continued

- **Project Approach and Project Execution Plan**
  - 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.

# Project Narrative continued

- **Qualifications**

- 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

# Resume(s) of Key Personnel

- **Resume(s) of Key Personnel**
  - Resumes for all key personnel assigned to the project must be provided.
  - Limited to two (2) pages per individual.

# Budget Narrative and Justification

- When cost share is included in the budget, the written justification must also identify the Federal and non-Federal portion of each cost, to include indirect costs, as applicable. (see Cost Sharing section of this NOFO for match requirements).
- The proposed budget will be evaluated in accordance with the Budget Narrative 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 15-19 of the NOFO for details.

# Indirect Cost Rate Agreement

- If indirect costs are included in the proposed budget, provide a copy of the approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement from a cognizant Federal audit agency.
- If a rate has not been established by a cognizant Federal audit agency, provide a statement to this effect with the application.
- 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 do not have a negotiated indirect (including provisional) indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), in which case a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement is not required.

See page 18 of the NOFO for details.

# MEP Single Year Budget Workbook

## Five Year Budget Summary Table

- Applicants will be required to submit additional budget documentation to include:
  - MEP Single-Year Budget Workbook which must be provided for year one (1) of the award and;
  - MEP Five-Year Budget Summary Table which must be provided for years one (1) through five (5) of the award.
  - The MEP Single Year Budget Workbook and MEP Five-Year Budget Summary Table template (OMB Control Number 0693-0032) are available on the MEP website at:  
<https://www.nist.gov/mep/nist-mep-center-state-competition-florida-fy2024>.
  - If the applicant is successful, additional MEP Single Year Budget Workbooks must be submitted for future years.



# Resolutions and Letters of Commitment

- **Applicant & Third-Party Non-Federal Cost Sharing:**
  - With the exception of a commitment letter from the applicant, letters of commitment for all other third-party sources of non-Federal cost sharing identified in a proposal are not required but are strongly encouraged.
  - Applicant Non-Federal Cost Sharing (Cash and In-kind): A letter of commitment is required from an authorized representative of the applicant, stating the total amount of cost share to be contributed by the applicant towards the proposed MEP Center project. (MUST COVER ALL 5 YEARS OF THE PROPOSED MEP CENTER PROJECT AND INCLUDE A PER YEAR BREAK-OUT OF THE APPLICANT'S CONTRIBUTION OF NON-FEDERAL COST SHARE AS WELL AS PER YEAR BREAKOUT OF CASH COST SHARE (INCLUDING PROGRAM INCOME AND IN-KIND (NON-CASH) CONTRIBUTIONS).
- **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.
- **Third Party Cost Sharing (Cash and In-Kind):**
  - Applicant is strongly encouraged to include in its application a letter of commitment from an authorized representative of each third-party organization providing cash or in-kind contributions

# Resolutions and Letters of Commitment

- **Subrecipients:**
  - Letters of commitment from subrecipients who are key to the technical plan's success are useful for verifying the availability of resources but are not required.
  - Applications without commitment letters from all identified, proposed key subrecipients may be considered less favorably during the application review process.
- **Prospective Key Employees:**
  - Letters of commitment to join the proposing organization's team are useful for verifying the availability of key employees, who are not yet employed at a proposing organization, to participate in the project if the project is funded.
  - Letters are not required, but they can play an important role in conveying the qualifications of key employees, especially for projects involving small companies or startups.
- **Contractors:**
  - Letters of commitment from contractors who are key to the technical plan's success are useful for verifying the availability of resources but are not required.

# 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 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>

See page 21 of the NOFO for details.

# Submission Guidelines

- Complete applications are due by July 1, 2024 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](http://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.
- If the directions found on the Grants.gov Online Help page are not effective, please contact the Grants.gov Help. 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](mailto:support@grants.gov).

# Evaluation Criteria

# Evaluation Criteria

- The following evaluation criteria and weights will be used to review proposals:
  - a. Project Narrative (**40 total points**)
    - i. Center Strategy (20 points)
    - ii. Market Understanding (10 points)
    - iii. Performance Measurement & Management (10 points)
  - b. Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel, Organizational Structure and Management; and Oversight Board or Advisory Committee (**30 total points**)
    - i. Key Personnel, Organizational Structure and Management (15 points)
    - ii. Oversight Board or Advisory Committee (15 points)
  - c. Budget Narrative, and Justification (**30 total points**)
    - i. Budget (15 points)
    - ii. Plan for Meeting the Award's Non-Federal Cost Share Requirements over 5 Years.(15 points)
- The maximum possible score is 100 points.

See pages 25-29 of the NOFO for details.

# **Merit Review and Selection**

# Merit Review

- Initial Administrative Review of Applications.
  - Reviewed for eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to the NOFO and scop of 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.



# Merit Review continued

- Full Review of Eligible, Complete, and Responsive Applications
  - Reviewed by at least three technically qualified individuals with appropriate professional and technical expertise relating to the topics covered in the NOFO.  
Combination of Federal/Non-Federal Personnel
  - 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.
  - During the review process, the reviewers may discuss the applications with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis, not a consensus.

Refer to page 31 of the NOFO for details.

# Merit Review continued

- Applications receiving an overall average score of 70.00 points or higher will be adjectivally categorized as “fundable” and identified as finalists.
- Applications that are numerically scored an average below 70.00 on a scale of 0-100 points will be adjectivally categorized as “unfundable” and will not be further considered for funding.
- Applicants identified as finalists will be invited to participate with reviewers in a telephone or virtual conference or invited to participate in a site visit that will be conducted by the same reviewers at the applicant’s location.

# Merit Review continued

- Upon completion of either a telephone or virtual conference call or site visit, reviewers will be given the opportunity to revise their assigned numeric scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in Section V.1. of this NOFO as a result of information obtained during either conference call or site visit. Any scoring revisions will be made by reviewers on an individual basis.
- Upon receipt of the technical reviewers' final scores, the Merit Review Team Chair will prepare a final ranking of the applications, which will be provided to the Selecting Official.

# Selection

- The Selecting Official, who is the NIST MEP Acting Director or designee, will make final award recommendations to the NIST Grants Officer.
- The Selecting Official will generally select and recommend the most meritorious application(s) for an award based upon the ranked order during the merit review.
- 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 geographical diversity and extent of the service area; and
- (3) 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;
- (4) Past performance on all Federal awards.

See page 30 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 Responsibility/Qualification records about that applicant in SAM.gov

See page 32 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 October 2024.
- The earliest start date for the award under this NOFO is expected to be January 2025.

# **Point of Contact Information, Public Website, Questions**



# Things to Know

- **Resource Documents**
  - Review all but make sure to review Budget templates, MEP General Terms & Conditions, etc
- **Operating Outcome Plan, Budget and Supporting Documentation**
  - Following the issuance of an MEP award, recipients will be required to submit an Operating Outcome Plan in accordance with the NIST MEP Operating Outcome Plan Guidance.
  - NIST may require recipients to provide copies of sub-tier agreements, including subawards and contracts, as well subrecipient performance monitoring plans.
  - A copy of the current NIST MEP Operating Outcome Plan Guidance (is available at: <https://www.nist.gov/mep/nist-mep-center-state-competition-florida-fy2024>)
- **FAQs** – please submit all questions to [mepnofo@nist.gov](mailto:mepnofo@nist.gov). The full FAQ document will be provided on the website link identified above.

# Things to Know continued

- **Kick-off Conference**
  - Conducted within 60 days after start date @ NIST or Virtually
  - Must be attended by the MEP Center Director and up to two (2) additional MEP Center employees.
  - Intent - help ensure that the MEP Center operator has a clear understanding of the program and its components.
  - Include costs in budget/narrative – up to 3 days.
- Today's presentation and recording will be made available on the website identified above.

# Federal Award Agency Contacts

## **Programmatic and Technical Questions**

Bryana Head,

Competitions Administrator

Phone: 202-875-0745

E-mail: [mepnofo@nist.gov](mailto:mepnofo@nist.gov) or [Bryana.Head@nist.gov](mailto:Bryana.Head@nist.gov)

with '2024-NIST-MEP-01' in the subject line

## **Technical Assistance with Grants.gov Submissions**

[grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

Phone: 800-518-4726

E-mail: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

## **Grant Rules and Regulations**

Michael Teske, Grant Officer

Phone: 301-961-0387

E-mail: [Michael.Teske@nist.gov](mailto:Michael.Teske@nist.gov)

# Public Information

- NIST MEP has a public website that provides information pertaining to this Funding Opportunity: [NIST MEP Center State Competition for Florida FY2024 | NIST](#)
- Any amendments to this NOFO will be announced through [Grants.gov](#).
- Questions pertaining to this NOFO can be submitted to [mepnofo@nist.gov](mailto:mepnofo@nist.gov) or [Bryana.Head@nist.gov](mailto:Bryana.Head@nist.gov) with **2024-NIST-MEP-01** in the subject line.