Good afternoon. My name is ███████████ and I am the ███████████ of the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance. I work closely with the Michigan State University Supply Chain Program in Midland, Michigan. I am writing today to give some brief input regarding the MEP Competitive Award Program.

Specially, I would like to give answers to two of the questions posed below. They are as follows:

1. What are the key problems and issues facing small U.S. manufacturers and their competitiveness and opportunities for growth in the near-term (1 to 2 years), mid-term (3 to 5 years) and/or long-term (more than 5 years)?

   There are a wide array of key problem facing U.S. manufacturers in the near-term, mid-term, and long-term. First, U.S. manufacturers are always at risk of losing business to foreign suppliers. U.S. companies need to manage their own supply chains to reduce costs and to improve quality. They need the flexibility and ability to understand their place in their customer's supply chains so that they can share status and other information with downstream customers. There will also be the need for increased capability to address cybersecurity concerns. Finally, there is a talent war being waged across the United States. We need to work with higher education closely to build the most talented workforce possibly in our supply chain programs. This includes helping our higher education institutions craft the most robust curriculum possible, partnering with industry, and engaging students to bolster interest in supply chain related opportunities.

5. Are there any other critical issues that NIST MEP should consider in its strategic planning for future investments that are not covered by the first four questions?

   It is vitally important to engage all stakeholders in the planning process, including university academic supply chain centers and affiliated industry members. Collaboration between industry, higher education, and policy makers is critical to future investments. Also, please do not underestimate the challenges that accompany collaboration, including the involvement of small U.S. manufacturers. They need to be at the table and have a voice in the strategic planning process. Finally, as it relates to talent, the U.S. needs to invest more aggressively in computer science. Cybersecurity is a constantly changing and advancing segment of supply chain. Our professionals must have the skills necessary to adapt, change, and grow.

Thank you for all of your consideration.

Best regards,

Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance