

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) would like your feedback to help prepare a 2017 federal funding opportunity that will allow Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Centers and their partners to add capabilities to the MEP program, including projects to solve new or emerging manufacturing problems.

Specifically, NIST requests information from small and medium-sized U.S. manufacturers related to their needs in four areas: critical manufacturing technologies; supply chain; potential business services, including information services; and other technologies or services that would enhance global competition. NIST also requests recommendations for other critical issues that it should consider in strategic planning for future investments.

**NIST is seeking information that responds to one or more of the questions listed below. Responses should clearly indicate which question is being addressed.**

(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)?

Answer - Government burden including regulations and tax. The overhead cost goes up yearly and we now compete globally with other companies from around the world. For every percentage of overhead and/or tax/user fee/license/occupancy tax/property tax, health, etc. that takes away from profitability, it will go to some other company and quite often, offshore.

(2) What advanced manufacturing technologies are and/or will be needed by small U.S. manufacturers for the companies to be competitive and grow in the global marketplace in the near-term (1 to 2 years), mid-term (3 to 5 years) and/or long-term (more than 5 years)?

Answer – MEP Software, broadband internet, seamless communication, remote capabilities.

What would be the appropriate Manufacturing Readiness Level [6] or Technology Readiness Level [7] for those technologies in order for small U.S. manufacturers to consider adoption?

Answer – MRL 9 or 10.

(b) What information will be required for small U.S. manufacturers to understand a technology or related group of technologies and the risks and opportunities associated with making or not making an investment in any given technology?

Answer – If the technology is MRL 7 or 8.

(c) How is the information about advanced manufacturing technologies best delivered to small U.S. manufacturers and/or MEP Centers that support those small U.S. manufacturers?

Answer – Electronic communication via industry newsletters.

(3) What technologies and/or business models are important to small U.S. manufacturers as they choose and participate in any particular supply chain?

Answer – Global OEM manufacturing operations located in the US need to increase.

(4) What complementary business services, including information services, are and/or will be needed by small U.S. manufacturers and/or MEP Centers to take full advantage of advanced manufacturing technologies at the company or supply chain level?

Answer – Informational and/or training sessions with further training possibilities.

(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?

Answer – Employee or workplace training.

**Please see the [MEP website](#) for more information. Responses will be accepted at [meprfi@nist.gov](mailto:meprfi@nist.gov) with the subject line “MEP Competitive Awards Program RFI Responses” until 11:59 p.m. Eastern on January 13, 2017.**