

This is a submission to the NIST MEP RFI on behalf of the Iowa MEP. These responses are based on the results of our biannual needs assessment which includes input from over 250 small- to medium-sized manufacturers across Iowa.

(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)?

We identified the following as the key issues facing Iowa manufacturers:

*Enterprise Leadership:* (1) Improved Strategy and planning capabilities; (2) Support for small manufacturers in understanding complying with regulations; (3) Assistance in creating and sustaining a competitive advantage in healthcare costs.

*Growth:* (1) Exposure and coaching to pursue opportunities in new markets; (2) Support Product Development Efforts; (3) Support growth efforts through next-generation technology and productivity.

*Productivity:* (1) Improve implementation rates of proven initiatives to ease workforce constraints; (2) Hands-on implementation assistance for small manufacturers.

*Technology:* (1) Exposure to applications of next-generation technologies; (2) Deep technical support in manufacturing engineering and automation; (3) Take significant leap in digital manufacturing capabilities

Thank you,  
Iowa State University, CIRAS