

April 19, 2016

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (FFO)  
Embedding MEP in NNMI Institutes Pilot Projects**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), United States Department of Commerce (DoC)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Embedding MEP in NNMI Institutes Pilot Projects
- **Announcement Type:** Initial
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** 2016-NIST-MEP-ENNMI-01
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.611, Manufacturing Extension Partnership
- **Dates:** Electronic applications in response to this FFO must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, June 17, 2016. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered. The approximate start date for awards under this FFO is expected to be October 1, 2016.

**Applicants should be aware, and factor in their application submission planning, that the Grants.gov system is expected to be closed for routine maintenance from 12:01 a.m. Eastern Time, Saturday, May 21, 2016 until Monday, May 23, 2016 at 6:00 a.m. Eastern Time. Applications cannot be submitted when Grants.gov is closed.**

**Applicants are strongly urged to read Section IV.2.b., Attachment of Required Application Documents, found on page 19 of this FFO. Applicants should carefully follow the instructions and recommendations regarding adding attachments to an application and using Grants.gov's Download Submitted Applications feature to check that all required attachments were contained in their submission. Applications submitted without the required documents will not pass the Initial Administrative Review, described in Section V.2.a. of this FFO, which may result in the application not being considered for funding.**

- **Application Submission:** Electronic applications must be submitted to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). See Section IV.7.a. in the Full Announcement Text of this FFO.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NIST invites proposals from current MEP Centers to pilot test approaches to provide needed technology acceleration assistance to small and mid-sized U.S. manufacturers (hereinafter referred to as

small U.S. manufacturers) through the establishment of meaningful and results oriented collaborations between the nationwide system of Centers operating as part of the NIST Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Program (hereinafter referred to as NIST MEP), and the Institutes participating in the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI). The emphasis of these Pilot Projects will be to demonstrate ways to more fully leverage the assets and resources of the national MEP Program to provide assistance to small U.S. manufacturers in technology areas that are the focus of the NNMI Institutes. These Pilots will embed personnel from MEP Centers in residence at NNMI Institutes, targeting the cultivation of enduring collaborations among small U.S. manufacturers, NNMI Institutes, and MEP Centers for the benefit of all these entities. The Pilots will accelerate the processes by which small U.S. manufacturers transition the latest and most compelling technological innovations into the manufactured goods needed by our Nation.

Proposals submitted in response to this FFO should clearly articulate approaches to MEP Center – NNMI Institute collaborations that will be based upon the embedding of personnel from MEP Centers within NNMI Institutes. Such personnel embedding should involve the placement of MEP Center representatives from one or more MEP Centers within residence at a particular NNMI Institute for a period of up to two years. Specifically, the pilot projects proposed by applicants should:

- Develop innovate approaches for transferring technology from the NNMI Institutes to small U.S. manufacturers based on the technological needs of manufacturers;
- Create approaches for engaging small manufacturers in the work of the NNMI Institutes through hands-on assistance mechanisms and services, such as those that are currently, or that could be, offered by MEP Centers;
- Develop and test business models by which MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes may viably and effectively serve the needs of small U.S. manufacturers in the technology areas of the NNMI Institutes, as well as facilitating knowledge and best practice sharing between the NNMI Institutes and MEP Centers; and
- Cultivate an enhanced nationwide network of partnerships among NNMI Institutes and MEP Centers for the benefit of small U.S. manufacturers.

Activities conducted as part of these MEP Center – NNMI Institute Pilot Projects will be expected to take place in collaboration with local and regional stakeholders and other partners, including local, state, and/or regional advanced manufacturing and/or technology-based economic development organizations; industry and/or professional associations; technical and community colleges; universities; industry-university partnerships, small U.S. manufacturing companies, and other manufacturing organizations. See Section I of this FFO for a detailed description of this program.

- **Anticipated Amounts:** NIST anticipates funding approximately seven (7) Pilot Project awards at a level of approximately \$300,000 - \$600,000 per year for each award. The Pilot Projects awarded under this FFO will have a budget and performance period of up to two (2) years. See Section II.2. of this FFO for more information regarding the availability of NIST funding for this program.
- **Funding Instrument:** Cooperative Agreement. See Section II.1. of this FFO for additional information concerning the funding instrument for these awards.
- **Who Is Eligible:** Eligible applicants for this program are MEP Centers receiving current cooperative agreement funding from NIST. An applicant MEP Center must form a collaboration, teaming arrangement, or other appropriate relationship with one or more of the current NNMI Institutes.<sup>1</sup> NIST encourages project proposals involving participation from multiple MEP Centers and multiple NNMI Institutes, as well as other collaborating entities such as local economic development organizations, universities, community colleges, technology incubator programs, and other organizations.

An MEP Center may serve as the applicant on only one proposal. There are no restrictions on the number of applications in which MEP Centers or NNMI Institutes can be proposed as collaborators. See Section III.1. of this FFO for more information regarding program eligibility.

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** Non-federal cost share is not required for awards issued pursuant to this FFO. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals with budgets that maximize the application of award funding to the performance of project tasking and other direct project costs. See Section III.2. of this FFO for more information regarding cost sharing requirements.
- **Webinar Information Session:** NIST MEP will hold one or more webinar information sessions for organizations that are considering applying for or participating as a team member in this funding opportunity. The webinar(s) will provide general information regarding MEP and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST MEP staff will be available at the webinar to answer general questions. During the webinar(s), detailed proprietary or technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any specific project ideas during the webinar(s) or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP. However, NIST MEP staff will provide information about potential participants, eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, program priorities and objectives, and the general characteristics of a competitive proposal during this webinar. It is expected that webinar(s) will be held approximately within thirty (30) business days after posting of this FFO. The exact date and time of the webinar(s) will be posted on the NIST MEP website at <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-embeddingmep.cfm>. The webinar(s) will be

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.manufacturing.gov/nnmi-institutes/>

recorded, and a link to the recording(s) will be posted on the NIST MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentation(s) will be available after the webinar(s) on the NIST MEP website. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar(s) must register in advance by contacting NIST MEP by e-mail at [mepffo@nist.gov](mailto:mepffo@nist.gov). Participation in the webinar(s) is not required in order for an organization to submit an application pursuant to this FFO.

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).** Questions from applicants pertaining to FFO eligibility, cost sharing requirements, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive proposal will not be considered on an informal basis. Applicants must submit all such questions in writing to [mepffo@nist.gov](mailto:mepffo@nist.gov). Answers to such written questions submitted to NIST MEP may be made available to the public as part of an FAQ document, which will be periodically updated on the MEP website at <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-embeddingmep.cfm>.

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### FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

#### **I. Program Description**

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) invites proposals from current MEP Centers to support efforts of the MEP Program to achieve its mission of improving productivity and technological performance in United States manufacturing. Proposals accepted for funding will conduct pilot projects that add capabilities to the MEP program by solving new or emerging manufacturing problems. Funded pilot projects will develop and enhance effective collaborative relationships involving MEP Centers and Institutes participating in the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI). In addition to assisting MEP efforts related to the transfer of technology based on the technological needs of manufacturers and available

technologies from the NNMI Institutes, the proposed pilot projects will also enhance the NNMI Institutes' ability to benefit the technological needs of small and mid-sized U.S. manufacturers (hereinafter referred to as small U.S. manufacturers).

Technology in manufacturing enables product and process innovations that lead to the production of sophisticated products and systems. Such manufacturing technology, in turn, enables the efficient operation of manufacturing supply chains. All of this results in higher value, without which U.S. manufacturers could not be globally competitive.

The NNMI Institutes are working to create a competitive, effective, and sustainable manufacturing research-to-manufacturing infrastructure. Their goal is to enable U.S. industry and academia to solve the "scale-up" challenges that are relevant to industry. The NNMI consists of multiple linked Manufacturing Innovation Institutes. Each has a unique technological concentration, but is also designed to accelerate U.S. advanced manufacturing as a whole. As nodes in the NNMI, the Institutes complement each other's capabilities and benefit from shared approaches to matters such as intellectual property, contract research, and performance metrics. Each provides shared facilities to local start-ups and small manufacturers to help them scale up new technologies, accelerate technology transfer to the marketplace, and facilitate the adoption of innovation workforce skills. The NNMI is designed to foster innovation and deliver new capabilities that can stimulate the manufacturing sector on a large scale.

Through its nationwide network of MEP Centers operating in every U.S. state and Puerto Rico, MEP facilitates and accelerates the transfer of manufacturing technology in partnership with industry, industry and professional associations, educational institutions including universities and community colleges, state government, and NIST and other federal and non-federal research laboratories and agencies. MEP Centers provide direct, hands-on assistance to thousands of small U.S. manufacturers each year. The acceleration of new and emerging technology into the hands of these small manufacturers is critical to the MEP mission of enhancing the productivity and technological performance of U.S. manufacturers.

There are potentially powerful synergies that can be achieved for the benefit of small U.S. manufacturers through the broadening and deepening of NNMI Institute – MEP Center collaborations. As the basis for proposed collaborations involving MEP Centers and any of the NNMI Institutes, proposals submitted in response to this FFO should articulate approaches to collaborations between NNMI Institutes and MEP Centers that are based upon the embedding of MEP Center representatives within NNMI Institutes, and that build upon the collaboration framework as defined in the May 2015 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NIST and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).<sup>2</sup> The goals of that MOU are to enhance collaboration between MEP

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<sup>2</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Secretary of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manufacturing and Industrial Base Policy and the U.S. Department of Commerce National Institute of Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension Partnership, May 2015: <http://www.nist.gov/mep/about/upload/MOU-NIST-OSD-Signed-Executed-2015.pdf>.

Centers and DOD-led NNMI Institutes and to engage small U.S. manufacturers more fully to optimize benefits and results from the public and private investments in these Institutes. While this framework was specifically intended for application to DOD-led NNMI Institutes, it also broadly applies to MEP involvement with all NNMI Institutes, regardless of the lead federal agency for a particular Institute. Heretofore, NNMI Institutes have been established with federal funding from the DOD and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Future Institutes have been announced that will receive funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC). This framework provides the foundation upon which MEP Centers and any NNMI Institutes should approach their collaborations in response to this FFO. Specifically, the framework provides the basis to define how Institutes and MEP Centers can work together to facilitate engagement of small U.S. manufacturers to:

- Increase small U.S. manufacturer awareness of NNMI Institute focus areas and resources;
- Ensure the involvement of small U.S. manufacturers in the processes and activities associated with informing and developing the research agendas of the NNMI Institutes;
- Increase small U.S. manufacturers' participation in NNMI Institute research; and
- Ensure the transition of NNMI Institute research results to small U.S. manufacturers for implementation.

As part of these MEP Center – NNMI Institute Pilot Projects, NNMI-MEP Center collaborations will be created that leverage relationships with other entities and include the embedding of MEP Center representatives within NNMI Institutes. The pilot projects funded through this FFO will leverage the assets and resources of the national MEP Program to assist the NNMI Institutes as they strive to broadly and deeply enhance their impact on small U.S. manufacturers. The pilot projects also will expand MEP's ability to positively impact the competitiveness and growth of U.S. manufacturers by developing expertise in the focus areas of the NNMI Institutes. Specifically, the pilot projects proposed by applicants should:

- Transfer technology from the NNMI Institutes to small U.S. manufacturers based on the technological needs of manufacturers;
- Create approaches to engaging small manufacturers in the work of the NNMI Institutes through hands-on assistance mechanisms and services such as those that are currently, or that could be, offered by MEP Centers;
- Develop and test business models by which MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes can viably and effectively serve the needs of small U.S. manufacturers in the technology areas of the NNMI Institutes;
- Facilitate knowledge and best practice sharing between the NNMI Institutes and MEP Centers; and
- Cultivate an enhanced nationwide network of partnerships among NNMI Institutes and MEP Centers for the benefit of small U.S. manufacturers.

Applicants are expected to propose pilot projects that involve different, creative, and

new approaches to achieve the intended purpose and objectives of this FFO – but all proposed Pilot Projects must involve the embedding of MEP Center personnel operating in residence at NNMI Institutes. It is anticipated that embedded MEP Center personnel will become fully engaged experts in the technology focus areas for a particular NNMI Institute. This will enable the embedded MEP personnel to serve as a national MEP resource to facilitate meaningful and impactful MEP engagements with small U.S. manufacturers in these focus areas on a national scale. The Pilots should create and test business models and service delivery mechanisms that allow small U.S. manufacturers to work with and benefit from the NNMI Institutes via connections and assistance provided to them through the nationwide network of MEP Centers. The Pilots will document their approaches, successes, challenges, and other learnings. Examples of different approaches that may be included in proposed Pilots include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Training and other workforce development efforts in NNMI Institute technology focus areas to be developed and deployed for small U.S. manufacturers and/or MEP Center practitioners;
- Train-the-trainer programs in NNMI Institute technology focus areas to be developed and deployed for MEP Center practitioners; and
- Technical assistance projects to be conducted involving partnerships among small U.S. manufacturers, NNMI Institutes, and MEP Centers.

The examples provided above only represent a few possible approaches for conducting pilot projects. Applicants may propose other approaches, and applicants are encouraged to identify creative and new ways in which the relationships established between the MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes through these pilot projects can achieve meaningful impact and significant benefit for U.S. manufacturers on a broad, national scale.

Applications submitted in response to this FFO must be from a current MEP Center as the applicant, and with clear definition of the NNMI Institute partnership(s) involved. Applicants are encouraged to forge working relationships with the NNMI Institutes operating in the region where they are located, as well as with other Institutes and MEP Centers operating around the country and with other entities with which the Centers and Institutes regularly collaborate. These partnerships should be based upon and commensurate with the Pilot Project approach being proposed by the applicant.

Proposed approaches are required to fund the embedding of MEP Center representatives in residence at NNMI Institutes at a total level of effort and time commitment equal to or greater than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff each year. This 1.0 FTE requirement for embedded MEP Center personnel represents the minimum level of effort, and embedding of MEP Center personnel at levels of effort and time commitment totaling more than 1.0 FTE each year are encouraged. This 1.0 FTE requirement may be met via the embedding of multiple MEP staff members in NNMI Institutes, but any single MEP Center personnel must be embedded at a level of effort of 0.5 FTE staff year or greater to be counted toward the overall annual 1.0 FTE

requirement. It is required that the embedded MEP Center personnel operate in residence at the participating Institutes. Applicants may also propose approaches that involve the participation of multiple NNMI Institutes, as well as multiple MEP Centers. A proposal that fails to meet these requirements will be deemed as unresponsive to this FFO.

The statutory authority for this program is 15 U.S.C. § 278k(f). This program is not a Federal research and development program.

Further information regarding the MEP Program is provided in the information packet that may be obtained at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), with additional background information provided at <http://www.nist.gov/mep>. Refer to Section VII. of this FFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Grant Rules and Regulations, if you seek the information at this link or for any link in this FFO, and it is no longer working or you need more information.

## **II. Federal Award Information**

- 1. Funding Instrument.** The funding instrument that will be used for awards issued pursuant to this FFO is a cooperative agreement. The nature of NIST's "substantial involvement" will generally be considered to be constituted as collaboration between NIST MEP and the recipient organization. This includes NIST MEP collaborating with the recipient on evaluating its progress and making changes to the statement of work. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Final Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Guidance Implementing the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act, 43 Fed. Reg. 36860-65 (Aug. 18, 1978) and in Chapter 5.C of the Department of Commerce Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, as may be periodically amended, which is available at <http://go.usa.gov/SNJd>.

Examples of NIST MEP involvement in cooperative agreements awarded pursuant to this FFO may include activities such as, but not limited to:

- Guidelines and assistance in developing scope of work;
- Approval of key personnel;
- Assistance, where possible, in accessing solutions to technical and managerial issues; and
- Assistance to the Recipient organization to define, understand, and resolve issues pertaining to the successful implementation of the Pilot Project.

- 2. Funding Availability.** NIST anticipates funding approximately (7) cooperative agreement awards, with up to two-year (2) periods of performance, in accordance with the multi-year funding policy described in Section II.3. of this FFO. It is expected that funding for these awards will be between \$300,000 and \$600,000 per



year, with total federal funding for the two-year award period being between \$600,000 and \$1,200,000. NIST anticipates approximately \$7,000,000 in total federal funding, being to be available for awards issued pursuant to this FFO.

- 3. Multi-Year Funding Policy.** When an application for a multi-year award is approved, funding in some cases will be provided initially for the first year of the project. The recipient will be required to submit detailed budgets and budget narratives prior to the award or release of any continued funding. Continued funding for the remaining year(s) of the project will be awarded or released by NIST on a non-competitive basis, and may be adjusted higher or lower from year-to-year of the award, contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to the mission and priorities of the program, and the availability of funds. Continuation of an award to extend the period of performance and/or to increase or decrease funding is at the sole discretion of NIST.
- 4. Award Kick-Off Meeting.** Recipients will be required to attend a kick-off meeting, which will be held within the first 30 days of the start of the project period, to ensure that the recipient has a clear understanding of the program and project components. The kick-off meeting will take place at a location determined by NIST MEP.

The kick-off meeting will last no longer than one day and must be attended by the project manager and appropriate key personnel who will play a significant role in managing and/or executing the award. The kick-off meeting for each award should involve appropriate personnel from the lead MEP Center recipient, participating Institute(s), other MEP Center(s) participating in the project, and may as necessary include personnel from other third party collaborating entities.

Applicants must include travel and related costs for the kick-off meeting as part of the budget for year one (1), and these costs should be reflected in the SF-424A. (See Section IV.2.a.(2). of this FFO.) These costs must also be reflected in the budget table and budget narrative for year 1, which is submitted as part of the budget tables and budget narratives section of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(6).(d). of this FFO.)

- 5. MEP System-Wide Meetings.** NIST MEP typically organizes MEP system-wide meetings approximately four times per year to share best practices, and to discuss new and emerging trends, and additional topics of interest. These meetings are planned throughout the United States and typically involve 2-3 days of resource time and associated travel costs for each meeting. One key representative from the lead MEP Center and appropriate NNMI Institute(s) should attend these meetings.

Applicants must include travel and related costs for four quarterly MEP system-wide meetings in each of one (1) or two (2) project years (4 meetings per year; up to 8 total meetings over up to a two-year award period). These costs must be reflected in the SF-424A (see Section IV.2.a.(2). of this FFO). These costs must also be reflected in the budget tables and budget narratives for each of the project's years,

which are submitted as part of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(6).(d). of this FFO).

Pilot projects will be expected to actively participate during these meetings and freely share lessons learned regarding the mechanisms of the pilot approach, and attributes conducive to transferring knowledge from the NNMI Institutes to MEP Centers for the benefit of small U.S. manufacturers, as well as information about the Institutes' technology focus areas.

Recipients will be required to provide detailed analysis of the lessons learned through this Pilot Project under Section VI.3.a.(2) Performance (Technical) Reports. These analyses will include, but are not limited to: attributes, participant roles, planning of the intended approach, root cause for success/failures, bases for selecting individual MEP Center staff for embedding in NNMI Institutes, recommendations for how the outcomes of the Pilot Project might inform expansion of the intended goals, and any plans for sustainment of the effort beyond the period of performance.

6. **Indirect (F&A) Costs.** NIST will reimburse applicants for proposed indirect (F&A) costs in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414. Applicants proposing indirect (F&A) costs must follow the application requirements set forth in Section IV.2.a.(7). of this FFO.

### III. **Eligibility Information**

1. **Eligible Applicants.** Applicants for this program must be an active MEP Center that is operating pursuant to a current NIST MEP cooperative agreement. An applicant MEP Center must form a collaboration, teaming arrangement or other appropriate relationship with one or more of the current established and operating NNMI Institutes.<sup>3</sup> NIST encourages project proposals involving participation from multiple MEP Centers and multiple NNMI Institutes, as well as from other collaborating entities, such as local economic development organizations, universities, community colleges, technology incubator programs, and other organizations. Applications submitted in response to this FFO are required to clearly identify the lead MEP Center applicant, as well as the NNMI Institute (s), other MEP Centers, and other key organizations participating in the proposed project, including the specific teaming arrangements for each participating organization.

An MEP Center may serve as the lead MEP Center/applicant on only one proposal. There are no restrictions on the number of applications in which MEP Centers or NNMI Institutes can be proposed as collaborators.

Eligibility for this program is contingent upon an applicant being a NIST MEP Center

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.manufacturing.gov/nnmi-institutes/>

at the time of application, at the time of award, and for the entire period of performance for awards issued pursuant to this FFO. NIST reserves the right to take appropriate action, which may include not making an award, or terminating an award or a portion thereof, should an MEP Center fail to maintain its eligibility at all required times. NIST further reserves the right to take appropriate action, including terminating an award or a portion thereof, if an Institute does not maintain its designation as such during any time during the period of performance for awards issued pursuant to this FFO.

2. **Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement.** Non-federal cost share is not required for awards issued pursuant to this FFO. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals with budgets that maximize the application of award funding to the performance of project tasking and direct project costs.
3. **No Double Charging Against other NIST/MEP or Institute Awards.** Costs charged against awards issued pursuant to this FFO, whether paid by federal or non-federal funds, may not also be charged as costs against any other NIST/MEP or Institute award (*i.e.*, no double-billing of costs). In addition, NIST/MEP funding provided by an MEP Center to an Institute or to another MEP Center may not be used by such Institute or MEP Center as a non-federal cost share contribution for an Institute or MEP Center award (*i.e.*, federal funds may not be used as cost share for other federal awards).

#### IV. Application and Submission Information

1. **Address to Request Application Package.** The standard application package, consisting of the standard forms, *i.e.*, SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, SF-LLL, and the CD-511, is available at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Applicants may also request an application package by contacting the point of contact for administrative, budget, cost-sharing, eligibility questions and other programmatic questions listed in Section VII. of this FFO.
2. **Content and Form of Application/Submission.** Set forth below are the required content and form of applications submitted pursuant to this FFO.
  - a. **Required Forms and Documents**
    - (1) **SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.** The SF-424 must be certified through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by an authorized representative of the applicant organization.

SF-424, Item 12, should list the FFO number as 2016-NIST-MEP-ENNMI-01.

SF-424, Item 18, should list the total budget information for the full duration of the project.

The list of certifications and assurances referenced in Item 21 of the SF-424 is contained in the SF-424B.

- (2) **SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.** The budget should reflect anticipated expenses for each year of the project, considering all potential cost increases, including cost of living adjustments. The budget should also include staff, travel and other costs associated with the Award Kick-off Meeting and the NIST/MEP System-Wide meetings as described in Sections II.4. and II.5., respectively, of this FFO.

The applicant should reflect each year of the project, up to two (2) years, on the **SF-424A form**. Please carefully follow the directions found at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html> when filling out this form.

The Grant Program Function or Activity on Line 1 under Column (a) should be entered as Manufacturing Extension Partnership. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number in on Line 1 under Column (b) should be entered as 11.611.

- (3) **SF-424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs.**
- (4) **CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying.** For the Award Number, enter “2016-NIST-MEP-ENNMI-01”. In the Project Name filed, use the “Descriptive Title of Applicant’s Project” from field 15 of the SF-424, or an abbreviation thereof.
- (5) **SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.** (if applicable)
- (6) **Technical Proposal.** The Technical Proposal, with a period of performance of up to two (2) years, is a word- processed document not exceeding 25 pages that is responsive to the program description (see Section I. of this FFO) and the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO). The following is a suggested format that applicants may use for the technical proposal.

**a) Table of Contents.** (Does not count toward the page limit).

**b) Executive Summary.** The executive summary should briefly (usually no longer than two pages) describe the proposed project, consistent with the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1.a. of this FFO).

Please note, if an applicant’s proposal is selected for funding, NIST may use all or a portion of the Executive Summary as part of a press release issued by NIST, or for other public information and outreach purposes. Applicants are advised not to incorporate information that

concerns business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information as part of the Executive Summary. See *also* 15 C.F.R. § 4.9(c) concerning the designation of business information by the applicant. (Does not count towards page limit).

**c) Project Narrative.** This section should provide a description of the proposed approach, sufficient to permit evaluation of the proposal, in accordance with details included in the proposal Evaluation Criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO). The project narrative must identify tasks, measureable milestones, and outcomes resulting from the proposed approach, including the role of the embedding of MEP Center personnel in the participating NNMI Institutes, for each year of the proposed period of performance. The project narrative should clearly identify the application's approach that will develop, test, and provide assistance for small U.S. manufacturers in the technology focus area(s) of the participating NNMI Institute(s). The project narrative should clearly indicate the service delivery mechanism(s) and business model(s) being developed and tested relating to MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes working together, and relating to MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes working with small U.S. manufacturers to provide small U.S. manufacturers the assistance they need. The applicant also should clearly explain how the proposed approach will accomplish one or more of the following:

- i. Increase small U.S. manufacturer awareness of NNMI Institute focus areas and resources;
- ii. Ensure the involvement of small U.S. manufacturers in the processes and activities associated with informing and developing the research agendas of the NNMI Institutes;
- iii. Increase small U.S. manufacturers' participation in the conduct of NNMI Institute research; and
- iv. Ensure the transition of NNMI Institute research results to small U.S. manufacturers for implementation.

The applicant should provide information that clearly indicates how the proposed MEP Center – NNMI Institute collaboration(s) and embedded personnel will result in increased impacts for small U.S. manufacturers, as well as the rationale for the selection and level of involvement of the particular NNMI Institute(s) and MEP Center(s) engaged in the proposal.

The business model descriptions being proposed should clearly identify the revenue bases of the collaborations and service delivery models, including organizational contributions and how MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes will be able to collaborate on a sustainable basis, including beyond the period of performance of this program's funding

awards. The business models should also clearly articulate the anticipated contributions from the small U.S. manufacturers that are the targets for proposed efforts.

Proposals should clearly identify and fully explain the elements of their collaborations intended to reach a broad base of small U.S. manufacturers, including, for example, outreach and assistance activities for very small, start-up, and rural manufacturers, and in areas such as technology acceleration and workforce training.

The project narrative should clearly indicate how the proposed approach adds capabilities to the MEP Program, and the narrative should detail how the approach solves new or emerging manufacturing problems of small U.S. manufacturers relating to areas such as, but not limited to:

- the transfer of technology from the participating Institute(s) to small U.S. manufacturers for manufactured products and manufacturing processes;
- supply chain integration; and
- quality management.

Applicants are encouraged to propose collaborations between NNMI Institutes and the MEP Center(s) serving the manufacturers in the region where the NNMI Institutes are located to facilitate regional network building, as well as partnerships between NNMI Institutes and other MEP Centers located around the nation to facilitate national network building.

Proposals should clearly articulate:

- The nature of the network structure that's being developed or enhanced;
- Who the participants are;
- The roles, responsibilities and relationships to each other of all participating NNMI Institutes and MEP Centers (to include the lead MEP Center) and any other participating organizations; and
- The geographic scale of the proposed network activities, such as state, regional, or national scope.

Proposals should also provide details about approaches for sharing lessons learned and best practices resulting from the conduct of the project. This should include plans for sharing with the national network of MEP Centers, the national network of NNMI Institutes, and other organizations and entities involved with U.S. manufacturing, including but not limited to NIST, the other federal agencies providing funding for

the NNMI Institutes, U.S. manufacturers, manufacturing trade associations, economic development organizations, and others.

It is anticipated that embedded personnel operating in residence at the NNMI Institutes will become national resources for the NNMI Institute and MEP Center Networks, and the plan by which this will occur should be clearly articulated in the proposal. Proposals should clearly indicate how the embedding of MEP Center personnel in residence at the NNMI Institute(s) will contribute to the proposed network building activities.

The applicant should clearly articulate how the proposed approach will enhance the impact of the efforts of the participating MEP Center(s) and NNMI Institute(s) for the benefit of small U.S. manufacturers in terms of measures such as, but not limited to job creation, employee training, technology transfer and commercialization, and improved manufacturer and supply chain competitiveness.

The specific embedding of personnel that will occur between the MEP Center(s) and NNMI Institute(s) should be fully set forth in the Project Narrative section. Proposed approaches are required to fund the embedding of MEP Center representatives in residence at NNMI Institutes at a total level of effort and time commitment equal to or greater than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff each year. This 1.0 FTE requirement for embedded MEP Center personnel represents the minimum level of effort, and embedding of MEP Center personnel at levels of effort and time commitment totaling more than 1.0 FTE each year are encouraged. This 1.0 FTE requirement may be met via the embedding of multiple MEP representatives in NNMI Institutes, but any single MEP Center personnel must be embedded at a level of effort of 0.5 FTE staff year or greater to be counted toward the overall annual 1.0 FTE requirement. It is required that the embedded MEP Center personnel must operate in residence at the participating Institutes. A proposal that fails to meet these requirements will be deemed as unresponsive to this FFO.

The proposals must articulate the details of the administrative, financial, and other business parameters associated with the embedding of personnel from the participating MEP Centers in the participating NNMI Institutes.

- d) Budget Tables and Budget Narratives.** In addition to the SF-424A form (see Section IV.2.a.(2). of this FFO), applicants must provide a detailed budget table and budget narrative for the proposed period of performance, fully explaining and justifying all proposed project funding (both revenue and expenses) in accordance with applicable federal

cost principles. The budget information submitted by an applicant will be evaluated in accordance with the Budget evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1.c.i. and Section V.1.c.ii. of this FFO).

In the budget narrative, the recipient should provide adequate information to support the costs identified in each category of the budget table. For example, providing the annual salary and the percentage of time dedicated to the project by personnel to demonstrate the total cost of that individual; providing the airfare, lodging, per diem, number of days and number of travelers for each proposed trip; and identifying anticipated subaward/contract amounts, the subawardees/contractors, to the extent known at the time of application, and a detailed description of the purpose of each subaward/contract. Applicants must also include staff, travel and related expenses for the required Award Kick-Off and System-Wide meeting described in Sections II.4. and II.5. of this FFO in the budget tables and budget narratives. A suggested budget table and budget narrative template are available on the MEP website, <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-embeddingmep.cfm>.

When preparing project budgets, applicants must be cognizant of the prohibition on double-billing costs against multiple federal awards and on the prohibition on using NIST MEP federal funding as non-federal cost share on any other federal award. See Section III.3. of this FFO.

- (7) **Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.** If indirect costs are included in the proposed budget, provide a copy of the approved negotiated agreement if this rate was negotiated with a cognizant Federal audit agency. If the rate was not established by a cognizant Federal audit agency, provide a statement to this effect. If the successful applicant includes indirect costs in the budget and has not established an indirect cost rate with a cognizant Federal audit agency, the applicant will be required to obtain such a rate in accordance with the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions available at: <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>. This does not count toward the page limit.

Alternatively, in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), applicants that have never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge indirect costs to an MEP award pursuant to a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC), in which case a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement is not required. Applicants proposing a 10 percent de minimis rate pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f) should note this election as part of the budget portion of the application.



- (8) **Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms.** (This does not contribute to the total number of pages.) An alphabetical list of all abbreviations and acronyms, and their meaning, should be included.
- (9) **Table of Funded Project Participants and Unfunded Informal Collaborators.** (This does not contribute to the total number of pages.) Provide a table that identifies all organizations that will participate in and contribute to the project, if funded, known at the time of the application submission. The table should consist of an alphabetically ordered list, by organization, of all Funded Project Participants and all Unfunded Informal Collaborators. The table should include the organization's name, address, administrative role, scope of work (funded participants only) and proposed funding amount (funded participants only). Administrative roles are: applicant, subrecipient, or contractor for funded participants; or collaborator if they will not receive funding.
- (10) **Bibliographic List of References.** (This does not contribute to the total number of pages.) A complete bibliographic listing of all references used within the application should be included.
- (11) **Resumes of Key Personnel.** (These do not contribute to the total number of pages). One-page resumes of no more than five key personnel from each participant organization may be included; these do not count toward the page limit. Key personnel resumes should include resumes for any personnel from MEP Centers who will be embedded at the NNMI Institutes. Any information beyond one page for each resume and any additional resumes submitted will not be considered.
- (12) **Required Letters of Commitment.** (These do not contribute to the total number of pages). Letters that commit specific resources (not funding) to the project in the event that the application is funded are required from all of the following that apply:
- a) Each application must include a Letter of Commitment from an authorized representative of: (i) the MEP Center applicant; (ii) each Institute that will be participating in the project; and from (iii) other MEP Centers that will be participating in the project. Each letter should describe the submitting organization's commitment to and activities in support of the proposed project.
  - b) If the application includes subawards, contracts or other payments to known third parties, including Institutes and other MEP Centers, a draft copy of each subaward, contract or other funding vehicle must be included.

- c) Letters of Commitment should not be letters submitted by non-proposing entities wishing to vouch for the applicant's (or entities associated with the applicant) knowledge, skills, and abilities or entities to conduct the proposed work. These should be in the form of a Letter of Interest (see Section IV.3.a.(13) of this FFO).

**(13) Letters of Interest.** (These do not contribute to the total number of pages.) Optional letters may be included with an application that indicate willingness from any third party to help accelerate establishment of a new or strengthening of an existing industry-driven technology consortium and/or consortium project results. This may include letters from unfunded collaborators who will participate as unfunded team members, potential organizations involved across stages of the value chain, or strategic partners who can aid in any element of the plan to realize impact. Letters of Interest should outline the nature and importance of the collaboration or involvement being offered. Letters of Interest may also be from non-proposing entities wishing to vouch for the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities or entities to conduct the proposed work. All letters of interest must be included with the application and not sent separately to NIST.

**(14) Data Management Plan.** In accordance with the Office of Science and Technology Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies of February 22, 2013,<sup>4</sup> *Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research*, and as implemented through NIST Policy 5700.00,<sup>5</sup> *Managing Public Access to Results of Federally Funded Research*, and NIST Order 5701.00,<sup>6</sup> *Managing Public Access to Results of Federally Funded Research*, applicants should include a Data Management Plan (DMP).

The DMP is a supplementary document of not more than two pages that must include, at a minimum, a summary of proposed activities that are expected to generate data, a summary of the types of data expected to be generated by the identified activities, a plan for storage and maintenance of the data expected to be generated by the identified activities, and a plan describing whether and how data generated by the identified activities will be reviewed and made available to the public. As long as the DMP meets these NIST requirements, it may take the form specified by the applicant's institution or some other entity (e.g., the National Science Foundation<sup>7</sup> or the National Institutes of Health<sup>8</sup>). Some organizations' templates are available on the Internet.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/ostp\\_public\\_access\\_memo\\_2013.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/ostp_public_access_memo_2013.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nist.gov/open/upload/Final-P-5700.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.nist.gov/open/upload/Final-O-5701\\_0.pdf](http://www.nist.gov/open/upload/Final-O-5701_0.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>

<sup>8</sup> [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/data\\_sharing/data\\_sharing\\_guidance.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/data_sharing/data_sharing_guidance.htm)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cic.net/projects/technology/shared-storage-services/data-management-plans>

All applications for activities that will generate scientific data using NIST funding are required to adhere to a DMP or explain why data sharing and/or preservation are not within the scope of the project.

For the purposes of the DMP, NIST adopted the definition of “research data” at 2 C.F.R. § 200.315(e)(3) (available at <http://go.usa.gov/3sZvQ>).

Reasonable costs for data preservation and access may be included in the application.

The sufficiency of the DMP will be considered as part of the administrative review (see Section V.2.a. of this FFO); however, the DMP will not be evaluated against any evaluation criteria.

#### **b. Attachment of Required Application Documents**

When submitting the application electronically via Grants.gov, items IV.2.a.(1). through IV.2.a.(5). above are part of the standard application package in Grants.gov and can be completed through the download application process.

**Items IV.2.a.(6). through IV.2.a.(14). must be completed and attached by clicking on “Add Attachments” found in item 15 of the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. This will create a zip file that allows for transmittal of the documents electronically via Grants.gov.**

Applicants should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. **A receipt from Grants.gov does not provide details concerning whether all attachments (or how many attachments) transferred successfully.** Applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received its application.

**Applicants are urged to use Grants.gov’s Download Submitted Applications feature to check that all required attachments were contained in their submission. Go to the Grants.gov Online Users Guide available at the Grants.gov site (<http://go.usa.gov/cjaEh>), choose Applicants, then Applicant Actions, then select the “Check My Application Status” option, click on the Download Submitted Applications feature, and follow the directions.**

**Applicants can track their submission in the Grants.gov system by following the procedures at the Grants.gov site (<http://go.usa.gov/cjamz> ). It can take up to two business days for an application to fully move through the Grants.gov system to NIST.**

NIST uses the Tracking Numbers assigned by Grants.gov, and does not issue Agency

Tracking Numbers.

**c. Application Format**

- (1) **E-mail submissions.** Will not be accepted
- (2) **Facsimile submissions (fax).** Will not be accepted.
- (3) **Figures, graphs, images, and pictures.** Should be of a size that is easily readable or viewable and may be landscape orientation.
- (4) **Font.** Easy to read font (11-point minimum). Smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible.
- (5) **Line spacing.** Single.
- (6) **Margins.** One (1) inch top, bottom, left, and right.
- (7) **Paper copies.** Will not be accepted. All submissions must be made via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).
- (8) **Page layout.** Portrait orientation only (except figures, graphs, and pictures (see Section IV.2.c.(3))).
- (9) **Page Limit.** Twenty-five (25) pages.
  - a) **Page limit includes:** Cover page, Technical Proposal (with the exception of the Executive Summary), figures, graphs, tables, images, pictures, and all other pages of an application, with the exception of the page limit exclusions listed below.
  - b) **Page limit excludes:** Table of Contents, Executive Summary, SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; the SF-424A, Budget Information – Non- Construction Programs form; SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs; SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying; Table of Contents, Budget Tables and Budget Narratives; Indirect Cost Rate Agreement; Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms; Table of Funded Project Participants and Unfunded Informal Collaborators; Bibliographic List of References Resumes of Key Personnel; Required Letters of Commitment; Letters of Interest; and the Data Management Plan.
- (10) **Page numbering.** Number pages sequentially.
- (11) **Paper size.** 21.6 centimeters by 27.9 centimeters (8 ½ inches by 11 inches).

(12) **Application language.** English.

(13) **Typed document.** All applications, including forms, must be typed.

- d. **Application Replacement Pages.** Applicants may not submit replacement pages and/or missing documents after an application has been submitted. Any revisions must be made by submission of a new application that must be received by NIST by the submission deadline.
- e. **Pre-Applications.** NIST is not accepting pre-applications or white papers under this FFO.
- f. **Certifications Regarding Federal Felony and Federal Criminal Tax Convictions, Unpaid Federal Tax Assessments and Delinquent Federal Tax Returns.** In accordance with Federal appropriations law, an authorized representative of the selected applicant(s) may be required to provide certain pre-award certifications regarding federal felony and federal criminal tax convictions, unpaid federal tax assessments, and delinquent federal tax returns.
3. **Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM).** Pursuant to 2 C.F.R. part 25, applicants and recipients (as the case may be) are required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting their applications; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in their applications; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency, unless otherwise excepted from these requirements pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 25.110. NIST will not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time that NIST is ready to make a Federal award pursuant to this FFO, NIST may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.
4. **Submission Dates and Times.** Applicants must submit applications electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, June 17, 2016. The approximate start date for the award made under this FFO is expected to be October 1, 2016.

**Applicants should be aware, and factor in their application submission planning, that the Grants.gov system is expected to be closed for routine maintenance from 12:01 a.m. Eastern Time, Saturday, May 21, 2016 until Monday, May 23, 2016 at 6:00 a.m. Eastern Time. Applications cannot be submitted when Grants.gov is closed.**

When developing your submission timeline, please keep in mind that (1) all applicants are required to have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov); (2) the free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM.gov) (see Section IV.3. and Section IV.7.a.(1).b. of this FFO) may take between three and five business days or as long as more than two weeks; and (3) electronic applicants are required to have a current registration in Grants.gov; and (4) applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application. **Please note that a federal assistance award cannot be issued if the designated recipient's registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is not current at the time of the award.**

**Applicants will find instructions on registering with SAM.gov as part of the Grants.gov process at:**

**<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.**

The date and time recorded by [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) will be considered the official time that the application was received by NIST. Applicants are cautioned that the validation process may take up to two full business days after the application is submitted to Grants.gov.

NIST strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the last minute to submit an application. NIST will not make allowance for any late submissions. The responsibility for ensuring a complete application is received by NIST by the deadline is the sole responsibility of the applicant. To avoid any potential processing backlogs due to last minute Grants.gov registrations, applicants are strongly encouraged to start their Grants.gov registration process at least four (4) weeks prior to the application due date.

NIST will not accept applications submitted by mail, facsimile, or by e-mail.

- 5. Intergovernmental Review.** Applications under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372.
- 6. Funding Restrictions.** Construction activities are not an allowable cost under this program. In addition, a recipient or a subrecipient may not charge profits, fees or other increments above cost to an award issued pursuant to this FFO. Pre-award costs under this FFO are subject to the prior written approval of the NIST Grants Officer.
- 7. Other Submission Requirements**
  - a. Applications must be submitted electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).** NIST will not accept applications submitted by mail, facsimile, or by e-mail.

- (1) Electronic applications must be submitted via Grants.gov at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), under announcement 2016-NIST-MEP-ENNMI-01.
- a) Submitters of electronic applications should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. A receipt from Grants.gov indicating an application is received does not provide information about whether attachments have been received. For further information or questions regarding applying electronically for the 2016-NIST-MEP-ENNMI-01 announcement, contact Christopher Hunton by phone at 301-975-5718 or by e-mail at [grants@nist.gov](mailto:grants@nist.gov).
  - b) Applicants are strongly encouraged to start early and not wait until the approaching due date before logging on and reviewing the instructions for submitting an application through Grants.gov. The Grants.gov registration process must be completed before a new registrant can apply electronically. If all goes well, the registration process takes three (3) to five (5) business days. If problems are encountered, the registration process can take up to two (2) weeks or more. Applicants must have a valid unique entity identifier number and must maintain a current registration in the Federal government's primary registrant database, the System for Award Management (<https://www.sam.gov/>), as explained on the Grants.gov Web site. See also Section IV.3. of this FFO. After registering, it may take several days or longer from the initial log-on before a new Grants.gov system user can submit an application. Only individuals authorized as organization representatives will be able to submit the application, and the system may need time to process a submitted application. Applicants should save and print the proof of submission they receive from Grants.gov. If problems occur while using Grants.gov, the applicant is advised to (a) print any error message received and (b) call Grants.gov directly for immediate assistance. If calling from within the United States or from a U.S. territory, please call 800-518-4726. If calling from a place other than the United States or a U.S. territory, please call 606-545-5035. Assistance from the Grants.gov Help Desk will be available around the clock every day, with the exception of Federal holidays. Help Desk service will resume at 7:00 a.m. Eastern Time the day after Federal holidays. For assistance using Grants.gov, you may also contact [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).
  - c) To find instructions on submitting an application on Grants.gov, Applicants should refer to the "Applicants" tab in the banner just below the top of the [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) home page. Clicking on the "Applicants" tab produces two exceptionally useful sources of information, Applicant Actions and Applicant Resources, which applicants are advised to review.

Applicants will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application. Closely following the detailed information in these subcategories will increase the likelihood of acceptance of the application by the Federal agency's electronic system.

Applicants should pay close attention to the guidance under "Applicant FAQs," as it contains information important to successful submission on Grants.gov, including essential details on the naming conventions for attachments to Grants.gov applications.

*All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicants' schedules for delivery of their application. Applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov may be extremely heavy on the deadline date.*

The application must be both received and validated by Grants.gov. The application is "received" when Grants.gov provides the applicant a confirmation of receipt and an application tracking number. If an applicant does not see this confirmation and tracking number, the application has not been received. After the application has been received, it must still be validated. During this process, it may be "validated" or "rejected with errors." To know whether the application was rejected with errors and the reasons why, the applicant must log in to Grants.gov, select "Applicants" from the top navigation, and select "Track my application" from the drop-down list. If the status is "rejected with errors," the applicant may still seek to correct the errors and resubmit your application before the deadline. If the applicant does not correct the errors, the application will not be forwarded to NIST by Grants.gov.

Refer to important information in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times, to help ensure your application is received on time.

- b. Amendments.** Any amendments to this FFO will be announced through Grants.gov. Applicants may sign up on Grants.gov to receive amendments by e-mail or may request copies from Jennifer Leon by telephone at (301) 975-4176 or by e-mail to [mepffo@nist.gov](mailto:mepffo@nist.gov).

## **V. Application/Proposal Review Information**

- 1. Evaluation Criteria.** The evaluation criteria, selection factors, and review and selection process for this program are set forth below. Reviewers will evaluate how well the applicant's proposed approach will achieve the goals and objectives of this competition, and support the MEP mission, as described in Section I of the FFO. NIST will use the following evaluation criteria in evaluating applications and assigning weights, with a maximum score of 100.



**a. Alignment with MOU Framework for MEP – NNMI Institute Collaboration (30 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight)**

- i. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant’s proposal aligns with the 4 elements of the NIST – DOD MOU (see Section I. of this FFO), which defines the framework for how NNMI Institutes and MEP Centers can work together to facilitate engagement of small U.S. manufacturers to:
- Increase small U.S. manufacturer awareness of NNMI Institute focus areas and resources;
  - Ensure the involvement of small U.S. manufacturers in the processes and activities associated with informing and developing the research agendas of the NNMI Institutes;
  - Increase small U.S. manufacturers’ participation in NNMI Institute research; and
  - Ensure the transition of NNMI Institute research results to small U.S. manufacturers for implementation.

Reviewers will evaluate how effective and thorough the proposed approach will be in accomplishing these framework elements. The quality and technical merit of the proposed approach will be evaluated, as well as the number of framework elements that are addressed.

- ii. Reviewers will evaluate the adequacy of the proposed business model and service delivery mechanisms, including the respective roles and responsibilities of the proposed team members and their proposed relationships to each other, the identified tasks and measureable milestones and assess the likelihood that and the extent to which those models and mechanisms will be developed, tested, deployed, and implemented so as to best leverage available , add capabilities to the MEP System, and enhance the impact of Institutes’ efforts to benefit the technological needs of small manufacturers. The quality and technical merit of the applications will also be evaluated based upon the likelihood that and the extent to which the proposed approach will result in positive impacts for small U.S. manufacturers in terms of
- new and retained sales;
  - jobs created or saved; and
  - new small U.S. manufacturers’ investments in their businesses and small U.S. manufacturers’ cost savings.

**b. Development of a Sustainable NNMI Institute – MEP Collaboration to Benefit Small U.S. Manufacturers (10 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight)**

- i. Reviewers will assess the viability of the proposed business models being developed and tested. Specifically, reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the proposed approach will be based upon a revenue model that is aligned with, and can persist within, the operating parameters for

participating MEP Center(s), NNMI Institute(s), and the small U.S. manufacturers to be served. Included here will be an assessment of the likelihood that and the extent to which the proposed model will be able to sustain the provision of cutting edge innovative manufacturing technological assistance to small U.S. manufacturers beyond the period of performance of this announcement's funding awards.

- ii. Reviewers will also assess the likelihood that the proposed approach will attract small U.S. manufacturers on a large scale – to potentially be on the order of hundreds or more, annually, per Institute.

**c. NNMI and MEP Network Building (20 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight)**

- i. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the approach in the applicant's proposal cultivates network building across the national network of MEP Centers, as well as the national network of NNMI Institutes and other organizations and entities involved with U.S. manufacturing. Reviewers will assess the quality, merit, depth, and breadth of the network building being proposed by each applicant.
- ii. Reviewers will also specifically assess the number of MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes involved in the proposed approach for each application, as well as the geographic attributes of the network building that occurs (whether it is local, state, regional, national, or a combination). Proposals that are assessed as contributing to national network building and national scale benefits for U.S. manufacturing will be evaluated higher than those whose impacts are assessed as fewer and more localized.

**d. Key Personnel and Organizational Structure. (20 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight)** Reviewers will assess the ability of the key personnel and the applicant's proposed management structure to successfully conduct the project being proposed. It is the intent of NIST MEP and this program that project activities be true and significant collaborations between the participating MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes. Reviewers will assess the significance of the effort being proposed in terms of amount of staff time being allocated to the embedding of personnel from MEP Centers within NNMI Institutes, in relation to the overall proposed effort. Proposed approaches are required to fund the embedding of MEP Center personnel in residence at NNMI Institutes at a total level of effort and time commitment equal to or greater than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff year.

Reviewers will assess the quality, merit, and extent to which the following is evident when evaluating the qualifications of the applicant and of program management:

- i. Proposed personnel identified from the MEP Center(s) to be embedded within the participating NNMI Institute(s) have the appropriate education,

technical background, and experience assisting small U.S. manufacturers, especially in areas relating to technology acceleration and working with supply chains, to appropriately represent the involved MEP Center(s) to the involved NNMI Institute(s);

- ii. Key personnel are identified in the participating NNMI Institute(s), the participating MEP Center(s), and other participating organizations to appropriately support the activities of the proposed pilot project, including the embedding of personnel;
  - iii. Proposed management structure and organizational roles are clearly defined and aligned to plan, direct, monitor, organize and oversee the implementation of the proposed approach to achieve project objectives, and the proposed organizational structure flows logically from the specified approach to the project deliverables; and
  - iv. Proposed organizational structures and participating personnel from the MEP Center(s) and NNMI Institute(s) are ready to begin project operations upon receipt of funding award.
- e. Budget. (20 points; sub-criteria will receive equal weight)** Reviewers will assess the suitability and focus of the applicant's budget for each year of the proposed Pilot, with a performance period of up to two (2) years. It is expected that the amount of project award funding that is applied to direct project activity costs, including salaries of embedded personnel, should be maximized. The reviewers will consider whether the:
- i. Proposed budget projections are reasonable and appropriate for the scale of effort to be undertaken by the applicant over each year of the proposed project plan; and
  - ii. Proposal's narrative explains the rationale for each of the budgeted items, including assumptions the applicant used in budgeting for the overall project, and the proposed budget is aligned to support the execution of the proposed project consistent with the objectives of the project, the objectives and expectations of this program, and to advance MEP system goals.

## **2. Review and Selection Process**

Proposals, reports, documents and other information related to applications submitted to NIST and/or relating to financial assistance awards issued by NIST will be reviewed and considered by Federal employees, Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of which enter into appropriate nondisclosure agreements covering such information.

- a. Initial Administrative Review of Applications.** An initial review of timely received applications will be conducted to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this FFO and the scope of the stated program objectives. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive 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 which may easily be rectified or cured.
- b. Full Review of Eligible, Complete, and Responsive Proposals.** Proposals that are determined to be eligible, complete, and responsive will proceed for full reviews in accordance with the review and selection processes below:

**(1) Evaluation/Review and Ranking.** All eligible, complete and responsive applications will be peer reviewed by at least three (3) independent, objective individuals with appropriate professional and technical expertise relating to the topics covered in this FFO. Reviews will be limited to technical and cost matters, based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1 of this FFO). A mix of Federal and non-Federal reviewers may be used. The reviewers' scores will be determined on an individual basis, not as a consensus. The reviewers may ask questions of some or all applicants in writing. Reviewers will assign each application a score, based on the application's responsiveness to the FFO evaluation criteria, with a maximum score of 100.

Applicants whose applications receive an average score of 70 or higher out of 100 will be deemed finalists. If deemed desirable, all finalists will be invited to participate with reviewers in separate conference calls and/or all finalists will be invited to participate in individual site visits that will be conducted by the same reviewers at the applicant's location. Finalists will be reviewed and evaluated, and reviewers may revise their assigned numeric scores based on the evaluation criteria as a result of the conference call and/or site visit.

A rank order will be prepared based on the average of the reviewers' scores and assigned adjectival ratings in accordance with the following scale:

Fundable, Outstanding (90-100);  
Fundable, Very Good (80-89);  
Fundable (70-79); or  
Unfundable (0-69).

For decision-making purposes, applications receiving the same adjectival rating will maintain a rank order based on the average of the reviewers' scores – both within the particular adjectival ranking, as well as overall.

The Subject Matter Expert, who will be a NIST MEP federal employee, will review the evaluators' final scores, written technical comments and the final ranking of the proposals, and will provide a written recommendation to the Selecting Official concerning the funding of awards under this FFO. The

Subject Matter Expert may recommend to the Selecting Official that awards be made out of rank order (*i.e.*, from a lower adjectival category) based upon one or more of the selection factors described in section V.3 of this FFO.

**(2) Selection.** The Selecting Official is the MEP Director or designee. The Selecting Official makes the final recommendation to the NIST Grants Officer regarding the funding of applications under this FFO. The Selecting Official shall be provided all applications, all the scores and technical assessments of the reviewers, a written funding recommendation from the Subject Matter Expert, and all information obtained from the applicants during the evaluation, review and negotiation processes.

The Selecting Official will generally select and recommend the most meritorious applications for awards based on the technical comments and adjectival rankings, recommendation from the Subject Matter Expert, and/or one or more of the selection factors described in Section V.3. of this FFO. The Selecting Official retains the discretion to select and recommend an application out of rank order (*i.e.*, from a lower adjectival category) based on one or more of the selection factors, or to select and recommend no applications for funding. The Selecting Official's recommendation to the Grants Officer shall set forth the bases for the selection decision.

As part of the overall review and selection process, NIST reserves the right to request that applicants provide pre-award clarifications and/or to enter into pre-award negotiations relative to programmatic, financial or other aspects of an application, such as but not limited to the revision or removal of proposed budget costs, or the modification of proposed project activities, work plans or program goals and objectives. In this regard, NIST may request that applicants provide supplemental information required by the Agency prior to award. NIST also reserves the right to reject an application where information is uncovered that raises a reasonable doubt as to the responsibility of the applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final.

**c. Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants.** After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the NIST Grants Management Division (GMD) performs pre-award risk assessments in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.205, which may include a review of the financial stability of an applicant, the quality of the applicant's management systems, the history of performance, reports and finding from financial assistance audits, and/or the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities.

In addition, prior to making an award where the total Federal share is expected to exceed the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$150,000), NIST GMD will

review and consider the publicly available information about that applicant in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS). An applicant may, at its option, review and comment on information about itself previously entered into FAPIIS by a Federal awarding agency. As part of its review of risk posed by applicants, NIST GMD will consider any comments made by the applicant in FAPIIS in making its determination about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards. Upon completion of the pre-award risk assessment, the Grants Officer will make a responsibility determination concerning whether the applicant is qualified to receive the subject award and, if so, whether appropriate special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk posed by the applicant should be applied to an award.

**3. Selection Factors.** The Selection Factors for this FFO are as follows:

- a. The availability of Federal funds;
- b. Relevance of the proposed project to the program goals and policy objectives;
- c. Reviewers' evaluations, including technical comments;
- d. Ensuring appropriate geographic diversity in the award of MEP funding, as well diversity in awarding MEP funding to multiple MEP Centers and NNMI Institutes;
- e. Ensuring appropriate diversity in targeted industry sectors and/or supply chains;
- f. The selection factors contained in 15 U.S.C. § 278(k)(f)(5); and
- g. Whether the project duplicates other projects funded by DoC or by other Federal agencies.

**4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Date.** Review, selection, and award processing is expected to be completed by September 2016. The anticipated start date for awards made under this FFO is expected to be October 1, 2016.

**5. Additional Information**

- a. **Notification to Unsuccessful Applicants.** Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.
- b. **Retention of Unsuccessful Applications.** An electronic copy of each non-selected application will be retained for three (3) years for record keeping purposes. After three (3) years, it will be destroyed.
- c. **Protection of Proprietary Information.** When an application includes trade secrets or information that is commercial or financial, or information that is confidential or privileged, it is furnished to the Government in confidence with the understanding that the information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation of the application. Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552). Applicants should clearly mark as "proprietary" any information contained in their applications that they believe is a trade secret or otherwise protected proprietary business information. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, NIST will seek to limit

disclosure of such information to its employees and to outside reviewers when necessary for merit review of the application or as otherwise authorized by law. This restriction does not limit the Government's right to use the information if it is obtained from another source.

## **VI. Federal Award Administration Information**

- 1. Federal Award Notices.** Successful applicants will receive an award package from the NIST Grants Officer. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award is available at <http://go.usa.gov/SNMR>.
- 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**
  - a. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements.** Through 2. C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.
  - b. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.** The Department of Commerce will apply the Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions dated December 26, 2014, accessible at <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>, to this award. Refer to Section VII. of this FFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Grant Rules and Regulations, if you seek the information at this link and it is no longer working or you need more information.
  - c. Pre-Award Notification Requirements.** The Department of Commerce will apply the Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements dated December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), accessible at <http://go.usa.gov/hKkR>. Refer to Section VII. of this FFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Grant Rules and Regulations, if you seek the information at this link and it is no longer working or you need more information.
  - d. Funding Availability and Limitation of Liability.** Funding for the program listed in this FFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. In no event will NIST or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs if this program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of agency priorities. Publication of this FFO does not obligate NIST or the Department of Commerce to issue any specific award or to obligate any available funds.
  - e. Supporting Documentation.** Following the issuance of an MEP award, NIST may require recipients to provide copies of sub-tier agreements, including subawards and contracts over \$150,000, as well subrecipient performance monitoring plans.

## **3. Reporting**

**a. Reporting Requirements.** The following reporting requirements described in Sections A.01 Performance (Technical) Reports and B.02 Financial Reports of the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (December 26, 2014), <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj> apply to awards in this program (see Section VI.2.b. of this FFO):

**(1) Financial Reports.** The Recipient shall submit an SF-425, Federal Financial Report, into the MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS) on a semi-annual basis after the sixth and twelfth month of each operating year, unless other reporting intervals and/or due dates are identified by the NIST Grants Officer pursuant to a Special Award Condition. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of each semi-annual reporting period. The Recipient shall submit a final SF-425 within 90 days after the expiration date of the award.

**(2) Performance (Technical) Reports.** The Recipient shall submit a Technical Report (completing all required MEIS fields) on a semi-annual basis after the sixth and twelfth month of each operating year, unless other reporting intervals and/or due dates are identified by the NIST Grants Officer pursuant to a Special Award Condition. Reports are due in MEIS no later than 30 days following the end of each reporting period. The Recipient shall submit a final Technical/Quarterly report within 90 days after the expiration date of the award, and publication citation information as well as links to publicly available data shall be submitted as soon as they become available.

If a recipient's Data Management Plan has changed since their last submission of a technical report, the recipient must include their revised plan in the next technical report following the revision to the plan. The revised plan must include all of the requirements described in Section IV.2.a.(9). of this FFO.

Technical/Quarterly Report details are accessible on the MEIS website (<https://meis.nist.gov/>). Technical progress reports shall contain information as prescribed in the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines (OMB Control Number 0693-0032). For further information regarding the NIST MEP Reporting Process, you may download a copy of the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines at <http://nist.gov/mep>.

**(3) Patent and Property Reports.** From time to time, and in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements set forth in 2 C.F.R. part 200 and in accordance with other terms and conditions governing the award, the recipient may be required to submit property and patent reports.

**(4) Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.** In accordance with section 872 of Public Law 110-417 (as amended; see 41 U.S.C. 2313), if the total value of a recipient's currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any



period of time during the period of performance of an award made under this FFO, then the recipient shall be subject to the requirements specified in Appendix XII to 2 C.F.R. Part 200, <http://go.usa.gov/cTBwC>, for maintaining the currency of information reported to SAM that is made available in FAPIIS about certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings involving the recipient.

- b. Audit Requirements.** 2 C.F.R. 200 Subpart F, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101 requires any non-Federal entity (including non-profit institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations) that expends Federal awards of \$750,000 or more in the recipient’s fiscal year to conduct a single or program-specific audit in accordance with the requirements set out in the Subpart. Applicants are reminded that NIST, the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General, or another authorized Federal agency may conduct an audit of an award at any time.
- c. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006.** In accordance with 2 C.F.R. Part 170, all recipients of a Federal award made on or after October 1, 2010, are required to comply with reporting requirements under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-282). In general, all recipients are responsible for reporting sub-awards of \$25,000 or more. In addition, recipients that meet certain criteria are responsible for reporting executive compensation. Applicants must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements should they receive funding. Also see the *Federal Register* notice published September 14, 2010, at 75 FR 55663 available here <http://go.usa.gov/hKnQ>.

**VII. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts**

Questions should be directed to the following contact persons:

Subject Area	Point of Contact
Administrative, budget, cost-sharing, eligibility questions and other programmatic questions.	Diane Henderson Phone: (301) 975-5105 Fax: (301) 963-6556 E-mail: <a href="mailto:mepffo@nist.gov">mepffo@nist.gov</a>
Technical Assistance with Grants.gov Submissions	Christopher Hunton Phone: (301) 975-5718 Fax: (301) 975-8884 E-mail: <a href="mailto:grants@nist.gov">grants@nist.gov</a> or <a href="mailto:Grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> Phone: (800) 518-4726 E-mail: <a href="mailto:support@grants.gov">support@grants.gov</a>
Grant Rules and Regulations	Michael Teske Phone: (301) 975-6358 Fax: (301) 975-6368

Subject Area	Point of Contact
	E-mail: <a href="mailto:michael.teske@nist.gov">michael.teske@nist.gov</a>

### VIII. Other Information

- 1. Webinar Information Sessions:** NIST MEP will hold one or more webinar information sessions for organizations that are considering applying for this funding opportunity. The webinar(s) will provide general information regarding MEP and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST MEP staff will be available during the webinar(s) to answer general questions. During the webinars, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any specific project ideas during the webinar(s) or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP. However, NIST MEP staff will provide information about the MEP eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal during this webinar. The webinar(s) will be held approximately one (1) to thirty (30) business days after posting of this FFO. The exact dates and times of the webinar(s) will be posted on the MEP website at <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-embeddingmep.cfm>. The webinar(s) will be recorded, and a link to the recordings will be posted on the MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentation(s) will be available after the webinar(s) on the MEP website.

Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar(s) must register in advance by contacting MEP by e-mail at [mepffo@nist.gov](mailto:mepffo@nist.gov). Participation in the webinar(s) is not required in order for an organization to submit an application pursuant to this FFO.

- 2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).** Questions from applicants pertaining to eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal will not be considered on an informal basis. Applicants must submit all such questions in writing to [mepffo@nist.gov](mailto:mepffo@nist.gov). Questions submitted to NIST MEP may be posted as part of an FAQ document, which will be periodically updated on the MEP website at <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-embeddingmep.cfm>.