

August 1, 2014

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (FFO)
Award Competitions for Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)
Centers in the States of Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, New
Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), United States Department of Commerce (DoC)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Award Competitions for Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Centers in the States of Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia
- **Announcement Type:** Initial
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** 2014-NIST-MEP-01
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.611, Manufacturing Extension Partnership
- **Dates:** Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, October 15, 2014. Paper applications will not be accepted. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered. The approximate start date for awards under this Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) is expected to be July 1, 2015.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) (see Section VI.2.b. of this FFO takes on average fourteen (14) business days for new registrations, and between seven (7) and ten (10) business days for renewal registrations. The SAM registration process will likely take more time if problems are encountered. Also, please keep in mind that applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of receipts over a period of up to two (2) business days before learning via a validation or rejection 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.**

- **Application Submission:** Applications must be submitted electronically through www.Grants.gov. NIST will not accept applications submitted by mail, facsimile, or by email. See Section IV. in the Full Announcement Text of this FFO.

- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NIST invites applications from eligible applicants in connection with NIST's funding up to ten (10) separate MEP cooperative agreements for the operation of an MEP Center in the designated States' service areas and in the funding amounts identified in Section II.2. of this FFO. NIST anticipates awarding one (1) cooperative agreement for each of the identified States. The objective of the MEP Center Program is to provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small and medium-sized manufacturers within the State designated in the applications. The selected MEP Centers will become part of the MEP national system of extension service providers, currently comprised of more than 400 Centers and field offices located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.
- **Anticipated Amounts:** NIST anticipates funding up to ten (10) MEP Center awards with a five-year period of performance and in annual federal funding amounts identified in Section II.2. of this FFO. As discussed in the multi-year funding policy described in Section II.3 of this FFO, obligated funding amounts may be adjusted higher or lower from year-to-year of the award. In addition, as set forth in Section II.4. of this FFO, awards issued pursuant to this FFO may be renewed by NIST on a non-competitive basis for a subsequent period of up to five (5) years, based upon the recipient's satisfactory performance, continued relevance of the project to the mission and priorities of the MEP program, and the availability of appropriated funds.
- **Funding Instrument:** Cooperative Agreement. See Section II.1. of this FFO for additional information concerning the funding instrument for this award.
- **Who Is Eligible:** The eligibility requirements given in this section of the FFO will be used in lieu of those given in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR § 290.5(a)(1). Each applicant for and recipient of an MEP award must be a U.S.-based nonprofit institution or organization. For the purpose of this FFO, nonprofit institutions include Section 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, non-profit and State universities, non-profit community and technical colleges, and State, local or Tribal governments. Existing MEP awardees and new applicants that meet the eligibility criteria set forth in Section III.1. of this FFO may apply. An eligible organization may work individually or may include proposed subawards to eligible organizations or proposed contracts with any other organization as part of the applicant's proposal, effectively forming a team. However, as discussed in Section III.3.b. of this FFO, NIST generally will not fund applications that propose an organizational or operational structure that, in whole or in part, delegates or transfers to another person, institution, or organization the applicant's responsibility for core MEP Center management and oversight functions.
- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** This Program requires non-Federal cost share of at least 50 percent of the total project cost for the first through the third years of operation, with increasing minimum non-Federal cost share requirements beginning in year four (4) of the award. See Section III.2. of this FFO for more information on the non-federal cost sharing requirements under MEP awards.

- **Webinar Information Session:** NIST/MEP will hold an information session for organizations that are considering applying for this funding opportunity. This webinar 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, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any project ideas during the webinar or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP. However, NIST/MEP staff will provide information about the MEP eligibility and cost-sharing requirements, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal during this webinar. The webinar will be held approximately fourteen (14) business days after posting of this FFO and publication in the *Federal Register*. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm. The webinar will be recorded, and a link to the recording will be posted on the MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentation will be available after the webinar on the MEP website. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar must register in advance by contacting MEP by email at mepffo@nist.gov. Participation in the webinar 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 MEP eligibility, cost-sharing requirements, 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. 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://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

As required by the MEP regulations, 15 CFR Part 290, specifically 15 CFR § 290.7, this funding opportunity is also announced in the *Federal Register*. In the event of any inconsistency between this FFO and the notice published in the *Federal Register*, the notice published in the *Federal Register* controls.

About Manufacturing Extension Partnership

The National Institute of Standards and Technology's Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) works with small and medium-sized U.S. manufacturers to help them create and retain jobs, increase profits, and save time and money. The nationwide network provides a variety of services, from innovation strategies to process improvements to green manufacturing. MEP also works with partners at the State and

Federal levels on programs that put manufacturers in position to develop new customers, expand into new markets and create new products.

As a program of the U.S. Department of Commerce, MEP offers a range of effective resources to help manufacturers identify opportunities that will accelerate and strengthen their growth and competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Innovation is at the core of what MEP does. Manufacturers that accelerate innovation are far more successful than those who do not. By placing innovations developed through research at federal laboratories, educational institutions and corporations directly in the hands of U.S. manufacturers, MEP serves an essential role in sustaining and growing America's manufacturing base.

The National Network

MEP is a nationwide network of more than 1,200 technical experts - located in every State - serving as trusted business advisors focused on transforming U.S. manufacturers to compete globally, supporting supply chain integration, and providing access to technology for improved productivity. MEP is built around manufacturing extension centers locally positioned throughout the 50 States and Puerto Rico. MEP Centers are a diverse network of State, university-based, and non-profit organizations, offering products and services that address the critical needs of their local manufacturers.

Each MEP Center works directly with area manufacturers to provide expertise and services tailored to their most critical needs, ranging from process improvement and workforce development to business practices and technology transfer. Additionally, MEP Centers connect manufacturers with government and trade associations, universities and research laboratories, and a host of other public and private resources to help them realize individual business goals.

Through local and national resources, MEP Centers have helped thousands of manufacturers reinvent themselves, increase profits, create jobs and establish a foundation for long-term business growth and productivity.

The following resources are currently available on the MEP website at:

http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm:

- System Strategic Plan;
- Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership General Terms and Conditions (see also Section VI.2.f. of this FFO); and
- 2013 Annual Report.

The MEP Program is not a Federal research and development program. It is not the intent of this program that awardees will perform systematic research.

To learn more about the MEP Program, please go to <http://www.nist.gov/mep/>

The statutory authority for the MEP Program is 15 U.S.C. 278k, as implemented in 15 C.F.R. part 290.

II. Award Information

1. Funding Instrument. The funding instrument that will be used for the awards issued pursuant to this FFO is a cooperative agreement. The nature of NIST's "substantial involvement" will generally be collaboration between NIST/MEP and the recipient organizations. This includes NIST/MEP collaboration with a recipient on its progress and approving changes in 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 (DoC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, which is available at: [http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/FINAL%20Master%20DOC%20Grants%20Manual%202013%20\(03.01.13\)_b.pdf](http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/FINAL%20Master%20DOC%20Grants%20Manual%202013%20(03.01.13)_b.pdf).

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

- Guidelines and assistance in developing required plans;
- Guidance for evaluation of performance and collection of data and information from the Recipient organization;
- Approval of key personnel;
- Assistance, where possible, in accessing solutions to technical and managerial problems; and
- Assistance to the Recipient organization to define, understand, and resolve issues pertaining to the successful implementation of the MEP project.

For further information related to NIST's substantial involvement in this award, please refer to the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership General Terms and Conditions to which a link is located in Section VI.2.f. of this FFO.

2. Funding Availability. NIST anticipates funding ten (10) MEP Center awards with an initial five-year period of performance in accordance with the multi-year funding policy described in Section II.3. of this FFO. Initial funding for the projects listed in this FFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds.

Below are the ten (10) States identified for funding as part of this FFO:

MEP Center Location and Assigned	Annual Federal Funding for Each Year	Total Federal Funding for 5 Year Award Period
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Geographical Service Area (by State)	of the Award	
Colorado	\$1,668,359	\$8,341,795
Connecticut	\$1,476,247	\$7,381,235
Indiana	\$2,758,688	\$13,793,440
Michigan	\$4,229,175	\$21,145,875
New Hampshire	\$628,176	\$3,140,880
North Carolina	\$3,036,183	\$15,180,915
Oregon	\$1,792,029	\$8,960,145
Tennessee	\$1,976,348	\$9,881,740
Texas	\$6,700,881	\$33,504,405
Virginia	\$1,722,571	\$8,612,855

In addition, as set forth in Section II.4. of this FFO, awards issued pursuant to this FFO may be renewed by NIST on a non-competitive basis for a subsequent period of up to five (5) years, based upon the recipient's satisfactory performance, continued relevance of the project to the mission and priorities of the MEP program, and the availability of appropriated funds.

3. **Multi-Year Funding Policy.** When an application for a multi-year award is approved, funding will usually be provided for only the first year of the project. Recipients will be required to submit detailed budgets and budget narratives prior to the award of any continued funding. Continued funding for the remaining years of the project will be awarded 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. **Potential for Additional 5 Years.** Initial awards issued pursuant to this FFO are expected to be for up to five (5) years with the possibility for NIST to renew for an additional 5 years at the end of the initial award period. The review processes in 15 C.F.R. § 290.8 will be used as part of the overall assessment of the recipient, consistent with the potential long-term nature and purpose of the program. In considering renewal for a second five-year, multi-year award term, NIST will evaluate the results of the annual reviews and the results of the 3rd Year peer-based Panel Review findings and recommendations as set forth in 15 C.F.R. § 290.8, as well as the Center's progress in addressing findings and recommendations made during the various reviews. The full process is expected to include programmatic, policy, financial, administrative, and responsibility assessments, and the availability of funds, consistent with Department of Commerce and NIST policies and procedures in effect at that time.

5. Kick-Off Conferences

Each recipient will be required to attend a kick-off conference, which will be held at NIST at the beginning of the project period, to help ensure that the MEP Center operator has a clear understanding of the program and its components. The kick-off conference will take place at NIST/MEP headquarters in Gaithersburg, MD, during which time NIST will: (1) orient MEP Center key personnel to the MEP program; (2) explain program and financial reporting requirements and procedures; (3) identify available resources that can enhance the capabilities of the MEP Center; and (4) develop a detailed five-year operating plan. NIST/MEP anticipates an additional set of site visits at the MEP Center and/or telephonic meetings with the recipient to finalize the five-year operating plan.

The kick-off conference will take up to approximately 5 days and must be attended by the MEP Center Director, along with up to two additional MEP Center employees. Applicants must include travel and related costs for the kick-off conference as part of the budget for year one (1), and these costs should be reflected in the SF-424A covering the first four (4) years of the project. (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.)

6. MEP System-Wide Meetings

NIST/MEP typically organizes system-wide meetings four times a year (generally on a quarterly basis) in an effort to share best practices, new and emerging trends, and additional topics of interest. These meetings take place at NIST/MEP headquarters in Gaithersburg, MD and typically involve 3-4 days of resource time and associated travel costs. The MEP Center Director must attend these meetings, along with up to two additional MEP Center employees.

Applicants must include travel and related costs for four quarterly MEP system-wide meetings in each of the five (5) project years (4 meetings per year; 20 total meetings over five-year award period). These costs must be reflected in the SF-424A covering the first four (4) years of the project (see Section IV.2.a.(2). of this FFO) and in the SF-424A covering year five (5) of the project (see Section IV.2.a.(10). of this FFO). These costs must also be reflected in the budget tables and budget narratives for each of the project's five (5) years, which are submitted in the budget tables and budget narratives section of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(6).(d). of this FFO).

III. Eligibility Information

- 1. Eligible Applicants.** The eligibility requirements given in this section of the FFO will be used in lieu of those given in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR § 290.5(a)(1). Each applicant for and recipient of an MEP award must be a U.S.-based nonprofit institution or organization. For the purpose of this FFO, nonprofit institutions include Section 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, non-

profit and State universities, non-profit community and technical colleges, and State, local or Tribal governments. Existing MEP awardees and new applicants who meet the eligibility criteria set forth in this section may apply. An eligible organization may work individually or may include proposed subawards to eligible organizations or proposed contracts with any other organization as part of the applicant’s proposal, effectively forming a team. However, as discussed in Section III.3.b. of this FFO, NIST generally will not fund applications that propose an organizational or operational structure that, in whole or in part, delegates or transfers to another person, institution, or organization the applicant’s responsibility for core MEP Center management and oversight functions.

2. **Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement.** Non-Federal cost sharing of at least 50 percent of the total project costs is required for each of the first through the third year of the award, with an increasing minimum non-federal cost share contribution beginning in year 4 of the award as follows:

Award Year	Maximum NIST Share	Minimum Non-Federal Share
1-3	1/2	1/2
4	2/5	3/5
5 and beyond	1/3	2/3

Non-Federal cost sharing is that portion of the project costs not borne by the Federal Government. The applicant’s share of the MEP Center expenses may include cash, services, and third party in-kind contributions, as described at 15 CFR § 14.23 or § 24.24, as applicable, and in the MEP program regulations at 15 CFR § 290.4(c). No more than 50% of the applicant’s total non-Federal cost share for any year of the award may be from third party in-kind contributions of part-time personnel, equipment, software, rental value of centrally located space, and related contributions, per 15 CFR § 290.4(c)(5). The source and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash, full- and part-time personnel, and in-kind donations, must be documented in the budget tables and budget narratives submitted with the application and will be considered as part of the review under the evaluation criterion found in Section V.1.c.i. of this FFO.

Recipients must meet the minimum non-federal cost share requirements for each year of the award as identified in the chart above. For purposes of the MEP Program, “program income” (as defined in 15 C.F.R. § 14.2(aa) and in 15 C.F.R. § 24.25(b), as applicable) generated by an MEP Center may be used by a recipient towards the required non-federal cost share under an MEP award.

Any cost sharing must be in accordance with the “cost sharing or matching” provisions of 15 CFR part 14, *Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, and Commercial Organizations* or 15 CFR part 24, *Uniform Administrative*

Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, as applicable.

As with the Federal share, any proposed costs included as non-Federal cost sharing must be an allowable/eligible cost under this program and the following applicable Federal cost principles: 1) Institutions of Higher Education: 2 CFR part 220 (OMB Circular A-21); 2) Nonprofit Organizations: 2 CFR part 230 (OMB Circular A-122); and 3) State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments: 2 CFR part 225 (OMB Circular A-87). Any proposed non-Federal cost sharing will be made a part of the cooperative agreement award and will be subject to audit if the project receives MEP funding.

3. Other

- a. **Pre-Applications.** NIST is not accepting pre-applications or white papers under this MEP funding opportunity.
- b. **MEP Core Management and Oversight Functions.** An MEP Center, as a direct recipient of Federal financial assistance funds under an MEP cooperative agreement, must possess and maintain, at all times during an MEP award period, accountability to directly manage and execute all functions material and inherent to the successful operation of a Center, which include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 1) **Budget execution**, including the responsibility for determining and executing budget policy, guidance and strategy, and the determination of program priorities and associated budget or funding requests;
 - 2) **Policy implementation**, including the responsibility for determining the content and implementation of financial and program policies and procedures impacting the recipient's MEP project;
 - 3) **Human resources management**, including the responsibility for selecting individuals for Center employment and for selecting contractors and the direction, control, and performance management of Center employees and oversight of contractors; and
 - 4) **Strategic planning and project execution and management**, including the responsibility for:
 - a) **Strategic planning functions** such as the following: determination of project requirements, approval of a project implementation strategy, and the development and monitoring of agreements and statements of work with subrecipients, contractors, vendors and other strategic partners; and
 - b) **Project execution and management functions** such as submission of required financial and technical reports, maintenance of a functioning financial management system that satisfies the requirements found in 15 CFR 14.21 or 15 CFR 24.20 (as applicable), in order to ensure that costs charged against an MEP award are reasonable, allocable, and allowable

under applicable federal cost principles; and adherence to the terms and conditions of the MEP award.

In extraordinary situations, the NIST Grants Officer may allow a recipient to temporarily outsource its management and oversight responsibilities under an MEP award. If an applicant is proposing such a structure, the applicant must include with its application a detailed explanation and accompanying documentation (e.g., copies of draft contracts or other agreements) supporting its outsourcing request.

- c. **MEP Center Oversight Board.** Each recipient of an MEP Center award shall establish and maintain an oversight board (i.e., Board of Directors, Sub-committee of a Board or Advisory Board) for the duration of the project that includes a majority of oversight board members drawn from small and medium-sized manufacturing firms within the service region. Oversight board members may not concurrently serve on more than one Center's oversight board. Each Center oversight board shall adopt bylaws, policies and procedures governing the operation of the oversight board, including a conflict of interest policy. If such a structure is not currently in place, or is not expected to continue meet these requirements at the time of the MEP award, the applicant should propose a feasible plan for developing such an oversight board within 12 months of issuance of an MEP award. Please refer to Section 7 of the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership General Terms and Conditions for further information http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm.

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.
2. **Content and Form of Application/Submission.** The requirements given in this section of the FFO will be used in lieu of those given in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR § 290.5(a).

a. Required Forms and Documents

- (1) **SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.** Applicants must indicate the State in which they are seeking to establish an MEP Center in field 4, Applicant Identifier, of the SF-424. The SF-424 must be certified through www.Grants.gov by an authorized representative of the applicant organization. The FFO number 2014-NIST-MEP-01 must be identified in item 12 of the SF-424. The list of certifications and assurances referenced in item 21 of the SF-424 is contained in the SF-424B. Applicants should enter budget information for the full five (5) years of the project in item 18 on the SF-424.

- (2) **SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.** The budget should reflect anticipated expenses for all five (5) years of the project, considering all potential cost increases, including cost of living adjustments. Recipients must meet the minimum cost share and matching requirements set forth in this FFO. Please refer to Section III.2. of this FFO for the Cost Share and Matching Requirement over the life of the award. The budget should also include travel costs associated with the NIST/MEP Kick-Off Conference and System-Wide meetings as described in Sections II.5. and II.6. of this FFO. The applicant should submit two SF-424A forms. The first SF-424A form should cover the first four (4) years of the project and is the SF424A form that appears as part of the mandatory forms in the Grants.gov application package. The second SF-424A form should be submitted to cover year five (5) of the project, and its submission details are found in in Section IV.2.a.(10). of this FFO.
- (3) **SF-424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs.**
- (4) **CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying.**
- (5) **SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.** (if applicable)
- (6) **Technical Proposal.** The five (5) year Technical Proposal is a word-processed document not exceeding 40 pages 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) **Executive Summary.** The executive summary should briefly describe the proposed project, consistent with the evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1.a. of this FFO). **Applicants must name the State in which they are seeking to establish an MEP Center in the first sentence of the Executive Summary.**
- b) **Project Narrative.** A description of the proposed scope of work, tasks and measureable milestones to establish an MEP Center and provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small and medium-sized manufacturers in the designated State (see Section II.2. of this FFO), sufficient to permit evaluation of the application, in accordance with the Executive Summary and Project Narrative evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1.a. of this FFO).
- c) **Qualifications of the Applicant and Program Management.** A description of the qualifications and proposed Center operational or management activities of key personnel who will be assigned to work on the proposed project, and a description of program management

plans, sufficient to permit evaluation of the application, in accordance with the Qualifications of the Applicant and Program Management evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1.b.i. and ii. of this FFO). The applicant should include a description of its proposed performance of the MEP Core Management and Oversight Functions as described in Section III.3.b. of this FFO. The applicant should also provide a description of the proposed MEP Center Oversight Board, including a listing of the members or intended members and a discussion of the governing documents (e.g., bylaws, policies or procedures and conflict of interest policies) with enough information for NIST to determine whether the proposed Oversight Board meets the requirements of Section III.3.c. of this FFO. If an applicant's oversight board does not currently meet the requirements set forth in Section III.3.c. of this FFO or is not expected to continue meet these requirements at the time of the MEP award, the applicant must provide a plan to bring its oversight board into compliance with Section III.3.c. of the FFO by no later than 12 months following the issuance of the MEP award (expected to be made in July 2015).

- d) Budget Tables and Budget Narratives.** In addition to the two SF-424A forms (see Sections IV.2.a.(2). and IV.2.a.(10). of this FFO), applicants must provide a detailed budget table and budget narrative for year one (1) of the project, fully explaining and justifying all proposed project funding (both revenue and expenses) in accordance with applicable federal cost principles. Applicants must also provide a budget table for years two (2) through five (5) of the project; however, a budget narrative for these years is not required as part of an application.

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, if known at the time of application, and a detailed description of the purpose of each subaward/contract. Applicants must also include travel and related expenses for the required MEP kick-off conference and meetings described in Sections II.5. and II.6 of this FFO in the budget tables and budget narratives. A suggested budget table and narrative template are available on the MEP website, http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm.

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

(e) Past Performance. If applicable, provide specific information that addresses whether the applicant's and partners' past performance with the MEP program is indicative of expected performance under a possible new award and describing how and why performance is expected to be the same or different (see Section V.1.b.ii of this FFO).

(7) Letters of Commitment or Support. The letters of commitment or support identified below do not count toward the overall application page limit. In obtaining letters of commitment, please note that it is inappropriate for Federal employees to provide critique or feedback on project ideas, etc., and it is also inappropriate to ask Federal employees for a letter of support.

a) Applicant and Third-Party Non-Federal Cost Sharing: With the exception of a commitment letter from the applicant, letters of commitment for all other third-party sources of non-Federal cost sharing identified in a proposal are not required, but are strongly encouraged. Applications without commitment letters for each item of third-party, non-federal cost sharing may be considered less favorably during the application review process. Applicants may submit a summary listing of non-Federal cost share, which will not be counted toward the page limit.

(i) Applicant Non-Federal Cost Sharing (Cash and In-kind): A letter of commitment is required from an authorized representative of the applicant, stating the total amount of cost share to be contributed by the applicant towards the proposed MEP Center project. This letter must cover all five (5) years of the proposed MEP Center project and include a per year break-out of the applicant's contribution of non-federal cost share, as well as a per year break-out of cash cost share (including anticipated program income) and in-kind (non-cash) contributions.

(ii) Third Party Cost Sharing (Cash and In-kind): The applicant is strongly encouraged to include in its application a letter of commitment from an authorized representative of each third-party organization providing cash or in-kind contributions that are to be used as cost share under the proposed MEP Center project. Any such letter(s) should clearly state: whether the third-party contribution will consist of cash contributions, in-kind contributions, or a combination thereof; the total amount of the contribution, including a break-out of cash versus in-kind contributions (as

applicable); the time period over which the third-party contribution will be made; and any interim performance requirements for phased contributions.

- b) **Subrecipients:** Letters of commitment from subrecipients who are key to the technical plan's success are useful for verifying the availability of resources, but are not required. Applications without commitment letters from all identified, proposed key subrecipients may be considered less favorably during the application review process. The applicant should include information regarding any planned cost share contribution from a subrecipient in their letter of commitment. If an award is issued, the recipient is ultimately the entity that is committing to the cost share being obtained from the subrecipient.

If a subrecipient fails to meet the cost share expectations, the award recipient is required to meet the shortfall. In addition, applicants planning to use subawards are responsible for evaluating the financial viability of subrecipients to meet proposed cost share levels.

- c) **Prospective Key Employees:** Letters of commitment to join the proposing organization's team are useful for verifying the availability of key employees, who are not yet employed at a proposing organization, to participate in the project if the project is funded. These letters are not required, but they can play an important role in conveying the qualifications of key employees, especially for projects involving small companies or startups. Applications without commitment letters from all prospective key employees may be considered less favorably during the application review process.
- d) **Contractors:** Letters of commitment from contractors who are key to the technical plan's success are useful for verifying the availability of resources, but are not required. Applications without commitment letters from all identified, proposed key contractors may be considered less favorably during the application review process. Contractors may not contribute cost share towards the project.
- e) **General Letters of Support:** General letters of support are not required, but may be useful for illustrating broad-based support for the applicant's proposal.

- (8) **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. The successful applicant will be required to obtain

an approved negotiated indirect cost rate, if it does not already have one. This does not count toward the page limit.

- (9) **Resumes.** One-page resumes of no more than five key personnel may be included; these do not count toward the page limit; any information beyond one page for each resume and any additional resumes submitted will not be considered.

- (10) **SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs for year five (5).** The SF-424A form that appears as part of the mandatory forms in the Grants.gov application package covers the first four (4) years of the project. The second SF-424A form should be submitted to cover year five (5) of the project. A fillable SF-424A form can be found at <http://www.nist.gov/director/grants/upload/sf424a.pdf>. Applicants should download the fillable SF-424A form, complete the information for year five (5) of the project and submit the completed form as an attachment, using the procedure described in the next paragraph.

If 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.(10) 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 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.*

b. 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.
- (8) **Page layout.** Portrait orientation only (except figures, graphs, and pictures (see Section IV.2.b.(3))).
- (9) **Page Limit.** Forty (40) pages.

Page limit includes: Cover page and table of contents (if included), Technical Proposal, figures, graphs, tables, images, pictures, and all other pages of an application, with the exception of the page limit exclusions listed below.

Page limit excludes: SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; both copies of 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; budget tables and budget narratives; Letters of Commitment and/or Support; Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, and Resumes.

(10) **Page numbering.** Number pages sequentially.

(11) **Paper size.** 21.6 by 27.9 centimeters (8 ½ by 11 inches).

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

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

- 3. **Submission Dates and Times.** Applicants must submit applications electronically through www.Grants.gov. Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, October 15, 2014.

Applications not received by the specified due date and time will not be considered and will be returned without review. NIST will consider the date and time stamped on the validation generated by www.grants.gov as the official submission time.

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

NIST strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the last minute to submit an application. NIST will not make any allowances for late submissions resulting from an applicants' inability to register with Sam.gov or Grants.gov in a timely manner. 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.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) (see Section VI.2.b. of this FFO) may take between three (3) and five (5) business days or as long as more than two (2) weeks, and (2) applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of receipts over a period of up to two business days before learning via a validation or rejection whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application.

4. Intergovernmental Review. Applications under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372.

5. Other Submission Requirements

a. Applications must be submitted electronically through www.Grants.gov. NIST will not accept applications submitted by mail, facsimile, or by email.

(1) Electronic applications must be submitted via Grants.gov at www.grants.gov, under announcement 2014-NIST-MEP-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 2014-NIST-MEP-01 announcement, contact Christopher Hunton by phone at 301-975-5718 or by e-mail at christopher.hunton@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 Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number (see Section VI.2.b. of this FFO) 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. 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 authorized individual(s) 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.

- 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 home page. Clicking on the “Applicants” tab produces the “Grant Applicants” page.

In addition to following the “Steps” and instructions described in the “Applicant Actions” section and its sub-categories, further detailed instructions are described in “Applicant Resources” and all of its subcategories. This appears in the box near the top left of the Grant Applicants page. Applicants should follow the links associated with each subcategory.

Applicants will receive a series of receipts during a process of up to two business days before the application is either validated as electronically received by the Federal agency system, or rejected by it. 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 instructions 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.

Refer to important information in Section IV.3. Submission Dates and Times, to help ensure your application is received on time.

If timely application submissions are interrupted by the manifestation of a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, blizzard, or similar extreme inclement weather event, or by the aftermath of such an event, such as power outages and/or Federal, public and/or private institution closures, NIST may: (1) consider an appeal for an individual situation involving such circumstances, or (2) extend the due date for all applicants. For an individual appeal, an applicant must request a deadline waiver and present in writing

compelling circumstances, related only to such unavoidable causes involving forces of nature, which must be received by the NIST Programmatic and Technical Questions Point of Contact as listed in Section VII. of this FFO within three business days of the deadline, by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. In addition, in the event of Federal government closure on the application deadline day, the deadline will be extended for all applicants to the next business day, under the same conditions described in the FFO. In the event of Federal government closure(s) during the week before the application deadline, NIST will post a statement at the top of the FFO on www.grants.gov and at http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm as soon as practicable indicating whether the deadline is extended for all applicants, under the same conditions described in the FFO. The FFO may be amended to extend the deadline under these and other circumstances. For information on signing up for any amendments to the FFO that may arise, refer to Section IV.5.b. of this FFO.

b. Amendments. Any amendments to this FFO will be announced through Grants.gov. Applicants may sign up on Grants.gov to receive amendments by email or may request copies from Margie Robb by telephone at (301) 975-4176 or by email to mepffo@nist.gov. Since this opportunity is also announced in the *Federal Register*, any amendments to that notice will be published in the *Federal Register*. Copies of the *Federal Register* announcement and any amendments published in the *Federal Register* can be found at <https://www.federalregister.gov/> and may also be requested from Margaret Robb by telephone at (301) 975-4176 or by email to mepffo@nist.gov.

V. Application/Review Information

1. Evaluation Criteria. The evaluation criteria, selection factors, and review and selection process provided in this section will be used for this competition in lieu of those provided in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR §§ 290.6 and 290.7. The evaluation criteria that will be used in evaluating applications and assigned weights, with a maximum score of 100, are listed below.

a. Executive Summary and Project Narrative. (40 points) NIST/MEP will evaluate the extent to which the applicant's Executive Summary and Project Narrative demonstrate how the applicant will efficiently and effectively establish an MEP Center and provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small and medium-sized manufacturers in the applicable State-wide geographical service area identified in Section II.2. of this FFO. Reviewers will consider the following topics when evaluating the Executive Summary and Project Narrative:

i. Market Understanding (10 points). Reviewers will assess the strategy proposed for the Center to define the target market, understand the needs of manufacturers, with an emphasis on the small and medium-sized manufacturers, and to deliver appropriate services to meet identified needs. The following sub-topics will be evaluated and given equal weight:

(1) Market Segmentation. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant understands the market of potential customers and the varying needs of different market segments. In addition to the core MEP segment of established small and medium-sized manufacturers with 25-250 employees, reviewers will assess the applicant's understanding as described in the proposal of non-traditional MEP customers such as rural, emerging, very small, or underserved manufacturers. Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which applicants:

- delineate target service regions and manufacturers;
- make use of appropriate quantitative and qualitative data sources and market intelligence to support proposed strategies and approaches to defining and segmenting the market; and
- align priority industries and regions with other State and regional priorities and investments.

(2) Needs Identification and Service Offerings. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant addresses the capabilities to provide services for both top line growth and bottom line improvement through:

- serving the State's manufacturing base, industry types, and technology requirements;
- leveraging new manufacturing technology, techniques, and processes usable by small and medium-sized manufacturers;
- meeting existing and emerging needs of State manufacturers;
- making use of multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative information to determine manufacturers' needs and how best to address them;
- making use of resources, tools and services appropriate for the targeted small and medium-sized manufacturers to meet identified needs of the State;
- incorporating a range of complementary service providers and partners to deliver broad expertise and maximum value to manufacturing clients; and
- describing plans to provide services to very small, rural, emergent, or underserved small and medium-sized manufacturers.

ii. **Center Strategy (10 points).** Reviewers will assess the applicant's strategy proposed for the Center to deliver services that meet manufacturers' needs and generate impact. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant:

- incorporates the market analysis described in the criterion V.1.a.i.(1) above to inform strategies, products and services;
- defines a strategy for delivering services that balances market penetration with impact and revenue generation, addressing the needs of manufacturers, with an emphasis on the small and medium-sized manufacturers;

- defines the State ecosystem in which the Center will operate, including universities, community colleges, technology-based economic developers, and others; and
- supports achievements of the MEP mission and objectives while also satisfying the interests of other stakeholders, investors, and partners.

iii. **Business Model (20 points).** Reviewers will assess the applicant's proposed business model for the Center and its ability to execute the strategy proposed in criterion V.1.a.ii. above, based on the market understanding described in criterion V.1.a.i. above. The following sub-topics will be evaluated and given equal weight:

(1) Approach to the Market. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center:

- will reach State manufacturers;
- optimizes the use of delivery methods (direct delivery, third party, account management); and
- facilitates the engagement of manufacturers' leadership in strategic discussions related to new technologies, new products, and new markets.

(2) Products and Services. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center will:

- engage expertise both from within the Center and from subrecipients, contractors and strategic partners to make available a wide range of experts and services to manufacturers;
- deliver services to small and medium-sized manufacturers to encourage adoption of new technologies, development of new products, and sales of products in new markets;
- balance delivering process improvement services with services that will transform and grow manufacturers;
- deliver manufacturing technology and mechanisms for accelerating the adoption of technologies for both process improvement and new product adoption to small and medium-sized manufacturers ; and
- support a job-driven training agenda with manufacturing clients, including: (a) working with manufacturers to determine local or regional hiring needs; (b) coordinating with workforce partners and others to leverage training resources; (c) using data to inform program offerings; (d) promoting on-the-job training through clients and partners; (e) promoting a continuum of education and training leading to credential attainment and career advancement; and (f) measuring employment outcomes and taking action to improve.

(3) Partnership Leverage and Linkages. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center will:

- establish a sustainable business model, incorporating federal, state and local investment, small and medium-sized manufacturing clients, and other sources; and
- make use of effective resources or partnerships with third parties such as industry, universities, nonprofit economic development organizations, and State Governments likely to amplify the Center's capabilities for delivering growth services.

(4) Performance Measurement and Metrics. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant's proposed approach would utilize a systematic approach to measuring performance that includes:

- client-based business results of importance to key stakeholder groups; and
- operational performance results sufficient for day-to-day management of the Center.

b. Qualifications of the Applicant and Program Management (30 points; Sub-criterion i and ii will be weighted equally). Reviewers will assess the ability of the key personnel and the applicant's management structure to deliver the program and services envisioned for the Center. Reviewers will consider the following topics when evaluating the qualifications of the applicant and of program management:

i. Key Personnel and Organizational Structure. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the:

- proposed key personnel have the appropriate experience and education in manufacturing, outreach and partnership development to support achievements of the MEP mission and objectives;
- proposed key personnel have the appropriate experience and education to plan, direct, monitor, organize and control the monetary resources of the proposed Center to achieve its business objectives and maximize its value;
- proposed management structure (leadership and governance) is aligned to support the execution of the strategy, products and services;
- proposed staffing plan flows logically from the specified approach to the market and products and service offerings;
- organizational roles and responsibilities of key personnel and staff are clearly delineated;
- proposed field staff structure sufficiently supports the geographic concentrations and industry targets for the region; and
- degree to which the Center's proposed oversight board meets the requirements of Section III.3.c. of this FFO or, if such a structure is not currently in place or is not expected to continue meet these requirements at the time of the MEP award, a feasible plan is proposed for developing such an oversight board within 12 months of issuance of an MEP award (expected to be July 2015).

ii. Program Management. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the/an:

- proposed methodology of program management and internal evaluation is likely to ensure effective operations and oversight and meet program and service delivery objectives;
- proposed performance measurements and metrics are aligned to support the execution of the proposed Center's strategy and business model;
- proposed approach aligns effectively with the proposed key personnel, staff and organizational structure; and
- applicant with past performance deficiencies under the MEP Program (as applicable) identifies the reasons for such performance deficiencies and provides a detailed course of action for ensuring better performance under a new MEP award, or the extent to which an applicant without performance deficiencies under an MEP award (as applicable) describes why such performance would continue under a new MEP award. Applicants without past performance under the MEP Program will not be penalized and will still be eligible to receive the maximum amount of points under this sub-criterion. (Specifically, for applicants with past performance under the MEP Program, each bulleted evaluation factor in this sub-criterion will be worth a maximum of 3.75 points (15 maximum points in total). For applicants without past performance under an MEP Program, each bulleted evaluation factor in this sub-criterion will be worth a maximum of 5 points (15 maximum points in total)).

c. Budget Narrative and Financial Plan. (30 points; Sub-criterion i and ii will be weighted equally) Reviewers will assess the suitability and focus of the applicant's five (5) year budget. The application will be assessed in the following areas:

i. Plans for Meeting the Award's Non-Federal Cost Share Requirements.

Reviewers will assess the extent to which the:

- applicant's funding commitments for cost share are identified and supported and demonstrate allowability, stability, and duration; and
- applicant clearly describes the total level of cost share and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash and in-kind, within the proposed budget.

ii. Financial Viability. Reviewers will assess the extent to which:

- A reasonable ramp-up or scale-up scope and budget that has the Center fully operational by the 4th year of the project;
- the proposed projections for income and expenditures are allowable and appropriate for the scale of services that are to be delivered by the proposed Center and the service delivery model envisioned;

- the proposal’s narrative for each of the budgeted items explains the rationale for each of the budgeted items, including assumptions the applicant used in budgeting for the Center;
- the overall proposed financial plan is sufficiently robust and diversified so as to support the long term sustainability of the Center; and
- the proposed financial plan is aligned to support the execution of the proposed Center’s strategy and business model.

2. Review and Selection Process.

- 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 that can easily be rectified or cured.
- b. Full Review of Eligible, Complete, and Responsive Applications.** Applications that are determined to be eligible, complete, and responsive will proceed for full reviews in accordance with the review and selection processes below. Eligible, complete and responsive applications will be grouped by the State in which the proposed MEP Center is to be established. The applications in each group will be reviewed by the same reviewers and will be evaluated, reviewed, and selected as described below in separate groups.

(1) Evaluation and Review. Each application will be reviewed by at least three technically qualified reviewers who will evaluate each application based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO). Applicants may receive written follow-up questions in order for the reviewers to gain a better understanding of the applicant’s proposal. Each reviewer will assign each application a numeric score, with a maximum score of 100. If a non-Federal employee reviewer is used, the reviewers may discuss the applications with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis, not as a consensus.

Applicants whose applications receive an average score of 70 or higher out of 100 will be deemed finalists. If deemed necessary, all finalists will be invited to participate with reviewers in a conference call and/or all finalists will be invited to participate in a site visit 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 (see Section V.1. of this FFO) as a result of the conference call and/or site visit.

(2) Ranking and Selection. The reviewers’ final numeric scores for all finalists will be converted to ordinal rankings (i.e., a reviewer’s highest score will be ranked “1”, second highest score will be ranked “2”, etc.). The ordinal rankings for an

applicant will be summed and rank order will be established based on the lowest total for the ordinal rankings, and provided to the Selecting Official for further consideration.

The Selecting Official is the NIST Associate Director of Innovation and Industry Services or his designee. The Selecting Official makes the final recommendation to the NIST Grants Officer regarding the funding of applications under this FFO. NIST/MEP expects to recommend funding for the highest ranked applicant for each of the ten (10) States being competed under this FFO. However, the Selecting Official may decide to select an applicant out of rank order based upon one or more of the Selection Factors identified in Section V.3. of this FFO. The Selecting Official may also decide not to recommend funding for a particular State to any of the applicants.

NIST reserves the right to negotiate the budget costs with any applicant selected to receive an award, which may include requesting that the applicant remove certain costs. Additionally, NIST may request that the successful applicant modify objectives or work plans and 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.

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 MEP program goals and policy objectives;
- c. Reviewers' evaluations, including technical comments;
- d. The need to assure appropriate distribution within the designated State; and/or
- e. 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 in January 2015. The anticipated start date for awards made under this FFO is expected to be July 2015.

5. Additional Information

- a. **Application Replacement Pages.** Applicants may not submit replacement pages and/or missing documents once 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.

- b. **Notification to Unsuccessful Applicants.** Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.
- c. **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.

VI. Award Administration Information

- 1. **Award Notices.** Successful applicants will receive an award from the NIST Grants Officer. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award is available at http://ocio.os.doc.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@os/@ocio/@oitpp/documents/content/dev01_002513.pdf and the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (January 2013), which may be updated by the time of award, are available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf
- 2. **Administrative and National Policy Requirements.**
 - a. **DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements.** The DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements, 77 FR 74634 (December 17, 2012), are applicable to this FFO and are available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/12/17/2012-30228/department-of-commerce-pre-award-notification-requirements-for-grants-and-cooperative-agreements>
 - b. **Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN), Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS), and System for Award Management (SAM).** All applicants for Federal financial assistance are required to obtain a universal identifier in the form of DUNS number and maintain a current registration in the Federal government's primary registrant database, SAM. On the form SF-424 items 8.b. and 8.c., the applicant's 9-digit EIN/TIN and 9-digit DUNS number must be consistent with the information in SAM (<https://www.sam.gov/>) and the Automated Standard Application for Payment System (ASAP). For complex organizations with multiple EINs/TINs and DUNS numbers, the EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers MUST be the numbers for the applying organization. Organizations that provide incorrect/inconsistent EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers may experience significant delays in receiving funds if their application is selected for funding. Confirm that the EIN/TIN and DUNS number are consistent with the information on the SAM and ASAP. **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.**

Per 2 CFR part 25, each applicant must:

- (1) Be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) before submitting an application, noting the CCR now resides in SAM;
- (2) Maintain an active CCR registration, noting the CCR now resides in SAM, with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by an agency; and
- (3) Provide its DUNS number in each application it submits to the agency.

The applicant can obtain a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet. A DUNS number can be created within one business day. The CCR or SAM registration process may take five or more business days to complete. If you are currently registered with the CCR, you may not need to make any changes. However, please make certain that the EIN/TIN associated with your DUNS number is correct. Also note that you will need to update your CCR registration annually. This may take three or more business days to complete. Information about SAM is available at www.sam.gov. See also 2 CFR part 25 and the *Federal Register* notice published on September 14, 2010, at 75 FR 55671.

- c. **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 DoC 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 oblige NIST or DoC to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.
- d. **Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Regulations.** Recipients of MEP awards will be required to comply with Department of Commerce Financial Assistance regulations as set forth in 15 C.F.R. part 14 or in 15 C.F.R. part 24 (as applicable), which may be periodically amended.
- e. **Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.** Recipients of MEP awards will be required to comply with the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (DoC Standard Terms and Conditions), which may be periodically amended. The current DoC Standard Terms and Conditions are available at: http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf.
- f. **Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership General Terms and Conditions.** As a recipient of a NIST/MEP award, the recipient shall comply with the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership General Terms and Conditions (MEP Terms and Conditions), as may be periodically amended. The MEP General Terms and Conditions in effect at the time the awards are made will be incorporated into the awards. A copy of the current MEP General Terms and Conditions is available at: http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm. Award recipients will also be

required to comply with any Special Award Conditions imposed by the NIST/MEP Grants Officer.

- g. Award Implementation.** Given the partnership nature of MEP Centers, and to clarify and support the project activities and budget, including cost sharing, NIST may ask recipients to provide copies of sub-tier agreements, including subawards and contracts over \$100,000. In addition, to better understand and implement the national manufacturing extension network and partnership, NIST may ask recipients to provide an Operating Plan and Budget showing manufacturing extension service activity and costs in which the Center is engaged outside the Federal share and non-Federal cost share for the project. NIST may request recipients to provide their proposed subrecipient performance monitoring plans.
- h. DoC Representation by Corporations Regarding an Unpaid Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Conviction Under Any Federal Law.** In accordance with the Federal appropriations law expected to be in effect at the time of project funding, NIST anticipates that the selected applicants will be provided a form and asked to make a representation regarding any unpaid delinquent tax liability or felony conviction under any Federal law.
- i. OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements.** Please note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements” (OMB Uniform Guidance) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards>), which streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-122) and administrative requirements (OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards. Once adopted by the Department of Commerce through the promulgation of updated financial assistance regulations, the OMB Uniform Guidance will supersede DOC’s uniform administrative requirements for financial assistance awards, currently set forth in 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. The DOC expects to adopt the OMB Uniform Guidance by December 26, 2014, meaning that the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014. In addition, the audit requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to audits of non-Federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the OMB Uniform Guidance. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at <https://cfo.gov/cofar/>.
- j. Accounting Systems Certification.** If an applicant has never received Federal funding or if an applicant has an audit or other history of financial management issues, a certification may be required from a CPA to provide information about whether the applicant has a functioning financial management system that meets the

provisions of 15 C.F.R. § 14.21 or 15 C.F.R. § 24.20 (as applicable). As part of the proposed project budget, such applicants may wish to include costs for an accounting systems assessment and certification.

3. Reporting

- a. **Reporting Requirements.** In lieu of the reporting requirements described in sections A.01 Financial Reports and B.01 Performance (Technical) Reports of the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions dated January 2013 (http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf) the following reporting requirements shall apply:

(1) Financial Reports. The recipient shall submit a “Federal Financial Report” (Form SF-425) reports into MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS) on a quarterly basis for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 or any portion thereof, unless otherwise specified in a special award condition. Reports are due no later than 30 days following the end of each reporting period. A final Form SF-425 shall be submitted within 90 days after the expiration of the project period. The reports must be submitted to the Grants Officer electronically, or in hard copy (no more than an original and two copies), in accordance with the award conditions.

(2) Performance (Technical) Reports. Each award recipient will be required to submit performance (technical) reports into MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS), on a quarterly basis for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 or any portion thereof, unless otherwise specified in a special award condition. Performance Reports should be submitted in the same frequency as the Federal Financial Report (Form SF-425), unless otherwise authorized by the Grants Officer. Performance (technical) reports shall contain brief information as prescribed in the applicable uniform administrative requirements incorporated into the award, unless otherwise specified in the award provisions. 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://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm.

(3) Post Client Project Follow-Up. The recipient will be required to provide client and project data in the specified format to the organization identified by NIST/MEP in order for post-project follow-up data to be obtained (OMB Control Number 0693-0021). For further information regarding the NIST MEP Reporting Process, you may download a copy of the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines at http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm.

- b. OMB Circular A-133 Audit Requirements.** Single or program-specific audits shall be performed in accordance with the requirements contained in OMB Circular A-133, “Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations,” and the related Compliance Supplement. OMB Circular A-133 requires any non-Federal entity (i.e., including non-profit institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations) that expends Federal awards of \$500,000 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 Circular. Applicants are reminded that NIST, the DoC Office of Inspector General or another authorized Federal agency may conduct an audit of an award at any time. Additionally, applicants should take note of the new financial assistance audit requirements set forth in the recently published OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, which is cited and discussed above in Section VI.2.i. of this FFO. OMB Circular A-133 Audit Requirements.
- 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.
- d. Performance Reviews.** NIST will perform program evaluations of the recipient as follows: (1) in an annual review, as required by 15 CFR § 290.8, and (2) in an independent peer review during the third year of operation, at the sixth year, and at least every two years thereafter, as required by 15 U.S.C. 278k(c)(5) and 15 C.F.R § 290.8.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

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 Manufacturing Extension Partnership NIST Phone: 301-975-5105 Fax: 301-963-6556 E-mail: mailto:mepffo@nist.gov
Grants.gov - application submission	Christopher Hunton Administrative Support & Document Control Office

	NIST Phone: 301-975-5718 Fax: 301-975-8884 E-mail: christopher.hunton@nist.gov
Grant rules and regulations	Jannet Cancino Grants Management Division NIST Phone: 301-975-6544 Fax: 301-975-6319 E-mail: jannet.cancino@nist.gov

VIII. Other Information

- 1. Webinar Information Session:** NIST/MEP will hold an information session for organizations that are considering applying to this opportunity. This webinar will provide general information regarding MEP and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST/MEP staff will be available on the webinar to answer general questions. During the webinar, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any project ideas during the webinar or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP. However, NIST/MEP staff will provide information about the MEP eligibility and cost-sharing requirements, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal during this webinar, and by phone and email. The webinar will be held approximately fourteen (14) business days after posting of this FFO and publication in the *Federal Register*. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm. The webinar will be recorded and a link to the recording will be posted on the MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentation will be available after the webinar on the MEP website. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar must sign up by emailing mepffo@nist.gov. Participation in the webinar 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 MEP eligibility, cost-sharing requirements, 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. 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://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_state-competitions.cfm.