

MEP Competitive Awards Program RFI

Our company, The Snap Source, Inc., has been in business here in the USA for the past 24 years. Our US supply chain has moved production off shore because of archaic equipment and OSHA regulations. Our business can no longer sell American-made products to our customers because of the choices made by our suppliers.

With increase demand for our product to be USA made, the cost to bring the technology China, Japan and Taiwan has developed for US manufacturers back to the US is substantial for any small business to absorb and still make a profit. In addition, the cost to purchase the product from China, Japan and Taiwan with the newer technology is at an all-time high. Put these facts together and the cost of staying in business here in the US has become almost impossible unless there is something that can be done to help us.

1. What are the key problems facing small U.S. manufacturers?

We face the lack of funds and resources for development of product and equipment to re-shore manufacturing of the products we need for business. Big companies that moved production off-shore educated and employed the rest of the world on how to make products we need for business. Most US companies that moved production off-shore closed plants and no longer have the equipment to start up again. And, if they do, the equipment is archaic and rusty. We know this to be a fact -- purchasing equipment from off-shore companies to manufacturer products here in the US is not possible because those countries don't want to lose their jobs and are refusing to sell us similar equipment or invest in production here in the US. Therefore, we have no choice but to develop our own equipment and manufacturing processes – which will require time, funds and talent. As a small manufacturer, this feat is impossible without help. We know what it is going to take, but being heard is the only way we can make it happen. Speaking from experience, it is tough to be heard as a small manufacturer.

2. What advanced manufacturing technologies are needed to help manufacturers grow and be competitive in the marketplace?

We need small parts manufacturing technologies. Our overseas competition knows how to do this well. We need to develop technology to make products better, faster and more advanced using raw materials that are eco-friendly.

3. What technologies and business models are important to manufacturers as they choose and participate in supply chains?

We need to implement clean, green manufacturing practices to prevent the ecologic contamination that has plagued China, Japan, Taiwan and like countries. Luckily for us, there are companies making strides producing clean, green technologies all over the world. Here in the US we need to build a solid working “model” of an environmental friendly manufacturing plant and then use its success to build more in three sizes – small, mid-size and large manufacturing plants.

4. What business services are needed by manufacturers and/or MEP centers to take full advantage of advanced manufacturing technologies?

Education services are mandatory for both the small business and the MEP centers. Tell us what manufacturing technologies are available and from whom. For my small business, there is no advanced manufacturing technologies here in the US to make our product. We know this because of our research and the fact that companies do not want to take on small parts in millions. They want to produce large parts in thousands. And, I'm not the only company that is having this problem. Small parts manufacturing is a necessity and we need to advance this option to be competitive in the world market.

5. Are there any other critical issues that NIST MEP should consider in its strategic planning?

Yes, education of our children. It is time to create a grass roots approach to the skilled trade education of our children. A graduate from high school should have a skilled trade necessary to be employable immediately. Skilled trade education such as shop, carpentry, automotive, business to name a few have been removed from schools. A plan should be developed to put these skills education back into place so a young person can develop the skills necessary to be employable directly out of high school. Advanced schooling, such as college or trade school, should be made available for those needing more detailed skills for employment such as engineering, computer programming, electrical, etc. A college degree should not be necessary for employment – especially in the skilled trades. A high school teacher recommendation should be enough for employment when the skills have been met or exceeded during a student's time in high school. And, for those students with natural skills for a trade should be eligible for work at a business during high school and then a program set up with that employer to compensate for higher education based on the business needs.

I would like to be involved in the development of an education plan for our children and businesses in order to provide skilled labor in the USA.