MEP awards $9.1M for 22 projects to enhance U.S. manufacturers' competitiveness

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The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) on October 5 announced $9.1 million in cooperative agreements for 22 projects designed to enhance the productivity, technological performance and global competitiveness of U.S. manufacturers.

Granted through competitive processes to non-profit organizations, these projects will be implemented through MEP's national system of over 400 centers, field offices and partners. The funding will help encourage the creation and adoption of improved technologies and provide resources to develop new products that respond to changing market needs.

"A vibrant manufacturing sector drives American innovation and is central to our economic growth and global competitiveness," U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said. "With the right investments, we can continue to create highly valued manufacturing jobs building great products and sell them around the world."

The proposals selected represent a variety of compelling ideas for helping small and medium-sized U.S. manufacturers tackle a complex set of needs with cost-effective and innovative solutions.

The projects, described below, address one or more of five areas MEP has identified as vital for strategic growth in U.S. manufacturing. MEP's five Strategic Growth Areas include:

- responding to evolving supply chains;
- accelerating the adoption of new technology to build business growth;
- implementing environmentally sustainable processes;
- establishing and enabling strong workforces for the future, and;
- encouraging cultures of continuous improvement.

NIST MEP invited proposals for the projects earlier this year through two competitions announced in the *Federal Register*. Awards for both competitions are being announced today. In one competition (2010-MEP-BGPD-01), projects addressed the new and emerging competitive needs of manufacturers in areas consistent with the MEP program's five Strategic Growth Areas. This competition was open to existing MEP centers and groups of centers. In the second competition (2010-MEP-SDCC-01), projects focused on integrating two or more of MEP's Strategic Growth Areas into client engagement models to effectively deliver services to U.S. manufacturers. This competition was open to all nonprofit organizations including universities, community colleges, state governments and state technology programs, as well as existing MEP centers.

NIST received 68 proposals for the two competitions, which closed on July 15. The awards announced today provide funding for only the first year of each project. Continuation of funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be at the discretion of NIST/MEP and contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds. Projects are expected to start within 30 days of the award notice. Funding for the projects came from MEP's fiscal year 2010 budget.

Founded in 1901, NIST is a nonregulatory agency of the Commerce Department that promotes U.S. innovation and industrial competitiveness by advancing measurement science, standards and technology in ways that enhance economic security and improve our quality of life. NIST's Manufacturing Extension Partnership is America's leading resource for helping U.S. manufacturers use innovation to grow their profitability as they compete for customers in the global marketplace.

PROJECT DETAILS

Competition 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 awardees include:

Alabama Technology Network
Project title: Alabama E3
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $400,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $400,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $2,000,100

The Alabama Technology Network will build upon their initial E3 (Economy, Energy and Environment) efforts focused on automotive manufacturers to expand the E3 services to other manufacturing industries in the state. The project includes the development of innovation and entrepreneurship in sustainable technology transfer and product commercialization in Alabama using the new Innovation Engineering "green" module.

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BlueGreen Alliance Foundation
Project title: Increasing the Participation of Small- and Medium-Sized Manufacturers in U.S. Wind Energy Supply Chains
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $560,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $777,984
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $3,739,530

The BlueGreen Alliance Foundation, in partnership with four NIST MEP centers (Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center, Indiana Purdue TAP, Montana MEP and West Virginia MEP), the American Wind Energy Association, the United Steelworkers, the Global Wind Network, and the Alliance for American Manufacturing, will work to accelerate the development of the domestic supply chains for the emerging wind energy industry. The project will develop a series of services

designed to provide manufacturers with opportunities to become more effective, qualified suppliers to the wind energy industry while leveraging the resources of MEP and other national organizations.

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Colorado Association for Manufacturing Technology (CAMT)
Project title: Manufacturing Center of Excellence (MCOE) in Pueblo, CO
Proposed project duration: 1 year
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $400,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $400,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $800,000

Colorado Association for Manufacturing and Technology (CAMT), the NIST MEP affiliate in Colorado, proposes a regional innovation cluster and the development of a Manufacturing Center of Excellence (MCOE) to be located in Pueblo, Colo. The MCOE is a partner consortium of representatives from industry, workforce, education and economic development. The initiative will provide coordination and integration of programs to support manufacturing in a rural community. The MCOE will leverage programs in the areas of energy efficiency, business development and workforce development to address the needs of rural manufacturers.

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Enterprise Minnesota
Project title: Pathway to Business Growth
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding From NIST MEP: $515,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $515,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $2,023,096

Enterprise Minnesota, the NIST MEP affiliate in Minnesota, will develop integrated solutions to help manufacturers grow business opportunities that will help them compete and prosper. This effort will develop manufacturing leaders who can grow businesses through strategy, innovation, and targeted market solutions. A number of partners will participate in the project including the State of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the University of Minnesota's College of Continuing Education, the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management, Clear Intent Strategy, and Norman Development.

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Impact Washington (IW)
Project title: Export Driven Growth Strategy for Washington
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $130,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $238,590
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $993,180

Impact Washington, the NIST MEP affiliate in Washington state, will help the state's manufacturers drive growth through innovation and export strategies to increase their profitability and stimulate job growth statewide. Impact Washington is partnering with the Export Finance Assistance Center of Washington, the U.S. Export Assistance Center, Pierce College, Highline Community College and the Community Colleges of Spokane to deliver education, training, and coaching services to Washington manufacturers. This new growth strategy will foster innovation with a specific emphasis on exports. This project builds upon the lessons learned from a successful partnership between two U.S. Department of Commerce bureaus, the International Trade Administration and NIST, and fosters additional export opportunities for new products responding to new markets developed by U.S. manufacturers.

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Kentucky Technology Services, Inc. (Kentucky Manufacturing Assistance Center)
Project title: Next Generation Manufacturing Project: Transforming Kentucky Manufacturers by Accelerating Commercialization of New Technologies and Products and Creating High Tech Supplier Clusters
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $450,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $450,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $2,824,552

The Kentucky Manufacturing Assistance Center (KMAC), the MEP affiliate in Kentucky, will partner with the Kentucky Science and Technology Corporation (KSTC) to accelerate commercialization of new products in Kentucky and foster local supply chains. The project will position KMAC and KSTC to work strategically and operationally with companies using an approach that integrates technology acceleration and supplier development with a focus on increasing new product development and the commercialization of technology in Kentucky.

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Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET)
Project title: Stimulating Regional Manufacturing Growth through Sector Development

Proposed project duration: 2 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $285,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $285,743
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $631,771

The Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET), a sub-contractor to the Ohio Department of Development and a partner organization of the Ohio MEP, will join with the northeast Ohio-based regional economic development group, NorTech, to identify and work with companies committed to growing their business. They will link the companies with new opportunities in emerging industry sectors related to advanced energy, such as energy storage, the Smart Grid, biomass/waste conversion and electric vehicles. MAGNET and NorTech will use a coaching and training program approach to stimulate and support manufacturing innovation and address technology acceleration, supply chain development and continuous improvement.

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Mid America Manufacturing Technology Center (MAMTC)
Project title: Innovation in Manufacturing and the Supply Chain
Proposed project duration: 2 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $500,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $581,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $1,881,000

The Mid-America Manufacturing Technology Center (MAMTC), the NIST-MEP affiliate in Kansas, in partnership with the Topeka Chamber of Commerce, Washburn University, the National Growth through Innovation Foundation and the Eureka! Ranch, will increase innovation and growth in the Topeka, Kansas, area by increasing collaboration between Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), suppliers, inventors, community leaders and universities to optimize technology and stimulate economic growth. The project will develop a structured process to integrate innovation into the supply chain, educational programs and business models.

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National Growth Through Innovation Foundation
Project title: MEP Center Growth Acceleration Program - Innovation Black Belt Deployment Program
Proposed project duration: 2 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $770,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $770,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $3,080,000

The funding will be used to create dedicated "Innovation Engineering Black Belts" in 10 NIST MEP centers (Kansas, Wyoming, Vermont, Maine, Washington, Missouri, Arkansas, New York, Virginia, and Louisiana) to implement pilot projects with local manufacturing clients. MEP center staff will learn new skills to lead business growth projects with manufacturers through the development of new products, identification of new customers and markets as well as unique process improvement innovations. The project will also develop growth and innovation tools for use by other MEP centers across the nation.

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North Carolina State University, NC Industrial Extension Service (NC MEP)
Project title: E3: North Carolina, Deploying E3 for Growth through New Partnerships
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $415,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $415,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $2,473,520

NC State University's Industrial Extension Service, the NIST MEP affiliate in North Carolina, with numerous partnering organizations will develop an E3 (Economy, Energy and Environment) project that establishes a unique approach that significantly advances performance in the sustainability and workforce strategies. E3: North Carolina will help communities and manufacturers address energy and sustainability challenges. NC MEP will promote sustainable manufacturing and growth through innovative technology and access to capital.

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Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence, Inc.
Project Title: Next Generation Green and Sustainable Manufacturing in Oklahoma
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $300,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $310,052
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $1,877,100

The Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence, Inc., the NIST MEP affiliate in Oklahoma, and the Oklahoma State University New Product Development Center will partner to expand existing resources for new product development. The program also will make process and service-development strategies more accessible to manufacturers in Oklahoma. The project will focus on utilizing public and private engineering and communications expertise, as well as public and private laboratory facilities for work on high-impact projects developed by Oklahoma manufacturers. A focus will be on developing "green" projects with efforts made to quickly take new products and

technologies to market.

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Oregon MEP
Project title: NW Supply Chain and Sustainability Initiative
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $500,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $500,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $3,152,500

The Oregon MEP in partnership with Impact Washington, the NIST MEP affiliate center in Washington, will focus on an initiative that combines the MEP strategic growth areas of supply chain and sustainability. The Northwest Supply Chain and Sustainability Initiative will develop a regional infrastructure for the renewable energy industry that extends beyond the Portland-Salem-Vancouver urban region to other more rural parts of the state. The initiative also introduces the use of the Northwest "Connectory" encouraging supplier scouting services for manufacturers and supply chains.

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PolymerOhio, Inc.
Project title: Advanced Modeling and Simulation for Manufacturing
Proposed project duration: 1 year
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $355,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $376,460
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $731,460

PolymerOhio and the Ohio Supercomputer Center (OSC) propose to improve the manufacturing capabilities of small and medium-sized enterprises in the U.S. through advanced modeling and simulation of manufacturing process and functions. The project will target small polymer companies to help them address the technical barriers, costs and training necessary to effectively use this technology.

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WestCAMP, Inc. (MEP of Utah)
Project title: Support Manufacturers in the New Energy Economy
Proposed project duration: 3 years

Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $325,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $325,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $2,020,000

The MEP of Utah will work to support manufacturing in the new energy economy by providing manufacturers with information, supporters and tools needed to run efficient businesses and utilize the latest energy efficiency technology. The MEP of Utah will develop a new energy economy deployment methodology that utilizes best practices from other efforts within the MEP system to provide companies with information on the latest tools and technologies to incorporate energy efficiency in everyday practices.

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Competition 2010-MEP-BGPD-01 awardees include:

Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education on behalf of Nevada Industry Excellence (NVIE), formerly MAP
Project title: Dynamic Supply Chains and Integrated Workforce Training in Support of an eResource Manufacturing Center
Proposed project duration: 1 year
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $395,000

This project, led by Nevada Industry Excellence (NVIE), the NIST MEP affiliate in Nevada, will use innovative collaborative approaches to integrate existing supply chain methods with new manufacturing methods, retraining of personnel and retrofit of new, clean diesel technologies. The effort will leverage associated networks to accelerate the growth and transformation of digital fabrication supply chains and share these approaches and practices across the MEP System.

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Board of Regents, Nevada System of Higher Education on behalf of Nevada Industry Excellence (NVIE), formerly MAP
Project title: ExporTech Program Development: Improving the Program and Business Model
Proposed project duration: 1 year
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $187,000

This effort will involve a collaboration of 10 MEP Centers, led by Nevada Industry Excellence (NVIE), the NIST MEP affiliate in Nevada, to strengthen and enhance the deployment and business model of MEP's ExporTech initiative. This initiative is intended to radically increase the number of U.S. firms who are actively exporting products, thereby growing their top-line sales and profit margins.

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Catalyst Connection
Project title: Regional Innovation Cluster (RIC) Consortium Model for Technology Acceleration
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $298,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $53,916
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $949,452

Catalyst Connection, the NIST MEP affiliate in Pittsburgh, Pa., will develop and demonstrate a Regional Innovation Cluster (RIC) consortium model for technology acceleration that works together to facilitate technology transfer and product commercialization within the southwest Pennsylvania regional small- and medium-sized enterprise base. Both a push- and pull-based technology transfer approach will be employed with particular emphasis on strengthening southwestern Pennsylvania's clean and alternative energy innovation cluster.

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Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center Project title: MEP Supply Chain Development Initiative
Proposed project duration: 3 years Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $602,000
Total Multi-year project cost (est.): $2,329,300

The Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center (IMEC), the MEP affiliate in Illinois, will lead a consortium of five NIST MEP Centers (including centers in southern California, Illinois, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia) in an initiative focused on developing the MEP system's services and strategy to improve the competitiveness of U.S. supply chains. Based on input from both original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and the NIST MEP system, the initiative will expand MEP center services to support the development and competitiveness of U.S. supply chains. The initiative will focus on development of tools and techniques for use within existing supply chains as well as services to support the development of supply chains for emerging Growth Sectors. Over three years, the initiative will include development, demonstration, and deployment of new and refined services throughout the MEP System.

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North Carolina State University, North Carolina Industrial Extension Service (NC MEP)
Project title: Facilitating the Next Generation Strategy through Strategic Human Resource

Development
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $177,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $605,663

NC State University's Industrial Extension Service, the NIST MEP affiliate in North Carolina, in collaboration with NC State's College of Education's Leadership Policy, and Adult and Higher Education department, will focus on deployment of a learning and performance improvement intervention capability based on a strategic human resource development (SHRD) model. This will include development of SHRD competencies that allow MEP practitioners to: 1) learn how to become a SHRD partner to client firms; 2) learn to develop an integrated strategic plan for a client organization; and, 3) gain an awareness of how culture influences organizational change.

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NYS Foundation for Science, Technology and Innovation
Project title: Completing the Technology Acceleration Services Chain: A Tool and Methodology Development Proposal
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $400,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $1,072,000

The New York MEP (NYMEP) will develop the following tools and methodologies required to address two key gaps within New York's current suite of Technology Acceleration and Commercialization services: Using the new Active Technology Matching service, NYMEP will connect the state's manufacturers with promising technologies that are relevant to their businesses. In addition, a Virtual Design & Prototyping Service will help manufacturers and startup firms develop new products by using the immense variety of resources available through other New York manufacturers and research sites.

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Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC)
Project title: Technology Acceleration
Proposed project duration: 3 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $850,000
Year 1 non-federal cost share: $112,767
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $2,691,395

Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center, the NIST MEP affiliate in Texas, will use innovative and collaborative approaches to develop and demonstrate: 1) Data Standards for a needs analysis and

assessment tool, known as Asset Inventory Management focused on MEP's five Strategic Growth Areas; 2) benefits of Technology Acceleration training, including Technology Scouting and Technology Driven Market Intelligence; and, 3) a methodology that places MEP in a position to connect technology sources—including private, federal and university-based—with U.S. manufacturers.

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University of Wyoming, Manufacturing Works
Project title: The Engagement of Manufacturers with Technology Acceleration through Connection REACH and Connection DEPTH using the USA National Innovation Marketplace
Proposed project duration: 2 years
Year 1 funding from NIST MEP: $265,000
Total multi-year project cost (est.): $296,620

Manufacturing-Works, the NIST MEP affiliate in Wyoming, will lead a consortium of five MEP centers in an effort to develop a system of tools to help them provide an effective gateway to engaging with and assisting first-time and existing small- and medium-sized enterprise clients. The effort will directly connect customers to technologies, technology acceleration resources, and supply chains to bring new innovative products and services to market faster.

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