NYMEP Request for Proposals
Due Date November 24, 2015 by 4pm
Frequently Asked Questions

FAQs 1 – 20 (10/30/15)
FAQs 21 - 28 (11/12/15)
FAQs 29 - 70 (New)

Q1: Do we respond to this RFP by submitting our proposal or through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) system?

A1: Entities must respond to this RFP using the CFA system (https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/). Questions for both the statewide and regional designations are listed under this funding opportunity on the CFA portal and applicants should enter their answers into the system.

Q2: Do I need to submit the required vendor responsibility form to you if I fill out the questionnaire online?

A2: Yes. The included form serves as a notice to us that applicants are up to date with their vendor responsibility questionnaire.

Q3: Question pertaining to the Use Of Fund section, paragraph F.2.b; What types of costs are considered indirect?

A3: Indirect costs are costs that are not directly accountable to a cost object (such as a particular project, facility, function or product). Indirect costs may include administration, personnel and security costs.

Q4: Does paragraph F.2.b refer to the costs defined under paragraph F.1.e?

A4: Use of Funds listed in paragraph I.F.1 relate to direct costs (costs associated directly with the program).

Q5: A summary of ESD's proposal to NIST MEPs competition will be posted with this RFP. Where is it posted?

A5: The summary is now posted under the RFP at:
http://www.esd.ny.gov/CorporateInformation/RFPs.html.

Q6: Will answers be available on an on-going basis or do we have to wait until 11/16 to see the answers?

A6: We will be posting the FAQs periodically.

Q7: What are the guidelines as far as # of pages, fonts, etc?

A7: Answers should be entered in the space provided on the CFA website. There are no limitations on the number of characters. But applicants should be clear and concise in their answers. If you have the ability to select a font size in some places on the website, 11pt or 12 pt would be preferable.

Q8: Given the significant decreases in funding at the RTDC level, and the significant increases at the state level, will the RTDCs still have to pay a share of state-wide salaries?

A8: No.

Q9: Why isn't the Statewide Center scored by the Statewide Regional Council?

A9: There is no Statewide Regional Council.

Q10: Will the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) scoring be sent separately or be included in the RTDC application?

A10: REDC scores will be visible to the review team.

Q11: Why is there a specific resource dictate to support food, but there isn't one on the Regional Cluster priorities?

A11: Regional applicants must explain how they plan to support the priority Regional Cluster. A statewide food initiative is currently being developed.

Q12: On page 17, item ii, what are non-ESD funds and what does "quality" and "appropriateness" mean in relation to them?

A12: Non-ESD funds are funds that a center does not receive from ESD. These funds will be reviewed to determine if they can be counted towards program matching funds. Other factors will be considered as well.

Q13: On page 4, why were the dollars allocated on such gross, vague numbers instead of the actual number of manufacturers in each region?

A13: This was the method that was chosen.

Q14: On page 17, under Budget, given the decrease in funding, why is attending seven meetings a requirement in the budget?

A14: NIST MEP requires attendance at meetings as does ESD. NIST holds national system-wide meetings and regional meetings. ESD holds a divisional meeting and will be holding NYMEP meetings periodically.

Q15: The proposal application is through the CFA. An executive summary is requested but there is no document upload section for an executive summary?

A15: The Executive Summary, Required Staffing Plan and Vendor Responsibility Form can be attached at question Q_4580 "Proprietary Information Exception Request." If submitting multiple documents to this question, they should be submitted as one PDF.

Q16: Are letters of support expected? Where should we attach letters of support?

A16: Letters of support were not requested in this RFP. But applicants that would like to include letters of support in there proposal can submit them as stated in FAQ A15. Letters of support if included should be after the: Proprietary Information Exemption Request (if there the applicant is submitting one) Executive Summary; Required Staffing Plan Form and Vendor Responsibility Form.

Q17: Please confirm that on the Funding tab of the CFA, the amount entered should be for one year of the award rather than multiple, i.e. it should match cell G84 on the budget form.

A17: The budget should be for one year of funding. C84 and D84 should add up to the award amount. G84 should add up to the award amount and required match as listed in the RFP.

Q18: Does the restriction that board members "may not concurrently serve on more than one Center's oversight board" also apply to the Statewide Center? For the Statewide Center, does the requirement for "local" board members imply local to the organization's physical location, or is the Statewide Center free or encouraged to have board members from various areas of the state?

A18: Board members for the statewide organization cannot serve as board members of any regional MEP center or ESD's Manufacturing Advisory Board. The statewide center should have representatives from across the state on their board.

Q19: Regarding Question 4523, "Explain supply chain efforts and engagements": Does supply chain here refer to an objective of preparing and assisting small manufacturers in becoming part of the supply chains of larger enterprises? Or helping companies manage and optimize their supply chains and logistics? Or does it have some other meaning?

A19: In the context of the RFP, supply chain efforts and engagements refers to preparing and assisting small and medium sized manufacturers with becoming part of a supply chain. Applicants should address this in their response. But, applicants can propose other supply chain assistance if they choose to.

Q20: Cell C84 and D84 on first Tab, a comparison is done and the word revised pops up. It is pointing to check a cell, B107 that is empty. What is being checked here?

A20: Applicants are asked to use this row to total the budget items listed above. For the Federal MEP Funds and the ESD State Funds totals, please make sure that they do not exceed the budget allocation listed in the RFP. Also, if an applicant's budget is lower than the allocation for these same to categories, the first year award will reflect that lower amount.

Q21: For the Statewide Center, will 100% of the Tech Engagement Fund be allocated towards awards or will a percentage expected to be budgeted for staff time, events, marketing (i.e. administration and promotion of the fund)?

A21: Up to $33,194 of the allocation can be used for administration and promotion of the fund. For future years, if the Tech Engagement Fund receives additional funding, up to 5% of the total funding can be used for administration and promotion.

Q22: The required budget form will contain confidential personal information regarding employee salaries. Since the application is subject to review by the Regional Council, is there a mechanism to protect that confidentiality?

A22: If the budgets are shared with the Regional Economic Development Councils, efforts will be made to remove the individual employee names.

Q23: Where do we provide the justification for the requested funding, as instructed on RFP page 19 under use of funds?

A23: Providing detailed expenditures in the budget form is considered the justification for the amount of funding requested. The proposed budget will be compared to the scope of work to determine if the request is reasonable and justified.

Q24: Do applicants for statewide designation need to respond to Q_4516?

A24: No, statewide applicants are not required to respond to this question.

Q25: Which staffing plan document gets uploaded to Q_4580 – the website has a "form OCSD-1 EEO Policy Statement" but we also received a document via email titled OCSD-2 / staffing plan; this latter document is not on the website. Are both required?

A25: Only Form OCSD-1 EEO Policy Statement is required. OCSD -2 is not required in response to Q_4580.

Q26: Section 1.E. Supported Activities Option 1: Designated Regional MEP Center states on page 10 item (i) that "Designating an employee (.25 to .5 Full Time Equivalency) to food related manufacturing and assisting with market expansion as directed by ESD" is one of the services to be provided. Can this level of support be provided through the use of third party consultants or must this service be provided by an internal center employee?

A26: Both a third party consultant or internal center employee are acceptable.

Q27: To foster the collaborations with other NYSTAR programs, as well as to economize, as indicated in the RFP, could the MEP share space and leadership staff with such programs, so that such staff -- especially senior policymaking people as distinct from operating staff -- might have a 50% time commitment at each?

A27: The applicant should determine what it is the most efficient and effective method to make services/activities available to manufacturers within the region. This includes amount of time each staff person is dedicated to the program to accomplish these goals.

Q28: Could you rank in importance the following types of services: technical training; management training; consulting; one-time topical events with domain experts; networking and meetups; advanced technology assistance; and business outreach?

A28: Applicants are asked to identify the most appropriate and important services in their region.

Q29: Is information technology considered a manufacturing industry? Is software considered a manufactured product?

A29: Under NIST MEP funding, the primary NAICS codes of the SMEs must be between 311xxx and 339xxx. Additional acceptable codes include: 541711, 541712, 423510, 488991, 541330, 541380, 561910 and 811310 (except Automotive & Electronic Repair & maintenance).

Q30: The questions as posted on the CFA site differ slightly from questions in the RFP. Also, there is no specific place given on the CFA site for the explanation about food manufacturing. I assume we are to reply to the CFA questions, working in the required activities from the RFP, but I wanted to be sure. Please let me know.

A30: Applicants should reply to the CFA questions and work in required activities from the RFP as stated in the question.

Q31: Some employers have indicated that they have needs that would involve a shared use of equipment (for both training employees and for prototyping, etc.) Are equipment purchases allowable under the RFP?

A31: Yes, equipment purchases are allowable but centers must get prior written approval before purchasing equipment valued at more than $50,000.

Q32: Please indicate the criteria (number of employees? annual revenues?) for small enterprises and medium-sized enterprises?

A32: The MEP program is primarily focused on manufacturers with fewer than 500 employees.

Q33: In Q_4514, you ask for services that are "readily available". Can you clarify what readily available means? Does this mean services that the RTDC should NOT be offering?

A33: Services that are available to companies by entities within a reasonable proximity should be considered readily available and not be offered through the MEP program.

Q34: Q_4515: You ask us to describe the center's current customer base. Do you mean in general terms, or do you want a listing of all small and medium sized manufacturers?

A34: Explaining the applicant's current customer base in general terms should be sufficient.

Q35: Project funding section: You ask for total project cost. What does that mean? Is it the allocation amount specified for our region in the RFP? Or is it our overall annual budget? Is it supposed to show costs for all 5 years of the contract?

Project funding section: You ask for funding requested from program? What does that mean specifically? See previous questions above.

A35: Project cost should equal the total budget as listed in the last column of the award amounts table included in the RFP on page 5-6. The funding requested from the program should equal the Total ESD Funds as listed in this same table.

Q36: Will funds awarded by NYSDOL, NYSERDA et al. to companies, and used by them to pay for services provided by MEP Center partners through MEP's referral, be eligible to be considered as matching funds to the federal award?

A36: Funds awarded to companies can be considered for impact measurement but are not allowable cost share.

Q37: What types of funds are eligible for matching the state award amount? May those also be matched up to 50% by in-kind, with the same constraints?

A37: Non-ESD state funds, project and event fees, non-governmental grants and other potential revenue can be used for matching purposes.

Q38: What are the "reduced match requirements" referenced on p. 2 of the NY MEP NIST proposal summary? What are the match requirements for the ESD-funded portion of the MEP award to regional centers?

A38: Historically, NIST MEP required $2 of match for every $1 of federal MEP funding. NIST MEP has reduced this requirement for the first three years of this program (starting January 1, 2016) to $1 for every $1 of federal MEP funding. Required matching amounts for each designation is listed in the RFP starting on page 5.

Q39: Are science and technology-based businesses distinguished from startups because they are beyond startup mode but: still in the R&D phase, although closer to the "D" end – performing proof of concept, technology or product development, clinical trials? Could they be revenue-generating? Are startups non-revenue generating although may have funds from SBIRs (which wouldn't count toward the federal match if used to pay for MEP Center services?) and/or investment?

A39: Science and technology-based companies refers to some of the companies that other ESD funded centers tend to work with through the Centers for Advanced Technology, Centers of Excellence and other programs. Designated MEP centers will be encouraged to assist early stage companies at all phases. This assistance may include offering direct assistance or referring early stage companies to the proper resource.

Q40: There are two mentions of developing export capacity near the front of the RFP, where the national NIST program is described, but no mention after that. Although Global NY is an important ESD program, is that priority addressed through other ESD programs that are more directly focused on that than the MEP is?

A40: MEPs should engage in activities that make market opportunities available to companies, including exporting.

Q41: Will you provide a list of interested applicants/organizations for the RFP?

A41: No.

Q42: When will the Technology Engagement Fund be made available for interested applicants/organizations?

A42: After awards are made and contracts are completed the Technology Engagement Fund is expected to be available for submission of proposals.

Q42: Will the Statewide Center be engaged in oversight on the projects funded via the Technology Engagement Fund? Or will the organizations/companies awarded, be solely responsible for the implementation and success of the projects?

A42: Oversight of projects will be the responsibility of both the Statewide Center and ESD.

Q43: What criteria will be used to determine whether an applicant receives additional funding and conversely what criteria will be used to determine whether an applicant receives less funding?

A43: The methodology for addressing changes in base funding levels is addressed on page 6 paragraph I.B.4 of the RFP.

Q44: Page 9 of the RFP, 3rd paragraph, notes that the designated centers must participate in events and activities to identify the needs of manufacturers. Will additional funding or support be provided to the centers to perform these activities?

A44: No additional funding will be provided.

Q45: Referencing page 10, item I, what specific activities will the .25-.5 FTE food staff be engaged in? Partnership is encouraged in the RFP. Does this include other Regional MEP Centers? If yes, are there mechanisms or criteria in place to determine how revenue and impact will be addressed amongst the centers?

A45: Dedicated FTE for food related activities will be engaged in a new initiative that is currently being developed.

Partnerships are expected among all eleven centers and entities outside the MEP program. Any concerns about revenue or impact will be addressed at ESD's kick off meeting to be held during the first quarter of 2016.

Q46: Page 13 item #2, additional means of verifying impact is noted. What are the additional methods the designated centers should be aware of?

A46: This will depend on the nature of the impact claimed. ESD reserves the right to verify impacts independently of NIST MEP's survey process. (The survey process is described in the beginning of this annual report: http://www.nist.gov/mep/upload/MEP-Measuring-Results-Mar13-v2.pdf).

Q47: When will the NYMEP Designated Centers Awards be announced?

A47: Announcements will be made as soon as possible after the RFP deadline.

Q48: How will the Statewide MEP Center engage Regional MEP Centers for services within their designated regions? What activities and/or expenses are required of the Regional MEP Centers in support of the Statewide MEP Center?

A48: Once centers are identified, ESD will hold a kick-off meeting to implement processes for center engagement.

Q49: Will the Statewide MEP Center handle all marketing activities and materials for the Regional MEP Centers? If not, is there a limitation on marketing activities for Regional MEP Centers or approvals that are required by the Statewide MEP Center?

A49: Regional MEP centers will also engage in marketing activities. All activities should be done in a collaborative manner and approved by ESD.

Q50: Can Technology Engagement Fund awards be used to pay for Regional MEP Center staff time and expenses?

A50: No.

Q51: The RFP states that unsatisfactory performance may lead to designated termination. What are the performance measures for the Regional MEP Centers and the Statewide Center? How do the performance measures align to MEP expectations?

A51: Performance standards will be developed and agreed by both ESD and awarded centers as part of the contracting process.

Q52: Please define "good financial standing" (page 7), "joining organizations" (page 11) and "priority projects" (page 21).

A52: Good financial standing: as this is a reimbursement grant, applicants should have the ability to pay for up to 120 days of operating expenses related to the MEP program.

Joining organizations: is the act of joining other entities through membership, memorandum of understanding or by other means.

Priority projects: are projects that are a priority of the Regional Economic Development Council.

Q53: Do companies receiving awards via the Technology Engagement Fund need to be prequalified as MEP eligible?

A53: The Technology Engagement Fund review committee will be responsible for determining eligibility.

Q54: Are indirect costs capped at 15% only if those costs are submitted for reimbursement as federal or NYS funds?

A54: Yes, indirect costs are capped at 15% reimbursement. For matching purposes, a higher percentage may be used with prior written approval from ESD.

Q55: Are activities for the Statewide MEP Center to be conducted only on behalf of the Regional MEP Centers or additional ESD and NYS programs? The RFP states that activities for the Designated Statewide Center include assisting with ESD program reporting, marketing ESD and NYS programs, arranging tours of assets and resources for ESD Centers and offering a calendar of events page for ESD funded entities.

A55: The Statewide MEP Center will be engaged in activities that support manufacturing companies across the state.

Q56: In the event of a tie, will organizations be informed before a decision is made?

A56: No.

Q57: On the funding tab of the CFA, should the "total project cost" equal "funding requested from program". Or, should the "total project cost" include requested federal/NYS ESD funds plus all matching funds, etc.?

A57: See A35.

Q58: Is there a size limit for attachments?

A58: The maximum limit is 12Mb.

Q59: On page 16 of the RFP, applicants are asked to describe how they plan to attract and serve more manufacturing and technology firms. Will a baseline be provided for each region for the number of firms served?

A59: Applicants should provide a baseline as part of their response.

Q60: Does the entity that receives the grant have to be performing the services described in the proposal now or can the entity provide them in the future?

A60: Services can be provided in the future in a realistic timeframe.

Q61: When does the Center have to be fully operational?

A61: New Centers should be operational within three months after the contract start date.

Q62: If a new Center is being proposed, how long will the Center have to hire staff and implement a program?

A62: Key staff should be identified, to the extent possible, in the applicant's proposal. Remaining staff should be hired as appropriate to address regional needs.

Q63: What is the LIREDC definition of biotechnology?

A63: Applicants can view Regional Priority Cluster information at:

Western NY: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/westernny/WNYREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf
Finger Lakes: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/fingerlakes/FLREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf
Southern Tier: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/southerntier/STREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf

Central NY: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/centralny/CNYREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf
North County: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/northcountry/NCREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf
Mohawk Valley: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/mohawkvalley/MVREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf
Capital Region: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/capitalregion/CapREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf
Mid-Hudson: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/midhudson/MHREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf
New York City: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/nyc/NYCREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf
Long Island: http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/longisland/LIREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf

Q64: What will ESD use as metrics for success for the RTDCs?

A64: Numerous factors will be weighed to determine how successful a Regional MEP is, including but not limited to: companies assisted; start-ups served; products developed; and impacts realized by companies (jobs created/retained, increased/ retained sales, etc.).

Q65: If the Center is being administered by a non-for-profit educational institution, will a separate audit be required or can it be part of the institution's audit?

A65: ESD reserves the right to require a separate audit for all activities and expenses applied to this program.

Q66: If the Center waives taking indirect costs, can they be used for as part of the matching requirement?

A66: Yes, with prior written approval from ESD, centers can use certain indirect costs as matching funds.

Q67: Will the grant be paid in tranches? We want to make sure we will be able to meet payroll dates if the grant is funding staff.

A67: Centers will receive funding on a reimbursement basis. Centers are required to provide quarterly progress and expense reports. Payments will likely be made 30 -45 days after reports are submitted, reviewed and approved.

Q68: Is the RTDC contract going to follow the standard ESD REDC procedure of reimbursements and approvals or will be the funds be paid up front?

A68: Centers will receive funding on a reimbursement basis.

Q69: Will the statewide Technology Engagement Fund be available to the companies that are part of the regional RTDC networks?

A69: Yes.

Q70: Will the grant fund stipends for internships or co-op participants?

A70: The fund can be used for stipends for the portion of time the individual is assigned to the specific project.