

NIST MEP State Stakeholder Newsletter

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MEP 2007 National Conference:

NIST MEP convened our National Conference on April 21-25 in Orlando, Florida with the theme: Growth Through Innovation – A Key to Competitiveness. The conference included multiple tracks with technical experts from inside and outside the MEP network who shared insights, new trends and opportunities in the areas of innovation, growth strategies, supply chains, sustainability, workforce, and numerous other topics. Keynote speakers included Doug Hall from Eureka! Ranch, John Brandt, CEO of the MPI group and former Editor-in-Chief of *Industry Week* and *Chief Executive* magazines, Governor John Engler, President of NAM, and Dan Korte, Vice President for Supplier Management and Procurement for Boeing Integrated Defense Systems.

Our sessions exploring biotechnology applications, renewable energy, and rapid product realization provided a context allowing the MEP center staff to gain a better overall understanding of the future for manufacturing in the United States. These sessions add to the professional development of the MEP staff, enabling them to better address the needs of manufacturers across the country. (contact: Kari.Reidy@nist.gov.)

Update on MEP Growth Strategies for Firms

MEP centers across the country are excited over the new Growth Services products launched at the MEP National Conference in Orlando. MEP Center staff have received training in the EUREKA! Winning Ways disciplined process for:

- 1) generating 50 measurably-smarter ideas for growing SMEs' businesses
- 2) evaluating the ideas based on research, benchmarking, and success likelihood; and
- 3) transforming these most promising ideas into lower risk and high reward growth initiatives using a proven management framework and action plan coaching.

EUREKA! Ranch has used this approach with large companies and pilot tested it with MEP clients, with impressive results. As states adopt strategies to promote innovation, MEP growth services offerings provide a concrete example of how work with MEP clients can contribute to a successful agenda promoting innovation, providing success stories and metrics that document impact in the near term. (contact Mark.Troppe@nist.gov.)

Department of Energy Industrial Technologies Program Partnering with MEP

The 26 university-based DOE sponsored Industrial Assessment Centers (IAC) that are part of the Industrial Technologies Program are supporting summer interns to work with their local MEP to offer energy efficiency assessments and help with using their Quick Plant Energy Profiler web-based tool. The objectives of this activity are to provide "in-house" energy expertise to the MEP center to assist smaller manufacturers with energy efficiency needs, offer IAC students additional learning opportunities to complement their IAC experience, and to foster greater partnership and cooperation between the MEP and IAC as encouraged in a recently-signed Memorandum of Understanding between DOE and NIST. (contact: Carroll.Thomas@nist.gov.)

U.S. Dept. of Labor Announces Availability of Regional Innovation Grants.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has announced a new partnership opportunity with the public workforce system focused on regional planning to address impacts of present and future economic dislocations. ETA has announced the availability of Regional Innovation Grants of up to \$250,000 for state workforce agencies and local workforce investment boards (WIBs) to conduct comprehensive planning to help communities address impacts of anticipated or potential economic dislocations. Applications (which WIBs must submit through Governors) must show evidence of partnership and support by regional key players including workforce and economic development entities, public education systems, and employers. A broad range of planning, partnership, assessment, and capacity building activities are allowable under this initiative, potentially including building awareness about how the MEP "Choices for Growth" services can contribute to regional economic growth strategies and help to grow companies in strategically important industries. (visit http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=2387 for more information.)

NAM Launching New Study About Supply Chains

NAM's Manufacturing Institute and RSM McGladrey are working with John Brandt, CEO of the MPI group and former Editor-in-Chief of *Industry Week* and *Chief Executive* magazines, to prepare a report on the changing role of SMEs in manufacturing supply chains. MEP will contribute insights from our work with suppliers and OEMs, as well as recent research undertaken. The NAM report will build on NAM's 2006 study, *Future Success of Small and Medium Manufacturers: Challenges and Policy Issues*. Watch for the report due out this fall.

USDA Energy Resources

The Department of Agriculture has a number of energy related programs that are “varied, large in scope, and spread among many USDA agencies and mission areas.” With energy becoming a more sustained issue and contributing to a greater proportion of manufacturing costs, many MEP centers are integrating resources such as those provided by USDA into services delivered to clients wherever feasible.

USDA Secretary Johanns announced on March 21 a new web-based tool designed to make “energy-related activities from across the Department accessible from a single web page.” The release notes: “The **Energy Matrix** is a comprehensive collection of information on all of USDA's energy-related programs, research efforts, funding opportunities, and technical assistance. Interested parties will be guided through depth and breadth of energy-related activities in which the Department is engaged.” This new matrix is available at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/index2/0208/EnergyPrograms.htm> and provides search by agencies, programs, or energy type. (contact: Alex.Folk@nist.gov.)

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