

Dear State Stakeholder:

The Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program is pleased to present the second installment of the NIST MEP State Stakeholder Newsletter. We are launching a State Relations' Community of Practice (CoP) to provide timely information on interesting state topics including initiatives, studies, partnerships and economic development activities, as well as highlights from the MEP program. In addition to the newsletter, the information will be available electronically on the State Relations' CoP of the MEP Source for Centers website. The Source for Centers is a MEP internal website where registered users can share relevant information. For more information on the new State Relations Community of Practice, including registration instructions, please see item #1 below or contact Aimee Dobrzeniecki at 301-975-8322.

NIST MEP State Stakeholder Newsletter

April 2006

1. Join the MEP State Relations Community of Practice

The State Relations' Community of Practice is an electronic forum where current and future MEP state partners can find information on key state initiatives, studies focused on current state activities and initiatives, partnerships and impacts and highlights from the MEP program. Members of this Community are encouraged to actively participate to create an atmosphere of sharing information, knowledge, and practices among MEP and state partners. To join the Community, please register for the Source for Centers by going to <https://www.mepcenters.nist.gov> and click on the "Register Now" link. Please select "Other" as the account type and identify Aimee Dobrzeniecki as the sponsor. Once your account is created, you will receive a confirmation email.

2. National Science Foundation Partnerships for Innovation Offers Unique Funding for Technology-based Economic Development Efforts

The Partnership for Innovations (PFI) Program within the National Science Foundation (NSF) opened a new round of competition last week, offering funding of up to \$600,000 for 10-15 successful proposals. Created in 2000, the PFI program "seeks to stimulate and capitalize on innovation by catalyzing partnerships among colleges and universities, the private sector, and federal, state and local governments."

Partnerships - both domestic and global - are increasingly critical to accelerating the development and the growth of knowledge-based economies. This is perhaps most true when it comes to the academic institution's role in innovation. It takes private companies - whether university spin-offs or existing firms - to commercialize university-generated research. To contribute most significantly to an innovation economy, students of higher education have to become graduates and then active members of the workforce. NSF strives to support all of these relationships and to improve the quality of innovative activities through the PFI program.

Last year, NSF funded 12 projects under the PFI program, including a technology incubator at the University of Louisiana and a biotechnology career center at the University of Florida. A list of projects that have been funded can be found at <http://www.nsf.gov/home/crssprgm/pfi/>.

More information is available at

http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf06550. Letters of Intent (optional) are due June 28, 2006, and full proposals are due Aug. 30, 2006. Partners may include academic institutions, non-profit organizations, private sector organizations, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, state and local government entities, trade and professional associations, and federal laboratories. International collaborations also are encouraged.

3. Recent Meeting with State Partners

NIST MEP hosted a meeting in Columbus, Ohio on March 15th with several state partners to present the Next Generation MEP Strategic Plan and to learn how the MEP system could better partner with the states as they make investments in technology and innovation for the future. State representatives included:

- Mr. Tom Palisin, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- Mr. Dan Luton, Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology
- Mr. Jim Donaldson, Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Ms. Jennifer Ruggles, Ohio Department of Development
- Mr. H. Lynn Reese, North Carolina State University Industrial Resource Center
- Ms. Sandra Watson, Arizona Department of Commerce

Presentations included a report from the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness focused on community college efforts in the area of specialized training for industry, along with a discussion with the states on how to better integrate the efforts of the MEP system with their training objectives for community colleges. The MEP system's partnerships with training and education providers are becoming more important as we better understand manufacturers' workforce development needs, especially in light of technological and business changes.

The meeting concluded with two supplier development presentations. Gary Conley of TechSolve provided a presentation on recent supply chain activities with Boeing, and Jack Parsons from Honda of America provided his perspective on how Honda's suppliers have benefited from MEP services.

All presentations as well as a summary of the meeting are available at the MEP State Relations' Community of Practice. See item number #1 above for access information. An example of the interesting state programs shared at the meeting is the brief overview of the Nano Science Associates degree program offered by Oklahoma State University, which was shared by Mr. Dan Luton of the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST).

Mr. Luton thought the information shared by NIST in the MEP State Roundtable was very helpful in understanding the goals and priorities of the MEP Program. The discussions also served to reinforce his belief that the Oklahoma Alliance (a NIST MEP affiliate) is right on track

with their new strategic priorities that bring a complete portfolio of growth-support services to their clients with an even greater emphasis on supply chain support done in partnership with other state economic development and education organizations. It was beneficial for Mr. Luton to hear how other states are overcoming challenges such as assisting their manufactures in accessing funding to pay for the innovation crucial to their survival and growth, as this is a challenge Oklahoma is currently facing. NIST MEP appreciates the contributions of all the state partners at the Columbus meeting, and we look forward to future conversations.

4. INNOVATION: Seize Tomorrow's Potential Today

How can U.S. manufacturers compete and thrive in a world where price is often the driving factor? One word: innovation. To best accelerate manufacturing growth and to maintain a globally competitive position, innovation is, and will continue to be, the answer. Learn more by joining us at the 2006 MEP National Conference, Orlando, Florida, May 21-25th where innovation is the theme.

Whether it's defined specifically as new product development, market niche segmentation, ongoing process improvement, workforce development, or state-of-the-art technology utilization, innovation is the key to helping our customers grow and stay in the game.

That's why this year's MEP National Conference is focusing on innovation. We hope you will join us. This conference is your opportunity to gather the latest tools, strategies, and knowledge needed to grow our collective intelligence in order to better instill innovation into U.S. manufacturing and help propel it into the future.

Come to the 2006 MEP National Conference for:

- Valuable technical sessions on emerging trends, new technologies, partnerships, and case studies
- Motivating expert speakers from within the MEP program as well as the broader manufacturing and business universe
- Invaluable networking among peers who understand your challenges and have new angles and new approaches to share

This conference, which features over a 100 sessions of interest to technology-based economic developers, begins Monday, May 21st with one of America's top innovation experts, Doug Hall. As the founder of Eureka! Inventing, a corporate think tank dedicated to turning the art of innovation into a reliable science, Doug brings years of experience in engineering and business innovations and initiatives for Proctor & Gamble to his current enterprise. Doug has earned accolades from such corporations as American Express, Ford Motor Company, Nike, and The Walt Disney Company. In addition, NIST MEP Director Roger Kilmer will update you on our strategies to evolve the nationwide MEP system of resources, transform manufacturers to compete globally, support greater supply chain integration, and provide access to technology for improved productivity. If you are interested in attending the 2006 MEP National Conference or have any questions, please contact the conference planning manager, Kari Reidy at kari.reidy@nist.gov or 301-975-4919. The final conference schedule is attached to this newsletter.

For more information on MEP State Relations, please contact Aimee Dobrzeniecki at 301-975-8322 or aimeed@nist.gov.