

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)
Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Program
Expanded Services Client Impact Survey
OMB Control No. 0693-XXXX

A. JUSTIFICATION

This is a request for approval of a new information collection.

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary

Sponsored by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a national network of locally-based manufacturing extension Competitive Award Recipients working with small manufacturers to assist them improve their productivity, improve profitability, and enhance their economic competitiveness.

The information collected will provide the MEP with information regarding MEP Competitive Award Recipients' performance regarding the delivery of technology and business solutions to their U.S.-based manufacturers.

The information collected will come directly from manufacturing clients of NIST MEP Competitive Award Recipients. This information will include quantified impacts on a client's sales, cost savings, employment, and investment. These figures will be used to determine the effectiveness of the project work done by the Recipients, and to gauge the overall success of the NIST MEP program. This collected information will not used to make mission-critical decisions. Collection of this information is mission-critical, as it is required for MEPs GPRA requirements, as well as outlined in the MEP Charter enacted into law by congress.

All clients that MEP centers complete substantive projects with are surveyed to determine the economic impact of the projects.

2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

The data collected will help NIST MEP monitor and evaluate the Competitive Award Recipients' participation in the program and to provide Congress with quantitative information that it requires from government-supported programs. NIST MEP collects information from Competitive Award Recipient clients on a quarterly basis. This information is used for the following purposes:

- Program Accountability
- Analysis and Research
- Reports to Stakeholders
- Continuous Improvement
- Knowledge Sharing
- Identification of Distinctive Practices
- Award Recipient Evaluation

The data will be disseminated to the public on aggregate—quantified impacts will be totaled for NIST MEPs annual impact reports to stakeholders and the general public.

The disseminated information will comply with NIST information quality guidelines.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.

Collection of this information will be done through a web-based survey instrument. Respondents will be sent their login information and a link to the survey via email.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

Due to the unique partnership relationship between MEP and the Competitive Award Recipients and their clients, comparable data are not collected from manufacturers. Consultation with other offices within the Department of Commerce have been used to gather background information about topics and about previously used approaches to increase knowledge base for the local Competitive Award Recipients. As a result, the information to be collected through this system will not duplicate any existing collection efforts.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

The MEP Competitive Award Recipients target small businesses/entities and every effort is made to ensure their experience is less burdensome. Respondents will be prepared in advance of the survey and have concepts explained to them by their local field staff. Questions have been kept to a minimum in an effort to decrease the overall burden.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

Removal of the “Sunset Provisions” (H.R.1274), have made NIST MEP a long-term investor in regional economies with a need to establish the *Competitive Award Recipient Reporting* system. These requirements are clearly stated in the MEP program legislation and the GPRA. Some of these data will be collected on a quarterly basis and will enable NIST MEP to identify Competitive Award Recipients in need of immediate assistance. Less frequent collection of data would result in the unacceptable situation of making significant policy decisions on the basis of obsolete and potentially misleading information. It might also delay the provision of assistance to the Competitive Award Recipients.

If the information is not collected, NIST MEP staff will be unable to monitor Competitive Award Recipients’ performance and ensure that the MEP program is meeting the goal of “strengthening the global competitiveness of smaller U.S. manufacturers.” Additionally, national stakeholders, including Congress and Federal agencies use the information to make annual funding decisions regarding the MEP national appropriation. These stakeholders need information on which to base their decisions. Information demonstrating compelling evidence of program effectiveness is a critical component of that decision. The NIST MEP reporting and survey systems are designed to collect this information so that it can be made available to stakeholders. Finally, MEP would be unable to fully comply with the GPRA mandate that all Federal agencies evaluate their programs’ outcomes.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

Not applicable

8. Provide information of the PRA Federal Register Notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

As required by 5CFR 1320.8(d), MEP’s notice soliciting comments on the information collection was published in the Federal Register on September 10, 2010 (Vol. 75, No. 175, pg. 55301).

A request for a copy of the survey instrument was received from Lynn Corson of Environmental Management Concepts, LLC. A copy was sent via email with no further comment or response.

9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

Not applicable.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

No assurance of confidentiality is given but the data collected is considered confidential in that it is not shared outside of NIST.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

Not applicable.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

It is estimated that NTIA will receive 1,500 responses annually x 15 minutes per respondent = 375 burden hours.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-keepers resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question 12 above).

Not applicable.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

The estimated cost to the government is \$40,000. This cost is based on an estimate of hosting the new survey on internal server, as well as additional man-hours needed to administer the survey, including programming and help desk activities.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments.

This is a new information collection.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

The data will be collected indefinitely for internal review purposes and to monitor the Competitive Award Recipients, as well as for reporting to Congress. Reports dealing with the characteristics and performance of the Competitive Award Recipients will include trends, benchmarks, statistical tables and charts generated from the database. Information will be presented in the following methods:

- Reports to Congress
- Promotional/marketing brochures
- Competitive Award Recipient Reports
- Internal Reports
- Presentations to MEP stakeholders
- Competitive Award Recipient Reviews

Data collected will only be used in aggregate.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.

Not applicable.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

Not applicable.