

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)
Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)
MEP Client Impact Survey
OMB Control No. 0693-0021

A. JUSTIFICATION

This is a request for revision and extension of a currently approved 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 Centers (over 350) 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 Center performance regarding the delivery of technology and business solutions to U.S.-based manufacturers.

The information collected will come directly from manufacturing clients of NIST MEP Centers. 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 Center, and to gauge the overall success of the NIST MEP program. Collection of this data is mission-critical, and is used for NIST MEPs Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) requirements.

NIST MEP has introduced its "Next Generation Strategy." This new strategy focuses on growth and innovation for manufacturers. The client impact survey was revised with questions that reflect the new strategic focus, and will inform management and stakeholders of the strategy's effectiveness. These new questions are geared towards new product development and how the new products relate to sales growth. The changes involve the addition of three questions, information added to questions, and shifting of questions. A description of the changes to the survey is in ROCIS IC List.

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.

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.

NIST MEP collects information from Center 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

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 or mailed letter. The hyperlink included in the email or mailed letter will direct the respondent to the online survey login page, and is a secure link. The hyperlink is not available at this time, as NIST is in the process of switching survey vendors and the link is not operational. The link in the email will be live and clickable.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

Due to the unique partnership between MEP, the Centers, and their clients, comparable data is not collected from manufacturers. Consultations with other offices within the Department of Commerce have been used to gather background information about topics and previously used approaches to increase knowledge base for the local Centers. 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.

Data collected by this survey is information that will be readily available to those that answer the survey. MEP Centers identify the person at the client site with the most knowledge of the project work completed, and with the best access to the data requested within the survey. MEP Centers take great care to educate survey respondents on the concepts within the survey prior to the survey invitation is sent. MEP Centers also confirm client contact data and perform quality assurance measures to ensure the information goes to the correct person on the first attempt. 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 to owners or employees of small businesses. .

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 *Center Reporting* system. The data collected will help NIST MEP monitor and evaluate the Centers' participation in the program and to provide Congress with quantitative information that it requires from government-supported programs. These requirements are clearly stated in the MEP program legislation and the GPRA. Some of this data will be collected on a quarterly basis and will enable NIST MEP to identify Centers 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 Centers.

If the information is not collected, NIST MEP staff will be unable to monitor Center 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 is 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.

The proposed collection of information will be conducted in a manner consistent 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.

A Federal Register notice soliciting public comments was published on July 20, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 139, pages 43264-43265). No comments were received.

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.

Data collected will only be used in aggregate. Identifying information will not be shared outside of NIST MEP.

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 10,000 respondents will complete the survey and will take 15 minutes to complete. The estimated annual burden is **2,500 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 cost to collect, review, and analyze the collected information is \$350,000. This is the approximate cost of the current data collection contract held with an independent third-party vendor.

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

This is program change increase of respondents/responses, from 8,000 to 10,000, and burden hours, from 1,067 to 1,433, as a result of the new strategies and related revised survey. The time per response increased from 8 minutes to 15 minutes. NIST MEP anticipates that as the new

strategies are rolled out, and the economy begins to recover, the MEP Centers will work with additional manufacturing clients.

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 Centers, as well as for reporting to Congress. Reports dealing with the characteristics and performance of the Centers 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
- Center Reports
- Internal Reports
- Presentations to MEP stakeholders
- Center Reviews

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