

Manufacturing Extension Partnership Technology Transfer/Transition Pilot Initiative



Background

Global competition is typically seen as a national challenge, but the front lines of the battlefield are regional, where companies, workers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and governments join together to create a local competitive advantage. Creating that advantage depends on the ability to develop innovative partnerships to leverage new ideas and new knowledge into advanced, high quality products or services.

The United States cannot continue to compete successfully against low-wage nations in commodity markets. However, innovation is a key competitive factor on which the U.S. can compete. New regional responses must be created and lessons learned rapidly and shared throughout the nation to be successful. Innovation depends heavily upon firms connecting to sources of science and technology.

Two key factors have limited this success:

- Technology Transfer Limitations - Science & Technology's (S&T) access to firms has been generally weak with S&T technology "push" often lacking key business/market orientation
- Workforce Skills Gaps - Serious skills gaps for the jobs of the future have been cited as a major barrier to innovation and to adoption of emerging technologies

To respond to these limitations, the creation of new partnerships and alignment of regional institutions based on dynamic, responsive, business-oriented requirements, including labor markets, understood and addressed by all partners, are now critical.

The Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative, under the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, is focused to respond and support talent development in driving regional economic competitiveness, increased job growth, and new opportunities for American workers.

Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)

The vision of the NIST Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is to strengthen the global competitiveness of U.S.-based manufacturing by providing information, decision support, and implementation of innovative approaches focused on leveraging new technologies, techniques, and business best practices through strategic partnerships and implementation. MEP is a nationwide manufacturing assistance network that helps firms interested in improving their performance. The MEP network has over 400 manufacturing extension offices in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, and the nearly 2,000 staff members help guide firms to greater productivity, increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness.



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Opportunity

The future of U.S.-based manufacturing depends upon the skillful adoption and successful implementation of innovative technologies and market driven knowledge. Through its well-established connections with state technology development organizations, Federal labs, and university researchers, MEP is well positioned to partner with WIRED grant recipients on three of the key ingredients to innovation, including:

- The methodologies that guide manufacturers’ continual innovation of products, processes, services, and business models;
- A technology deployment system that systematically assesses manufacturers’ needs, identifies potential technologies, evaluates alternatives for technical and commercial potential, and transitions technologies into practical solutions; and
- An entrepreneurial workforce equipped to utilize decision support tools and market intelligence to drive change.

Eight WIRED regions have been selected to participate in a pilot initiative to identify opportunities to align the activities of MEP – in the area of technology transfer/transition and innovation – with the goals of the WIRED Initiative. **Potential collaborative technology transfer and transition activities for pilot regions’ partnerships include:**

- Identification and establishment of broader partnership opportunities
- Implementation, validation, and documentation of exemplary practices
- Contribution to development of regional asset maps
- Evaluation of company-specific technology transfer or transition readiness
- Development and delivery of training/workshops
- Project implementation assistance
- Documentation of successful implementations by manufacturer(s) in region

WIRED Pilot Locations

WIRED Region	MEP Centers
California Innovation Corridor	Corporation for Manufacturing Excellence
	California Manufacturing Technology Consulting
Eastern and Central Montana	Montana Manufacturing Extension Center
Finger Lakes Region, NY	High Technology of Rochester
Kansas City	Missouri Enterprise
	Mid-America Manufacturing Technology Center
North Central Indiana	Indiana MEP - Purdue Technical Assistance Program
Piedmont Triad North Carolina	North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership
Tennessee Valley	Tennessee MEP
	Alabama Technology Network
West Michigan	Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center

