AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO



(5) *Program evaluation*. The applicant should specify plans for evaluation of the effectiveness of the proposed tool or technique and for ensuring continuous improvement of the tool. Factors that may be considered include: Thoroughness of evaluation plans, including internal evaluation for management control, external evaluation for assessing outcomes of the activity, and ''customer satisfaction'' measures of performance.

(6) *Management experience and plans*. Applicants should specify plans for proper organization, staffing, and management of the implementation process. Factors that may be considered include: Appropriateness and authority of the governing or managing organization to conduct the proposed activities; qualifications of the project team and its leadership to conduct the proposed activity; soundness of any staffing plans, including recruitment, selection, training, and continuing professional development; and appropriateness of the organizational approach for carrying out the proposed activity.

(7) *Financial plan*. Applicants should show the relevance and cost effectiveness of the financial plan for meeting the objectives of the project; the firmness and level of the applicant's total financial support for the project; and a plan to maintain the program after the cooperative agreement has expired. Factors that may be considered include: Reasonableness of the budget, both in income and expenses; strength of commitment and amount of the proposer's cost share, if any; effectiveness of management plans for control of budget; appropriateness of matching contributions; and plan for maintaining the program after the cooperative agreement has expired.

### § 292.4 Information infrastructure projects.

(a) *Eligibility criteria*. In general, eligible applicants for these projects include all for profit and nonprofit organizations including universities, community colleges, state governments, state technology programs and independent nonprofit organizations. However, specific limitations on eligibility may be specified in solicitations. Organizations may submit multiple proposals under this category in each solicitation for unique projects.

(b) *Project objective*. The purpose of these projects is to support and act as a catalyst for the development and implementation of information infrastructure services and pilots. These projects will aid manufacturing extension organizations and smaller manufacturers in accessing the technical information they need or will accelerate the rate of adoption of electronic commerce. Specific industry sectors to be addressed or subcategories of information infrastructure projects include, but are not limited to, pilot demonstration of electronic data interchange in a supplier chain, implementation of an electronic information service for field engineers at MEP extension centers, and industry specific electronic information services for MEP centers and smaller manufacturers.

(c) *Award period*. Projects initiated under this category may be carried out over a period of up to three years. If an application is selected for funding, DOC has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of DOC.

(d) *Matching requirements*. Matching fund requirements for these proposals will be specified in solicitations including the breakdown of cash and in-kind requirements. For those projects not requiring matching funds, the presence of match will be considered in the evaluation under the Financial Plan criteria.

(e) *Information infrastructure projects evaluation criteria*. Proposals from applicants will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the following criteria listed in descending order of importance:

(1) *Demonstration that the proposed project will meet the need of the target customer base*. The target customer base must be clearly defined and, in general, will be technical assistance providers and/or smaller manufacturers. The proposal should demonstrate a clear understanding of the customer base's needs within the proposed project area. The proposal should also show that the efforts being proposed meet the needs

identified. Factors that may be considered include: A clear definition of the customer base, size and demographic distribution; demonstrated understanding of the customer base's needs within the project area; and appropriateness of the size of the customer base and the anticipated impact for the proposed expenditure.

(2) *Development plans and delivery/implementation mechanisms.* The proposal must set forth clearly defined, effective plans for the development, delivery and/or implementation of proposed services to the customer base. The proposal must delineate the sources of information which will be used to implement the project. Sources may include those internal to the center (including staff expertise) or from other organizations. Factors that may be considered include: Adequacy of plans; potential effectiveness and efficiency of proposed delivery and implementation systems; demonstrated capacity to form effective linkages; partnerships necessary for success of the proposed activity; strength of core competency in the proposed area of activity; and demonstrated access to relevant technical or information sources external to the organization.

(3) *Coordination with other relevant organizations.* Wherever possible the project should be coordinated with and leverage other organizations which are developing or have expertise within the project area. In addition, the project should demonstrate that it does not duplicate efforts which already are being performed by the private sector without government support. Applicants will need to describe how they will coordinate to allow for increased economies of scale and to avoid duplication. If the proposer will not be partnering with any other organizations, then the proposal should clearly explain why the project will be more successful if implemented as proposed. A proposal which makes a credible case for why there are no, or very limited, partnerships will not be penalized in evaluation. Factors that may be considered include: Demonstrated understanding of existing organizations and resources relevant to the proposed project; Adequate linkages and partnerships with relevant existing organizations; clear definition of the roles of partnering organizations in the proposed activities; and that the proposed activity does not duplicate existing services or resources.

(4) *Management and organizational experience and plans.* Applicants should specify plans for proper organization, staffing, and management of the project. Factors that may be considered include: Appropriateness and authority of the governing or managing organization to conduct the proposed activities; qualifications of the project team and its leadership to conduct the proposed activity; soundness of any staffing plans, including recruitment, selection, training, and continuing professional development; and appropriateness of the organizational approach for carrying out the proposed activity.

(5) *Financial plan.* Applicants should show the relevance and cost effectiveness of the financial plan for meeting the objectives of the project; the firmness and level of the applicant's total financial support for the project; and the ability of the project to continue after the cooperative agreement has expired without federal support. While projects that appear to require ongoing public support will be considered, in general, they will be evaluated lower than those which show a strong ability to become self-sufficient. Factors that may be considered include: Reasonableness of the budget, both in income and expenses; strength of commitment and amount of the proposer's cost share, if any; effectiveness of management plans for control of budget; appropriateness of matching contributions; and plan for maintaining the program after the cooperative agreement has expired.

(6) *Evaluation.* The applicant should specify plans for evaluation of the effectiveness of the proposed project and for ensuring continuous improvement. Factors that may be considered include: Thoroughness of evaluation plans, including internal evaluation for management control, external evaluation for assessing outcomes of the activity, and ''customer satisfaction'' measures of performance.