



**FEDERAL AWARDING  
AGENCY:**

Washington Headquarters Services Acquisition  
Directorate (WHS/AD)

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY  
TITLE:**

Department of War (DoW) Science, Technology,  
Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) National Defense  
Education Program (NDEP) Notice of Funding  
Opportunity (NFO)

**ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE:**

Amendment 05: Manufacturing Engineering Education  
Program (MEEP) - Optics Education and Workforce  
Development

**NOTICE OF FUNDING  
OPPORTUNITY (NFO)  
NUMBER:**

HQ003423NFOEASD01

**ASSISTANCE LISTING:**

12.006 National Defense Education Program

**KEY DATES:**

Amendment Posted: 23 March 2026  
White Papers Due: 13 April 2026, 23:59 Eastern  
Invitation for Full Technical Applications: 11 May 2026  
Technical Applications Due: 15 June 2026, 23:59 Eastern  
Notification of Award (Tentative): 13 July 2026  
Award Finalized (Tentative): 10 August 2026

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## I. Program Description

The DoW National Defense Education Program (NDEP) is seeking to establish new or to enhance existing programs (or collections of programs) to better position the current and next-generation manufacturing workforce to produce military systems and components that assure technological superiority for the DoW. Proposed programs must support innovative approaches in optics education and workforce development.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 established the “Manufacturing Engineering Education Program,” (MEEP) (10 U.S.C. § 4843) which authorizes the Department of War (DoW) to support industry-relevant, manufacturing-focused, engineering training at United States institutions of higher education, industry, nonprofit institutions, and consortia of such institutions or industry.

DoW seeks a broad range of consolidated and integrated multidisciplinary programs of education with an emphasis on the following components:

- (1) Multidisciplinary instruction that encompasses the total manufacturing engineering enterprise and that may include—
  - a. manufacturing engineering education and training through classroom activities, laboratory activities, thesis projects, individual or team projects, internships, cooperative work-study programs, and interactions with industrial facilities, consortia, or such other activities and organizations in the United States and foreign countries as the Secretary considers appropriate;
  - b. faculty development programs;
  - c. recruitment of educators highly qualified in manufacturing engineering to teach or develop manufacturing engineering courses;
  - d. presentation of seminars, workshops, and training for the development of specific manufacturing engineering skills;
  - e. activities involving interaction between students and industry, including programs for visiting scholars, personnel exchange, or industry executives;
  - f. development of new, or updating and modification of existing, manufacturing curriculum, course offerings, and education programs;
  - g. establishment of programs in manufacturing workforce training;
  - h. establishment of joint manufacturing engineering programs with defense laboratories and depots; and
  - i. expansion of manufacturing training and education programs and outreach for members of the armed forces, dependents and children of such members, veterans, and employees of the Department of War.
- (2) Opportunities for students to obtain work experience in optics manufacturing through such activities as internships, summer job placements, or cooperative work-study programs.
- (3) Faculty and student engagement with industry that is directly related to, and supportive of, the education of students in optics manufacturing engineering because of—
  - a. the increased understanding of manufacturing engineering challenges and potential solutions; and

- b. the enhanced quality and effectiveness of the instruction that result from that increased understanding.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to clearly articulate how their proposed MEEP effort builds upon or complements the existing ecosystem of optics education and workforce development or demonstrate how the proposal will address specific regional or national needs without duplicating existing initiatives. Further, applications should outline how the proposed initiatives directly engage and attract future generations of talent to support manufacturing defense missions, and thus supporting the U.S. military in strengthening its technical advantage over strategic competitors.

**Interested parties should submit a white paper in response to this amendment no later than 13 April 2026 at 23:59pm ET, following the instructions and template outlined in Sections III.A., IV, and XII of the NFO.**

The white paper should be emailed to **osd.ndep.dodstem@mail.mil** with the subject line, “NFO White Paper Submission, Amendment 05: MEEP.” Applications will undergo a merit-based review, and selected applicants will be *invited by the Government via email* to submit a full technical application on Grants.gov for evaluation and possible award consideration.

At a minimum, selection criteria will be evaluated per 10 U.S.C. § 4843, item (g).

## **II. Federal Award Information**

The Department intends to award multiple grants with a maximum grant award of up to \$3.5M for a period of up to three (3) years, subject to the availability of funds. Applications with a proposed budget exceeding maximum grant may be considered, subject to the overall merit and impact of proposed activity, and availability of funds. However, this does not bind the Government to award grants beyond the maximum grant award described above.

## **III. Technical Application Requirements**

Technical applications *are accepted by invitation only* and must adhere to all application guidelines and page limits, found in NFO Section IV. **Note the turnaround time between invitations sent by the Government to submit full technical applications and when technical applications are due. Refer to timeline on the cover page.**

The Project Narrative page limit is 25 pages, and is broken out as follows. Descriptions of each section are outlined in the NFO (Section IV.F.b.).

- Cover Page – 1 page
- Table of Contents – 1 page
- Technical Approach and Justification – no more than 7 pages
- Project Schedule and Milestones – no more than 2 pages
- Financial Breakdown – no more than 2 pages
- Reports – no more than 1 page
- Management Approach – no more than 1 page
- Metrics and Evaluation – no more than 2 pages
- Qualifications – no more than 1 page

- Responsibility – no more than 1 pages
- Facilities & Equipment – 1 page
- Work Plan – no more than 5 pages

#### **IV. Evaluation Criteria**

Awards under this NFO Amendment will be made to applicants on the basis of the evaluation criteria listed below. The weight or relative importance of each criterion is included in parentheses.

**1) Overall technical merits (60%):**

Overall technical merits of the applicant's proposal shall clearly describe its creativity, innovation, feasibility, and efficacy to achieve the NFO objectives. Also considered is:

- a) The quality of the program's plan to execute proposed activity and assess effectiveness of the program and participant outcomes;
- b) The Applicant's capabilities, related experience, facilities, techniques or unique combinations of these which are integral factors for achieving the application objectives; and
- c) The qualifications, capabilities and experience of the proposed Project Director / Principal Investigator, team leader and key personnel who are critical to achieving the application objectives.

**2) Relevance and Alignment (20%):**

Application must address programs and capabilities listed in this Amendment specifically as it pertains to optics education and workforce development. Manufacturing activities, industrial sectors, or regional interests should be relevant to national security and economic competitiveness.

**3) Cost Analysis (20%):**

A cost analysis will be performed to determine reasonableness of the proposed budget. Long-term sustainability plan will also be evaluated under this criterion. The availability of funds to support the effort and long-term sustainability of the project will also be considered.