Q - Does the completion of the CESMII Current State Assessment satisfy the following grant application requirement?

> A - Yes. Completion of the CESMII Technology Assessment through Maryland MEP satisfies this application requirement. The assessment provides a visual snapshot of manufacturers' Industry 4.0 maturity across six key business dimensions and measures overall readiness to adopt and sustain Industry 4.0 practices, helping leadership prioritize investments.

Q - If we went through the CESMII assessment last year do we have to do it again to apply this year?

> A - No. Manufacturers that completed the CESMII Technology Assessment through Maryland MEP for a previous Maryland Manufacturing 4.0 application do not need to repeat the assessment for this funding round.

Q - If we don't need to install robotics, what other technologies (internal assembly or production process software perhaps) would qualify for the grant program?

> A - Robotics are only one example of eligible investments. Projects involving ERP systems, Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES), industrial software, AI applications, advanced sensors, machine connectivity, cloud computing, cybersecurity, systems integration, predictive maintenance, industrial data analytics, digital quality systems, automation, digital work instructions, and other Industry 4.0 technologies are all potentially eligible if they clearly improve manufacturing competitiveness and align with a broader modernization strategy.

Q - I have completed the CESMII assessment, but have not heard back from receiving a chart. Is there something else that I need to do?

> A - Please contact Maryland MEP, who administers the CESMII assessment on behalf of the program. They can verify completion and provide your assessment results.

Q - If we already completed the CESMII Technology Assessment offered through partner Maryland MEP in 2025 when we applied last year - do we need to take that assessment again this year to apply? Or do we only need to take the assessment one time?

> A - Manufacturers that completed the CESMII Technology Assessment through Maryland MEP for a previous Maryland Manufacturing 4.0 application do not need to repeat the assessment for this funding round.

Q - Can a company apply to the grant for multiple projects/initiatives within the same company?

A - Applicants are encouraged to submit a single application that represents their highest priority Manufacturing 4.0 modernization project. If multiple related technologies support one overall modernization effort, they should generally be presented as one integrated project rather than separate applications.

Q - Can you apply for different projects at different award amounts?

A - Commerce encourages applicants to submit the strongest project aligned with their long-term Industry 4.0 strategy.

Q - For eligibility purposes, is the 250-employee limit evaluated at the individual manufacturing site level or at the legal-entity / parent-company level?

A - Employee eligibility is based on the total full-time employees of the legal manufacturing business applying for the grant, not a single facility. The program eligibility specifies businesses with between 3 and 250 full-time employees at Maryland facilities.

Q - If a company is relocating operations and purchasing new equipment as part of a broader modernization effort, what portion of those investments would typically qualify for funding?

A - Eligible costs are those directly associated with implementing new Industry 4.0 technologies. The modernization technology, machinery, software, implementation, integration, and associated training may qualify. General building construction, relocation expenses, or conventional equipment purchases unrelated to Industry 4.0 generally would not. Eligible costs are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Q - Can engineering, consulting, facility layout, implementation, training, and systems integration costs be included alongside equipment purchases?

A - Yes. Consultant fees, engineering, facility layout, systems integration, implementation, software licensing, installation, and employee training directly related to the Industry 4.0 project are eligible project expenses and are reviewed as part of the application. In most cases we ask for these costs to be covered by your match to the grant.

Q - Is there a maximum length of project that will be approved?

A - Projects should generally be completed within the performance period established in the grant agreement. Commerce expects projects to proceed promptly following award and generally take no more than the year that the grant agreement covers. We will review and approve exceptions on an as needed basis.

Q - Is the Maryland Manufacturing 4.0 Grant expected to be an ongoing annual program, or is the current funding cycle considered a one-time opportunity?

A - The Maryland Manufacturing 4.0 Program has been funded annually since its creation, but future funding remains subject to State appropriations approved by the Maryland General Assembly. Applicants should not assume future funding opportunities beyond the current application cycle.

Q - Are there any restrictions on what type of manufacturers can receive the grant funds?

A - Applicants must be Maryland manufacturers classified under NAICS 31-33 and meet all published eligibility requirements. The program is industry-neutral within manufacturing and is open to all manufacturers meeting eligibility requirements.

Q - Will the recording of this be sent out?

A - Yes. The webinar recording will be posted following the event for manufacturers unable to attend live. Here is the link to the recording: https://vimeo.com/1209938937?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci

Q - Do you provide technical assistance? I am interested in opening a food manufacturing processing center.

A - Yes. Maryland Department of Commerce works closely with Maryland MEP and other resource partners to assist manufacturers with technology planning and project development. Companies interested in establishing manufacturing operations may also contact Commerce's Office of Manufacturing for additional resources and referrals.

Q - Consultant and implementation costs are eligible project expenses, so many applicants will need a technology or implementation partner to build a credible project. From the program's side, is there a preferred way for applicants to find and vet those partners, for example a vendor directory, a referral through Maryland MEP, or matchmaking, and what can a qualified support firm do to be visible to manufacturers as they're scoping their applications?

A - Commerce does not maintain a preferred vendor list. Manufacturers are encouraged to work with trusted technology providers, systems integrators, equipment suppliers, and consultants of their choice. Maryland MEP can often provide referrals or technical guidance during project development. Commerce does not endorse individual vendors.

Q - What's the link to the assessment?

A - Applicants should contact Maryland MEP or visit the Maryland Manufacturing 4.0 webpage for the link to request access to the assessment from the Maryland MEP team.

Q - If the same team, business activity, and project direction operated for a year under a prior entity before spinning out into the current entity, does that prior period count toward the 2-year minimum?

A - Eligibility is generally based on the legal entity applying for the grant. Unique corporate restructurings, mergers, or spin-outs should be discussed with Commerce prior to application, as supporting documentation may be required.

Q - If >25% has been invested by the manufacturer ahead of receiving funding, is any amount of that investment reimbursable?

A - Applicants may begin making purchase decisions after the application period closes at their own risk. If selected, eligible project costs incurred after the allowable pre-award period identified by Commerce may be eligible. Costs incurred before the allowable period are generally not reimbursable.

Q - Will companies that are wanting to procure technologies from other Maryland companies receive preferential consideration?

A - The scoring rubric does not provide explicit preference for purchasing from Maryland vendors. However, applicants are encouraged to consider Maryland suppliers where practical because of the broader economic benefit to the State.

Q - Would CMMC implementation/audit costs qualify, provided this is a requirement to build/manufacture products in MD?

A - Potentially yes. If cybersecurity improvements such as CMMC implementation are directly tied to manufacturing operations and Industry 4.0 modernization, they may be considered as part of an eligible project. Stand-alone compliance activities without a clear manufacturing modernization component may be less competitive. Projects are reviewed individually.

Q - Our company was established in Maryland in September 2024, and we are currently manufacturing and selling our product, with $100k+ in annual revenue. Would we be eligible to apply? Specifically, is the two-year requirement measured as of the application deadline, the grant award date, or the project start date?

A - To be eligible, a business must have been established for a minimum of two years prior to application. Companies not yet meeting the two-year requirement would not be eligible during this application cycle.

Q - Can the purchase of our technology qualify for the grant (if we had a MD customer of our sanding robots, for instance) should we encourage them to apply?

A - Yes. Manufacturers purchasing eligible Industry 4.0 technologies from your company may apply for funding if they meet all program eligibility requirements. The grant is awarded to the manufacturing company implementing the technology, not to the technology vendor.

Q - It sounds like the case we are making for the tech being added to the manufacturing facility is that the new tech will help improve the facilities operations in some way, is that correct?

A - Yes. Successful applications clearly demonstrate how the proposed technology will improve manufacturing operations through increased productivity, quality, efficiency, capacity, workforce development, competitiveness, resilience, or other measurable business outcomes.

Q - There was a question regarding geographic and industry specific dispersion of grant funding. Please let me know if geography or industry specific dispersion are considerations in the grant.

A - Geography and specific industry within the grant application have no relevancy. Please refer to the scoring rubric. Currently these considerations are not relevant to the grant awards.

Q - There was a question regarding national companies that have a Maryland presence, but retain other facilities in other states. Would the total corporate size influence decisions on the grant designations so long as they fit into the State of Maryland requirements for the grant?

A - No. Currently we review corporate size within the State of Maryland and do not factor in the total corporate size of the entity outside of the State of Maryland.

Q - I'd appreciate the opportunity to connect after the presentation and learn more about the types of financing gaps you see most often with Maryland manufacturers. Could you please provide me with an email that I can contact you after the zoom meeting?

A - Absolutely. Manufacturers and industry partners are encouraged to contact the Maryland Department of Commerce Office of Manufacturing following the webinar. Questions may be directed to m4grant.commerce@maryland.gov or to the program staff listed on the program webpage.