Doing Business with DARPA

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October 28, 2019
Abstract and Full Proposal Tips

Proposal Abstract Tips

• Abstracts are strongly encouraged, but optional
• Abstracts are limited to 8 pages
• DARPA will respond to abstracts with a statement as to whether DARPA is interested in receiving a full proposal
• You may submit a full proposal even if you did not submit an abstract

Full Proposal Tips

• Read the BAA carefully - Nonconforming proposals may be rejected without review
• The BAA has two technical areas - Proposals that fail to address both technical areas will be considered non-responsive
• Full Proposal Volume I is limited to 40 pages
• Understand the evaluation criteria
• SOW and Budget template provided; Human Subjects Research and Animal Research are anticipated
• You may submit a full proposal even if a proposal is discouraged in response to your abstract

See BAA pgs. 24-28 for details regarding Volume I, Technical & Management Proposal. Be sure to address the requirements in pgs. 5-17
Cost Proposal Tips

• Read the BAA carefully - Nonconforming proposals may be rejected without review

• There is no page limit to Volume II, Cost Proposal

• Cost breakdowns are outlined in the BAA
  o By Phase (I, II, & III) by contractor fiscal year; phases II and III will be options
  o Total program cost by major task
  o Projected funding required by month (account for early equipment needs)
  o **Subcontractor** proposals **must** be prepared at the same level of detail as that required of the prime

• Don’t forget travel funds for key personnel to attend the Kickoff Meeting and semi-annual PI Review meetings

• There is an optional (**but highly recommended**) MS Excel budget template provided (later presentation on how to use it)

• Address any restrictions on the Government’s use of Intellectual Property in accordance with BAA pages 33 and 34

DARPA strongly encourages establishing teams to address all technical areas to ensure the expertise and capabilities necessary to meet program goals.

- You must **find your collaborators on your own**. Specific content, communications, networking, and team formation are the sole responsibility of the proposer teams.

- It is **expected that proposals will involve multidisciplinary teams** that include expertise from multiple complementary disciplines (e.g., synthetic biology, sensor technology, plant genomics and ecology).

- Your **team must submit a single, integrated proposal** led by a single Principal Investigator/Manager (Prime contractor) that addresses all program Phases as applicable.

This BAA is open to all responsible sources:

- FFRDCs and Government Entities (Government/National labs, military educational institutions) are subject to direct competition limitations.
  - Must clearly demonstrate that the work is not otherwise available from the private sector and provide written documentation citing the specific statutory authority and contractual authority, if relevant, establishing their ability to propose to BAA.
- Organizational Conflicts of Interest.
- Foreign entities may join a team or submit as the prime contractor (section 3.1.2).

If you are a member of a team, you may join any number of other teams or form your own and submit a proposal as the prime contract.
Full Proposal Review-Awards Process

- No common Statement of Work - Proposals evaluated on individual merit and relevance as it relates to the stated research goals/objectives rather than against each other
- Proposals are not ranked, but evaluated for strengths and weaknesses with respect to the criteria published in the BAA:
  - Overall Scientific and Technical Merit
  - Potential Contribution and Relevance to the DARPA Mission
  - Realism of Proposed Schedule
  - Plans and Capability to Accomplish Technology Transition
  - Cost Realism
- Government reserves the right to select for award all, some (partial selection), or none of the proposals received
- Government anticipates making multiple awards - procurement contracts, cooperative agreements, or other transactions may be awarded
- Contract negotiation timelines depend on each institution/organization’s response time
- The contracting office will contact the selected performers and begin the contracting process. The effort is anticipated to be fundamental research with no publication restrictions.

Anticipated NOW program kick off date is June 2020

See BAA pg. 36-38 for details regarding proposal evaluation

*SRO = Scientific Review Official
5.1 Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria, listed in descending order of importance:

1) Overall Scientific and Technical Merit,
2) Potential Contribution and Relevance to the DARPA Mission,
3) Realism of Proposed Schedule,
4) Plans and Capability to Accomplish Technology Transition,
5) Cost Realism

5.1.1. Overall Scientific and Technical Merit

The proposed technical approach is innovative, feasible, achievable, and complete. The proposed technical team has the expertise and experience to accomplish the proposed tasks. Task descriptions and associated technical elements provided are complete and in a logical sequence with all proposed deliverables clearly defined such that a final outcome that achieves the goal can be expected as a result of award. The proposal identifies major technical risks and planned mitigation efforts are clearly defined and feasible.

5.1.2. Potential Contribution and Relevance to the DARPA Mission

The potential contributions of the proposed effort are relevant to the national technology base. Specifically, DARPA's mission is to make pivotal early technology investments that create or prevent strategic surprise for U.S. National Security.

5.1.3. Realism of Proposed Schedule

The proposed schedule aggressively pursues performance metrics in the shortest timeframe and accurately accounts for that timeframe. The proposed schedule identifies and mitigates any potential schedule risk.

5.1.4. Plans and Capability to Accomplish Technology Transition

Realism of Proposed Schedule

The proposer clearly demonstrates its capability to transition the technology to the research, industrial, and/or operational military communities in such a way as to enhance U.S. defense. In addition, the evaluation will take into consideration the extent to which the proposed intellectual property (IP) rights will potentially impact the Government's ability to transition the technology.

5.1.5. Cost Realism

The proposed costs are realistic for the technical and management approach and accurately reflect the technical goals and objectives of the solicitation. The proposed costs are consistent with the proposer's Statement of Work and reflect a sufficient understanding of the costs and level of effort needed to successfully accomplish the proposed technical approach. The costs for the prime proposer and proposed subawardees are substantiated by the details provided in the proposal (e.g., the type and number of labor hours proposed per task, the types and quantities of materials, equipment and fabrication costs, travel and any other applicable costs and the basis for the estimates).
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BAA Inbox and Submission

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BAA Coordinator
DARPA Biological Technologies Office

October 28, 2019
TIPS

- Pay close attention to submission deadlines
  - Abstract submissions are STRONGLY recommended
  - Proposals will be reviewed without regard to abstract response
- Formation of complete teams with comprehensive expertise and capabilities is viewed as critical
  - Teaming is strongly encouraged
  - Teams are encouraged to have a program integrator/program manager

Take advantage of today’s opportunities to meet potential teammates
Direct **ALL** questions and communications to the BAA Inbox:

**NOW@darpa.mil**

Dr. Jenkins, any member of her team, or the BAA Inbox **cannot provide feedback or guidance on any aspect of your proposal, they can only clarify the content of the NOW BAA.**

DARPA will update the NOW FAQs on a regular basis. FAQs can be found on the DARPA Opportunities web page (below the entry for NOW):


All **questions must be submitted at least 7-10 days prior** to the proposal submission deadline in order to guarantee a response.
Before submitting a question, you should...

- Read the BAA

- Understand that you’ll get a clarification, not an idea

- Re-read the BAA

- Understand that you won’t get any information from a competitor

- Study the BAA

- Understand that your question will likely be added to the FAQ

• Memorize the BAA!!!
Q: One of my technical components does not fit into the SWaP constraints, is that okay?
A: All developed systems must function within defined SWaP and function simply, reliably, and continuously in austere and/or isolated environments (e.g., far-forward positions with limited infrastructure). Technological advancements that relax reaction conditions, reduce energy demand, and lessen platform vulnerabilities to stress-strain factors and corrosion by enabling process operations closer to ambient conditions are preferred.

Q: Does my team have to apply to both TAs?
A: Both technical areas must be developed concurrently over the duration of the effort. Proposals that fail to address both technical areas will be considered non-responsive.

Q: My research is not geared specifically to meet the NOW program goals. Is there an alternate solicitation that I can respond to?
A: Yes. DARPA/BTO has an office-wide solicitation (HR001119S0048) for this purpose. Responses are being collected through April 23, 2020.

Q: What products are most desirable to the Department of Defense?
A: From the outset, proposed approaches and developed technologies should identify desired product outputs that align to the specific military operations and scenarios outlined in the BAA.
• NO submissions via fax/e-mail

• Submission Methods
  • Proposals Requesting Cooperative Agreements – Grants.gov
  • Proposal Abstracts and Proposal Requesting Any other Award Instrument – DARPA BAA Portal

• Start Today 😊

• Only attach attachments requested in the BAA
Final bits of advice

Read the BAA over and over again and follow all instructions carefully.

A conforming proposal addresses all aspects of the BAA

- Pay attention to “must”, “should”, “shall”, and “all” in the BAA
- Nonconforming proposals may not be evaluated

**DO NOT** try to shoehorn ongoing, but not applicable, work into the BAA

**DO NOT** submit a rewritten USDA, NIH or NSF proposal

**DO NOT** propose to do anything that is not directly relevant to the BAA

**DO NOT** submit an irrelevant or incomplete proposal in the hope we’ll fund it anyway

A proposal abstract is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**