

2026 Young Faculty Award (YFA) Research Announcement (RA)
DARPARA2502
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
as of 10/9/25

Questions for this RA should be submitted to YFA2026@darpa.mil. All FAQs will be updated on a continual basis.

60Q: Are Tables and Figures expected in the submission, and do they count toward the one-page Executive Summary limit? Are References required, and do they also count toward the one-page Executive summary limit?

60A: The Executive Summary submission should follow the template and instructions provided in Attachment A to the RA. Executive Summaries shall not exceed a maximum of 1 page, excluding the Cover Sheet. Items 1 through 4 (to include any figures, tables, and charts) will count toward the page limit. The Executive Summary should not include any references. See FAQ 29 and 38.

59Q: Should I include the dollar amount of current award option years when determining my eligibility apply based on DOD funding? Does it matter if the option will not be active until after the YFA competition proposal window closes?

59A: For purposes of determining eligibility for the YFA 2026 solicitation, only funds that have been formally obligated (i.e., received under an executed base or option award) should be included when calculating total DARPA and/or DoD funding to date.

Unexercised option years, even if budgeted or anticipated, should not be counted toward the funding threshold, as these funds have not yet been obligated and may not ultimately be awarded.

Therefore, if an option year will not be exercised or active until after the YFA proposal window closes, it does **not** affect eligibility for the current competition. However, if additional option funds are obligated prior to the proposal submission date, the proposer should include those amounts when reassessing eligibility.

58Q: Can you please confirm the maximum amount a PI may request for the US Person Graduate Student option on a 2026 DARPA YFA award? Page 2 of the RA states the amount may not exceed \$200,000, but page 4 lists the cap as \$350,000.

58A: Each award has the potential for additional options concurrent to the base for a United States (U.S.) Person Graduate Student, not to exceed \$350,000. DARPARA2502 Amendment 1 will reflect this clarification.

57Q: Does being a co-PI (as opposed to the PI) on a DoD award count towards the total dollar amount used for eligibility? This question was addressed for subcontractors but not co-PIs.

57A: Yes. If a proposer has been named as co-PI on an award or subcontract, half of the total share of the dollar amount awarded to the awardee or subawardee should be considered when determining eligibility.

56Q: Does the YFA allow for a co-investigator? What are the options for subawardees?

56A: This RA solicits single Principal Investigator (PI) proposals for research and development in the specific TAs of interest. See Section III: Submission Information, Subawardee Proposals and Section IV: Special Considerations for other eligibility considerations.

55Q: I have previously personally submitted and performed for a DARPA ARC effort and proposed two other DARPA efforts. My advisor is a former YFA recipient. Do these considerations and having an interested DARPA PM open any possibilities for special consideration?

55A: Proposals will be evaluated using the criteria provided in the RA and responsiveness to the chosen YFA topic. Your eligibility will be assessed based on funding you have received, your employment status, and the other considerations presented in the YFA RA.

54Q: Is it allowable for the graduate student associated with the effort to be associated with faculty at a different institution than the YFA recipient?

54A: Yes, as long as any relevant eligibility requirements are met by the graduate students.

53Q: My advisor is a prior YFA recipient. Am I eligible to apply for a YFA and keep my current advisor? My advisor would not receive funds through the Cooperative Agreement.?

53A: Yes, you may apply as long as you meet the eligibility considerations.

52Q: If a potential proposer is an incoming Assistant Professor at a U.S. institution, with a start date in December 2025, would they be eligible to apply for the DARPA Young Faculty Award in the current cycle?

52A: If a proposer is employed at a U.S. institution, which includes those in U.S. states and territories, and meets the other eligibility requirements, at the time they submit a full proposal, they are eligible to propose for a YFA 2026 award. Note, executive summaries are not required. See also Section IV: Special Considerations in the YFA RA.

51Q: The solicitation states that “Proposers who have received funding greater than \$500,000 from DARPA or \$1,250,000 from all DoD sources combined as either a prime or subawardee are not eligible to apply.” Could you clarify whether that amount refers specifically to an individual’s direct portion of funding as opposed to the total award amount? Does the amount include the total DoD funding received across all awards including any portions provided to subs? How should any prior SBIR/STTR funding awards received be applied towards this limit?

51A: If a proposer has been named on an award or subcontract as PI, the total share of the dollar amount awarded to the awardee or subawardee should be considered when determining eligibility. If a proposer has been named as co-PI on an award or subcontract, half of the total share of the dollar amount awarded to the awardee or subawardee should be considered when determining eligibility. The relevance of SBIR/STTR funding depends on the funding agency – if funding came from DARPA or another DoD agency, the total share of the dollar amount awarded to the awardee or subawardee should be considered when determining eligibility. The funding eligibility

considerations do not consider work performed when a proposer was not named as a PI, Co-PI and/or Key or Sr. Personnel.

50Q: Are researchers in small for-profit companies automatically ineligible for the YFA 2026?

50A: If a proposer is employed at a U.S. institution, which includes those in U.S. states and territories, and meets the other eligibility requirements, they are eligible to propose for a YFA 2026 award.

49Q: Could you please advise if I am eligible to apply for the YFA? I work at a non-profit, and I have received my doctorate within the last 12 years. I've never been the PI on a winning proposal, but I was just made the program manager and key personnel on an active DARPA contract through a contract modification.

49A: If you are now listed as the program manager and key personnel on a DOD effort that exceeds the funding eligibility limits laid out in the RA, you would not be eligible to apply for a YFA.

48Q: The solicitation states that "Proposers who have received funding greater than \$500,000 from DARPA or \$1,250,000 from all DoD sources combined as either a prime or subawardee are not eligible to apply." Could you please clarify whether this threshold refers to Total awarded funds (regardless of obligation or expenditure), Obligated funds (regardless of whether they have been spent), or Only funds that have been spent?

48A: The threshold is based on formally Obligated funds (i.e., received under an executed base or option award).

47Q: If a proposer was part of a \$500,000 collaborative award, but he/she had a small share of the award (i.e., less than \$500k), will that person be eligible?

47A: Based on the funding eligibility, they would be eligible. They must also comply with all other eligibility considerations. If a proposer was named on the collaborative award as PI, the total share of the dollar amount awarded to the awardee or subawardee should be considered when determining eligibility. If a proposer was named as co-PI, half of the total share of the dollar amount awarded to the awardee or subawardee should be considered when determining eligibility. The funding eligibility considerations do not consider work performed when a proposer was not named as a PI, Co-PI and/or Key or Sr. Personnel.

46Q: The solicitation states that "Proposers who have received funding greater than \$500,000 from DARPA or \$1,250,000 from all DoD sources combined as either a prime or subawardee are not eligible to apply." Could you please confirm whether this threshold refers to the total amount awarded to the PI's institution for a project, or specifically to the portion allocated to the PI's lab? Additionally, if a project includes a Co-PI from the same institution, should each investigator's individual share be considered separately for eligibility purposes, or does the total award amount to the institution determine eligibility?

46A: If a proposer has been named on an award or subcontract as PI, the total share of the dollar amount awarded to the awardee or subawardee should be considered when determining eligibility. If a proposer has been named as co-PI on an award or subcontract, half of the total share of the dollar amount awarded to the awardee or

subawardee should be considered when determining eligibility. The funding eligibility considerations do not consider work performed when a proposer was not named as a PI, Co-PI and/or Key or Sr. Personnel.

45Q: I do not understand whether the focus of this program is on basic/fundamental research or applied research. Could you please clarify this?

45A: Fundamental research only. See Section IV: Special Considerations, "DARPA will not select proposals for negotiation of an award if the proposal is deemed to be Applied Research, or otherwise requires Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) restrictions."

44Q: I was the Prime for a DARPA award valued at \$900,000 but \$450,000 of this award was for my subcontractors. Do I meet eligibility?

44A: No, you would not meet eligibility requirements. The value of your award exceeded \$500,000.

43Q: I was a subcontractor for a DARPA award that was valued at \$900,000, and I received \$450,000. Am I eligible to apply?

43A: Yes, the value of the subaward was less than \$500,000 and if other eligibility requirements are met you can apply for the YFA program.

42Q: Can I propose travel costs for non-DoD events and activities?

42A: Proposing travel costs for non-DoD sponsored events and activities is highly discouraged. As part of the YFA program, a number of visits/exercises at a variety of DoD sites and facilities will be scheduled. It is expected that YFA recipients will participate in a subset of the DoD visits/exercises made available to them. All requests for travel funding (for both the Principal Investigator (PI) and others) will be reviewed by the DARPA Program Manager as well as the Agreements Officer for those proposals selected for award. Any requests for travel funding that are deemed excessive will likely be reduced during negotiations, if selected. Please see DARPARA2502 for more guidance on budgeting for these activities.

41Q: Can I propose costs to support publication-related expenses?

41A: The inclusion of publication costs is highly discouraged. Costs proposed should focus on meeting program research goals and objectives.

40Q: I am a faculty member at University A. I have recently accepted an offer from University B. Can I transfer my YFA cooperative agreement to University B?

40A: No, YFA cooperative agreement awards can NOT be transferred to another institution under any circumstances.

39Q: I am a professor in a tenure track position, but my title does not have Assistant/Associate preceding it. Am I eligible to apply for the YFA program?

39A: Yes, proposers with the title of "Professor" can apply for funding under the YFA program if they meet eligibility criteria as stated in DARPARA2502.

38Q: How are we to anonymize the Executive Summary? The argument of why the research will be successful often hinges on previous work performed by the PI.

38A: Proposers should be able to answer items 1 through 4 without naming the specific personnel or organizations involved. Proposers are expected to exercise good common sense to ensure the idea expressed in their submission stands alone. Executive Summaries will undergo a “blind” review - a common practice at many conferences and journals. The Executive Summary should not include any references.

37Q: Can I submit multiple executive summaries and full proposals?

37A: Each submission (executive summary or full proposal) must specify ONE and only one TA for the submission and identify this TA on the submission’s cover sheet.

Executive summaries and full proposals that do not clearly address a specific TA may be deemed non-conforming and may not be reviewed. DARPA reserves the right to assign a proposal or an executive summary to a different topic area than indicated by the proposer.

36Q: Can multiple executive summary submissions be included in the same .zip file?

36A: No. Only one .zip file will be accepted, see FAQ 37.

35Q: Who should make a submission – the Organization or the PI?

35A: Whether the submission is made by the PI or the Organization is at the discretion of the proposer.

34Q: Should I provide my submission as a single file or multiple files?

34A: The elements of a complete submission (Executive Summary or Full Proposal) must be provided as a single .zip file containing either one document file, or a single .zip containing multiple, separate document files. Document files may be in .pdf, .ppt, .pptx, .odx, .doc, .docx, .xls, or .xlsx formats.

33Q: Must the team members be final when the Executive Summaries are submitted?

33A: Teams need not be final at the time of Executive Summary submission.

32Q: How do I confirm if I have an account with <https://baa.darpa.mil>?

32A: An account with <https://baa.darpa.mil> will have an associated email and username. If you have the email address and have forgotten the username, you may click on the "username recovery" link on the bottom right hand side of the <https://baa.darpa.mil> web page. If you do not have a username or associated email, it is best to create a new account.

31Q: In order to make a submission via <https://baa.darpa.mil>, I must complete an online form. This form asks me to request the attention of a specific Program Manager. However, during the webinar, we were told that we're not supposed to communicate with PMs (i.e., POCs), which is why no PM names were listed within the different topic areas. Can you please clarify this input field? Which Program Manager’s name shall I provide here?

31A: Please leave this field blank. DARPA reserves the right to assign a submission to a different topic area or program manager than indicated by the proposer.

30Q: In order to make a submission via <https://baa.darpa.mil>, I must complete an online form. This form requests a “Submission Summary” and requires us to “Provide a summary of the proposed Technical and Management approach.” What should I provide here?

30A: Please provide a brief description of the approach or simply write, “See attached submission.” Completing this field is required during the submission process; however, the contents of this field will not be evaluated as part of your submission.

29Q: May I add a bibliography to my executive summary submission?

29A: No. An Executive Summary submission should follow the template provided in Attachment A to the RA.

28Q. What level of technical/mathematical detail is expected in the full proposal? Can I reference and hyperlink my own current research (i.e., non-published papers/internal reports) for additional technical details?

28A. Guidance for the Technical and Management volume can be found in Attachment C of DARPARA2502. Attachment C states “Additional information not explicitly called for in the Technical and Management Volume must not be submitted with the proposal, but may be included as links in the bibliography. Such materials will be considered for the reviewers’ convenience only and not evaluated as part of the proposal.”

27Q. I work at an Institute at a University. The institute does not offer tenure-track appointments, but the University does. Which clause applies in my case?

27A. Your appointment position at your employing organization will determine your eligibility. Please review the eligibility information provided in DARPARA2502. Please discuss your eligibility determination with your Office of Sponsored Projects and refer to the guidance in FAQs 3, and 4 for further clarification.

26Q: I am interested in submitting a proposal to DARPARA2501, but my research topic does not fall under any of the Topic Areas (TAs). Does DARPA encourage proposals outside of these TAs?

26A: Unfortunately, no. If you feel that your research is not directly related to one of the topic areas, you may look into submitting a proposal to another active DARPA solicitation, including the DARPA Office-wide Broad Agency Announcements (<https://www.darpa.mil/research/opportunities/baa>.) It is important to note that any such submission cannot be referred to as a "YFA" proposal. Prior to any submission, you should carefully review the technical area description to ensure the proposed concept is in line with that solicitation and/or office’s technology investment portfolio.

25Q: My idea fits into multiple topic areas. May I submit to multiple topic areas and/or submit multiple applications?

25A: No, please see FAQ 37.

24Q: My proposed idea is [insert research idea]. Is this of interest? Can I get confirmation that my research fits within the scope of one of the TAs in the RA?

24A: Proposers are strongly encouraged to submit an executive summary in advance of a full proposal to determine DARPA's interest and minimize the effort and expense of preparing an out-of-scope proposal. If proposers have technical questions about a TA that can be shared with the general public via the FAQ, they can submit those questions to the YFA2026@darpa.mil inbox for response.

23Q: Under what topic area is my research most applicable?

23A: It is up to you to choose the most appropriate TA for your proposed research. Please note that DARPA reserves the right to assign proposals to a TA than that which was indicated by the proposer.

22Q: Will the YFA solicitation go out every year, and will the topic areas vary over the years?

22A: We are unable to make good-faith predictions about future solicitations. While this program has received positive feedback in the past, the future of the program depends on the availability of funding. The topic areas for YFA solicitations tend to vary but are designed to meet the needs of DARPA Program Managers at the time that the solicitation is issued.

21Q: I would like to request a meeting with a specific YFA topic POC. Is this possible?

21A: No. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of responses to this RA, YFA topic POCs are unable to accommodate such meetings. However, if you have specific technical or administrative questions that may be shared with the general public, you may send them to YFA2026@darpa.mil.

20Q: Can I view a sample of a previously awarded proposal?

20A: No.

19Q: What is the effort requirement for the PI? We plan on having other FTEs working on this project so we want to budget appropriately for the PI.

19A: DARPA cannot determine this for you. The PI's level of effort should be substantial enough to ensure that the proposed research can be completed during the cooperative agreement period.

18Q: Are preliminary results required, allowed but not required, or not allowed in this solicitation?

18A: Preliminary results are allowed, but not required.

17Q: If proposers intend to include human or animal use in their research study do they need to include a document detailing human or animal use?

17A: Proposers that anticipate involving Human Subjects Research (HSR) or Animal Use in the proposed research must comply with the approval procedures detailed at [Human Subjects and Animal Use](#), to include providing the information specified therein as required for proposal submission. Proposals should briefly describe plans for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review and approval. A description of these plans should be included in the proposal.

16Q: Does the limit of \$500,000 for the Base Award include indirect costs?

16A: Yes.

15Q: I would like to know if it is ok to team with a previous DARPA YFA winner.

15A: Yes, but previous DARPA YFA awardees cannot be PIs nor participate as a Subawardee Senior or Key Personnel.

14Q: Is there a DARPA list of labor categories and associated qualifications I can use in my cost proposal?

14A: There is no such list maintained by DARPA. You may use the categories established by your institution.

13Q: Is a Letter of Support from the University Department Head required for the full proposal submission?

13A: An official transmittal letter is required for a full proposal submission. This is typically a brief, signed statement from an official at the submitter's organization (perhaps a Director of Research or Sponsored Programs) in support of the research proposed. Please reach out to your University's Office of Sponsored Research for further information and guidance.

12Q: If I took a leave of absence (i.e. maternity, sabbatical, etc.) within 3 years of being hired or promoted to a tenure position, should this period be included in the 3-year window?

12A: Situations like this are highly case-dependent. If the institution has approved leaves of absence, these dates may be listed on the cover sheet of the submission under "PI's Approved Leaves of Absence, if any." DARPA will only accept the official tenure start date according to the university. If the time between the tenure start date and full proposal submission deadline exceeds the 3-year eligibility window, DARPA will expect to see the excess amount justified in the approved leaves of absence section. Failure to provide any/all relevant information relating to the PI's eligibility on the cover page of the submission may result in the proposal being determined non-conforming and subject to rejection without review.

11Q: Is it recommended for proposers to include a budget for the Director's Fellowship in the third year?

11A: Yes. The proposer should include cost information as defined by the RA, for both the base and Director's Fellowship Option. Note that there is a maximum budget of \$500,000 for the Director's Fellowship and may include the additional U.S. Person Graduate Student option. If a proposer does not include a Director's Fellowship Option in the proposal, they may not add the option later should the base proposal be selected for funding.

10Q: Should we include a budget for equipment, and is there a funding limitation on equipment purchases?

10A: If you will need to purchase equipment to perform your research, then it should be included in your budget via a priced Bill-of-Materials. (All equipment priced at over \$5,000 requires supporting documentation, such as a vendor quote.) There is no specific limit for equipment purchases; however, your total budget for the 24-month base period cannot exceed \$500,000.

9Q: I am [a non-U.S. citizen/a Permanent Resident/Green Card/etc.]; can I apply to YFA?

9A: Participation is open to individuals who are U.S. Citizens, U.S. Permanent Residents, and Foreign Nationals who meet the eligibility criteria.

8Q: I am considering applying to other Young Investigator programs sponsored by other agencies. Does that disqualify me from proposing to (or being selected for) the DARPA YFA cooperative agreement?

8A: No. Submission to other programs by DARPA or other agencies is not restricted. Recipients of non-YFA DARPA awards are eligible to propose. Proposers must provide a listing of federal support (past, current, and pending). This list must include the sponsor, amount, and performance dates of all federally-funded research efforts. Please note that proposals previously funded by DARPA of other agencies should NOT be submitted to the RA.

7Q: The RA specifies single-investigator proposals only. Am I allowed to include subcontractors, vendors, or other faculty members, if they are included in a supporting role, and not listed as a Co-PI?

7A: This RA solicits single PI proposals; no co-PIs are allowed. However, investigators will be given the opportunity to propose teaming if the nature of the proposal requires it. Specific content, communications, networking, and team formation will be the sole responsibility of the participants.

6Q: Are Federally Funded Research and Development Centers, University Affiliated Research Centers, National Laboratories or other Government entities eligible to apply or team with organizations for support?

6A: See Section IV: Special Considerations. No, researchers working at Federally Funded Research and Development Centers, University Affiliated Research Centers, National Laboratories or other Government entities are not eligible to apply as PIs or subawardees under this program.

5Q: Is a Ph.D. required?

5A: Current Tenure-Track Assistant/Associate Professors, and Tenured faculty within 3 years of their Tenure date are NOT required to have a Ph.D. However, an equivalent position at a non-profit research institution is required to be within 12 years of the receipt of their Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Philosophy, and/or another Doctorate Degree to be eligible for the YFA program.

4Q: I am a young investigator at a non-profit research institute that does not have Tenure-Track positions. Do I qualify as part of an equivalent non-profit research institution?

4A: If the proposer is from a non-profit science and technology research institution a determination of eligibility must be made using the following guidance:

- The appointment must be a continuing appointment (soft-money appointments and/or visiting appointments do not apply and will not be considered).
- If the employing organization DOES NOT offer Tenure-Track appointments, then the PI must be within 12 years of the receipt of their Ph.D.
- If the employing organization DOES offer Tenure-Track appointments, then only current Tenure-Track associates and tenured faculty within 3 years of their Tenure date are eligible for the YFA program.

3Q: If I am an Assistant Professor not in a Tenure-Track position (even though my institution offers Tenure-Track positions) am I eligible to submit a proposal?

3A: Unfortunately, no; eligible applicants must be Tenure-Track or Tenured professors (or their equivalents) at the time of submission.

2Q: If I was previously in a Tenure-Track or Tenured position, but have changed universities and am currently in a Tenure-Track or Tenured position, am I still eligible to submit a proposal?

2A: Proposers must meet the eligibility requirements of the RA for current positions held. Previous positions held do not apply.

1Q: I am an Assistant Professor who has been in a Tenure-Track position for 6 years, am I eligible to submit a proposal?

1A: Yes, applicants currently in a Tenure-Track position regardless of the number of years are eligible to apply to the YFA program.