

PROTEIN ENGINEERING (PENG)

DARPA-PS-26-129

Doing Business with DARPA

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PENG - Doing Business with DARPA

- Program Solicitation (PS) posted at SAM.gov website
- Pay attention to due dates and all submission instructions
- Award Instrument Type
 - Other Transaction (OT) for Prototype Agreement
- Important Dates:
 - PA Posted: **August 7, 2026**
 - Proposers Day: **August 10, 2026**
 - Submit questions by: **August 17, 2026 at 4:00 pm ET**
 - Abstracts Due: **August 24, 2026 at 4:00 pm ET**
 - Tentative Proposal Due Date: **October 19, 2026 at 4:00 pm ET**

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Acquisition Strategy

- Multiple awards are anticipated.
 - The number of awards will be based on the quality of the proposals.
- This is a **42-month**, multi-phase program.
 - Phase IA – 18 months
 - Phase 1B – 6 months
 - Phase 2 – 18 months
- This PA is soliciting for **ALL PHASES**.
- Abstracts are **REQUIRED**.
 - Attachments A and B are **required** if submitting an abstract.
 - Due Date: Must submit by **August 24, 2026 at 4:00 pm ET** through **BAAT**.
 - *Only abstract submitters invited by DARPA to submit a proposal package are eligible to provide one.*

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Other Transaction (OT) Authority

- The Government reserves the right to award an **OT for Prototypes under 10 U.S.C. § 4022**, or make no award at all.
 - Not a Request for Proposal (RFP)- FAR Part 15 does not apply
 - Not a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA)- FAR Part 35 does not apply.
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- OT Authorities were created to give DOD the flexibility necessary to adopt and incorporate business practices that reflect commercial industry standards and best practices.
 - OTs can help encourage streamlined and cost effective project design and execution.
 - OTs foster building of new relationships and collaboration in innovative arrangements.
 - DARPA's use of an OT is to attract companies, traditional and non-traditional, to effectively negotiate business terms outside the FAR/DFARS based government acquisition process.

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"Non-Traditional" Defense Contractor

10 U.S.C 3014 Non-Traditional Definition:

- nontraditional defense contractor, with respect to a procurement or with respect to a transaction authorized under section 4022 of this title, means an entity that is not currently performing and has not performed, for at least the one-year period preceding the solicitation of sources by the Department of Defense for the procurement or transaction, any contract or subcontract for the Department of Defense that is **subject to full coverage under the cost accounting standards** prescribed pursuant to section 1502 of title 41 and the regulations implementing such section. To be considered as participating to a significant extent, the proposal should substantiate that the effort being performed by the nontraditional defense contractor is critical to the technical success of the project
- Participating to a significant extent or Significant Contribution means – The contribution causes a material reduction in the cost or schedule or increase the performance of the prototype. The nontraditional performer is responsible for a key component, technology or process without which the prototype cannot be successfully developed (ie, on the critical path).

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Use of OTs for Prototype

10 U.S.C 4022 (d) (1) permits DARPA's OT authority to be used only when one of the following conditions are met:

- (A) There is at least one nontraditional defense contractor or nonprofit research institution participating to a significant extent in the prototype project;
- (B) All significant participants in the transaction other than the Federal Government are small businesses (15 U.S.C. 638)) or nontraditional defense contractors;
- (C) At least one third of the total cost of the prototype project is to be paid out of funds provided by sources other than the Federal Government; or
- (D) The senior procurement executive for the agency determines in writing that exceptional circumstances justify the use of a transaction that provides for innovative business arrangements or structures that would not be feasible or appropriate under a contract, or would provide an opportunity to expand the defense supply base in a manner that would not be practical or feasible under a contract.

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Abstracts

- Abstracts are **REQUIRED**. Proposers must submit an abstract in response to this solicitation to be eligible to participate in the next acquisition step.
- The Government Evaluation Team will review submitted abstracts and invite selected performers to submit a Full Proposal. Full Proposals **MAY NOT** be submitted without an invitation from DARPA.
- **Carefully review:** Goals/ metrics, Schedule of Milestones and Payments, required abstract content, evaluation criteria, and templates.
- Monitor SAM.gov for potential PS amendments and Frequently Asked Questions.

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Full Proposals

- Full Proposals **MAY NOT** be submitted without an invitation from DARPA.
- If DARPA requests a full proposal, the proposers will be asked to provide further details on their proposed solution. Specific instructions (including content submission guidelines) will be provided in the invitation to participate.
- Final submission instructions will be provided with the invitation to submit a full proposal.
- Carefully reads all proposal submission instructions– Proposer Submissions that fail to comply with all requirements of the PS and/or subsequent proposal instructions may be deemed non-conforming and may be removed from consideration.

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Proposal Review-Awards Process

- No common Statement of Work – Abstracts and Full Proposals are evaluated on individual merit and relevance as it relates to the stated research goals/objectives rather than against each other.
- The Government will review all submitted Abstracts for **technical rationale and approach and technical ability**. Upon review of Abstracts, the Government may elect to invite all, some, or none of the proposers to submit Full Proposals.
- **The final evaluation criteria and proposal instructions will be included with the invitation to submit a Full Proposal. Evaluation criteria in instructions may vary slightly from what is published in the PS.**
- Government anticipates making multiple awards.
- The DARPA contracting office will contact the selected performers and begin the negotiation process.

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Teaming & Eligibility Information

- **Non-U.S. organizations and/or individuals:** Non-U.S. organizations and/or individuals cannot participate in this solicitation. All other responsible sources capable of satisfying the Government's needs may submit a proposal that shall be considered by DARPA.
- **FFRDC, UARCs and Government agencies/labs:** Due to their specialized roles and longstanding regulatory relationships with the Government, Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs), and Government Entities to include National Laboratories present potential conflicts and advantages that would compromise fair and open competition. These entities typically may only receive funding through existing awards they hold with their sponsoring agencies. If these entities are proposed as subawardees, their costs must be clearly segregable in cost proposals
- **Organizational Conflicts of Interest.** An organization cannot simultaneously provide scientific, engineering, technical assistance (SETA), advisory and assistance services (A&AS), or similar support to DARPA and also be a performer on a DARPA research program. If a prospective proposer believes a conflict of interest exists or may exist (whether organizational or otherwise) or has questions on what constitutes a conflict of interest, the proposer must send their contact information and a summary of the potential conflict to the specific email address identified in this PA before time and effort are expended in preparing any submission documentation.

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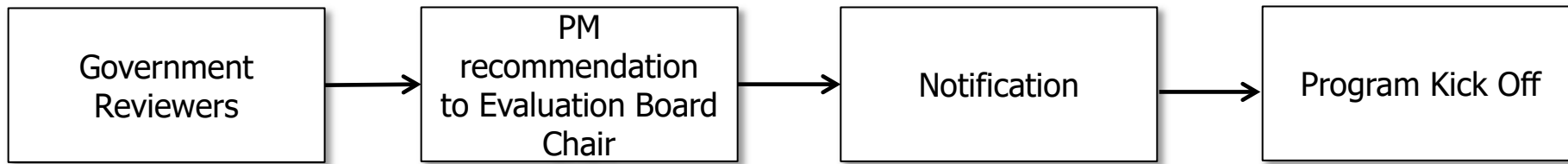
DARPA's Fundamental Research Risk-Based Security Review Process (FRRBS)

- DARPA's Fundamental Research Risk-Based Security Review Process (FRRBS) is an **adaptive risk management security program** designed to help protect the critical technology and performer intellectual property associated with DARPA's research projects by identifying the possible vectors of undue foreign influence. DARPA will create risk assessments of all proposed Senior/Key Personnel selected for negotiation of fundamental research awards (to include cooperative agreements and Other Transactions). The DARPA risk assessment process will be conducted separately from the DARPA scientific review process and adjudicated prior to final award.
- Applicable to fundamental research efforts, awarded using Other Transaction for Research Agreement.
- For additional information on this process, please visit Proposer Instructions links below.
 - Other Transaction agreements: <https://www.darpa.mil/about/offices/contracts-management/proposer-transactions>

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Proposal Review-Awards Process



- No common Statement of Work – Proposals are evaluated on individual merit and relevance as it relates to the stated research goals/objectives rather than against each other.
- Proposals are evaluated for strengths and weaknesses relative to the criteria published in the PS, *listed in descending order of importance:*
 - 1. Overall Scientific and Technical Merit**
 - 2. Potential Contribution and Relevance to the DARPA Mission**
 - 3. Cost and Schedule Realism**
- The DARPA contracting office will contact the selected performers and begin the negotiation process.
- Government reserves the right to select for award all, some (partial selection), or none of the proposals received.

Refer to PS for details regarding proposal evaluation

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Competition Sensitive Information

DARPA policy is to treat all submissions as procurement sensitive, and to disclose their contents only for the purpose of scientific review & source selection.

- Restrictive notices notwithstanding, during the evaluation process, submissions may be handled by support contractors for administrative purposes and/or to assist with technical evaluation.
- All DARPA support contractors performing this role are expressly prohibited from performing DARPA sponsored technical research and are bound by appropriate nondisclosure agreements.
- Input on technical aspects of the proposals may be solicited by DARPA from non-Government consultants/experts who are strictly bound by the appropriate non-disclosure requirements.

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Award Information

DARPA reserves the right(s) to:

- Fund proposals in phases and may or may not exercise the option period for continued work at the end of one or more of the phases
- Remove proposers from award consideration should the parties fail to reach agreement on award terms, conditions and cost/price

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