

OPEN TOPIC PHASE I

Disclaimer: This FAQs document is intended to be a helpful resource for understanding the SBIR/STTR program. However, it is critical to understand that the information here does not override or take precedence over the official solicitation or Request for Proposal (RFP). The official solicitation/RFP is the primary document and should be followed in any instance of conflicting information.

What does “strong commercialization & dual-use” mean?

“Dual-use” refers to the ability for the product to be used in both defense and non-defense markets. Commercialization factors are discussed in the solicitation and generally include past, future orders and demonstration of the company in the overall market. “Commercialization” in this context can refer to both “Government commercial” uses and “private-sector commercial” uses. For the evaluation criteria purposes, multiple Government end-users/customers for a solution can be strong evidence of commercialization potential.

Can a company apply to multiple topics in a single solicitation cycle?

A business may only submit one proposal per solicitation and is prohibited from submitting a proposal under both Air Force and Space Force topics within a single solicitation.

What is an example budget for Phase I?

We recommend you review the Cost Volume. Budget breakdown will vary based on your project needs.

Are foreign employees/contractors allowed to work on the team that is conducting the feasibility testing for Phase I?

It depends. However, something to keep in mind is if you have International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) restricted material, the work would have to be scoped accordingly. It will limit the amount of foreign national participation that you are allowed to have under your award to only public domain or fundamental research. Additionally, all work must be done within the United States. For our program, Green Card holders or lawful permanent residents are not considered foreign employees.

When does the three-month period of performance clock start for Phase I?

The three-month period of performance starts at time of award. For Phase I there is a structured curriculum you will go through, and it starts with a kickoff meeting with AFWERX representatives.

In regard to the solicitation regulation that all of the R/R&D must be done in the United States, does this refer to prior work of the firm?

No, it only refers to R/R&D work performed during the contract period of performance.

Is there a preference for a R/R&D plan that involves the customer, or is Phase I feasibility testing preferred to be conducted on our own?

There is not an expectation to have a particular customer in Phase I. Phase I can be used to find your DAF fit. However, if you already have a customer, you are more than welcome to work with them on your feasibility study. For companies that already have an identified customer/end-user, we suggest researching Direct to Phase II (D2P2) solicitations.

How important are letters of support?

While not required, signed letters of support from other Government personnel may be indicators of the appropriateness, relevance, and specificity of an identified defense need. Letters of support are considered alongside other supporting documentation that is not required but that the applicant elects to submit.

What is the best way to find the end-user or customer for our technology which is about autonomy?

If you do not have an end-user or a customer, a great route would be to start with a Phase I. A Phase I award is a feasibility study, but also has a curriculum on outreach to find your customer and Shared Awareness through Guided Empowerment (SAGE) fellows that can help make connections to your customer and end-user.

Can we submit additional support documents or diagrams and further explanation to support our proposal?

Yes, proprietary information can be included through Volume 2 if it is describing your technical solution.

What information does the Phase I sample work plan include?

A Phase I work plan should include a feasibility study that describes how you will engage with potential customers. The Phase I effort should attempt to determine the technical feasibility of the proposed concept. The work plan will be in the following format: (a.) Scope: List the major requirements and specifications of the effort (b.) Task Outline: Provide a brief outline of the work to be accomplished over the span of the effort (c.) Deliverables (preliminary and final report) (d.) Kickoff meeting within 30 calendar days of contract start (e.) Preliminary report (f.) Final report with SF 298 and DD Form 882.

For a Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR), what are the common activities for the research institute in Phase I?

While not limited to this, most research institutes (RI) are used for testing and evaluation purposes. Activities may also be affected due to the timeline of the period of performance. Ultimately, activities should be discussed between the small business concern (SBC) and RI based upon length of contract, capabilities and desired outcomes. While the overall management direction and control of the technical effort remains with the SBC awardee, the RI typically provides generalized expert advice to its partnering firm.

If a company submits both an Open Topic STTR and a Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) proposal, does being selected for one impact the chances of being selected for the second/both?

Both proposals will be evaluated on their own merit strictly in accordance with the solicitation. Therefore, submitting proposals for essentially equivalent work will not impact either proposal evaluation. However, applicants cannot receive multiple awards for essentially equivalent work so in the event that both proposals are selected, the applicant would be required to choose one of the proposals to proceed to award.

An SBC was previously awarded a SBIR Open Topic contract. Does this disqualify them from submitting a new one if the area of the proposal is the same but with different approaches?

Please review the definition of Essentially Equivalent Work outlined in the solicitation. The Government can award a second proposal provided that it is not Essentially Equivalent to the first award.

USEFUL RESOURCES**Navigating the SBIR/STTR Process**

AFWERX Ventures afwerx.com/divisions/ventures/overview

SpaceWERX Ventures spacewerx.us/space-ventures/overview

SBA - America's Seed Fund sbir.gov

Defense SBIR/STTR Innovation Portal dodsbirsttr.mil/submissions/login

Navigating DAF and Identifying Signatories

DAF Tech Connect airforcetechconnect.org

AFLCMC Small Business Support aflcmc.af.mil/small-business-office

DoD Military Departments defense.gov/Resources/Military-Departments/Defense

Innovation Marketplace defenseinnovationmarketplace.dtic.mil/industry-portal

AF Units Social Media af.mil/AF-Sites

Registration

System for Award Management sam.gov