

AFWERX · SPACEWERX

SBIR/STTR REAUTHORIZATION Q&A

APRIL 22, 2026

POST-REAUTHORIZATION UPDATE & PATH FORWARD WEBINAR Q&A

Do you anticipate a shift to more focused open topics and less funding to complete technology agnostic open topics?

AFWERX and SpaceWERX are transitioning to a focused open topic model, which replaces traditional open topics with mission-driven subject areas that allow for multiple innovative solutions within a specific capability gap.

What is the status of the projects funded in 2025 but not signed into contract?

This will depend heavily on what the budget ends up being for AFWERX and SpaceWERX and if the topic owner still requires the technology.

How much funding does AFWERX/SpaceWERX have for FY2026?

Defense Appropriations Act Section 8151 outlines a proration for the SBIR budget that will likely impact the budget significantly for FY2026. AFWERX and SpaceWERX are working with OSW to finalize Section 8151's impact to our FY26 budget. AFWERX and SpaceWERX do not have information about individual decisions for individual topics to provide in this forum.

Is there an anticipation for the number of awards for Phase I, Phase II, and STRATFI/TACFI?

DAF does not have a forecast for the number of awards, but applicants can expect that the DAF is aiming toward higher dollar-value awards to enable the highest likelihood of transitioning and operationalizing technology. Note that NDAA Section 8151 outlines a proration for the SBIR budget that will likely impact the budget for FY26, so the DAF expects to make funding decisions with that in mind.

Will U.S. companies that operate R&D abroad and are in the process of duplicating R&D and production in the U.S. be eligible?

All SBIR dollars have to be spent in the US unless exempted by SpaceWERX. In this case, as long as the specific SBIR dollars are spent on US production, with other funds covering non-US spending, the company will remain eligible.

Are there any plans to adjust CMMC level requirements for upcoming solicitations to support broader small business participation?

The level of Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) required will be denoted in the solicitation. Until 10 Nov 26, where applicable, solicitations will require Level 1 or 2 self-assessment.

Which agencies have this program?

All federal agencies with R&D budgets over \$100M are required to have an SBIR program (DoW [DAF, Army, Navy, etc.], DOE, NASA, USDA, NSF, etc.).

How is SpaceWERX ensuring Phase II/III efforts transition into real end-user programs?

SpaceWERX has proven out a cohort model that exposes small businesses who have been awarded a contract to additional resources and tools to help them transition more successfully. You can look up cohorts like TacRS, AltPNT, Sustained Space Maneuver (SSM) to learn more.

Do you expect to publish a calendar of upcoming opportunities?

Yes! Please review the slides and keep an eye on our website for updates coming soon.

[Continued on next page](#)

AFWERX · SPACEWERX

SBIR/STTR REAUTHORIZATION Q&A

What can we expect (if any) for upcoming AMAs?

AFWERX and SpaceWERX are preparing a regular cadence of AMAs, webinars, and virtual booth engagements to increase transparency around upcoming opportunities. The best way to stay informed is by following AFWERX and SpaceWERX on social media.

How can a prime suggest SBIR Topics?

Primes have in the past worked with their end customer program offices to assist in topic ideas. This may continue, however, it is still a requirement for the Department of the Air Force (DAF) program office to create/develop and submit the topic based upon the DAF requirement.

How many awards do you expect to make per year across Phase I, Phase II, and Direct-to-Phase II?

The number of awards will be determined by the overall budget. That being said, we are pivoting to more Phase II awards for SBIR and now STTR to get more capital to the business and more capability to the government.

When is the next opportunity to submit new solicitations through AcqBot?

Topic submissions / requests / discussions are always open and government requirements owners can reach out to AFWERX any time.

What locations are AFWERX and SpaceWERX offices located?

Our main locations are Dayton, OH, Washington, DC, Eglin, FL, Austin, TX. SpaceWERX is headquartered in Los Angeles, CA.

Can you speak on the competitiveness of the application process? How many teams typically apply for a given solicitation?

Broadly in the last 2 Fiscal Years we have received approx 10-12k proposals and we are awarding approximately 1200-1800 per year. The number of awards will be affected by the DAF SBIR Budget, which is 3.3% of the overall DAF R&D Budget.

What beyond AFRL interest is needed to become a real D2P2 candidate?

Direct to Phase IIs are meant for technology that has already completed a feasibility study outside of the SBIR/STTR program and are ready for the prototyping phase or other more advanced development.

How will the program be executed with the shortened timeline due to the delayed reauthorization?

There will be fewer releases in 2026 than in previous years. The timelines for those releases are consistent with previous years (1 month pre-release, 1 month release, etc).

We have a Phase I that's ready to prototype but needs a bigger budget than Phase II or STRATFI. How do we apply for a Phase III?

Phase III dollars are by definition "Non-SBIR dollars" so these funds will come from a variety of sources, and most likely from the transition partner (not AFWERX). A Phase III is not a contract you apply for, Phase III is a 'sole source authority' that the Contracting Officer (CO) can use for a direct award, based on a prior SBIR award (Phase I or Phase II).

What format changes should we expect to the proposal packages?

The DAF does not anticipate format changes to proposal packages as a result of the Small Business Innovation and Economic Security Act of 2026.

Are we able to reach out directly to Topic Authors while the topics are in pre-release?

Yes. During pre-release, small businesses have the opportunity to ask questions to the topic author on the DSIP portal and directly. Note that the DAF always recommends posting your question to the DSIP Q&A, as this will ensure a more standardized response <https://www.dodsbirsttr.mil/>

[Continued on next page](#)

AFWERX · SPACEWERX

SBIR/STTR REAUTHORIZATION Q&A

For a first-time SBIR applicant, what is the single most important thing to get right?

Pay attention to topic duration maximums. That is the number one grounds for disqualification. Proposals that exceed stated maximum periods of performance are not considered for award.

Is there a predictable calendar for when the big SBIR/STTR topics drop each year, or does it vary by agency?

The DAF SBIR/STTR program follows OUSW's schedule. Which means you may see new solicitations drop the first Wednesday of the month. For FY 2026, the Air Force anticipates participating in all six releases.

Is the TACFI/STRATFI model expanding or changing under the reauthorization?

For now, STRATFI and TACFI programs will remain unchanged. As additional guidance comes out, there may be impacts to how we manage strategic funding for small businesses.

Is Past Performance necessary to apply for a SBIR/STTR award?

No, from FY19–FY24, 1,500+ companies entered the defense sector for the first time.

Should companies prioritize Open Topic or align tightly to autonomy, ISR, and space resilience priorities?

There will be a decrease in the number of Open Topic opportunities. The Future Operating Environment 2040 document published last week cites Autonomy, ISR, and Space Resilience as key to the objective force. At SpaceWERX, our investments closely align with the Programmed Force as outlined in the same document. While these areas are important, companies will see opportunities in multiple technology areas and are encouraged to apply to all of them.

Please explain the new BZ and TZ in the topic ID. Are D2P2 still an option?

B stands for SBIR, T stands for STTR, Z is BAA, X is CSO in the topic number. D2P2 are still available and will have a D in their topic number. A full breakdown of the topic number can be found on our website. https://afwerx.com/wp-content/uploads/20250923_Ventures_Solicitation_Infographic_CLEARED_AFRL-2025-4991.pdf

Does the program include funding for phase III projects?

Phase III refers to work that derives from, extends, or completes an effort made under prior SBIR/STTR funding agreements, but is funded by sources other than the SBIR/STTR program.

Are any of the instructions from the 2025 topics changing or are they still current/valid?

The DAF SBIR/STTR program reserves the right to update solicitation instruction during any release. Please review the solicitation for a complete list of changes. You can expect to see changes in CMMC, Foreign Disclosure, and others based on programmatic updates.

What will be the frequency of new SBIR/STTR calls through the rest of the year?

In accordance with the OUSW SBIR office, new solicitations will go into pre-release on the first Wednesday of EVERY month.

Are there any new compliance requirements (e.g foreign disclosure, CMMC Level expectations) that could cause proposal rejection?

There are no updated foreign disclosure requirements at this time. Applicants will continue to complete Volume VII in DSIP with their proposal submissions. CMMC guidance is laid out in the DoW program solicitations, applicants are expected to have achieved the specified CMMC level described in their individual topic.

[Continued on next page](#)

AFWERX · SPACEWERX

SBIR/STTR REAUTHORIZATION Q&A

When will the next TACFI, STRATFI, and Open Topic be available?

Opportunities will be published on our website and social media as they become publicly available.

What does “any DOW component” mean on your website instructions to submit those through DOW SBIR?

A DoW “component” is an individual Armed Force through the Department of War. i.e. DAF, Army, Navy, MDA etc. All of these components of the DoW utilize the DSIP website for SBIR solicitations and submissions.

Does the Adaptive and Intelligent Space (AIS) STTR still only allow for a 3 month period of performance?

Yes

What are the notable changes? And how do they impact AFWERX and SpaceWERX?

While we are still working through many changes, you can expect to see solicitations that require a CMMC level 1 or 2 self-assessment, proposal caps changing in FY 27 per OUSW's determination, D2P2 STTR opportunities coming in the near future, and updates to other reauthorization changes becoming public as soon as we iron out implementation.

Would a foreign national be allowed to submit?

Probably not unless teaming with a company. Per SBIR/STTR eligibility rules, awarded small business concerns must be at least 51% owned by U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.

Can the DOW fund a Phase II or III from a DOE Phase I if the DOE would prefer the DOW fund further work on the project directly?

Yes, there is a well defined internal process called “Cross Agency Transfer” and this is initiated by your DAF customer, not the SBC or DOE.

Have there been any changes to evaluation criteria weighting under the reauthorization?

The DAF constantly iterates its evaluation criteria as mission needs become more defined, or as best practices continue to develop. The DAF does not anticipate evaluation criteria weighting changing as a result of the reauthorization.

Do the same rules apply with contract limits? 1 STRATFI ever, 1 TACFI ever, only 1 submission per topic?

We are not changing the STRATFI/TACFI limits. However, starting in FY 27, in accordance with OUSW, DAF SBIR/STTR will have a submission limit of one proposal per topic instead of per solicitation.

Is there a target date for when the AIS Phase 1 STTR contracts will begin?

The DAF estimates that these awards will be made in approximately August 2026.

Is there a website that announces new SBIR/STTR awards?

[SBIR.gov](https://www.sbir.gov)

Can historical topics be of any use in preparing for the coming releases (same development interests)?

While past topics indicate demand signals and may give you a point of contact (POC) to network with, please visit current solicitations for opportunities that the DAF SBIR/STTR program is currently funding.

Is TACFI/STRATFI being replaced by The Strategic Breakthrough Allocation or Accelerated Research for Transition (ART) Program?

It is not. Strategic breakthrough funding will be different from the STRATFI/TACFI program. More to come once we received more guidance.

[Continued on next page](#)

AFWERX · SPACEWERX

SBIR/STTR REAUTHORIZATION Q&A

What is the window for Space PY 26.1 STRATFI?

SpaceWERX currently has PY26.1 STRATFI Notice of Opportunity open now and will close on May 29th.

What is maximum TACFI funding permitted?

TACFI award amounts range from \$375k to \$2M.

What is the timeline for resumption of new contract awards e.g. Phase III SBIR?

Phase III authority never lapsed as it does not use SBIR dollars.

When do we expect the Direct to Phase 2 to be issued?

There are currently D2P2 opportunities available in pre-release.

How will AFWERX and SpaceWERX structure proposal caps? Per fiscal year, per solicitation, per topic, or some combination?

AFWERX will follow what OUSW sets up for the DOW and will start in FY 27.

Will proposals need to be routed in at a minimum by their appropriate commands or PAE / PEO?

For all of the current topics on offer, DAF solicitations have program office support baked into them. Submitting to a solicitation will get your proposal seen and reviewed by the appropriate command/PEO/PAE.

What's the best pathway to pursuing SBIR?

Submit to one of the solicitations! These opportunities will be announced on our website and social media. They can be found on the DSIP portal and will follow OUSW's posting schedule for the first Wednesday of the month.

Status of Selectable, not funded Phase II. Are they assumable?

AFWERX no longer has "Selectable, not Funded" award notices.

When will the Air Force post all topics on the DoW SBIR site?

AFWERX will continue to post solicitations to the DSIP portal.

Are there programs in place to help with the transition from Phase 2 to Phase 3?

Currently, we have the Strategic Funding Increase (STRATFI) and Tactical Funding Increase (TACFI) Programs that offer matching funds to qualifying small businesses to help bridge the gap between a Phase II and a Phase III.

Does AFWERX & SpaceWERX place any precedence on Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) in your SBIR/STTR selections?

The DAF program does not evaluate based on set asides. For qualifying businesses, evaluation criteria is listed in the solicitation but consists of technical merit, commercialization, and defense needs.

Who are PEO/PAEs?

Two tranches of the PAEs have been announced. Post link: <https://www.spaceforce.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/4436172/space-force-announces-second-tranche-of-paes/>