

STAR/ STAR-FISH ARA's Webinar Q&A Transcription and Relevant Links

Can the United States Air Force Academy be on proposal in partnership with the traditional University?

There's nothing that is barring the Air Force Academy from being in a partnership with a traditional University, I think, as long as we're following the FAR and what it says about universities, or I don't know what kind of university it would fall under. But that's definitely something that we can look at. As far as doing that, you're not specifically forbidden from partnering with the university on our ARAs.

Can US nonprofits with a DUNS submit?

Yes, yes, they can. We have the ability and flexibility in our ARAs to issue grants or cooperative agreements depending on what sort of nonprofits we're talking about here. Those are some vehicles that we have provided awards with. So yes, they can.

Are there any requirements or restrictions on business size of applicants?

No, there are none.

What is the typical time length of the effort?

So the typical time. It really all depends on the requirement that's being proposed, or the white paper that's coming in. We do have some one year efforts. We have some three year efforts. We have longer 5 year efforts, you know, and anything in between. So there's no typical time length. It is just based on the requirement or the proposal that it's built for. So one is not necessarily better than the other. As far as time, I do encourage you to ask us specific questions about length of time for requirements, because, as Mike said earlier, whatever our needs and what funding we have changes weekly, so just stay on top of that.

How do the data and IP rights for technologies developed within STAR program compare to a traditional SBIR?

SBIRs have their own special SBIR data rights. And those are going to be different from the rights that the Government will negotiate on an ARA. We don't negotiate similar data rights. And those I encourage you. If you, if you're not familiar with how data rights work, to look that up, and familiarize yourself with it, because it does provide you additional benefits, far into the future, even after the SBIRs have ended. And so we will negotiate rights based on funding based on needs based on a range of things. But we won't negotiate any cyber data rights specifically on these areas.

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So are there any current calls out a STAR-FISH ARA, or will those occur in the future?

Currently right now, there are no active calls out, but as for those in the future, depending on the programs and what they're looking for for a requirement, there will be some in the future that will come down.

When and how often do these calls come out? And can the vendors potentially get advanced notice that calls will be coming soon?

It all depends on what the program teams are looking for, what ideas they are trying to get to. And so, and of course, also, you know, funding being available at that time with how things change weekly. So, of course, there's always no harm in just reaching out to us, asking if there's anything coming out and just keeping up with that.

And what's the best way to reach you all?

So the best way to reach myself, and probably DJ, are via our email addresses. Well, we will typically respond within the same business day. We also have our work phones available, but we're also working remotely, so may not always be able to get to the phone when you call. So the email is definitely the best way and like I said, we typically responded the same business day.

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What classification levels are allowed for these projects?

Typically no classification is what we're kind of normally going for, but if there is a classification other than that, I would say, just reach out to us on that beforehand that way we can kind of work through our channels on how to best move forward with that.

What are you looking for in a ROM estimate?

So Mike may have a different answer than me, but from a contracting perspective, what we're looking at is that you do have a ROM estimate in there that you've got something that's reasonable, and that it looks like something that matches sort of what your capabilities are. Mike, are you looking for anything in particular?

I mean nothing in particular. Obviously, as you said. I echo what Shawn said. Just be realistic in what you're offering. Obviously you want to show your schedules, and of course everything

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should line up between your period of performance years. So as long as you're proposing an accurate number based on the knowledge that's out there for being able to do this type of work, and then just put in as many details, if you have options that you're proposing make sure you let us know what those options are, you know things of that nature, but really nothing specifically, because all efforts are vastly different from one another, including period of performances. But as many details you can provide, you know, based on that period of performance will position you best for a ROM.

Are there any in-person events to meet all of you or representatives for in real life discussions?

I don't believe we currently have anything setup to meet us in person. We do have occasional industry days, but those have been rare ever since, you know the Covid Times. We kind of put a stop to those we used to have these, maybe twice a year, where, you know, we meet with industry. They can come and approach us. I don't know if we have any plans to take those back up. I certainly hadn't heard of anything, you know, coming down the pike, but as of now, we do not.

What level of effort are the contracts that have been awarded, examples, studies, or prototyping?

We've had both. We've had reports, and we've also had deliverables of hardware and software. So along with prototypes. So I think it all depends on what is being proposed and what the programming team is looking for and what the contract is able to provide.

Going back to the ROM questions to fall onto that? Could you provide a range of the awards?

Sure I can do that. So because this doesn't have a ceiling per se, the STAR-FISH awards vary in size greatly. We have some that are maybe a couple \$100,000. We have some that are in the tens of millions of dollars off the top of my head. I don't think we have anything that's in the neighborhood of 100 million or more, but there's nothing stopping us from doing something like that. We have a wide range of existing contracts, and then it's wide open for any future contracts. It just depends on the requirement, what our needs are, and obviously the type of funding that we have, or the amount of funding that we have.

I'll mention that we have to watch when an announcement for submissions is opening up. Is that correct? Or is it constantly open?

So the STAR-FISH is our closed announcement. So as Mike has mentioned earlier. This is where the PMs are looking for requirements within the topic areas. So those aren't as frequent, I would say, as the Open STAR announcement, which is always out there. Just if you have something, do we want to submit that as those topic areas? And of course, you know, funding

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being available, the program and team needs for that time. So, yeah, so for the STAR-FISH, it's a little more closed, as far as when efforts will be announced but we will do our best to make sure efforts are announced for that.

If you finished a period of performance for SBIR/STTR phase II, could this be an alternative route to fully mature and implement the technology, basically they are essentially an alternative phase III contract?

Yeah, that is a route that you could take again. You'll fall under STAR and not under the SBIRs. So anything, any benefits from going Phase III you obviously wouldn't get under an award with our ARAs, and also it's determined by your white paper submission as well as an accepted proposal versus the single process, which is a little bit different. So, but ultimately yes, you can.

Is the white paper made publicly available? For example, if they include competitively sensitive information, will anyone outside of the Department of the Air Force be able to see them?

No, no, we keep them in-house.

What is the target time for funds to be available? What is the target time for funds available in scope understood to contract award- in reference to the rapid acquisition? So target time for funds available and scope.

Okay, yeah. So the the time that we're looking from the time that we get the white paper, we accept the white paper, and then we send a request for a full proposal all the way to a contract award, it depends on the size of the contract, but but we like to do it in under in 190 days. Sometimes we can do it a lot faster. Sometimes we get really close to that. It just depends on the company. It depends on the funding that's needed and any sort of issues that might come up during the acquisition process.

What's the transition plan from RDT and E testing, prototyping to get to a program of record for successful technologies, and will AFRL assist in the transition, or is it solely on the offeror to make those plans?

So I'm not aware of the transition plan. Do you know? So, yeah, so it's, I guess it varies by you know, the type of effort, and what that effort entails. Really we don't have a transition plan set in place, so it would be up to the offers to, you know, to figure out where their technology is going to be implemented. You know here at the research labs, we we focus on, you know, sort of that upfront. Where it goes from there and the priorities of the government at a higher level would determine where, you know, if and when it would go into a program of record so it's a little bit of a tricky question, just because of the nature of the work that we do here. But it's not to say that it could not become, you know, a program of record per se. But really, that's sort of beyond the scope that we work with here at AFRL.

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How complete should a white paper proposal be? For example focusing on a component technology or on a free flying spacecraft?

Yeah, so really, the white papers, you can look up the template. And I think somebody had left it in chat, and I'm having an issue bringing up the chat now. But if somebody can post that again, really, it's a five-page white paper. We're ultimately looking for the overall idea of your technology, right? So you, how specific you want to become. And each area is really up to you, and how you write those white papers. But really we have 21 criteria that we're looking for, and we ask that each white paper addresses those 21 criteria, because ultimately, that's what we're going to be running our evaluations on. So as long as you address each of those criteria, and we can give you a fair evaluation that's going to position you best for a well written white paper.

White Paper Template can be downloaded here:

https://valideval.com/star_documents/

Can you give a little more info on TRL Level 3 and detail?

Yeah, so TRL level 3. Really, what we're looking for is, you know, obviously, we work in R&D, we want an idea that has been proven to a certain degree. Where that falls is kind of a gray area. But we want ideas that are proven to work in an environment that we're asking for you know, we're not looking for, you know, conceptual designs per se. We're looking for something a little bit more developed than that, but it's really a gray area in terms of it, especially when we're talking about how that technology is being implemented, so it's sort of a gray area. I know that's not the best answer, but it really depends on, you know, whether it be the component of a satellite or it could just be a study that's done. But really we're looking for more than just concepts, if that makes sense.

Is transition oriented R&D preferred under STAR, and is the process similar to getting a Customer MOU for SBIR phase II?

As far as what we're looking for in contracting it, it's not preferred, or neither of the options are preferred over another. It just depends on, obviously, what the technical team is looking for with what the programs can support and then the funding that's available. But being ready to transition isn't one of the things that contracting looks for specifically.

Is there a ceiling for funding?

No, there is no funding ceiling. So really, it all depends on what the effort is, and what funding we have currently available to be able to move forward, funding them.

So as it was before, we range from 100 thousands to tens of millions, and if available, we're always open. It can even reach 100 million. I really, I want to also add to that people hear that there, you know, there's no funding ceiling. And you know, as great as that sounds right, it isn't like, Hey, the government has unlimited funding for whatever ideas that are out there. It's sort of

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misleading, because we say there's no funding ceiling right? But really, it just depends on the budget that we receive each year, and then, of course, each program also receives a specific budget. So you know, if that program where your technology would fall under has already obligated their funds for that year, they're, you know, they're not gonna be accepting new ideas and wanting to create more contracts, right? And so yes, we say under STAR, that there's unlimited ceiling, but again, that's sort of misleading, because we are still bound to budgets. And then, you know, if you drill down further, it's each program budget. So I just wanted to kind of, you know, throw that out there. And I hope that makes sense that the Government, as much as we'd like unlimited funding is just not the case right? Yeah. So that's so. Yeah, Mike, and Mike and Dj, definitely hit that right on the head. It's just a way for the solicitation to be used unlimitedly, right? So as long as we have funding available we're not gonna hit a ceiling on the ARA itself, and that doesn't mean that if you know that a program doesn't have funding that you shouldn't submit white papers because we do keep those for a time, and we can. We can label them as selectable, but without funds available and revisit it in the future. So that's not to say don't send white papers, don't submit proposals. If you know there's no funding available, because it is unlimited, in that week we can, when funding is available, we can make awards on it.

Is the STAR-FISH opportunity open to International Companies? Can US companies partner with international companies?

All of our acquisitions are subject to export control laws and regulations. This means that only contractors and businesses who are registered and certified with the Defense Logistics Services Center have a legitimate business purpose and may participate in the solicitation.

What this means is that the business awarded a contract must reside in the US and not employ/partner with International businesses. However, they may have foreign nationals that must be vetted prior to an award.

Relevant Links:

White Paper Template can be downloaded here: https://valideval.com/star_documents/

STARFISH ARA Solicitation: <https://sam.gov/opp/a13aea7d54684cf9b949339c9c1b6001/view>

This is the base Solicitation. Offerors would not propose to this but would propose to individual Calls that would be separately posted. All of ours just closed, so there aren't any live examples.

STAR ARA Solicitation: <https://sam.gov/opp/e1c2e03c6d8e44878b485e5296e5dfc3/view>

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