

2015–2016 EPA SBIR Phase I Solicitation Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

How can I get more information about the EPA SBIR solicitation?

Information about the EPA SBIR Phase I solicitation will be posted on the EPA SBIR homepage www.epa.gov/ncer/sbir. The actual solicitation will be posted on FedConnect www.fedconnect.net. For general questions about the solicitation, contact the EPA SBIR Program Manager, April Richards (richards.april@epa.gov).

Historically, what has been the ratio of the number of EPA SBIR awards to the number of proposals?

Last year, the success rate for SBIR Phase I proposals was approximately 13 percent; a similar rate is expected for this year.

Does the EPA SBIR team also offer entrepreneurship help/advice to potential applicants, particularly those with technical but not entrepreneurial experience?

Your best option would be to investigate resources such as federal, state and local organizations to provide help with entrepreneurship. Many are listed at <https://www.sbir.gov/resources/external-partners> and <https://www.sbir.gov/> (under “State Services”).

Eligibility

Where can I find eligibility information for the SBIR program?

Please visit the FAQs at SBIR.gov (<https://www.sbir.gov/faqs/eligibility-requirements>)

Can funds be used for prototype development, as well as for research?

Yes, prototype development can be a key step in developing a technology.

Can Phase I funding be used to launch a startup?

SBIR funding is awarded to the small business and should be used for research and development towards commercialization of the technology, not necessarily to launch the start up.

Can the applicant be a new startup that is incorporated but does not yet have a physical presence or employees?

Please check the eligibility requirements for SBIR. New requirements mean that companies must complete several registrations prior to submitting a proposal for an EPA SBIR award. You will need a Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to register with the Small Business Administration Company Registry, which is a new requirement for SBIR. You also will need an active System for Award Management registration.

Does EPA fund technologies developed at a university that are in the process of commercialization?
SBIR awards are made to small businesses. Partnering with a university or other technical or commercial partner is a good way to add expertise to your team. The Principal Investigator, however, has to be employed primarily by the small business. More information on eligibility can be found at www.sbir.gov/faq/all. You may also want to consider the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Program (<https://www.sbir.gov/about/about-str>) where the small business is required to collaborate with a research institution. (Note that EPA does not have an STTR Program but other agencies do.)

I understand the size of the company needs to be less than 500. Is there a requirement for the minimum number of employees?

No, there is no minimum size requirement, although the company must demonstrate that they have the capability to perform the work proposed.

If I am going to develop a technology for my own company, do I need to have commercialization partners?

Typically a small business will need some type of commercialization partner to help them get their technology to market.

What types of qualifications should the Principal Investigator have?

The Principal Investigator should have expertise in the area of the technology that is being proposed. He or she does not need to have a doctorate degree. Business experience is a plus.

Phase I Solicitation Topics

Can I submit a proposal on a topic that is not one of the 2015 solicitation topics?

No. All applications must be responsive to the solicitation, and we do not accept unsolicited proposals. If your technology does not fit under this year's topics, you can wait until next year to see if your technology would fit under one of next year's topics, or look at SBIR programs in the other federal agencies to determine if your topic is covered in one of their solicitations.

Can we contact you about the fit of our technology with a topic before the solicitation is released?

We are able to provide you general advice about your technology before the solicitation opens.

Can you tell me in which category my technology will fit best?

We cannot answer specific questions about your technology. Please read the solicitation carefully and make your best decision. The onus is on the company to select the best topic based on the descriptions in the solicitation.

Do you accept proposals for areas other than the solicitation topics that fall under the broader categories (e.g., technologies other than lab-on-a-chip sensors under the topic of Air & Climate)?

No, only proposals that directly address the specific solicitation subtopics within each broad category will be considered.

What can I do if I my proposal applies to a different topic from the solicitation topics (e.g., climate change resiliency and adaptation for Air & Climate)?

If your proposal addresses a topic that is not being addressed this funding cycle, you can wait to see if it is applicable to the topics of future solicitations. Alternatively, another agency might be soliciting SBIR

proposals on a topic related to your technology. Other federal agencies—such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)—fund different types of environmental technologies.

Where can I find more information about what is meant by a particular solicitation topic (e.g., lab-on-a-chip)?

When the solicitation opens, more information, including references, about each topic will be provided.

Phase I Application Content/Requirements

Can existing or developing technologies be incorporated to meet the goals of a topic?

Phase I funding is intended for technologies that have not yet demonstrated proof-of-concept. They may have been developed somewhat, but some development work must remain.

Can I submit the same proposal to different government agencies?

You can submit the same proposal to different agencies, but you can NOT be funded by different agencies for the same work. (If successful with one agency, you must withdraw your duplicative proposal from the other agency). You can, however, submit and be funded for multiple distinctly different proposals.

Can we resubmit a proposal that was not funded in the last round?

Resubmitting a proposal is allowed. You should ensure that the proposal addresses one of this year's solicitation topics and that you have responded to all of the comments from the previous peer review.

Do you allow or encourage letters of support from researchers or commercial partners?

Yes, EPA allows and encourages letters of support which demonstrate progress towards developing commercial partners. Applicants should consider whether letters genuinely strengthen their application, however, because they are counted toward the proposal's page limit.

How do I submit my application?

All EPA SBIR proposals now are submitted electronically via FedConnect (www.fedconnect.net). You must register with FedConnect before you can submit a proposal in the system.

Is developing new models considered to be within the scope of SBIR?

Yes, as long as it is responsive to the solicitation and can be commercialized.

Awardee Rights and Obligations

Do awardees retain the intellectual property (IP) rights?

Yes, under SBIR, awardees retain full control over their IP. The intent of the SBIR program is to help move technologies into the marketplace. The government does have some data rights after a certain amount of time. For more information, see www.sbir.gov/faq/data-rights.

What type of updates are required during the contract period?

Because EPA SBIR awards are made under a contract mechanism, awardees are required to submit monthly reports to EPA. Companies send EPA monthly invoices and are paid monthly.

Phase II Solicitation/Awards

Can you tell me more about the commercialization option?

The commercialization option (similar to the National Science Foundation (NSF) Phase IIB) involves obtaining an investment from a third party (e.g., venture capital, angel investor or sales) of \$100,000 or more. It cannot be an in-kind donation or a loan. If eligible, EPA will match the \$100,000 investment.

If I already have data and have verified proof-of-concept, can I skip Phase I and apply directly for a Phase II contract?

Some agencies allow you to apply directly for Phase II. EPA, however, requires all Phase II applicants to have been awarded Phase I funding by EPA.

What is the period of performance for Phase II and the “commercialization option”?

The period of performance for Phase II is 2 years and if you receive the commercialization option there is an additional year.

Would EPA consider a Phase II application when we had a successful Phase I from another agency?

EPA does not allow Phase I awardees from other agencies to apply for its Phase II contracts.