



Questions & Answers from EPA SBIR Informational Webinar Held on June 11, 2018

General

Can we get a copy of today's presentation?

Yes. Today's presentation and questions & answers (Q&As) from the presentation will be posted on the EPA SBIR website: www.epa.gov/sbir

Where can I get more information on EPA's SBIR Program?

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/201608_sbir_fact_sheet.pdf

Where can I get more information on the SBIR Program in general?

www.sbir.gov

Does the EPA also fund STTRs?

No, the EPA does not have an STTR program. Only the 5 largest SBIR programs have STTRs. (The STTR program is another program that requires the small business to formally collaborate with a research institution.)

Does EPA fund new businesses, or are business accomplishments & history an important part of the application?

EPA makes funding decisions based on the peer and relevancy review criteria provided in the solicitation. If a company is a new business, then they need to demonstrate that they are capable of responding to the commercialization criteria as part of the peer review. On the flip side, if the company is an experienced company, then they must demonstrate that they've been able to commercialize past technologies (within and outside of the SBIR program).

If a small business applies and is rejected, how can they find out why?

All small businesses that apply will receive a copy of their peer review comments whether they are selected for funding or not. EPA often has more quality proposals than it can afford to fund.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply for the SBIR program?

Only U.S. small businesses are eligible for the SBIR Program. For more information on eligibility, please see: <https://www.sbir.gov/faqs/eligibility-requirements>

Can academic institutions apply for SBIR?

Only small businesses are eligible for SBIR. Academic institutions could look into being a subcontractor to a small business on an SBIR award and/or partnering with a small business through the STTR Program (at one of the 5 agencies that have STTR).



When is eligibility determined?

Eligibility is determined at time of award, BUT in order to apply to EPA SBIR, a small business must have completed the 4 registrations listed below and described in the webinar slides.

- DUNS #
- SBA Company Registry
- SAM
- FedConnect

Topics

What are the solicitation topics for 2018-19?

The proposed topics for this year are listed below. The official solicitation includes the finalized topics. Given the EPA's modest budget, the topics are fairly focused and we would like only proposals responsive to this year's topics.

Clean and Safe Water

- Innovative technologies for the rapid detection and treatment of antibiotic resistant bacteria in wastewater
- Novel technologies for the rapid detection of PFAS in water
- Innovative pretreatment technologies for PFAS in industrial wastewater
- Novel sampling devices for microplastics
- Novel technologies for the rehabilitation of water infrastructure

Air Quality

- Innovative measurement tools for ground level air pollution levels from wildland fires

Land Revitalization

- Innovative technologies that can sample, detect, analyze, remove or destroy PFAS in and from soil, sediment, water and groundwater

Homeland Security

- Novel water distribution and stormwater system sensors

Manufacturing

- Novel technologies for the reduction of toxic chemicals in food processing

Sustainable Materials Management

- Novel technologies to identify harmful materials in construction & demolition (C&D) materials
- Novel technologies to aid building deconstruction
- Recyclable composite building materials

Safer Chemicals

- Novel, safer paint and coating removal products

Will there be more information on the topics provided in the solicitation?

Yes, the solicitation will provide more detailed descriptions of the topics and typically a reference document to provide background on the topic.

Does EPA accept unsolicited proposals?

No, proposals should be responsive to the topics listed in the solicitation.

Can one proposal be entered into more than one topic area?

No, a specific proposal can only be submitted under one topic area.



How much focus is put on any one topic? How many projects do you fund in each topic?

We will fund projects across all topic areas depending on how many (quality) proposals we receive in each area.

How is the overall budget split between Phase I and Phase II?

The budget is roughly split 50/50 between Phase I and Phase II.

Do projects have to focus on U.S. Issues?

While only U.S. businesses are eligible for SBIR and work must be done in U.S., the application, impact and market for the project can extend beyond the U.S.

Schedule

What is the deadline to submit?

The solicitation will close approximately 45 days after it opens. The current close date is scheduled to be July 31st, 2018.

Do you anticipate opening another solicitation this year?

No, EPA only releases one solicitation per year. The next EPA SBIR solicitation will be released in 2019.

Funding Rates/Program History

What is your funding rate for each topic listed in the draft solicitation?

The Phase I funding rate has averaged 19%+ over the last three years. We fund across topic areas but it does depend on how many proposals we get in each area.

For Phase II the funding rate is approximately 40%.

This year we intend to fund approximately 17 Phase I proposals.

Do you share the titles of the previously funded proposals?

Yes, all previously funded projects are listed on our website:

https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncer_abstracts/index.cfm/fuseaction/outlinks.sbir/

Other Agencies/Opportunities

Could you please provide information on other SBIR Agencies that fund environmental technologies?

Some other agencies that support environmental technologies include:

- National Science Foundation (NSF)
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)
- Department of Energy (DOE)
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Do the different agencies have different application processes?

Yes, each agency has their own application process. Please check the Agency's solicitation for specifics on their application process.

Where can I find information on other agencies deadlines?



More information on the program as a whole and on the 11 agencies that participate can be found at www.SBIR.gov

Can you please provide information on the Sensors Funding Opportunities Website?

<https://www.sbir.gov/Sensor-technology-for-the-21st-century>

Can you apply to more than one agency?

You can apply to more than one Agency.

If you apply with the same project/technology, you can NOT get funded by more than one Agency for the same work. If you did apply to multiple agencies and were funded by one, you would withdraw your other proposals.

You can also apply to different agencies with different projects.

Applying

Where can I find the actual solicitation?

The official solicitation will be posted on FedConnect. Use the following steps to access the solicitation via FedConnect:

1. Go to FedConnect: <https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/Default.htm>
2. Use the FedConnect search function to Search Public Opportunities Only.
3. Select Reference Number in the Search Criteria drop-down menu.
4. Enter "68HEOD18R0010" into the text box and select the search option.
5. Select the SBIR solicitation title with Reference Number 68HEOD18R0010.

What is the link to register at FedConnect?

<https://www.fedconnect.net/FedConnect/Default.htm>

Does EPA require a letter of intent?

No, letters of intent are not required for Phase I or Phase II.

Can a small business submit more than one application to this solicitation?

Yes, a small business can submit multiple applications, but quality is preferred over quantity.

Can a company improve and resubmit a rejected SBIR?

A proposal from a previous round can be resubmitted as long as it is responsive to the current solicitation topics. The peer review comments from the previous year should be addressed.

Can a company apply directly to Phase II?

No, EPA does not allow direct to Phase II.

Does EPA keep our information confidential?

Yes, EPA will keep your proposal confidential through all phases of the review process. The proposal summary is intended for publication and should not contain any confidential information.

Contacts

Who are the program managers and do we contact them?



Technical questions can be addressed to the Program Manager, April Richards (richards.april@epa.gov)
Contractual questions can be addressed to the Contract Specialist, Adrienne Wells (wells.adrienne@epa.gov).

Are there specific program managers for the different topics you listed in the draft solicitation?

General questions on the topics can be directed to the EPA SBIR Program Manager, April Richards (Richards.april@epa.gov). Please note, that it is the responsibility of the small business to determine whether they think their technology is appropriate to a specific topic and whether they should submit a proposal or not.

Review Process

How are proposals reviewed at EPA?

Proposals go through a 2-stage review process. The first stage is an external peer review for technical and commercial strength. The technical and commercial criteria are equally weighted. If proposals are highly recommended or recommended in this stage, they will move forward to the 2nd stage which is an internal programmatic review where proposals are evaluated for responsiveness to the topics and EPA priorities. Additionally, the official solicitation will provide detailed guidance on the EPA's evaluation process.

How many peer reviewers are there?

Peer review panels are set up around each topic area. The number of reviewers on the panel is determined by the number of proposals received. Peer review panels contain both technical and commercial experts.

Can we find out who the peer or relevancy reviewers are?

While you will receive a copy of your peer review results all reviewers remain anonymous.

How can I serve as a peer reviewer? Do they receive compensation?

The EPA does not permit current Phase I contractors, Phase I offerors, or Phase II offerors to participate in the peer review. Also, you cannot serve if you have any involvement with any of these proposals. If you are interested, please send an e-mail with your resume to the EPA SBIR Program manager, April Richards (richards.april@epa.gov). She will pass your information along to another division who will contact you when there is a panel that matches your expertise. Peer reviewers do receive modest compensation and must participate in a virtual panel meeting lasting one to three days.

Projects

Does EPA provide commercialization assistance?

Yes, EPA provides commercialization assistance to both Phase I and Phase II awardees. EPA provides this assistance through an outside contractor. Small businesses must use the EPA contractor and are not allowed to select their own provider.

Can you define the “proof of concept” and when a technology is too far along to qualify for Phase 1?

Phase I of the SBIR Program is designed for “proof of concept” of the proposed technology. The technology should be beyond a literature search, should have some data to demonstrate its performance but should not be commercially viable yet. For more general information on the SBIR program, see <https://www.sbir.gov/about/about-sbir#sbir-program>



What is the definition of technology? Does it have to be hardware?

Technology solutions can be either hardware or software as long as they address the specific topic and have potential to be commercialized. Projects should be focused on the development/commercialization of a novel technology, and not simply testing of existing technologies.

Can the technology be a basic solution to a problem.

Technologies can be a non-complex solution to a problem, as long as the technology has potential for commercialization.

What technology readiness level (TRL) do you accept for Phase 1?

While EPA does not typically use TRLs to describe its SBIR technologies, Phase I is for “proof of concept” of the technology. However, providing at least preliminary data could help show the validity of your idea. In addition, literature searches should be complete prior to submission of a Phase I proposal.

Do we need to have a prototype?

A prototype is not required but depending on the type of technology being developed may be an important step towards commercialization.

Is it a plus if a technology helps to mitigate greenhouse gasses (GHGs)?

Yes. All proposals to EPA’s SBIR program should address the lifecycle environmental impacts of the proposed technology which may include minimizing resource use, minimizing toxicity of materials, efficient use of water and energy, minimizing pollution and minimizing impacts at end of life. This is part of the technical peer review criteria.

Will it affect EPA SBIR award if we have SBIR awards from other agencies such as NSF?

Many companies have multiple SBIR awards from different agencies. Per the solicitation, we would like to see that the small business has been successful with prior investments.

What are the limitations on subawarding the award to an academic lab?

For Phase I, a small business must perform a minimum of 2/3 of the research and/or analytical effort. One third may be subcontracted to another firm or research organization. For more FAQs on SBIR, see <https://www.sbir.gov/faqs/other>.