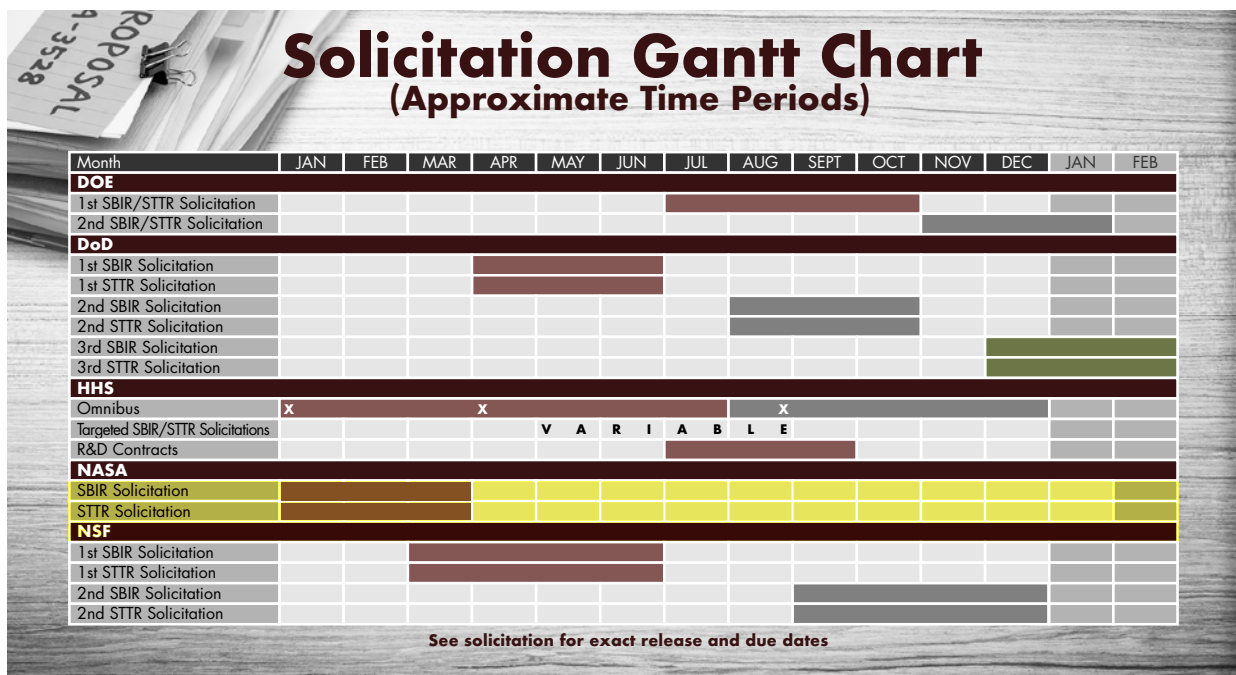


## COURSE 3, TUTORIAL 5

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NASA SBIR/STTR SOLICITATIONS



NASA releases one SBIR/STTR solicitation each year – sometime between November and January, with a due date about two months later. The solicitation can be downloaded in its entirety as a PDF from NASA's website or you can opt to read each section on-line, depending upon your preference. The NASA solicitation is lengthy, containing a little over 200 pages. However, the bulk of the document is Section 9 which contains a listing of all the SBIR and STTR topics, organized into Focus Groups.





Let's look at the structure of the most recent NASA solicitation as a means of highlighting some of the unique features of NASA and its solicitation. Like the other Agencies that participate in the SBIR and STTR program, NASA's solicitation contains sections entitled Program Description, Proposal Preparation Instructions, Method of Selection and Evaluation Criteria and Submission of Proposals. Any potential applicant needs to study these carefully. We will take a few moments to highlight some key points found in each of these sections.

In the **Program Description** section, it clarifies that NASA is a contracting Agency and specifies that winning Phase I proposals will be awarded a firm-fixed price contract. This section also highlights the percentage of Phase I proposals to which NASA anticipates providing a Phase I award. An interesting note is highlighted in this section indicating the number of proposals that NASA will accept from any individual company in response to the solicitation. The sources of the topics for both the SBIR and STTR programs are identified and the maximum contract value for SBIR/STTR Phase I and Phase II contracts is presented. Information is also included regarding Post-Phase II opportunities.

Phase I Contracts	SBIR	STTR
Maximum Contract Value	\$125,000	\$125,000
Period of Performance	6 months	13 months
Phase II Contracts	SBIR	STTR
Maximum Contract Value	\$750,000	\$750,000
Maximum Period of Performance	24 months	24 months

In the Program Description section of the NASA solicitation some Agency variations become more apparent regarding subcontractors, principal investigators, and topic authors. NASA specifies that based on a rare and unique circumstance, NASA may allow a particular portion of the research or R&D to be performed or obtained in a country outside of the United States. Such a circumstance might arise, for example if a supply or material required for the project is not available in the United States. NASA also provides clear guidelines regarding the employment requirements for the Principal Investigator. Primary employment means that more than 50% of the PI's total employed time (including all concurrent employers, consulting, and self-employed time) is spent with the Small Business Concern or the Research Institution at the time of award and during the entire period of performance.

Another important thing to keep in mind when responding to a NASA solicitation is that you CANNOT interact with topic authors during the Phase I solicitation period. This is a restriction placed upon *contracting* Agencies. NASA states that "To ensure fairness questions relating to the intent and/or content of research topics in this Solicitation cannot be addressed during the Phase I solicitation period. Only questions requesting clarification of proposal instructions and administrative matters will be addressed." This is to be accomplished by calling or sending an e-mail to the Help Desk. For this reason, when you look at the SBIR and STTR topics, you will notice that no topic authors names are listed.

The next section we will review is the **Proposal Preparation section**. Proposal preparation instructions for any Agency must be carefully read in order to assure that you are responsive to the guidelines provided. In this way you will avoid having your proposal eliminated during the administrative review process that checks for compliance. We are not going to review the details associated with proposal preparation here as you should always refer to the most recent solicitation for those guidelines. However, there are a few items that are worth noting. Some Agencies welcome letters of general endorsement and actually require them. However, NASA clearly states in the proposal preparation guidelines that "Letters of general endorsement are not required or desired and will not be considered during the review process. However, if submitted, such letters will count against the page limit." Specific forms are identified in the solicitation which need to be completed on-line, each of which counts against the page limit. NASA also provides specific guidelines on how to calculate the amount of time a subcontractor or consultant will spend on the project and includes an example of how to assure you are compliant with the restrictions on the amount of work that can be subcontracted for either SBIR or STTR.

The section called **Method of Selection and Evaluation Criteria** is also important to review. Here you will commonly find information regarding reviewers, as well as information about the weighting of the evaluation criteria. In the case of NASA, NASA scientists and engineers perform the evaluations. Also, qualified experts outside of NASA including industry, academia, and other Government Agencies may assist in performing evaluations as required to determine or verify the merit of a proposal. There are five factors considered in the evaluation process. The first is the Scientific/Technical Merit and Feasibility of what is proposed. The second is the Experience, Qualifications and Facilities, the third factor is the Effectiveness of the Proposed Work Plan, the Fourth is Commercial Potential and Feasibility, and the fifth is the Price Reasonableness. The weighting of these factors is discussed in the solicitation.



The **Submission of Proposals** section is the last to be highlighted in this Tutorial. We recommend that you review this early in the proposal preparation process – so that you are fully aware of what needs to be submitted, by whom, and when. In the case of NASA, an Electronic Handbook, also referred to as an EHB, is used for submitting proposals. In this section of the solicitation you will find reminders about what needs to be submitted and special requirements for STTR submissions. Please note that the offeror is responsible for performing a virus check on each submitted technical proposal. The detection by NASA of a virus on any electronically submitted technical proposal may cause rejection of the proposal.

In closing, a nice addition to the NASA solicitation is called Note-worthy Changes. As many aspects of a solicitation stay the same from year to year, it is useful to have the Agency call out those items that have changed at the beginning of the solicitation.

For example, in the FY18 solicitation it is noted that, for the first time the STTR subtopics will appear in an integrated list with the SBIR subtopics this year. They will be clearly marked as STTR subtopics so that offerors will know that the additional Research Institution (RI) partnership is required before submitting a proposal. This will assist firms in seeing related subtopics across both programs.

Take the time before the NASA solicitation is released to learn more about NASA by reviewing the NASA's Space Technology Roadmaps and reviewing the websites for the Space Technology Mission Directorates. Then, as the fall approaches watch the dates for the next release of the NASA SBIR/STTR solicitation.

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### **NASA SBIR Help Desk**

For questions or concerns contact the NASA SBIR Help Desk at [sbir@reisystems.com](mailto:sbir@reisystems.com), or (301) 937-0888 between 9:00am–5:00pm, Mon–Fri, Eastern Time

## **Factors Used in Evaluation Process**

- » **Scientific/Technical Merit and Feasibility**
- » **Experience, Qualifications and Facilities**
- » **Effectiveness of the Proposed Work Plan**
- » **Commercial Potential and Feasibility**
- » **Price Reasonableness**