

## COURSE 3, TUTORIAL 2

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOD SBIR/STTR SOLICITATIONS



The Department of Defense (DoD) releases three solicitations each fiscal year for both the SBIR and STTR programs. The SBIR solicitations are numbered using two digits to indicate the fiscal year followed by .1, .2, or .3 to indicate the order of the three releases made. For example 16.1 indicates that this was the first SBIR solicitation in Fiscal Year 2016. STTR solicitations use a letter instead of a number after the fiscal year designation – so 16.A is the first STTR solicitation during fiscal year 2016. Both the SBIR and STTR solicitations are released at the same time in separate documents. For those of you who have not worked with the federal government before, be aware that the fiscal year begins October 1st. The accompanying graphic shows the general time period in which the three SBIR and STTR releases are made.

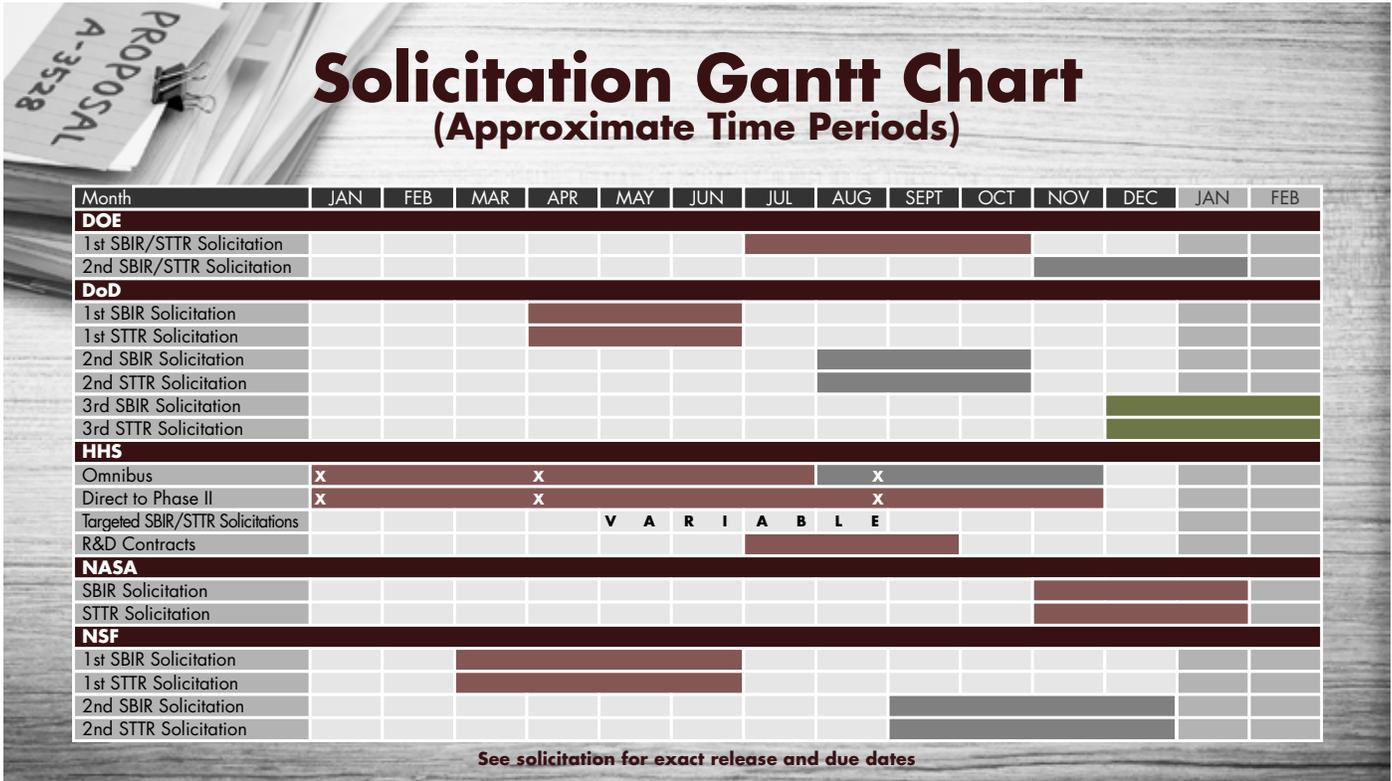
### **DOD IS A CONTRACTING AGENCY**

The Department of Defense, or DoD, is a contracting agency. Therefore, during the period when proposals are accepted, one cannot speak directly with the topic author but must submit any questions that they may have via e-mail. The answers are then publicly posted on SITIS which stands for the SBIR Interactive Topic Information System. However, as such discussions are helpful there is a period, referred to as the Pre-Release period, when an individual does have the opportunity to interact directly by phone or by e-mail with the topic author. This Pre-Release period lasts approximately one month.

DoD has the largest SBIR/STTR budget. The Department of Defense is comprised of 13 diverse components with unique missions. To address this diversity, each time that a DoD SBIR or STTR Solicitation is released general instructions are provided for all of DoD, as well as unique instructions and topics for each of the participating components. Not all components

participate in each of the three solicitation releases and usually the first in each fiscal year is the largest. Also important to note is that the smaller components often do not implement many of the options that the three larger services do. For example, not all DoD components have an STTR program. Given this diversity, after reading the general instructions, it is important to review the unique solicitations for each component of interest.

Let's talk briefly about what to expect when you look at a DoD solicitation. For the SBIR program, the DoD Instruction document is approximately 40 pages in length. No topics are contained in this document. However, when you look at the solicitations for the Army, Navy, or Air Force you will find that these documents are quite lengthy with between 140 and 220 pages. Most of these pages contain the topic descriptions, as opposed to instructions. The instruction section for these services is usually less than 15 pages.



## DoD Components

- » Army
- » Navy
- » Air Force (AF)
- » Chemical and Biological Defense (CBD)
- » Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)
- » Defense Health Program (DHP)
- » Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)
- » Defense MicroElectronics Activity (DMEA)
- » Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)
- » Missile Defense Agency (MDA)
- » National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)
- » Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)
- » Special Operations Command (SOCOM)

### HOW TO FIND DOD SOLICITATIONS

So, how do you find the DoD solicitations? The most common site used to access the DoD SBIR/STTR solicitations is the website administered by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). You can access both current and closed solicitations from this location, conduct topic searches, and join the Listserv in order to receive future notices.

Let's look at a few items in the DoD Instructions that highlight some of its unique features. The DoD Instructions document contains a useful summary of Component Programs. What you notice right away in the price column is the use of the phrase Phase I Option. In most, but not all cases, DoD divides an SBIR Phase I award into a base and an option. Being a contracting agency it is not uncommon to tie payment to performance. The use of a base and an option does this. The duration column indicates the typical length for the base and option in that component.

Another important concept is Export Control. Technology developed under the DoD SBIR/STTR programs may be subject to U.S. export-control laws and regulations. These laws restrict the transfer of certain types of information and technology to unauthorized persons by any means. In reviewing DoD topics you will notice that some have the word ITAR in the Technology or Acquisition Program section. This indicates that there are restrictions in place regulated by the **International Traffic in Arms Regulations**, commonly referred to as ITAR.



In the proposal fundamentals section it clarifies that “For both Phase I and Phase II, all research or research and development work must be performed by the small business concern and its subcontractors in the United States. Also DoD asks that you include information in your proposal regarding individuals that hold dual citizenship, as well as foreign nationals.

Another item of note is the need for an adequate accounting system. This is true for all companies that utilize the SBIR and STTR program. However, when working with DoD your accounting system will be audited by the Defense Contract Audit Agency or DCAA. Therefore, it is important to understand the DCAA requirements. Checklists and tools are available.

### **DOD PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The evaluation criteria for DoD Phase I SBIR proposals are very similar to what you have seen for other agencies. There are three evaluation criteria listed in descending order of importance.

**First, the soundness, technical merit and innovation of the proposed approach and its incremental progress toward topic or subtopic solution.**

**Second, the qualifications of the proposed principal/key investigators, supporting staff, and consultants. Qualifications include not only the ability to perform the research and development but also the ability to commercialize the results; and**

**Third, the potential for commercial (Government or private sector) application and the benefits expected to accrue from this commercialization.**

In looking at this list you might ask – Why does DoD mention having a sound approach to making “incremental progress toward topic or subtopic solutions?” What does this mean? When you look at the DoD topics you will notice that the topic specifies what it expects to be completed by the end of Phase I; by the end of Phase II; and a suggested direction for Phase III. Remember that DoD is a contracting agency and as such your award is an agreement between a buyer and a seller to provide a service or good. As you are conducting research, you cannot guarantee your results but you are expected to present an approach in your proposal that will result in incremental progress toward a topic or subtopic solution.

The DoD Instructions document also contains a section called Contractual Requirements. These are important to review. Of particular importance is the section entitled Technical Data Rights, commonly referred to as SBIR Data Rights. Another course included in this On-Line System will provide guidance on this topic.

In this overview of the DoD Instructions document, what has been highlighted are some unique features of DoD that become apparent when reviewing the solicitation. Most of the concepts discussed will not effect your proposal preparation, but provide insight into working with the Department of Defense. Be sure to visit the DoD SBIR/STTR program website numerous times during the year. This site contains many useful tools including the ability to search topics in open SBIR and STTR solicitations, links to the proposal submission site, and access to SITIS.

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### **DOD SBIR/STTR SOLICITATIONS**

<http://www.acq.osd.mil/osbp/sbir/solicitations/index.shtml>