

ARMD - University Leadership Initiative Vendor's Forum Q&A

1. Can you please state the number of awards?

We are anticipating 2 to 4 awards valued up to \$2M per award per year, with a period of performance not to exceed 5 years.

2. Regarding the interested partners list. Can we make a submission as a point of contact from the institution or can we make individual applications?

You may submit as an institution or individual. In either case, please provide a contact name and email.

3. Could you be open to integrating this with undergraduate activities? We have been involved with design build for the past 20 years and we do a lot of that and we found that the students are incredibly imaginative and innovative and I am just wondering if you had thought about that kind of line as well?

Yes, we would support that approach.

4. I wondered if some of the universities want to partner with facilities or access to facilities. Is that part of this?

Yes, teams may propose use of NASA facilities. The solicitation will provide NASA website links or contacts for obtaining facility information from the four NASA Aeronautics-supporting centers. Proposers may contact NASA for facility information prior to or during the solicitation. Further information can be found in NSPIRES under the Research Opportunities in Aeronautics (ROA) Questions and Answers.

5. Will the Interested Partners list be made available to everybody?

Yes, the list will be posted on the publicly available website, <https://nari.arc.nasa.gov/uli>

6. How long is the project? One? Or two years?

Award periods will vary depending on the proposal but shall not exceed 5 years.

7. Since this is supposed to be short-term, proof of concept type initiative can we expect that large teams with three or four institutes are discouraged?

No, NASA will be looking for experienced, diverse teams capable of executing the propose task. Over the course of the research effort, research products should grow in scope and complexity. They should address multi-disciplinary, system-level challenges. At the end of the research effort, we anticipate that proposal teams will provide some capabilities having the potential to directly impact NASA research teams or the U.S. aeronautics industry. Research products could include multi-disciplinary design tools, operational concepts, models, or technologies.

8. What will the funding limit be? Will this be funded as cooperative agreements with non-profit environments similar to the past LEARN solicitations?

Please see response #1 relating to the funding. The exact procurement vehicle is still under review, but the agency is considering awarding cooperative agreement and contracts. The final decision will be outlined in the solicitation.

9. Can a non-profit consortia of a degree granting institution propose as a team lead?

Not as a team lead. The team lead must be an accredited, degree-granting U.S. college or university.

10. Could you please shed some light on the selection process and the proposal?

We are currently considering a two-stage approach. In Phase/Step A, everyone will be allowed to submit a proposal. Only selected vendors will be invited to the Phase/Step B stage of the procurement process. The exact criteria relating to both phases will be highlighted in the final solicitation.

11. Within the two-step construct would you allow institutions to engage with technical point of contacts, project managers to gain verification and insight? Will they be identified in the solicitation?

No, there will be a blackout period from the solicitation release until a final selection is made (after the Step B phase). During the blackout period, communication with NASA about this initiative will be limited to the POC listed in the solicitation. Throughout the process, communication will be allowed to obtain information about NASA facilities.

12. If a team includes industries, how do we manage the proprietary nature of these competing industries and IP issues?

The exact arrangement between the vendors is at their discretion. The proposal will need to discuss what is going to be publicly available. Where necessary, we will provide a means to protect proprietary information.

13. How can we get the presentation?

The slides are available on the University Leadership Initiative (ULI) website: <https://nari.arc.nasa.gov/uli>

14. What is the entry and exit TRL level of proposed research?

We are going to leave that open. TRL may be applicable to some of the proposals and not to others. TRL is a metric used to assign a level of technical maturity to a technology. It provides insight on a technology's readiness to be transferred to a partner or used in an operational domain. That may be a metric that some proposers choose to use, but we are not going to provide a target level. Since this will be a multi-year effort, we'd expect some degree of advancement or maturation of the concepts as the research progresses.

15. Can a national Lab be a partner in the proposals such as AFRL?

No, ARMD's policy does not allow national labs to be included as team members in a proposal, but does support coordination with these entities. Please refer to the Proposer's Guidebook for further information: <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/nraguidebook>

16. Do you expect to have some sort of a quota system for different levels of proposals submitted to you? I'm trying to understand what will keep a small proposal competitive against a very large team proposal.

No, all proposals will be evaluated based on merit with no preference given to size of team.

17. After the Step A is there a possibility that the program management would say it might be really good if these guys worked with these guys or that kind of thing? Is that going to be something that you will look at? I don't think anybody asked that already.

No.

18. Will the teams that formed at the time of initial preliminary proposals be frozen or will some teaming realignment among individuals or universities be allowed for the second stage full proposals?

We will probably look to get an initial sense of what the teams might look like in Step A but would anticipate an opportunity to make adjustments going into Step B.

19. When will the NRA be available?

Mid/late April 2016.

20. What is the desired level of research efforts - basic research or more applied?

We will be looking to get system-level, multi-disciplinary research contributions. Basic or single discipline research can contribute, but system-level, multi-disciplinary capabilities should be emphasized in the final research products.

21. Will cost share be required? If yes, what level?

No, cost share is allowed, but not required.

22. Can you please clarify if the funding level will be \$2 million per project or \$2 million overall the awards per year?

See response to Question #1.

23. Is this to say that the Step A Proposals are akin to a white paper?

No, the solicitation will provide the required proposal elements.

24. Will the PI's have a chance to communicate with the program managers during the 45 days between the solicitation release and abbreviated proposal submission?

No, see response to Question #11.

25. With six thrusts and 2 to 4 funding projects is there an intent for most projects to integrate more than one thrust?

No. The thrusts are all supportive. There is some cross coupling, but they are also distinct. They all have their own set of outcomes at the near, mid, and far term levels. So, we will be looking for the proposer to choose a thrust and choose an outcome or set of outcomes from that thrust and propose technical challenges and work that the proposer believes will advance the thrust and help move the community forward toward achieving the outcome. It's possible that a capability might be able to support more than one thrust, but we'll be looking for proposals to focus on addressing the needs of a particular thrust.

26. Is this a one-time program or solicitation or will this occur in future years?

We certainly anticipate future solicitations under this initiative. Funding is always determined on a year-by-year basis.

27. The slides say summaries from these technical challenges will be provided in the solicitation. Can we get a summary before the solicitation is released?

Yes, we have posted the current ARMD technical challenges to the ULI website: <https://nari.arc.nasa.gov/uli>

28. Is this replacing LEARN or is this another method for identifying innovative research for the different thrust areas?

No, this is a separate opportunity.

29. Is cost matching required for this proposal effort?

See response to Question #20.

30. Midterm and far term so for the proposal is there any suggestions that we need to focus more on near-term or far term or including all of them?

We do not have a preference for a particular timeframe. We would encourage everyone to read through our Strategic Implementation Plan, focusing on the thrust and outcome descriptions. An important thing will be choosing a thrust and outcome that you feel you are in a position to support. We really don't have a preference of whether that is near-term, mid-term, or far-term. We need contributions in all three of those timeframes, across all six thrusts. So, we encourage you to look at those and consider where you think there is a good fit between what you have to bring to the table and those strategic thrust outcomes. Then, really draw the connection between the work that you are proposing and the ability to advance the thrust and contribute to the outcomes.

31. How would NASA be involved on the center advisory board side?

We're putting this challenge out to the university community to bring forward your ideas, technical challenges, milestones, and activities. In addition, we're asking you to track your own progress and use peer review mechanisms that you consider to be effective in assessing the quality and performance of your work. We do anticipate some level of review by NASA, possibly by NASA program or project management, in doing an additional assessment of work quality and performance. We anticipate that NASA oversight will include an annual review and some level of quarterly update. We will provide more details in the solicitation.

32. Can we use the current ROA as our guide to start preparing for the competition?

The current ROA is the 2015 version (available on NSPIRES). The 2016 version should be out soon. The ROA provides good background information for preparing a NRA proposal. I'd also recommend reviewing the NASA guidebook for proposers (available at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/nraguidebook>). Additional information on the University Leadership Initiative is available on <https://nari.arc.nasa.gov/uli>

33. Is the lead organization required to execute a minimum percentage of the effort?

No, at this time there is no minimum limitation on the lead organization. The final decision will be outlined in the solicitation.

34. Must all participants be US-based entities?

Yes.

35. Are the six strategic thrust areas similar to those that were in the original RFI?

Yes. The solicitation will provide any updates to the Strategic Implementation Plan, but we expect any changes to be minimal.

36. What is the earliest anticipated start date?

The actual start date will be based on the release of the final solicitation. The anticipated release date for the solicitation is Mid/late April 2016.

37. Will there be a specific template format for the proposal?

We recommend reviewing the NASA guidebook for proposers (available at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/nraguidebook>).

38. Can you give an example of what you mean by system-level?

One could conceivably define a system at many different levels, ranging from an aircraft component up to the entire national airspace system. I expect we'll provide wide latitude in how a team may define a system. I would offer some attributes that could characterize a system. In essence, a system generally performs an aviation function. It necessarily incorporates multiple disciplines. It interacts with its environment and with other adjoining systems. Solutions to problems described in the Strategic Implementation Plan are necessarily at a system-level.

39. Since it is a University leadership initiative, is it okay to simply have a team of only University researchers without any other entities like industries? Is it discouraged?

We have a preference for teams that offer multi-disciplinary capabilities and diverse perspectives. Vendors have discretion in developing teams that meet those needs.

40. Do universities need a NASA Space Act Agreement first and foremost to partner properly with NASA centers?

Each NASA Center applies different practices for collaboration and use of facilities. Potential proposers are encouraged to contact the centers directly. Proposers are encouraged to review the ROA Questions and Answers (available on NSPIRES) for further information on collaborating with NASA centers.

41. We already have a working relationship with NASA researchers. Can we discuss this University Leadership Initiative with them before solicitation release, and for writing Step A, e.g., to work out a teaming arrangement?

As mentioned, we are looking to bring in new ideas and independent research paths in pursuing the strategic outcomes. We would therefore discourage discussions of proposal content with NASA researchers prior to solicitation, although there is no prohibition on such discussions. These discussions will be prohibited during the blackout period (from solicitation release until award selection). In addition, a NASA researcher cannot write any part of your proposal.

Collaboration with NASA during the period of performance is permitted, but NASA centers or researchers may not be included as "team members". When proposing collaboration with NASA, we ask that proposers not list NASA researchers by name. If a proposal is selected for negotiation towards a potential award (after Step B), then and only then can the details of any proposed collaboration including time in residency at a NASA Center, if applicable, be discussed and finalized. Further information can be found in NSPIRES under the Research Opportunities in Aeronautics (ROA) Questions and Answers.

42. Are on-site contractors who are part of academic institution supporting this type of work encouraged to apply for such solicitations?

This is at the discretion of the vendor as long as the lead organization is an accredited U.S. college or university.

43. Will you require teams to include a HBCU or a minority serving institution?

This is strongly encouraged but is at the discretion of the vendor. We are looking for a more active engagement from HBCU, tribal colleges and universities, and minority serving institutions.

44. Are there any restrictions regarding including industry partners who belong to the NASA Industry Composites Consortium?

There is no limitation on industry partners at this time.

45. When do you anticipate the first year of the research to start?

We anticipate awards at the end of this fiscal year and research starting around that time or shortly thereafter.

Will there be specific HBCU/MI goal setting for majority universities to team with HBCU/MI's in this ULI? For example: "10 USC 2323(a) (2) [Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994] set forth that "the Head of the Agency (DOD, NASA, Coast Guard) shall establish a specific goal within the overall 5% goal for the award of prime contracts and subcontracts to HBCU's and MI's in order to increase the participation of such colleges and universities in the program (SDB) provided for by this section".

See response to Question #43.

46. Should our project be a five-year project or will you also consider something on the order of a three year proposal?

See response to Questions #1 and #6.

47. What is the merit review criteria?

We are still working out the exact selection criteria. They will be provided in the solicitation.