

UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND
23.4 Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)
Phase I Proposal Submission Instructions

February 7, 2023: Topic issued for pre-release

February 21, 2023: USSOCOM begins accepting proposals via DSIP

March 9, 2023: DSIP Topic Q&A closes to new questions at 12:00 p.m. ET

March 23, 2023: Deadline for receipt of proposals no later than 12:00 p.m. ET

Join us for a virtual Q&A with our Technical Point of Contact
February 22, 2023, from 12:00PM-1:00PM ET

INTRODUCTION

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) seeks small businesses with strong research and development capabilities to pursue and commercialize technologies needed by Special Operations Forces through the Department of Defense (DoD) SBIR 23.4 Program Broad Agency Announcement (BAA).

Offerors responding to a topic in this BAA must follow all general instructions provided in the DoD SBIR Program BAA. USSOCOM requirements in addition to or deviating from the DoD Program BAA are provided in the instructions below. A thorough reading of the “DoD SBIR Program, SBIR 23.4 Program Broad Agency Announcement (BAA)”, located at <https://www.defensesbirsttr.mil/SBIR-STTR/Opportunities/#announcements> prior to reading these USSOCOM instructions is highly recommended. The Offeror is responsible for ensuring that their proposal complies with the requirements in the most current version of these instructions. Prior to submitting your proposal, please review the latest version of these instructions as they are subject to change before the submission deadline.

The Government may withdraw from negotiations at any time for any reason to include matters of national security (foreign persons, foreign influence or ownership, inability to clear the firm or personnel for security clearances, or other related issues).

The USSOCOM SBIR/STTR Program Office will be hosting a virtual USSOCOM Industry Day on February 22, 2023 to further specify requirements and stimulate small business/research institute partnership-building. Please visit <https://events.sofwerx.org/sbir23-4/> for additional information and to sign up.

PHASE I PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The Defense SBIR/STTR Innovation Portal (DSIP) is the official portal for DoD SBIR/STTR proposal submission. Offerors are required to submit proposals via DSIP; proposals submitted by any other means will be disregarded. Detailed instructions regarding registration and proposal submission via DSIP are provided in the DoD SBIR Program BAA.

Proposal Volumes are key in the qualification of the proposal. Offerors shall complete each of the following volumes. Those volume are (1) Cover Sheet, (2) Technical Volume, (3) Cost Volume, (4) Company Commercialization Report, (5) Pitch Day Presentation, and (6) Fraud, Waste and Abuse Training.

Please Note:

1. It is the Offeror’s responsibility to make sure all DoD and USSOCOM instructions are followed, and all required documents are submitted. The DSIP (DoD’s SBIR/STTR proposal submission website)

will NOT be able to ensure your submission is in accordance with both DoD and USSOCOM instructions. The DSIP “100% submitted” means that the upload process is complete; It does NOT mean the proposal submission complies with the stated instructions and that all required documentation is successfully uploaded.

2. USSOCOM doesn't assist Offerors with proposal preparation nor does USSOCOM review proposals for completeness. We recommend you use your local and state resources for assistance. (See DoD Instructions for resources information.)
3. USSOCOM has encountered issues while downloading proposals due to lengthy file names. The Offeror shall not use more than 20 characters to include spaces in any of the proposal documents titles.
4. **USSOCOM does NOT require a Government Letter of Support (LoS). Any Government LoS provided will deem the proposal to be non-responsive (Disqualified).**

Cover Page (Volume 1)

Is created as part of the DoD Proposal Submissions process.

Technical Volume (Volume 2)

The technical volume is not to exceed 5 pages and must follow the formatting requirements provided in the DoD SBIR Program BAA titled, “Format of Technical Volume (Volume 2)”. USSOCOM will only evaluate the first five (5) pages of the Technical Volume, additional pages will not be considered or evaluated.

Content of the Technical Volume

Required items are specified in the DoD SBIR Program BAA Phase I Technical Volume instructions section titled “Content of the Technical Volume 2”. To access the template, please go to <https://www.defensesbirsttr.mil/SBIR-STTR/Opportunities/> then scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the third tab titled “Supporting Documents and Attachments”. At the bottom of the list, select the document titled “Phase I Technical (Vol 2) Sample Template”

Contract Data Requirement Lists (CDRLs): CDRLs identifies which data products must be delivered by the contractor to the Government. Please make sure you read all required CDRLs requirements (each using a DD Form 1423-1) prior to developing your proposal. All five of the required Phase I CDRLs are available on <https://www.socom.mil/SOF-ATL/Pages/SBIR-P1.aspx>.

The identification of foreign national involvement in a USSOCOM SBIR topic is needed to determine if a firm is ineligible for award on a USSOCOM topic that falls within the parameters of the United States Munitions List, Part 121 in the International Traffic in Arms Regulation (ITAR). A firm employing a foreign national(s) (as defined section titled “Foreign Nationals” of the DoD SBIR Program BAA) to work on a USSOCOM ITAR topic must possess an export license to receive a SBIR Phase I contract.

Cost Volume (Volume 3)

The Phase I Base amount must not exceed \$210,000. Costs must be identified on the Proposal Cover Sheet (Volume 1) and in Volume 3. Once the proposal is initiated in DSIP the Offeror will have access to the required USSOCOM specific Cost Volume instructions and template.

A minimum of two-thirds of the research and/or analytical work in Phase I must be conducted by the proposing firm. The percentage of work is measured by both direct and indirect costs as a percentage of the total contract cost.

Please review the updated Percentage of Work (POW) calculation details included in section 5.3 of the DoD Program BAA. USSOCOM will not accept any deviation to the POW requirements.

The cost volume template (volume 3 template) is located on DSIP and <https://www.socom.mil/SOF-ATL/Pages/SBIR-P1.aspx>.

Company Commercialization Report (CCR) (Volume 4)

Completion of the CCR Volume 4 of the proposal submission in DSIP is required. Please refer to the DoD SBIR Program BAA for full details on this requirement. Information contained in the CCR will be considered by USSOCOM during proposal evaluations.

Supporting Documents (Volume 5)

In addition to the documentation outlined in the DoD SBIR Program BAA, the following documents must also be included with Volume 5: (1) PowerPoint presentation, (2) Section K, and (3) Resumes.

Note: If you can't find a proper "volume" or "selection" in DSIP, please attach under "Other".

- (1) PowerPoint Presentation: Potential Offerors shall submit a slide deck **not to exceed 15 PowerPoint slides (inclusive of the cover sheet)**. The presentation shall not have any videos or links to videos. There is no set format for this document. It is recommended (but not required) that more detailed information is included in the technical volume and higher-level information be included in the slide deck, suitable for a possible presentation. Refer to the "Phase I Evaluations" Section of this instruction for more details.
- (2) Section K - Titled "Representations, Certifications, and other statements of Offerors": If Section K is not submitted with the proposal, the proposal will still be considered responsive, but the completed Section K shall be required at the time of award. Section K is available at <https://www.socom.mil/SOF-ATL/Pages/SBIR-P1.aspx>.
- (3) Resumes: Include resumes.

Fraud, Waste and Abuse Training (Volume 6)

Fraud, Waste and Abuse (FWA) training is required for Phase I proposals. Please refer to the DoD SBIR Program BAA instructions for full details.

DISCRETIONARY TECHNICAL AND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE (TABA)

USSOCOM does not provide Discretionary Technical and Business Assistance for Phase I awards.

INQUIRIES

USSOCOM does not allow direct communication with the topic authors (differs from the DoD SBIR Program BAA instructions).

During the Pre-Release and Open Periods of the DoD SBIR Program BAA, only and all technical questions that enhance the Offerors understanding of the topic's requirements must be submitted to the online **Defense SBIR/STTR Innovation Portal (DSIP) Topic Q&A**. All questions and answers submitted to DSIP Topic Q&A will be released to the general public. USSOCOM does NOT allow inquirers to communicate directly in any manner to the topic authors (differs from the DoD STTR Program BAA instructions). Only questions pertaining to the proposal preparation instructions should

be directed to: sbir@socom.mil. All inquiries must include the topic number in the subject line of the e-mail.

Consistent with DoD SBIR instructions, USSOCOM will not answer programmatic questions, such as who the technical point of contact is, the number of contracts to be awarded, the source of funding, transition strategy.

Physical site visits will not be permitted during the Pre-release and Open Periods of the DoD SBIR Program BAA.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

All proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria listed in the DoD SBIR Program BAA, with the following exceptions:

1. Proposals missing any of the six above stated volumes or those that do not comply with the requirement of two-thirds of the work conducted by the proposing firm will not be evaluated. Likewise, proposals that exceed the maximum price allowed as per Table 1 of these instructions will be considered non-responsive.
2. The technical evaluation will utilize the Evaluation Criteria provided in DoD SBIR Program BAA instructions. The Technical Volume and PowerPoint Presentation slide deck will be reviewed holistically. The technical evaluation is performed in two parts:

Part I: The evaluation of the Technical Volume will utilize the Evaluation Criteria provided in the DoD SBIR Program BAA. Once the evaluations are complete, all Offerors will be notified in a timely manner.

Part II: Selected Offerors may receive an invitation to present their slide deck (30 minute presentation time / 30 minute Government question and answer period) to the USSOCOM technical evaluation team, using virtual teleconference. This will be a technical presentation only of the proposed solution and the key personnel listed in the proposal should be conducting the presentation and responding to the questions of the evaluation team. This presentation is NOT intended for business development personnel, it is purely technical. Selected Offerors shall restrict their Pitch Day presentations to only the 15-page PowerPoint presentations that were submitted with their respective proposals. There will be no changes or updates to the presentations from what was proposed. All selected firms will be required to provide teleconference information for the presentation. This presentation will complete the evaluation of the proposal the panel did against the criteria listed in the DoD SBIR 22.1 BAA.

3. The Cost Volume (Volume 3) evaluation:
For this Phase I, the award amount is set at a not to exceed (NTE) amount and a technical evaluation of the proposal cost will be completed to assess price fair and reasonableness. Proposals above the established NTE for the Phase I effort will not be considered for award. The team will assess the technical approach presented for the effort based on the number of labor hours by labor categories, the key personnel level of involvement, materials, subcontractors and consultants (scope of work, expertise, participation and proposed effort), and other direct cost as proposed.

Additionally, input on technical aspects of the proposals may be solicited by USSOCOM from non-Government consultants and advisors who are bound by appropriate non-disclosure requirements. When appropriate, non-government advisors may have access to Offeror’s proposals and may be utilized to objectively review a proposal in a particular functional area and provide comments and recommendations to the Government’s decision makers. They may not establish final assessments of risk, rate or rank Offerors’ proposals. All advisors shall comply with procurement Integrity Laws and shall sign Non-Disclosure and Rules of Conduct/ Conflict of Interest statements. The Government shall take into consideration requirements for avoiding conflicts of interest. Submission of a proposal in response to this request constitutes approval to release the proposal to Government support contractors.

Notifications:

For topic SOCOM234-001, the DEFENSEWERX (also known as SOFWERX) will notify each Offeror whether they have been selected for award or not. The e-mail notification will be sent to the Corporate Official (Business) identified by the Offeror.

Informal Feedback:

A non-selected Offeror can make a written request to SBIR@SOCOM.mil within 30 calendar days of receipt of notification of non-selection, for informal feedback. SOCOM SBIR/STTR Program Office will provide informal feedback in response to an Offeror’s written request rather than a debriefing.

Refer to the DoD SBIR Program BAA for procedures to protest the Announcement.

As further prescribed in FAR 33.106(b), FAR 52.233-3, Protests after Award should be submitted to: sbir@socom.mil.

PATH TO PHASE II

If awarded a Phase I, the Small Business will automatically be invited to propose a Phase II proposal unless otherwise informed by USSOCOM. To obtain the Phase II requirements, refer to the Contract Data Requirements List (CDRL) A004. The Final Report will be due on or before 6 months of the start of the Period of Performance (PoP) In Accordance With (IAW) CDRL A003. Your Phase II proposal will be due on or before the 195th day of the start of the PoP IAW CDRL A005.

All CDRLs are available on <https://www.socom.mil/SOF-ATL/Pages/SBIR-P1.aspx>. There are two different attachments for CDRL 5. Please refer to the section titled “Award and Contract Information” for the contracting path pertaining to the topic.

AWARD AND CONTRACT INFORMATION

Table 1: Consolidated SBIR Topic Information

Topic	Technical Volume (Vol 2)	Additional Info. (Vol 5)	Period of Performance	Award Amount	Contract Type
<i>Phase I</i> SOCOM234-001	Not to exceed 5 pages	15 page PowerPoint	Not to exceed 7 months	NTE \$210,000	Firm-Fixed- Price

SBIR awards for SOCOM234-001 may be made under the authority of National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022, Section 852, MODIFICATION OF PILOT PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY- ENHANCED CAPABILITIES WITH PARTNERSHIP INTERMEDIARIES. USSOCOM may use a partnership intermediary to award SBIR contracts and agreements to small business concerns. The stated topics SBIR contract awards may be done through SOFWERX and result in a commercial contract between

the firm and DEFENSEWERX. The Government will conduct the evaluation and select the proposals to be funded for award. .

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Phase I proposals shall NOT include:

- 1) Any travel for Government meetings. All meetings with the Government will be conducted via electronic media.
- 2) Government furnished property or equipment.
- 3) Priced or Unpriced Options.
- 4) "Basic Research" (or "Fundamental Research") defined as a "Systematic study directed toward greater knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and/or observable facts without specific applications toward processes or products in mind."
- 5) Human or animal studies.
- 6) Discretionary Technical and Business Assistance (TABAs)

SOCOM SBIR 23.4 Topic Index
Release 1

SOCOM234-001 Analyzing Narrative Evolution Across Social Networks

The technology within this topic is restricted under the International Traffic in Arms Regulation (ITAR), which controls the export and import of defense-related material and services. Offerors must disclose any proposed use of foreign nationals, their country of origin, and what tasks each would accomplish in the statement of work in accordance with section 5.4.c.(8) of the solicitation. Additionally, Offerors will describe compliance mechanisms offerors have in place or will put in place to address any ITAR issues that arise during the course of agreement administration.

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this topic is to develop applied research toward an innovative capability to automatically detect, track, and differentiate the evolution of narratives over time in the information environment. This study should explore the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as natural language processing, to project long-term narratives among social networks and track changes associated with micro-changes in narratives based on responses, tracked online, to events shared by a social network.

IMPORTANT: For SOCOM instructions: please visit: <https://www.defensesbirsttr.mil/SBIR-STTR/Opportunities/>. Go to the bottom of the page and click "DoD SBIR 23.4 Annual". Once there, go to the SOCOM SBIR 23.4 Release 1

DESCRIPTION: As a part of this feasibility study, the proposers shall address all viable overall system design options with respective specifications for detection and tracking the evolution of narratives across time and social networks. Current research captures proto-narratives at a snapshot in time and can track the engagement of audiences with a particular proto-narrative over a time period. However, narratives are not static; they evolve in the course of engagement by audiences. The main features of technology development should focus on constructing a quantitative model for tracking the evolution of narratives over time, including the transformation of one narrative into another, the dissolution of existing narratives, and the merging and splitting of strategic narratives from / into sub-narratives.

PHASE I: Conduct a feasibility study to assess what is in the art of the possible that satisfies the requirements specified in the above paragraphs entitled "Objective" and "Description."

The objective of this USSOCOM Phase I SBIR effort is to conduct and document the results of a thorough feasibility study ("Technology Readiness Level 3") to investigate what is in the art of the possible within the given trade space that will satisfy a needed technology. The feasibility study should investigate all options that meet or exceed the minimum performance parameters specified in this write up. It should also address the risks and potential payoffs of the innovative technology options that are investigated and recommend the option that best achieves the objective of this technology pursuit. The funds obligated on the resulting Phase I SBIR contracts are to be used for the sole purpose of conducting a thorough feasibility study using scientific experiments and laboratory studies as necessary. Operational prototypes will not be developed with USSOCOM SBIR funds during Phase I feasibility studies. Operational prototypes developed with other than SBIR funds that are provided at the end of Phase I feasibility studies will not be considered in deciding what firm(s) will be selected for Phase II.

PHASE II: Develop, install, and demonstrate a prototype system determined to be the most feasible solution during the Phase I feasibility study on an advanced analytic capability to detect, track, manage, and differentiate the evolution of narratives across social networks in the information environment.

PHASE III DUAL USE APPLICATIONS: This system has applicability in a broad range of other broader DoD, USG, or private company applications where planners, operators, and assessors must determine the most appropriate target audience for engagement to create effects in the information and cognitive domain, leading to physical behavior change. Advanced narrative detection would allow for better predictive analysis and create flexibility and more rapid responsiveness to changes in the information environment. This responsiveness is paramount for DoD strategic communications, intelligence agencies, and can benefit private companies needing to track shifts in conversation regarding social trends related to their products. Importantly, advanced narrative detection presents opportunity to track, measure, and assess changes over time, and to better assess effectiveness by correlating changes to events in the information environment.

REFERENCES:

1. Bail, C. A. (2016). Combining natural language processing and network analysis to examine how advocacy organizations stimulate conversation on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(42), 11823–11828. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1607151113
 - a. Link – <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1607151113>
2. Davis, J. T., Perra, N., Zhang, Q., Moreno, Y., & Vespignani, A. (2020). Phase transitions in information spreading on structured populations. *Nature Physics*, 16(5), 590– 596. doi: 10.1038/s41567-020-0810-3
 - a. Link – <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41567-020-0810-3>
3. Measuring coordinated vs. spontaneous activity in online social movements. *SocArXiv*. doi: 10.1177/14614448211041176
 - a. Link – https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354281278_Measuring_coordinated_versus_spontaneous_activity_in_online_social_movements

KEYWORDS: Artificial intelligence (AI); Machine Learning (ML); social network analysis; narrative detection; narrative modeling; narrative evolution; narrative transformation; coordinate activity; cultural convergence; misinformation; disinformation; quantitative; qualitative; target audience; natural language processing; network analysis; social media