

Solicitation No. DHSSBIRFY082 REV 2
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[DHS Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program]

REMINDER:

THE RESPONSE DATE FOR SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL UNDER DHSSBIRFY082 IS **8 JULY 2008** BASED ON **REVISION 2** OF THE SOLICITATION.

Proposers desiring to submit proposals under the DHSSBIRFY02 solicitation were required to submit an e-mail request for a proposal number by Friday, June 20, 2008, at 4:30 p.m. local Eastern time. FAILURE TO SUBMIT AN E-MAIL REQUEST BY THE DATE AND TIME SPECIFIED ELIMINATES INTERESTED SOURCES FROM RESPONDING TO THIS SOLICITATION.

Q1) Blasts, projectiles and fire are all different threat hazards (from a physics standpoint). Can you prioritize the types of hazards you seek to protect against? Can we propose a solution that is optimized to only one of these threats?

A1) We are looking for innovative approaches to protect infrastructure from each of these threats. Solutions optimized to a specific threat may be proposed.

Q2) The range of targets in the solicitation is very broad. Can you prioritize the types of structures to protect?

A2) No preference order is given. We are looking for innovative approaches to protect different types of critical infrastructure, and you are welcome to submit applicable technologies specific to one or more infrastructure types.

Q3) Is it acceptable to propose damage protection for specific subsystems (i.e. windows) instead of the entire building?

A3) Yes, the scope of work for the SBIR is applicable to any measure for protecting buildings against blast, including ones that address specific subsystems.

Q4) May we know, at this time, what database is currently being used by TLS?

A4) Yes.

Q4a) If "yes," please indicate the pertinent database(s) and version(s).

A4a) Datacomm DB. Your solution is required to be scalable. Additional information will be provided after contract award.

Q4b) If "no," can we expect to learn what databases is in use by TLS after being selected to participate in Phase I?

A4b) N/A.

Q5) Does the current TLS system have an API (Application Programming Interface)?

A5) No.

Q5a) If “yes,” may we obtain a copy of the API documentation prior to submitting our proposal?

A5a) N/A

Q6) To develop a new interface to the *existing* database(s), we would need to know **(a)** what database(s) is(are) currently in use and **(b)** the detailed schema (structure) of the database(s). If we are selected to participate in Phase I, may we assume that we will be provided with this information?

A6) Yes.

Q7) If we are selected to participate in Phase I, we would be developing a new interface to an *existing* DHS database. To test the interface and functionality during development, we would need one of the following:

(a). Secure network access to a functioning test database identical in structure to the "real" TLS database. OR...

(b). Secure access to the actual TLS database, with a functional recordset that we would assume to be non-security sensitive (i.e., not active or sensitive cases that we could access). OR...

(c). The equipment and software needed to reproduce the TLS database locally. (This option has cost implications in developing the proposal.)

Question: Which of the above options should we expect? If “none,” please indicate the anticipated means of providing a representation of the existing database for which we would be developing a new interface.

A7) Alternatives will be discussed at the kick-off meeting {after contract award}. However, for your proposal, please assume Option B.

Q8) Will we be granted access to the current TLS interface?

A8) Yes.

Q9) I have read the instructions and see that the Abstract and Anticipated Benefits are to be listed on the cover sheet, although there is not much room for both, do they both need to fit within the allowable space or can they increase the size of the section onto a third page, it really does not state if this is okay?

Since the Cover Sheet is supposed to be the first two pages, can it flow over into 3 or 4 and still only count as the first two pages only?

A9) Per page 12 of the solicitation, “Your cover sheets will count as the first two pages of your proposal no matter how they print out.”

Q10) Proprietary info, the instructions state that the “proposer with the term "PROPRIETARY" (do not use "Company Confidential") and provided that the following legend that appears on the Proposal Cover Sheet of the proposal is completed: ”

"This data, except the proposal cover sheet, shall not be disclosed outside the Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed in whole or in part for any purpose other than to evaluate the proposal. If a contract is awarded to the proposer as a result of or in connection with the submission of these data, the Government shall have the right to duplicate, use or disclose the data to the extent provided in the contract. This restriction does not limit the Government's right to use information contained in the data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction is contained on the pages of the proposal listed on the line below."

If this is to be listed on the Cover Sheet, it will also increase the length of the Cover Sheet, is this acceptable? If so, is there a location it should be placed, e.g., at the end of the Cover Sheet?

A10): The first section of the Cover Sheet provides a selection of “Proposal _____ Contains _____ Does Not Contain Proprietary Information.” Please select one of the choices.

REMINDERS:

The Project Summary on the cover sheets shall NOT contain proprietary information. Mark proprietary information within the technical proposal as instructed in Section 5.6. (See page 11 of the solicitation.)

If your proposal is selected for award, the technical abstract and discussion of anticipated benefits will be publicly released; therefore, do not include proprietary or classified information in these {Cover Sheet} sections. (See page 12 of the solicitation.)

Q11) Further in the instructions is stated: “In addition, each page of the proposal containing proprietary data which the proposer wishes to restrict must be marked with the following legend: ”

"Use or disclosure of the proposal data on lines specifically identified by asterisk (*) are subject to the restriction on the Cover Sheet of this proposal."

Even though below that, the instructions state “If all of the information on a particular page is proprietary, the proposer should so note by including the word "PROPRIETARY" (do not use "Company Confidential") in both the header and footer on that page. If this is done, is that sufficient or does the quote above still need to be on each page or is that only if specific lines are to be considered PROPRIETARY?

A11) Asterisk (*) each line that has proprietary information. If the entire page is proprietary, each line should be marked with an asterisk(*) or, the header and footer should note “ENTIRE PAGE PROPRIETARY.”

Q12) In the “Start Date:” box, is it sufficient to list “30 days post Phase I award”?

A12) You may propose the Start Date of your choice. However, this is subject to negotiations if your proposal is selected for award. [SEE ALSO A15).]

Q13) The instructions state “Each proposer must qualify as a small business for research or research and development purposes as defined in Section 2.0 and must certify to this on the Cover Sheet of the proposal.” Although there is no place for other than Woman Owned, Minority Owned, HUB zone or in the box “Small Business as defined in Section 2.12?”, this section in the instructions address Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses.

So how do we “qualify” if we are not one of these and there is no other place on the Cover Sheet to mark our qualification?

I am awaiting the VA certification of me as Service Disabled and therefore my business will be a “Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business” (SDVOSB), although at the moment we are a “Veteran Owned Small Business”, should I indicate that I am Pending SDVOSB status and mark it as “yes”?

A13) The primary criteria for your firm is that it must meet the requirements of a “small business” per Section 2.2 of the solicitation, which will be evidenced by your response to “Number of Employees.” Additionally, you are certifying small business status by submitting a proposal. Whether your firm qualifies as “Veteran-Owned or Service Disabled Veteran Owned” is secondary and that data is currently not captured.

Q14) Inside the zip file, are the cover sheet and cost proposal files to be submitted as Word files or PDF files?

A14) They may be either, although PDF files are preferred.

Q15) What is the acceptable range for the "Start Date" field in the cover sheet? Or should we leave it blank?

A15) Generally, successful proposals start 30 days from the date of contract award.

Q16) The solicitation section 5.6 requires a specific legend to be completed in the cover sheet if the proposal contains proprietary information. However, the required legend does not appear in the cover sheet. Can you please add the legend to the cover sheet or rephrase section 5.6 of the solicitation?

A16) Please check the appropriate line at the top of the cover page as proprietary or non-proprietary. Also, mark each page that has proprietary information on it.

Q17) Is there a limit on the maximum number of keywords for the "Keywords" field in the cover sheet?

A17) There is no limit, however, six (6) is a recommended maximum.

Q18) Is there a limit on the maximum number words for the "Abstract" field in the cover sheet?

A18) There is no limit, however, 250 words is the recommended maximum.

Q19) There is a minor typo on the cover sheet. Company Data/Company Officer shows a "PI Last Name" field. It should read "CO Last Name." Can we fix it?

A19) Please make the change.

Q20) What is allowed font size for cover sheet and cost proposal (some places use size 10, others 12)?

A21) It is expected the technical proposal text will be 12 font size, while cost proposals may use 10 font size. In all cases, the font size must be easily read upon viewing or printing.

Q22) The submission process is insecure. If someone captures the email with the proposal zip file, will likely also capture the subsequent email with the password. Can you please allow submissions of the proposal using email encrypted with PGP, or alternate secure method? PGP can encrypt securely the email without the need for a password to be emailed, it is freely available as open source (e.g. gnuPGP), and can be installed in few minutes as add-on to an email client.

A22) If your firm chooses, you may submit the password to the following fax number: (202) 254-6170. Only passwords may be faxed, not entire proposals.

Q23) In the latest version of the solicitation, it mentions zipping and "password protecting" the proposal. In the previous version it mentioned zipping and "encrypting". The Winzip software appears to require one to encrypt a file in order to set up a password for it. Is there a way to password protect a zipped file in WinZip without encrypting it or is it okay to go ahead and encrypt it with a password for submission?

A23) The requirement to e-mail an encrypted proposal was deleted since the DHS mail servers were stripping some encrypted files from e-mails. If your software version requires encryption to prepare a zipped file, you must use the lowest encryption level possible and it should pass the DHS mail servers. However, most versions only stipulate encryption in the initial setup for password-protected zipping and then provide other options once you finalize the zipping.