

**DoD SBIR 21.1 & STTR 21.A Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs)  
Guidance for Communication with Potential Proposers  
During Pre-Release and Open Period  
for Topic Authors (TPOCs) and Other Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)**

**Introduction**

In accordance with DoD SBIR/STTR procedures and policy, TPOCs and other SMEs must be available to provide answers to technical questions from potential proposers about topics appearing in the DoD SBIR 21.1 and STTR 21.A BAAs. During the pre-release period, potential proposers have an opportunity to contact topic authors directly by email or phone to ask technical questions about topics, while during the open period, proposers may only submit questions via the Topic Q&A module on the Defense SBIR/STTR Innovation Portal (DSIP). The following serves as a guide to communicating with potential proposers during these two periods.

**SBIR 21.1/STTR 21.A BAA – Key Dates**

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| <b>December 8, 2020</b>  | Pre-release – Direct communication permitted with TPOCs or SMEs. Online Topic Q&A system is operational but not required.             |
| <b>January 14, 2021</b>  | BAA Open – No further direct communication between TPOCs/SMEs and Proposers. Questions must be submitted via online Topic Q&A system. |
| <b>February 4, 2021</b>  | Topic Q&A closes to new questions from potential proposers.   |
| <b>February 15, 2021</b> | Deadline for TPOCs to submit answers for outstanding Topic Q&A questions.   |
| <b>February 18, 2021</b> | BAA Close – All proposals must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. ET  |

**SBIR/STTR BAA Pre-Release Period**

On the date of pre-release, the OUSD, R&E Small Business and Technology Partnerships (SBTP) Office publishes instructions and topics at <https://www.dodsbirsttr.mil/submissions/login> and <https://rt.cto.mil/rtl-small-business-resources/sbir-sttr/>. Potential proposers may review these topics and ask questions directly of the TPOCs or SMEs.

The pre-released topics will include contact information (name, telephone number and/or e-mail address) of assigned TPOCs, depending on the Component. TPOCs must to respond to all questions received. If you need to update your TPOC information, please contact your Component SBIR/STTR POC for coordination with SBTP.

Questions should be limited to specific information related to improving the understanding of topic requirements. Potential proposers may not ask for advice or guidance on solution approach, nor submit additional material to the TPOC or SME. The following are general guidelines for communicating with potential proposers:

- Limit discussion to the scope of specific topic requirements and information that will improve understanding of the topic requirements.
- Ensure uniform responses. Treat all potential proposers equally and be consistent and accurate in your responses to similar questions. A recommended best practice is to keep a log of the questions received, and answers provided, which establishes a record of your discussions, and will assist you with ensuring uniform responses are given to all potential proposers.

- Do not respond to the same or similar question with information that would give one potential proposer a competitive advantage over another.
- Avoid setting up personal, face-to-face meetings (one-on-one sessions that are open to the general public are permitted).
- Only the assigned TPOC or SME will answer questions. Do not allow other individuals to answer questions for you.
- Do not provide comments that may lead a potential proposer to assume that one approach is better than another.
- Do not accept additional materials (such as marketing materials or product samples)
- Do not share ideas or discuss technical solutions that you received from another potential proposer.
- Treat communications with personnel from Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) and government entities that are potentially interested in responding to an STTR topic (as a partner to a small business) the same as communications with other potential proposers. The government affiliation of FFRDCs and government entities does not afford them any special status and TPOCs must take care not to provide these entities an unfair competitive advantage.
- Do not respond to a question from a potential proposer if doing so would reveal the potential proposer's confidential business strategy, and is protected under the FAR.

If a TPOC determines that information given in response to a question is necessary for the preparation of proposals or wishes to post general questions received during pre-release to reach the broadest range of potential proposers, that information can be made available to the public through the online Topic Q&A system. This is accomplished by submitting individual Q&A entries, adding additional topic references, or uploading a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document to the topic. Please contact your Component SBIR/STTR POC for coordination with SBTP.

### **SBIR/STTR BAA Open Period**

Direct contact is not permitted between proposers and TPOCs or SMEs once the BAA is open. ***During this period, potential proposers must submit questions through the Topic Q&A System.***

#### **SBIR/STTR Topic Q&A (Formerly SITIS) Overview**

Topic Q&A resides within the Defense SBIR/STTR Innovation Portal (DSIP) at <https://www.dodsbirsttr.mil/submissions/login>. Topic Q&A is an anonymous electronic forum between potential proposers and the TPOC or SME. Potential proposers can submit questions that will be answered by the assigned TPOCs or SMEs and posted for public viewing.

TPOCs will receive an email from Topic Q&A when a question has been posted by a potential proposer which requires a response from the TPOC. TPOCs must respond to Topic Q&A within seven (7) days, by following instructions provided in the email notification. All questions and answers will be posted on the Topic Q&A System, to ensure fairness to all potential proposers. ***Please note that Topic Q&A will close to new questions two weeks before the BAA closing date.*** Topic Q&A will maintain all topic data, including previously answered questions, throughout the announcement period.

General questions about the program or announcement that are submitted through the Topic Q&A should be directed to the DoD Help Desk at 1-(703)-214-1333 or [DoDSBIRSupport@reisystems.com](mailto:DoDSBIRSupport@reisystems.com).

Once the BAA is open, direct contact with the TPOC or SME is not allowed. TPOCs or SMEs shall instruct the potential proposers to post questions on Topic Q&A.

#### **Additional Assistance**

If you have additional questions about the Topic Q&A process or general questions about the DoD BAA process or the proposal submission process, you may contact your Component SBIR/STTR POCs, or email the DoD Help Desk at [DoDSBIRSupport@reisystems.com](mailto:DoDSBIRSupport@reisystems.com).

**NOTE: The current information in this document is subject to change. If Topic Q&A becomes unavailable during the Open period for any reason, a new process for responding to topic queries will be disseminated at the earliest opportunity.**