

Questions & Answers – FELIX IARPA-BAA-17-07

Responses to Questions #1 to #14

Q1: We have started working on a proposal for the recently released IARPA-BAA-17-07 grant announcement. It doesn't mention any requirements for margin size on the proposal. Is there a minimum size for margins?

A1: There are no specific requirements regarding margins, but it is desired that a proposal have a minimum of 1" margins on all sides.

Q2: Are samples for Phase I testing to be taken from proposed systems, or from any system? Are samples for Phase I testing to be taken from a bounded set of sequence or system possibilities, or from an unknown universe of possibilities, including sequences or systems not proposed?

A2: Samples provided to performers as part of the Test and Evaluation process will be scoped as appropriate to assess performer progress and platform function. It is anticipated that the samples provided will be tailored to individual performer systems, but some samples may extend beyond the specific sequences or systems proposed to fully evaluate the capability and extensibility of the proposed approach.

Q3: During the 45 days of testing at T&E points, can we continue to modify and develop our algorithms?

A3: Performers may continue to work on any and/or all aspect of their projects through the entire contract period of performance.

Q4: Will there be live demonstrations requested during WMA workshops?

A4: It is not anticipated that live capability demonstrations will be requested during WMA workshops.

Q5: When do we hand over source code?

A5: The proposed system, including source code, should be delivered to the Government upon completion of each performer's period of performance. Please see Section 4.B.1.c.E of the BAA for additional details regarding program Deliverables.

Q6: Will we need to have the platform ready for use by an outside user at any other points during the project besides the end of phase 2?

A6: It is not anticipated that the proposed platform will be transitioned to an outside party prior to the end of the period of performance. However, the Government requires rights to all deliverables as described in Section 4.B.1.c.E and 6.B.2 of the BAA, and may exercise such rights as appropriate.

Q7: As part of deliverables, we'll be providing monthly reports. Do we need to provide comprehensive list of all species we can identify/have in our populated databases?

A7: For proposals selected for funding, the number and types of reports will be specified in the award document. The specific content of monthly reports will be determined after program award.

Q8: If we get cut, what do we hand over to the government and what do we get to keep?

A8: The Government does not typically seek to own the intellectual property, including technical data and computer software, developed under Government contracts; it acquires the right to use it. Generally, therefore, performers may freely use their intellectual property for their own commercial purposes (unless restricted by U.S. export control laws or security classification). Pursuant to section 4.B.1.c.E of the BAA, "the Government requires, at a minimum, Government Purpose Rights for all deliverables developed with mixed funding or that incorporate technical data or computer software at private expense..." All other deliverables shall be delivered with unlimited rights in accordance with FAR clause 52.227-14.

Q9: On page 13 of the BAA it states, "Offerors can create a platform that can be run on a compute cluster operating a Unix version with maximum memory of 1 TB, maximum processing of 6,000 CPU at 2.3-2.8 GHz and/or 15,000 GPU, and a maximum storage of 20 TB" Will the Government please provide the unit of measurement (e.g., hours) for 6,000 CPU and 15,000 GPU?

A9: Proposed platforms should be able to analyze up to 100 samples within the 45 days allotted for Test and Evaluation using a maximum of 6,000 CPU hours and/or 15,000 GPU hours. The Government will measure performance using a combination of wall clock time as well as CPU and GPU hours with resolution to seconds. Offerors should note that this represents a maximum and that the level of computational resource utilization required will be evaluated as part of the proposal, with reductions in utilization being viewed favorably.

Q10: On Page 24 of the BAA, "At the end of this section of the proposal, provide a Gantt chart, showing all the tasks and sub-tasks on the left with the performance period (in years/quarters) on the right. All milestones shall be clearly labeled on the chart. If necessary, use multiple pages to ensure legibility of all information." Would the Government please move the Gantt chart outside of the page limit for volume 1? Additionally, will the Government allow the Gantt chart to be on a foldout?

A10: The Gantt chart requested in Section 4.B.1.c of the BAA will count toward the page limit for Volume 1. The Gantt chart should meet all formatting requirements detailed in section 4.B of the BAA. Please note that non-compliant proposals may be rejected without review, and that any pages exceeding the page limit for Volume 1 will be removed and not considered during the evaluation process.

Q11: Will the Government please provide the APPENDIX B: Templates for Volume 2: Cost Proposal in Excel?

A11: Pursuant to section 4.B.2.b of the BAA, Offeror's are required to produce their own Excel document of cost and pricing information using the format as currently provided in Appendix B template.

Q12: Please clarify what is meant by a non-natural nucleotide. Does non-natural nucleotide cover modified bases, inosine, synthetic nucleotides or something else?

A12: The BAA notes that unnatural nucleotides are one of a variety of signatures of engineering that are of interest for detection. In this context, unnatural nucleotides are defined as those that do not occur in nature. This includes both artificial nucleotides (e.g. d5SICS and dNaM) as well as artificial nucleotide modifications.

Q13: If our analysis pipeline for Focus Area 2 depends on data from an established and well-developed lab technique (e.g., SiteSeq, Southern-by-Sequencing), will IARPA provide test data that are generated by the same technique, or will they provide raw DNA that can then be processed using that technique? Essentially, can Focus Area 2 submissions include as a part of the solution a particular lab technique that is no longer in an experimental phase, but is already developed and in use in the industry? If so, how are the datasets provided?

A13: Samples provided to performers as part of the Test and Evaluation process will be scoped as appropriate to assess performer progress and platform function. It is anticipated that the samples provided will be tailored to individual performer systems. For Focus Area 2, it is anticipated that the test data provided will be able to be analyzed using the performer system, with specific Test and Evaluation criteria being further developed following contract award. However, offerors should note that some samples may extend beyond the specific system proposed to fully evaluate the capability and extensibility of the approach being developed.

Additionally, submissions to Focus Area 2 may include well-established laboratory techniques as part of the proposed solution. In particular, such techniques may be utilized as a method to obtain data necessary for the development of proposed computational tools. If an experimental approach is to be utilized as part of the core Focus Area 2 solution (i.e. will be necessary for analysis of Test and Evaluation samples), the value of such an approach toward new computational tools should be clearly identified within the proposal.

Q14: What metadata will we be provided with each test sample? Will we be told a geographical distribution, organism or material from which DNA was isolated, a backstory, phenotype observations, or anything else?

A14: It is anticipated that little or no metadata will be included with the samples provided as part of the Test and Evaluation process. However, offerors should note that the samples provided will be scoped to be appropriate for individual performer solutions.