

Q 53: BAA Section 4.B.2.b asks for a breakdown of estimated costs by fiscal year. Does this refer to the Government's Fiscal Year, that of the prime contractor, or those of the subcontractors?

A: This refers to the Government's Fiscal Year.

Q 54: Should the levels of effort needed to support a Program Manager, and possibly a business manager, be included at levels that are anticipated to be needed to support the proposed project, or is there a suggested level or range of effort for these positions that should be used?

A: Offerors should propose the personnel and the levels of effort needed to accomplish the proposed work.

Q 55: Does IARPA have a salary cap similar to the US Department of Health and Human Services, or should full base salaries of faculty be used in the proposal?

A: IARPA does not have a salary cap similar to HHS. Offerors should use the full base salaries of faculty in their proposals.

Q 56: Does IARPA provide the opportunity for the prime contractor to receive indirect cost reimbursement on the first \$25,000 of each subcontracts?

A: IARPA does not have a specified limit on indirect costs that are allowed to be reimbursed on subcontracts. Contractors should follow FAR Part 31 Cost Principles and OMB guidance, as applicable.

Q 57: Should proposals include estimated costs for site visits, and, if so, should we anticipate these to be virtual (skype) or in-person meetings? Is the entire team (prime contractor and subcontractors) expected to attend each site visit?

A: Yes, proposals should include estimated costs for the program events described in BAA Table 7 and in BAA Section 6.B.3. At a minimum, offerors should plan for all key personnel and significant contributors to attend these events in person.

Q 58: If an institution is not an "academic" institution, do they still need to complete the Academic Institution Acknowledgement Letter?

A: No, only academic institutions (i.e., institutions of or relating to education and scholarship) are required to provide an Academic Institution Acknowledgement Letter. The requirement for an Academic Institution Acknowledgement Letter arises from paragraph 2.7 of Executive Order 12333, as amended, which states, "Contracts or arrangements with academic institutions may be undertaken only with the consent of appropriate officials of the institution."

Q 59: What is the success rate of funding?

A: There is no predetermined success rate. As described in BAA Section 5.A, each proposal will be evaluated on its own merits and its relevance to program goals rather than against other proposals responding to the BAA. Selections for negotiation of awards under MICrONS will be made on the basis of the evaluation criteria (BAA Section 5.A), program balance, and the availability of funds.

Q 60: Is preliminary data required?

A: Preliminary data is not required, but it may be useful in establishing the relevant experience and expertise of the proposed team and/or the credibility of the proposed technical approach, among other things (see Evaluation Criteria in BAA Section 5.A).

Q 61: What is the maximum budget that can be requested?

A: There is no maximum budget that can be requested, nor is there a predetermined size for awards. Offerors should propose estimated costs that are realistic and sufficient to accomplish the proposed work. As stated in Footnote 31 within BAA Section 5.A, "IARPA recognizes that undue emphasis on cost may motivate offerors to offer low-risk ideas with minimum uncertainty and to staff the effort with junior personnel in order to be in a more competitive posture. IARPA discourages such cost strategies. Cost reduction approaches that will be received favorably include innovative management concepts that maximize direct funding for technology and limit diversion of funds into overhead. After selection and before award, the Contracting Officer will negotiate cost/price reasonableness."

Q 62: Is it absolutely necessary that the physiology is conducted in the cortex, as opposed to midbrain?

A: Yes, as described in BAA Section 1.C.1.b(ii), offerors to Technical Area 1 must "describe the experimental paradigm(s) [they] will use to study the operation and organization of mesoscale *cortical* circuits" (emphasis added). However, supplementary physiological data may be acquired from non-cortical areas, as described in BAA Section 1.C.1.b(iii).

Q 63: Is neuroanatomy an essential requirement?

A: Yes, neuroanatomy is an essential component of the MICrONS program. However, as described in BAA Section 1.A.5, neuroanatomical data collection is addressed in Technical Area 2 (TA2), and any individual offeror may choose not to propose to this TA.

Q 64: For auditory studies, high temporal resolution is a necessity. Would single-unit recordings with high temporal resolution be acceptable as a substitute for the very high spatial resolution (but poor temporal resolution) techniques that are described?

A: Offerors may propose any combination of experimental methods that meets or exceeds the target values for the physiological data metrics described in BAA Section 1.B.1.c and BAA Table 4. In addition, as described in BAA Section 1.C.1.b(iii), offerors may acquire supplemental data at other smaller and/or larger [spatial and/or temporal] scales using any combination of appropriate experimental techniques and technologies.

Q 65: Would efforts at understanding the cognitive architecture controlling auditory attention fit the scope of the work?

A: As described in BAA Section 1.C.1, proposals should: (1) posit a biologically-plausible theoretical framework of cortical computing that may explain sensory information processing in one or more cortical areas; (2) use that framework to motivate a research plan that will answer specific neuroscientific questions about the representations, transformations, and learning rules employed in those brain regions; and (3) use those answers to advance machine learning.” To the extent that an effort focused on understanding the cognitive architecture controlling auditory attention fits within this paradigm, and to the extent that the resulting machine learning algorithms could be expected to meet the metrics described in BAA Section 1.B.1.a, it would fit within the MICrONS scope of work.

Q 66: Can we publish scientific papers out of this study?

A: Yes, see Question 42.

Q 67: Can we submit papers whenever we have publishable results?

A: Yes, but performers are required to provide the IARPA Program Manager and the Contracting Officer Representative (COR) with a courtesy soft copy of any work intended for publication at least two weeks prior to submission.

Q 68: Can the cost of data sharing be covered by funding awarded under MICrONS?

A: Yes, offerors should propose realistic costs for whatever activities are necessary and sufficient to accomplish the proposed work.

Q 69: Can the cost of subcontractors be covered by funding awarded under MICrONS?

A: Yes, offerors should propose realistic costs for both the prime contractor and subcontractors, as necessary. See BAA Sections 4.B.1.b(vi), 4.B.1.c(v), and 4.B.2.b for additional information on how to describe estimated costs in the proposal. Note that the roles and relationships of prime contractors and subcontractors must be clearly delineated in the proposal, as described in BAA Sections 4.B.1.c(ii), 4.B.1.c(viii), and 5.A.

Q 70: When is the expected start date for projects funded by MICrONS?

A: As described in BAA Section 1, the MICrONS program is envisioned to begin in September 2015 and end by September 2020.

Q 71: The BAA is not specific about the sensory system to be investigated, but the proposer's day slides seem to emphasize the visual system as the target of investigation. Would efforts that propose investigation of other sensory systems be within the scope of the program?

A: As stated on Slide 7 ("Disclaimer") in the Proposers' Day presentation, "Nothing said at Proposers' Day changes the requirements set forth in a BAA," and "[The] BAA supersedes anything presented or said by IARPA at the Proposers' Day." The BAA requires investigation of one or more regions of sensory cortex (BAA Section 1.C.1.b(i)), but is agnostic to the specific sensory modality so long as the machine learning algorithms derived from the study of these sensory regions could be expected to meet the metrics described in BAA Section 1.B.1.a. Note that offerors may propose to develop algorithms that operate in a different sensory modality than that investigated through biological experimentation and computational neural modeling, provided that they describe how results will be translated between the two modalities (Footnote 15 in BAA Section 1.C.1.a).