RESEARCH SOLICITATION OVERVIEW INFORMATION

- **Federal Agency Name** – Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Strategic Technology Office (STO)
- **Funding Opportunity Title** – Bringing Classified Innovation to Defense and Government Systems (BRIDGES)
- **Announcement Type** – Initial Announcement
- **Funding Opportunity Number** – DARPA-RS-23-02
- **Dates**
    - Posting Date: October 3, 2022
    - Virtual Question and Answer Session: October 24, 2022 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm eastern time. Please visit https://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/bringing-classified-innovation-to-defense-and-government-systems to register for this Question and Answer session. Registration will be open from 7-19 October.

- The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is looking for small business concerns, as defined under section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. § 632), and/or nontraditional defense contractors, as defined in 10 U.S.C § 3014, that do not have facility clearances but are interested in performing classified work for the Department of Defense (DoD). The BRIDGES initiative seeks to assist small companies with disruptive ideas gain facility clearances so that they can bring their innovation to the DoD, and help solve classified technical challenges.

- **Types of instrument that may be awarded** – Other Transaction for Research agreements under the authority of 10 U.S.C. 4021
- **Agency Contact**

  The Solicitation Coordinator for this effort can be reached at:
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RESEARCH SOLICITATION
Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)
Bringing Classified Innovation to Defense and Government Systems (BRIDGES)

1. PROGRAM INFORMATION

1.1. Background

The Bringing Classified Innovation to Defense and Government Systems (BRIDGES) initiative is a pilot effort sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to connect innovation from companies that traditionally do not work with the United States Government to classified Department of Defense (DoD) research and development (R&D) efforts. The goal is to connect innovators directly to the challenging problems that exist in the classified realm and to help develop solutions to those problems. In other words, enable innovators to do what they do best: innovate, but at the classified level. BRIDGES aims to provide companies that demonstrate they can provide innovation and value to the DoD the means to obtain a facility clearance (FCL) and interact directly with DoD customers.

The DoD is interested in innovative and creative solutions to complex challenges that exist at the classified level, but is currently only able to contract with a limited amount of companies due to the classified nature of the effort. Classified work requires the company to have a facility clearance and personnel with security clearances to do the work, but for a company to have a facility clearance, they must have a contract requiring classified work to justify the facility clearance. This current model results in a cyclical pattern that precludes the injection of new companies and ideas into the DoD R&D ecosystem.

BRIDGES will solicit companies that traditionally do not work with classified DoD efforts to join a government sponsored consortium focused on specific topic areas of interest to the DoD. As a member of the consortium, companies will be sponsored for facility clearances and provided access to classified work areas and networks at specified locations where they can conduct classified work. Additionally, consortium members will be able to have interactions with government personnel at classified levels up to TS/SCI/SAP. The purpose of these interactions is to inform the companies on selected classified problems that DARPA and the DoD are interested in, and to enable these companies to develop innovative solutions to those problems. The ultimate goal is for a company in the consortium to demonstrate their value to the government for classified programs, which will then enable them to hopefully “graduate” out of the consortium with a contract for a classified program.

The BRIDGES pilot initiative will be 30 months in length, and provide Government funding of $50,000 per 12-month period to each company that joins the consortium. Since the contract will be an Other Transaction (OT) for Research, companies will be required to match the Government funding of $50,000 per 12-month period.

For additional information about BRIDGES, including frequently asked questions, please refer to the BRIDGES website: https://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/bringing-classified-innovation-to-defense-and-government-systems.

1.2. Acquisition Strategy

DARPA will periodically release topic areas of interest (e.g. – next generation antennas, white hat hackers) and then accept short (~4 pages) proposals for those topic areas from small businesses and nontraditional defense contractors up to one year from the topic area posting date. These proposals will detail what expertise the company has in the topic area, what new

ideas they have, and what value they could provide the DoD if they gained the ability to perform classified work (see Section 3, below, for additional information). Government sponsor(s) for each topic area will review proposals, evaluate them, and decide on which companies will be invited to join the BRIDGES consortium. All topic areas and proposals will be unclassified. Please note that proposals should only be submitted in response to specific topic areas (as they are released), not in response to this RS. This RS only serves to notify and inform potential offerors of the overall BRIDGES initiative, and no proposals submitted in response to this RS will be evaluated for admittance to the BRIDGES consortium. The Government anticipates releasing initial topic areas by December 2022.

If a company's proposal is selected, that company will be invited to join the consortium, and get sponsored for a facility clearance. The consortium will hold classified, in-person meetings on a quarterly basis where members will hear from and interact with the government sponsor and other government personnel. As a member of the consortium, companies will be expected to attend all quarterly meetings, engage in additional one-on-one discussions with the government, and take advantage of provided classified work spaces to develop materials such as white papers for new R&D programs and proposals to submit for classified solicitations.

To assist the government in executing BRIDGES, MITRE will be the lead BRIDGES consortium member and will facilitate consortium meetings and provide classified meeting spaces, assist the Government in the day-to-day management of the consortium teams, interact with the Government as the agent of the BRIDGES consortium and all its members, administer payment to other consortium members, and provide classified working spaces in Bedford, MA, McLean, VA, and Los Angeles, CA.

2. RESEARCH SOLICITATION (RS) AUTHORITY

This RS for the BRIDGES effort will result in companies being added to the BRIDGES consortium, which has been established under a separate Articles of Collaboration. In order to participate in the BRIDGES effort, selected entities will agree to join the BRIDGES consortium and be bound by its Articles of Collaboration. Collectively the BRIDGES consortium members will execute an Other Transaction for Research agreement, as authorized by 10 U.S.C. § 4021, which will represent the agreement between the consortium as a whole and the Government. In all cases, the Government Agreements Officer shall have sole discretion to negotiate all agreement terms and conditions with selected offerors.

2.1. RS Procedure

BRIDGES topic areas will be published as addendums to this solicitation on SAM.gov, and will solicit proposals from qualifying companies up to 12 months from the publication date. In response to a topic area addendum, offerors will be asked to submit a 4-page proposal as described in Section 3.2. This process allows DARPA to ascertain (1) whether the offeror has the appropriate technical understanding of the topic area, (2) new ideas the offeror has and that offeror's ability to innovate, and (3) whether the offeror is capable of executing the proposed concept. Specific evaluation criteria used to make the assessment can be found in Section 3.3. If DARPA finds that all of these conditions are met, it will make a determination as to which offerors may be invited to join the consortium and provide instructions on how to do so. The Government will not pay offerors responding to this RS for the costs associated with developing the proposal. At no time will there be any fees due to the Government or any other consortium member to join and participate as a consortium member.

2.1.1. Proposals (result if successful: invitation to participate in consortium)

No proposals should be submitted in response to this RS, only to the topic area addendums. Proposals submitted for specific topic areas shall be submitted as specified in Section 3 of this RS. The Government will only evaluate proposals against the criteria stated in this RS; proposals are not compared against other submitted proposals.

If a company wishes to propose against multiple topic areas, they must submit a distinct proposal for each topic area. Each submitted proposal will be evaluated individually.

It is important to note that offerors must submit a proposal(s) in response to the topic area addendums to be considered for participation in the consortium.

2.1.2. Awards

DARPA will award a single OT for Research encompassing the entire BRIDGES initiative and for all consortium members. For each topic area, DARPA will review proposals to determine which proposed solutions sufficiently meet the evaluation criteria stated in Section 3.3. Upon favorable review, and subject to the availability of funds, the Government will modify the OT agreement to add the selected companies to the consortium roster within the OT. Concurrently, any new member will be expected to agree to and execute the Articles of Collaboration with the other consortium members.

3. GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSALS

3.1. General Guidelines

a. Do not include elaborate brochures or marketing materials; only include information relevant to the submission requirements or evaluation criteria.

b. Use of a diagram(s) or figure(s) to depict the essence of the proposed solution is permitted

c. All proposals shall be unclassified.

d. Offerors are responsible for clearly identifying proprietary information. Submissions containing proprietary information must have the cover page and each page containing such information clearly marked with a label such as “Proprietary” or “Company Proprietary.” NOTE: “Confidential” is a classification marking used to control the dissemination of U.S. Government National Security Information as dictated in Executive Order 13526 and should not be used to identify proprietary business information.

e. A distinct email address will be established for each individual topic area, and will be included in the topic area addendum posting. Proposals for a topic area must be submitted to the appropriate inbox. Files containing Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) must be encrypted when sending over the Internet.

f. Submissions sent through other mediums, channels, or after the prescribed topic area deadline will not be considered, reviewed, nor evaluated.

g. Offerors providing Proposals that are not invited to the consortium will be notified in writing as soon as practicable.

3.2. Proposal Content

a. Proposals should not exceed four (4) single-sided 8.5” by 11” written pages using 12-point Times New Roman font with 1” all around.

b. Proposals must include the following:

1. ***Title page*:** Offeror Name, Title, Technical Area, Date, Point of Contact Name, E-Mail Address, Phone, and Address. (The Title Page does not count against page limits).

- The offeror shall include a statement that no people on the offeror’s team work for DARPA as Scientific Engineering Technical Assistance (SETA), Advisory and Assistance Services (A&AS) or similar support services, as DARPA has a policy prohibiting such people from working as a technical performer. Include this statement on the title page; it will NOT count as part of the four (4) written pages limit.

2. ***Technical Understanding*:** Provide a summary of the technical problem the topic area seeks to solve. This summary shall be stated in the offeror’s own words without any “copy and paste” of the posted topic area. The goal is for the offeror to demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic area’s purpose and current technological challenges.

3. ***Technology Innovations*:** Identify the offeror’s ability to provide value to the government by discussing new ideas the offeror has and the offeror’s ability/history of innovation in the topic area. In other words, if presented with problems from the classified space, will the offeror be able to provide new and interesting solutions to help solve those problems.

4. ***Technical Ability*:** Detail why the offeror believes their organization has the ability to be successful in this topic area, and what value this would provide the DoD. The offeror may include past experience, organizational capabilities, team members’ qualifications, or anything else that demonstrates competence in the topic area.

3.3. Proposals – Process and Basis of Evaluation

Proposal evaluation criteria are listed in order of importance. Individual proposals will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria described below:

a. **Technical Comprehension**: The provided technical understanding is accurate, and key technical challenges and goals are identified.

b. **Technical Innovations**: The offeror demonstrates that they have an ability to innovate in the topic area and that they would be able to help produce innovative solutions to complex classified problems.

c. **Technical Ability:** The offeror demonstrates an ability, if selected, to provide value to the DoD in this topic area.

Proposals will be evaluated by DARPA using the evaluation criteria listed above, not against other proposals submitted in response to the topic area. The Government will endeavor to complete the evaluation of proposals within 20 business days of receiving the proposal. Upon review of proposal, the Government may elect to invite the offeror to join the consortium team aligned with the specific topic area, and add the offeror to the BRIDGES OT agreement. If the Government does not intend to invite the offeror to the consortium, the Government may provide feedback to the offeror regarding the rationale for this decision.

4. AWARDS

4.1. General Guidelines

Upon favorable review of the proposal and subject to the availability of funds, the Government may choose to invite the offeror to join the BRIDGES consortium and be added to the BRIDGES Other Transaction for Research agreement.

In order to be added to the BRIDGES OT agreement, offerors must be determined to be responsible by the Agreements Officer and must not be suspended or debarred from award by the Federal Government nor be prohibited by Presidential Executive Order and/or law from receiving an award. Offerors must also agree to execute and be bound by the BRIDGES consortium Articles of Collaboration.

4.2. Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) and Controlled Technical Information (CTI) on Non-DoD Information Systems

Further information on Controlled Unclassified Information identification, marking, protecting and control, to include processing on Non-DoD Information Systems, is incorporated herein and can be found at www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/additional-baa. DARPA will identify appropriate classification and CUI guidance for each topic area to help offerors determine classification thresholds for information relevant to, and ideas developed under the topic area. Dependent upon invitation to the consortium, the specific classification guidance will be provided to the consortium members to observe and follow.

4.3. Representations and Certifications

Offerors may be required to submit DARPA-specific representations and certifications for Research OT awards in order to be eligible to join the consortium. See http://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/reps-certs for further information on representations and certifications for OT for Research agreements.

4.4. Competition Sensitive Information

DARPA policy is to treat all submissions as competition sensitive, and to disclose their contents only for the purpose of evaluation. Restrictive notices notwithstanding, during the evaluation process, submissions may be handled by support contractors for administrative purposes and/or to assist with technical evaluation. All DARPA support contractors performing this role are expressly prohibited from performing DARPA sponsored technical research and are bound by appropriate nondisclosure agreements. Input on technical aspects of the proposals may be solicited by DARPA from non-Government consultants/experts who are strictly bound by the appropriate non-disclosure requirements.

5. DEFINITIONS

"Nontraditional Defense Contractor" is defined in 10 U.S.C. § 3014 as an entity that is not currently performing and has not performed, for at least the one-year period preceding the solicitation of sources by the DoD for the procurement or transaction, any contract or subcontract for the DoD that is subject to full coverage under the cost accounting standards prescribed pursuant to 41 U.S.C. § 1502 and the regulations implementing such section. This includes all small business concerns under the criteria and size standards in 15 U.S.C. § 632 and 13 C.F.R. Part 121.

"Other Transaction" refers to the type of OT that may be awarded as a result of this RS. This type

of OT is authorized by 10 U.S.C. § 4021 for carrying out basic, applied, and advanced research research, and development projects that—are necessary in the field of research and development; and either—relate to weapon systems and other military needs; or are of potential interest to the Department of Defense.

"Small Business Concerns" is defined in the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. § 632).

6. ACRONYMS

A&AS: Advisory and Assistance Services
BRIDGES: Bringing Classified Innovation to Defense and Government Systems
CTI: Controlled Technical Information
CUI: Controlled Unclassified Information
DARPA: Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency
DoD: Department of Defense
FCL: Facility Clearance
OT: Other Transaction
PIA: Procurement Integrity Act
RS: Research Solicitation
R&D: Research and Development
SAP: Special Access Program
SCI: Sensitive Compartmented Information
SETA: Scientific Engineering Technical Assistance
STO: Strategic Technology Office
TS: Top Secret