

SBTDC Interview with the US Air Force Program

Ujvari: Provide an overview or intro of your agency.

US Air Force: The Air Force Research Laboratory mission is “Leading the discovery, development, and integration of affordable warfighting technologies for our air and space force.”

Ujvari: Does your agency mainly offer grants or contracts?

US Air Force: The AF only offers contracts.

Ujvari: What is the 2004 budget for SBIR (and STTR if applicable)?

US Air Force: The SBIR FY 2004 budget is \$288.1M and STTR is \$34.5M.

Ujvari: How many awards were made in 2003?

US Air Force: The AF awarded 448 phase I awards from solicitation FY03.1. We awarded 261 Phase II awards from solicitation FY02.1.

Ujvari: What are the general win rates?

US Air Force: The AF awards phase I contracts to about between 12 and 15% of the proposals. About 60% of the phase I awards receive phase II awards.

Ujvari: How many awards are generally made per solicitation for a Phase 1 and Phase 2?

US Air Force: The AF award over 400 phase I awards and over 250 phase II awards annually.

Ujvari: Who reviews your contract proposal/grant application (agency staff – outside peer reviewers – combination)?

US Air Force: The AF uses agency staff to review proposals.

Ujvari: How are reviewers selected?

US Air Force: **The** reviewers are experts in the technical area of the topics.

Ujvari: Are the review criteria “weighted?”

US Air Force: The review criteria are weighted:
Phase I = technical is 50%, PI team credentials is 30%, commercialization is 20%.
Phase II = technical is 50%, PI team is 20%, commercialization is 30%.

Ujvari: How much “weight” is assigned to the credentials of the PI and his/her “team?”

US Air Force: See above

Ujvari: How much “weight” is assigned to the soundness and technical merit of the project?

US Air Force: See above

Ujvari: Does your agency require a “succinct Commercialization Plan” in your current Phase II solicitation?

US Air Force: The AF does not have a phase II solicitation. All phase IIs are by individual invitation based upon the results of the phase I work. We do require a succinct commercialization plan for phase II proposals.

Ujvari: Are there separate reviewers for the technical and commercialization sections of the applications for Phase I? For Phase II? If so, what are the backgrounds, generally, of the commercialization reviewers?

US Air Force: The AF uses the same reviewers for all parts of the proposals.

Ujvari: How much “weight” is assigned to commercialization?

US Air Force: See above

Ujvari: At what point are the reviewers of a proposal known to the applicant organization?

US Air Force: The AF never publicly announces the names of the reviewers.

Ujvari: How are debriefings requested?

US Air Force: The AF offers debriefings automatically over the same web site that the small businesses used to submit their proposals.

Ujvari: If provided – are debriefings oral or written?

US Air Force: The debriefings are always written.

Ujvari: What is the general period of time between proposal submission and announcement of selection or non-selection?

US Air Force: The AF strives to complete the phase I selection process within three months of the solicitation closing date. Because of the huge number of proposals (over 3000 annually), it normally takes another 30 to 60 days to notify all of the proposers.

Ujvari: What is the general time gap between the time an award is chosen for funding and actual distribution of funding?

US Air Force: The AF has funding in place before any awards is chosen.

Ujvari: Does your agency have a Fast Track or Quick Response offering? If so, please explain.

US Air Force: The AF does participate in the DOD Fast Track program. Because of the reporting requirements used to verify the existence of the outside funding, the lead time for awarding phase II fast track selections usually take longer than normal phase award selections.

Ujvari: What is your agency’s dollar cap on phase 1 and phase 2 funding?

US Air Force: The AF uses the Congressional limits of \$100K for phase I and \$750K for phase II awards.

Ujvari: Does the agency provide any follow-on funding beyond the phase 2 or to carry on additional phase 2 work?

US Air Force: The AF has the Phase II Enhancement program that allows for additional funding with an extension of phase II contracts for up to one year. We will use up to an additional \$500K SBIR money matched dollar for dollar to military non-SBIR dollars. To qualify for consideration, the phase II effort has to have an unforeseen technical barrier that keeps it from meeting the objectives of the phase II objective.

Ujvari: How is the applicant organization informed of selection or non-selection?

US Air Force: The AF uses e-mail and regular ground mail to notify small businesses of selections and non-selections.

Ujvari: If not selected, may applicant organization resubmit – Phase I? - Phase 2?

US Air Force: The AF does not allow for resubmittals of proposals.

Ujvari: Is a Phase 2 proposal to be submitted only by invitation?

US Air Force: Yes.

Ujvari: Does a separate final report need to be submitted for Phase 1 and Phase 2?

US Air Force: The AF requires both final reports and summary reports for both phase I and II awards.

Ujvari: Is your agency typically a consumer of the final commercial product? (While we tend to think of contract agencies as looking for deliverables, it might be helpful to know if an agency is a potential customer or can provide sole-source assistance to begin a product launch).

US Air Force: The AF is normally considered the end-customer of the products that use SBIR technologies.