



**DARPA Guide to
Broad Agency Announcements
and Research Announcements**

November 2016

FOREWORD

The "DARPA Guide to Broad Agency Announcements and Research Announcements" is issued under the authority of DARPA Instruction (DI) 20, "Soliciting, Evaluating, and Selecting Proposals under Broad Agency Announcements and Research Announcements," current version, and is effective immediately.

This Guide implements processes and procedures established under DI 20, including how to prepare and process a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) or Research Announcement (RA) and how to evaluate and select for award proposals received in response to BAAs and RAs. All Government employees and support contractor personnel involved in acquisition at DARPA shall read and become familiar with procedures and responsibilities outlined by the Guide to prepare them to solicit and select proposals for award under a BAA or RA.

Please submit comments or suggestions for improvement of this Guide to the Contracts Management Office via e-mail. Copies of this document may be obtained electronically on the DARPA Portal.



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PURPOSE

The purpose of the “DARPA Guide to Broad Agency Announcements and Research Announcements,” hereafter referred to as “the Guide,” is to provide guidance and instructions to (1) prepare, route, and advertise Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs) and Research Announcements (RAs); and (2) evaluate and select proposals received in response to BAAs and RAs for negotiation for award. Chapter 1 describes the process leading up to issuance of a BAA or RA. Chapter 2 discusses the procedures for reviewing and selecting for award proposals received in response to BAAs and RAs and documenting the results of this review. Guidance regarding BAAs provided herein also applies to RAs, unless specifically designated otherwise.

This Guide is intended to be a living document, subject to revision due to lessons learned and Department of Defense (DoD) best practices.

APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

The Guide is applicable to DARPA employees and contractor support personnel (including Systems Engineering and Technical Assistance (SETA) contractors) engaged in the acquisition of research and development through the use of BAAs. It also applies to DARPA contracting agents to the extent that they make awards resulting from proposals submitted in response to DARPA BAAs.

This Guide is intended to be consistent with Federal law, regulations and policies. If there is any discrepancy between this Guide and Federal law, regulations and policies, the Guide shall not be effective on the particular issue.

DEFINITIONS

Key terms used in the Guide are defined in Appendix 2, the Glossary of Terms. For the purposes of this Guide, “DIRO” refers to the Director, DARPA, and the Deputy Director, DARPA, in cases where the Director has delegated his or her approval duties to the Deputy Director.

Chapter 1

Soliciting Proposals Under Broad Agency Announcements and Research Announcements

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

This chapter provides guidance and instructions to prepare, route, and advertise BAAs based on Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 35.016 and DARPA Instruction (DI) 20, "Soliciting, Evaluating, and Selecting Proposals under Broad Agency Announcements and Research Announcements."

1.A. BAA Overview. DARPA's authority to issue BAAs is derived from FAR 6.102 and 35.016. The latter prescribes procedures for the use of the BAA for the acquisition of basic and applied research and that part of development not related to the development of a specific system or hardware procurement. BAAs may be used by agencies to fulfill their requirements for scientific study and experimentation directed toward advancing the state-of-the-art or increasing knowledge or understanding rather than focusing on a specific system or hardware solution. The BAA technique shall be used only when meaningful proposals with varying technical/scientific approaches can be reasonably anticipated.

The BAA should be general in nature. If the Government's need is for the development of a specific system or hardware solution, proposals must be requested by a solicitation type other than BAA or RA (e.g., request for proposals). Further, a BAA will not be used if the Government's need is for supplies or services (e.g. SETA support), even though research and development (R&D) funding may be used and the project may be in support of R&D.

DARPA may award procurement contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, or other transactions (including Other Transactions for Prototype, Other Transactions for Research, and Technology Investment Agreements) as a result of proposals submitted in response to a BAA.

1.B. Research Announcement (RA) Overview. The term "RA" refers to "BAA-like" solicitations that may result in the award of any instrument but a procurement contract. RAs generally follow a similar structure to BAAs.

2. TYPES OF BAAs

A BAA should describe the Agency's research interest, either for an individual program requirement, a program-specific BAA, or for broadly defined areas of interest covering the range of the Agency's requirements, an office-wide BAA. While there may be minor procedural differences in how DARPA administers office-wide BAAs, all Federal, DoD and DARPA regulations and policies applicable to program-specific BAAs are also applicable to office-wide BAAs (e.g., FAR 35.016).

3. MODEL BAA

DARPA's Contracts Management Office (CMO) maintains the DARPA Standard Model BAA (hereafter, model BAA), a copy of which can be obtained and downloaded from the DARPA-approved BAA writing tool or from CMO. The model BAA was initially written to comply with the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act (Pub.L.106-107),

which intended to streamline and standardize the format for announcements of funding opportunities to result in grants or cooperative agreements under Federal programs. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a policy letter in the Federal Register in June 2003 that prescribes a streamlined format that all Federal agencies must follow and updated the format in the Uniform Guidance prescribed in 2 CFR §200.203. All BAAs posted to www.grants.gov must follow this prescribed format; DARPA mandates that all BAAs must comply with this format whether posted to grants.gov or not.

The model BAA is color-coded to distinguish mandatory and discretionary language. Statutory and Federal regulatory language is typed in black and is mandatory. Language required by the DARPA policy is typed in blue and is also mandatory. Instructional text is typed in red and will not be included in the final version of the BAA. Language typed in green may be freely edited. However, the intent of the information typed in green must be included (i.e., it can be edited but not deleted altogether) unless red instructional text states otherwise. Additional language may be incorporated into individual BAAs as appropriate with the concurrence of the cognizant Contracting Officer (CO). Waivers for deviations to the mandatory text must be processed through the cognizant CO and approved by the Director, CMO, or his or her approved delegate. Proposed changes to the model BAA may be submitted to CMO for consideration and approval.

4. SECTIONS OF A BAA

DARPA BAAs comprises of two parts; Part 1 is a summary page that includes a basic description of the announcement. Part 2 is the full text of the announcement and is broken down into eight sections, as described below:

- Section I: Funding Opportunity Description - Details the technical areas of interest for the potential awards and gives a general outline of the purpose of the research resulting from the BAA.
- Section II: Award Information - Includes the number of awards anticipated (single or multiple), total funds expected to be awarded (as available), anticipated award types (contracts, agreements, etc.), and the negotiating rights reserved by DARPA (e.g., the CO's right to negotiate award type and terms and conditions). This section also provides information regarding the anticipated type of research, whether the research will likely be considered fundamental, and, if the research will not be considered fundamental, what publication approval requirements will be included in the prospective award.
- Section III: Eligibility Information - Provides all information regarding proposer eligibility. This includes Government entities, Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs), foreign participants, and security clearance requirements for proposers. This section also addresses procurement integrity, standards of conduct, ethical considerations and organizational conflicts of interest, and cost sharing/matching, as applicable.

- Section IV: Application and Submission Information - Provides all information necessary to submit a response to the BAA and must include:
 - Content/Format requirements (e.g., page limits, classified/proprietary markings, font size, number of copies)
 - Submission instructions for all acceptable methods of transmission (electronically via DARPA-approved website and/or grants.gov, hard copy/direct mail, hand-carried, classified)
 - Submission due date(s) and time(s). The BAA must specify the period of time during which proposals will be accepted. Program-specific BAAs that allow submissions beyond the initial due date must include a submission “cut-off” date that is within 6 months of the date of issuance. Office-wide BAAs may be open indefinitely, but must be re-advertised at least annually. Per FAR 5.203(e), BAAs must allow a response time of at least 45 calendar days between the date of the posting in Federal Business Opportunities (FBO) and/or grants.gov and receipt of proposals. There is no response time requirement for receipt of preproposal submissions (for definition, see Section 5.A.), but the submission date and time must be stated in the BAA. If applicable, whether preproposal submissions are permitted and, if so, should include submission instructions and content/format requirements.
- Section V: Application Review information - Describes the proposal review and selection process including the evaluation criteria and the relative importance of those criteria. DI 20 identifies the three criteria mandated by the FAR: overall scientific and technical; potential contribution and relevance to the DARPA mission; and cost realism. Program Managers (PMs) may include additional evaluation criteria. This section must also inform proposers if non-Government personnel, to include SETAs and subject matter experts from FFRDCs or UARCs, will have access to any submissions.
- Section VI: Award Administration Information - National policy requirements and other regulations that affect proposers
- Section VII: Agency Contacts - All relevant points of contact for administrative, technical and contracting questions
- Section VIII: Other Information - Provides other relevant information, including Proposers Day details and teaming websites

5. DISCRETIONARY COMPONENTS OF BAAs AND RAs

5.A. Preproposal Submissions. The Technical Office may allow proposers to submit preproposal submissions before submitting a full proposal. Preproposal submissions include abstracts, white papers, and executive summaries (see Appendix 2, Glossary of Terms); hereafter, the term “abstract” will be used to reference all preproposal submissions.

If the Technical Office will use abstracts for a particular BAA, the following instructions must be included in the BAA:

- The format required for the abstract.
- How to submit abstracts to DARPA (e.g., via hard copy, DARPA-approved web portal, and/or email)
- How the abstracts will be reviewed (i.e., only on their technical merits, all the evaluation criteria listed in the BAA for review of full proposals, or by another method approved by the Technical Office).
- How abstracts will be handled, if the abstract receipt and review process differs from the receipt and review process for full proposals. Further instructions regarding the review of abstracts are found at Section 3.A. The BAA should also include any further instructions for how abstracts will be handled, if the abstract receipt and review process differs from the receipt and review process for full proposals.

5.B. Proposers Day. At DARPA, Proposers Day meetings are typically held in conjunction with a solicitation and allow PMs to outline challenges, concerns, and expectations to potential proposers within a technology area, and to allow dialogue with respect to technical approaches for solving or addressing these issues. Proposers Day meetings may also be used as a forum for facilitating potential teaming arrangements or collaborative partnerships among participants; e.g., participants may provide presentations about their specific or unique technical capabilities.

Proposers Days may occur prior to the issuance of a BAA or shortly after a BAA has been publicized at FedBizOpps/Grants.gov. Any qualified and responsible source may still respond to any solicitation, regardless of whether that particular entity attended any Proposers Day activities. Therefore, PMs are encouraged to make briefing materials available following the Proposers Day; e.g., by publishing them at www.darpa.mil.

If the PM wishes to hold a Proposers Day after the issuance of a solicitation, the Proposers Day serves as an opportunity to review the specific details of the BAA and hold additional dialogue with the interested parties to clarify portions of the BAA. Section 6 of this chapter provides general guidelines for what information the PM should or should not provide when communicating with proposers prior to receipt of proposals. Proposers Day meetings typically include presentations by the PM and CO. The CO is strongly encouraged to attend. Other Government personnel, to include General Counsel (GC), Mission Services Office (MSO)/Security and Intelligence Directorate (SID), and/or the Small Business Program Office (SBPO) may be invited to participate in or present information at the meeting, as appropriate.

Because briefings will be provided in an open forum during Proposers Day, all charts must be approved for public release in advance of the forum. Refer to DI 65, "Clearance of DARPA Information for Public Release," for further details regarding policies, responsibilities, and procedures for the clearance of DARPA information for public release.

6. COMMUNICATION WITH PROPOSERS PRIOR TO THE RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS (OPEN DISCOURSE)

The PM is encouraged to maintain an open dialogue with proposers after release of a BAA and prior to the receipt of proposals, including the receipt of any preproposal submissions of a BAA. See the DARPA Proposer Communication Plan, dated March 5, 2014, at <http://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/contract-management> under the Proposer Day Communications tab. General guidelines for discourse with potential proposers prior to receipt of proposals include the following:

- The PM cannot attempt to replace the proposer's original ideas with his or her own.
- The PM cannot share ideas or technical solutions that were provided to him or her by a competing proposer.
- If a PM provides information concerning the objectives/goals/requirements of the BAA to one proposer, he or she must provide this information to all proposers; (e.g., via a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document). Similarly, if a proposer is provided information that expands on information contained in the published solicitation or is otherwise publically available, it must also be made publically available to all potential proposers, typically via the FAQ. In some cases, this will also require an amendment to the BAA.
- Responses to proposer questions must be coordinated with the CO. If a proposer is provided information that contradicts or retracts information contained in the published solicitation or other publically available information, an amendment to the BAA may be required.
- It is important to treat interactions with personnel from FFRDCs and UARCs who are potentially interested in responding to a solicitation the same as communications with other potential proposers. The unique status of FFRDCs and UARCs does not afford them any special status as proposers, and the PM and CO must take care not to provide them an unfair competitive advantage. It is important to communicate concerns regarding these entities with GC as they arise.

In accordance with the DARPA Communications Plan, if a PM does not intend to have any interactions with proposers relative to his or her BAA, a waiver must be requested from the Deputy Director, DARPA. This request must be in writing and include the rationale supporting the ban on these interactions. The waiver must be received from the Deputy Director, DARPA prior to the release of the BAA.

7. CLASSIFIED BAAs

If the nature of the BAA effort is classified or is anticipated to involve access to or generation of classified information, a DD Form 254, "DoD Contract Security Classification Specification," will be required as an attachment to the BAA. Per the "DARPA Security Guide,"

found on the DARPA portal, the Technical Offices, in conjunction with MSO/SID, are responsible for drafting the DD Form 254 and providing it to the CO.

Solicitation of proposals via classified BAAs is often limited to one proposer or a small group of proposers for national security reasons. The PM, in consultation with the CO, must draft a Justification and Approval (J&A) document for other than full and open competition that describes the rationale for limiting competition to the selected source(s). The authority for limiting competition for classified BAAs is found at FAR 6.302-6. Refer to DI 13, "Program Funds, Commitment, and Acquisition Procedures" for further details regarding drafting and approving J&As.

The DARPA PM should coordinate early in the process with MSO/SID if classified information will be included in the BAA package sent to proposers and/or if the PM anticipates proposer submissions will contain classified information.

8. FOREIGN PARTICIPATION

The potential for including/excluding international participation must be discussed with MSO/SID, and any necessary authorizations obtained from DoD and other departments or agencies of the U.S. Government prior to routing the BAA beyond the Assistant Director, Program Management (ADPM), level. The need for early contact with MSO/SID is vital to preclude the inadvertent exclusion of potential international proposers or exposure of export controlled information to foreign entities.

9. SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

As stated at FAR 19.201, it is the policy of the Government to provide maximum practicable opportunities in its acquisitions to small business. Research conducted by small business has been integral in the advancement of U.S. technology. DARPA seeks and encourages small businesses to participate in its research programs. However, due to the broad nature of DARPA R&D programs and the fact that DARPA is seeking the best ideas available, it is generally not feasible to set aside all or some portion of a BAA for small business. The "DARPA Small Business Activities Guide," dated April 2013, details the required process for documenting small business set-aside decisions on the DD Form 2579, "Small Business Coordination Record." The DD Form 2579 is prepared by the Technical Office and accompanies the BAA for review and coordination by the Program Director, SBPO and the CO.

10. PREPARATION AND ROUTING OF BAAs

The PM is responsible for drafting a BAA that complies with the model BAA. A copy of the current model BAA is in the DARPA-approved BAA drafting tool.

There are many issues to consider prior to issuing a BAA and addressing these issues early in the process can avoid problems during review and award. Consult with CMO, GC and MSO/SID, as applicable. The following issues should be considered and addressed in the BAA:

- How many awards are anticipated?

- Are there security clearance requirements? If so, what level will be required and when (at time of preproposal or proposal submission, time of award, later phase of the program)?
- Are there any anticipated intellectual property issues (e.g., open source encouraged to facilitate transition)?
- Are assistance instruments (e.g., grants and cooperative agreements) appropriate for the research?
- Will any part (prime or sub) of the research be considered fundamental ¹? If so, are the corresponding type of funds available, (i.e., basic research or, if the effort will be performed on campus, applied research)? Will the effort require publication restrictions?
- Will there be any issues involving export control (i.e., International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) or the Export Administration Regulations (EAR))?
- Will the research involve human or animal subjects?
- Does DARPA anticipate the use of Government-furnished property, equipment, or information? If so, when will it be available and how will it be provided?
- How will the program be structured? If there are multiple phases, how will decisions be made to continue the program (e.g., down-selects)?
- Are there potential COIs between technical areas (e.g., one area is performing development and another is performing evaluations)?

Each Technical Office may establish its own internal review and approval process for BAAs. However, all BAAs must, at a minimum, be reviewed by the cognizant PM, ADPM, Technical Office Director (OD); MSO/SID; GC; the Program Director, SBPO (for coordination on the accompanying DD Form 2579); the CO; and the Director, CMO. The Director, CMO, or his or her designee, approves all BAAs prior to their issuance. In parallel action, an informational copy must be provided to Director, Strategic Communications, once it has been approved by the OD and also after the BAA has been published. All BAAs routed through the BAA Maker (BAAM) or other DARPA internal electronic tools may have this process automated. All other BAAs must be sent to outreach@darpa.mil.

¹ Per the National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 189, “‘Fundamental research’ means basic and applied research in science and engineering, the results of which ordinarily are published and shared broadly within the scientific community, as distinguished from proprietary research and from industrial development, design, production, and product utilization, the results of which ordinarily are restricted for proprietary or national security reasons.”

11. PUBLISHING BAAs

After the BAA has been approved by the Director, CMO, or his or her designee, it will be forwarded to the CO for posting. The CO will be responsible for posting the BAA and will retain confirmation of the BAA posting for the subsequent award files if DARPA is the contracting agent or for the contracting agent's award files. The CO will notify the Director, Strategic Communications, the Congressional Affairs Liaison, and anyone else deemed necessary by the CO/Technical Office when posting the BAA to fulfill public and Congressional notification requirements.

11. A. Posting BAAs and RAs. The CO will post (www.fbo.gov); RAs may also be posted to www.fbo.gov. All RAs and BAAs where it is anticipated that assistance instruments (grants, cooperative agreements, and technology investment agreements (TIAs)) may be awarded must be posted to www.grants.gov. Program-specific BAAs will be posted for no longer than 180 days from the date they are published at fbo.gov. Office-wide BAAs all BAAs and RAs to the appropriate portal. All BAAs must be posted to the FBO website may be open indefinitely, but must, at a minimum, be updated as necessary and re-announced once a year.

Exceptions to the requirement to advertise BAAs are found at FAR 5.202. Examples of situations when the CO need not post the BAA to fbo.gov include when:

- The posting cannot be worded to preclude disclosure of the Agency's needs and such disclosure would compromise national security (e.g., would result in disclosure of classified information).
- The proposed contract action is made under the circumstances described in FAR 6.302-2, and the Government would be seriously injured if the Agency complies with the required publication time periods.
- The Director, DARPA, and the Deputy Director, DARPA (DIRO), determines in writing, after consultation with the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy and the Administrator for Small Business Administration, that advance notice is not appropriate or reasonable.

11. B. Unsolicited Proposals. In accordance with DI 13, "Program Funds, Commitment, and Acquisition Procedures," the Technical Office or recipient of any unsolicited proposals must forward these proposals to the Director, SBPO for processing. Proposers are encouraged to submit their technical solutions and proposals against current open BAAs.

12. ASSISTANCE WITH THE BAA PROCESS

For assistance with the BAA process, PMs should consult with their office BAA Coordinator, ADPM, and/or CO.

Chapter 2

Evaluating and Selecting Proposals for Negotiation of Award Under BAAs and RAs

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

This chapter provides guidance and instructions for evaluating and selecting for award proposals submitted under BAAs based on FAR 35.016 and DI 20. Guidance regarding BAAs provided herein also applies to RAs, unless specifically designated otherwise.

2. PREPARING FOR REVIEW

FAR 35.016 (d) requires that “proposals received as a result of the BAA shall be evaluated in accordance with evaluation criteria specified therein through a peer or scientific review process.” DARPA employs a Scientific Review Process to evaluate proposals received in response to BAAs. However, some preparatory work must be accomplished before anyone actually begins to review proposals.

2.A. Participants in the Scientific Review Process. The key individuals involved in the Scientific Review Process are the PM (and Delegates, as necessary), reviewers, subject matter experts (SMEs), and the Scientific Review Official (SRO) (and Delegates, as necessary). Collectively, this group is referred to as the Review Team; individuals in the team are referred to as Review Team Members.

The PM is the lynchpin in the Scientific Review Process. He or she documents and then communicates, in writing, to the Reviewers and the SMEs which proposals they will review and what their designated role is in the process. PMs select Reviewers with the requisite background and experience to readily grasp the scientific concepts discussed in the proposals and cogently analyze the proposal in accordance with the stated evaluation criteria. The PM may also be a Reviewer (i.e., fill out an individual Evaluation Report) at his or her discretion. While a PM may choose not to be a Reviewer, he or she must read the proposals as part of their duties as outlined in Section 3.B. Individual Technical Offices may require their PMs to complete Evaluation Reports, as appropriate.

PMs may manage the review process for abstracts under BAAs. While a PM may ask for guidance from a Reviewer or SME regarding an abstract, the PM will decide whether to encourage or discourage the proposer to subsequently submit a full proposal.

Finally, the PM determines which proposals to recommend for funding based on the Reviewers’ evaluations, technical information provided by SMEs, and the PM’s own independent judgment.

The Reviewers must evaluate entire proposals in accordance with the evaluation criteria stated in the BAA and must sufficiently document their findings in written Evaluation Reports. Reviewers may provide guidance on abstracts on request from the PM. (See Appendix 1, Exhibit 1, for the format). Reviewers must be Government personnel. PMs may also serve as Reviewers if they complete Evaluation Reports in addition to their duties as PMs for both BAAs where they serve as PM and BAAs where they do not. The number of required Reviewers is discussed in Section 3.

SMEs review only those sections of proposals within their area(s) of technical expertise, as assigned by the PM, and document their findings on the Subject Matter Expert Worksheet. (See Appendix 1, Exhibit 2, for the format.) SMEs are not required to be Government personnel. SMEs may provide guidance on abstracts on request from the PM. DARPA Programmatic/Technical SETAs are only considered SMEs if they are providing technical input to the PM and the Reviewers (as opposed to the PM only); such SETAs must act in accordance with all SME-related guidance outlined herein (e.g., be listed on the Scientific Review Memorandum (SRM) as SMEs, provide COI self-certifications).

The SRO is generally the Technical Office Director. The role of the SRO is to ensure the integrity of the Scientific Review Process. He or she reviews the PM's recommendations to ensure they adequately match DARPA's needs and mission requirements, and that the review of abstracts and proposals was in accordance with DI 20. Under no circumstances shall the SRO on a BAA also serve as the PM, Reviewer, or SME.

2.B. Scientific Review Memorandum (SRM). The PM drafts and identifies in the SRM all the Review Team Members by name (see Appendix 1, Exhibit 4). The Technical Office may also consider identifying a Delegate PM and Delegate SRO by name in the SRM to minimize delay should a financial COI be identified. Any named Delegates should be documented in the SRM. Any changes to the membership of the team must be documented in an amendment to the SRM prior to that individual being permitted to review proposals. The SRM also includes the proposed schedule for the Scientific Review Process. The SRO and PM, in coordination with the CO, sign the SRM for program-specific BAAs. The SRO, in coordination with the CO signs only the SRM for office-wide BAAs. The SRM should be routed in conjunction with the BAA review and must be completely signed prior to publication of the BAA.

2.C. Conflicts of Interest (COIs). Review Team Members with a COI related to proposals submitted against a BAA are generally prohibited, in regards to that BAA, from making any funding decisions, or conducting review of any proposals with which they have a conflict, or participating in any meeting where a proposal with which they have a conflict is discussed. This prohibition does not apply to abstracts or other submissions not directly tied to funding decisions. However, in certain circumstances and with the appropriate approvals (as detailed below in this section), Review Team Members may participate in the Scientific Review Process to a limited extent. Delegates will assume the duties for conflicted SROs or PMs for any conflicted proposals and resultant award negotiations and program management, as applicable.

2.C.1. Types of Conflicts

2.C.1.a. Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA). The IPA (5 U.S.C. §§ 3371 – 3375, 5 CFR 334, as amended) authorizes the temporary assignment of employees between the Federal Government and state, local, and Indian tribal governments; institutions of higher education; and other eligible organizations. Personnel on assignment at DARPA under this law are generally referred to as an "IPA". They are generally subject to the same ethics laws and regulations as appointed federal employees. Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208, IPAs have a financial COI and cannot participate in the Scientific Review Process with regard to any proposals from

their sending institution. For example, an IPA at DARPA from Stanford University cannot participate in the review of proposals from Stanford or be involved in the day-to-day execution of the program involving Stanford once the award negotiations are complete. Only DIRO can waive the conflict for IPAs. An IPA may have financial COIs unrelated to their IPA status and those cannot be waived (See Section 2.C.1.b.).

2.C.1.b. Financial Conflicts of Interest (Non-IPA). Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208, Government personnel cannot participate personally or substantially in an official capacity in any matter in which he or she has a financial interest. A financial interest means the potential for gain or loss to the employee or other persons imputed to the employee (spouse, minor child, general partner, organization in which the employee has a relationship, or person with whom employee is negotiating for or has an arrangement concerning prospective employment). A non-IPA financial COI cannot be waived. For example, if a Review Team Member's spouse works for a specific company the Review Team Member cannot participate in the review of proposals from that company or be involved in the day-to-day execution of any awards to that company.

2.C.1.c. Appearance Issues. A Review Team member may have an appearance issue if there is no identifiable financial COI, but circumstances might lead a reasonable person to believe that the Review Team Member may be influenced and unable to make a completely unbiased judgement. For example, there might be an appearance issue if a Review Team Member's adult (over 18) child is an unpaid intern for a specific company. If a Review Team Member believes he or she has an appearance issue, he or she must consult with GC and the CO as soon as he or she is aware of that issue. GC will determine whether the appearance issue will preclude the Review Team Member from participating in activities involving the proposal or project with which there may be an issue.

2.C.2. Participation in the Scientific Review Process When a Review Team Member Has a Conflict

2.C.2.a. SRO. An SRO with a COI may be excluded from the Scientific Review Process entirely, unless granted permission to fulfill their duties as SRO for all but the conflicted proposal(s).

2.C.2.a.1. Who Approves Participation? With permission from DIRO, in consultation with GC and CMO, as appropriate, the SRO may fulfill his/her duties as SRO for all but the conflicted proposal(s).

2.C.2.a.2. When Can a Conflicted SRO Participate?

Program-specific BAA: Once granted permission to participate in the process, a conflicted SRO can review and make funding decisions for all but the conflicted proposals(s) after the Delegate SRO conducts his or her reviews and performs all the assigned SRO duties for the conflicted proposal(s).

Office-wide BAA: Upon receipt of a proposal with which the SRO has a conflict, the SRO is disqualified from reviewing or making funding decisions regarding any other

proposal under the same office-wide BAA until the conflicted proposal is assigned to a Delegate SRO (see Appendix 2 for definition of assigned). After the conflicted proposal is assigned to the Delegate SRO, the SRO may resume his or her duties under that office-wide BAA.

2.C.2.a.3. How is a Delegate SRO Selected? A Delegate SRO will usually be named in the SRM. A Delegate SRO must be an SES/SL-level employee outside the Technical Office Director's chain of command (i.e., a Director or Deputy Director from another Technical Office) to avoid COI issues. A Deputy Director in the conflicted Office Director's chain of command may serve as the Delegate SRO provided a written authorization is issued by DIRO. Consistent with 5 CFR § 2635.502(d), this authorization should include a determination that DARPA's interest in appointing the Deputy Director as a Delegate SRO outweighs any concerns that a reasonable person might question the integrity of DoD or DARPA programs and operations. DIRO will issue this authorization on a case-by-case basis in consultation with GC and, as necessary, CMO.

2.C.2.a.4. What is the Delegate SRO's Responsibility in the Scientific Review Process?

Program-specific BAAs: The Delegate SRO will be provided access to all information available to the conflicted SRO, including abstracts, proposals, the PM/Delegate PM/Reviewer/SME evaluations, and PM briefings provided to the conflicted SRO, as well as the same information for the conflict proposal(s). The Delegate SRO will conduct reviews and performs all the duties assigned to the SRO for the conflicted proposal(s). If the Delegate SRO determines the conflicted proposal(s) will not be selected for funding, the funding that was set aside for any conflicted proposal(s) is reinstated to the total program budget. Only after the Delegate SRO's determination is complete and funding is returned to the total program budget, as applicable, can the conflicted SRO proceed with making funding approval decisions for the remaining proposals. At no time during this process may the Delegate SRO communicate with the conflicted SRO about the conflicted proposals. Only after the Delegate SRO's determination is complete and funding is returned to the total program budget, as applicable, can the conflicted SRO proceed with making funding approval decisions for the remaining proposals.

Office-wide BAA: Any SRO who has a financial COI or an appearance of impropriety with any proposal under an office-wide BAA is disqualified from reviewing any other proposal or making any funding approval decisions under the same office-wide BAA until the conflicted proposal is assigned to a Delegate SRO.

2.C.2.a.5. What are the Delegate SRO's Responsibilities After the Scientific Review Process? The Delegate SRO will assume all SRO duties related to the conflicted proposal and any potential resultant award. Office Directors (ODs) are prohibited from signing subsequent Purchase Requests (PRs)/Military Interdepartmental Purchase Requests (MIPRs) for actions where their COI is still in effect. The Delegate SRO will sign as "Office Director" on PRs/MIPRs for any proposals selected for negotiation of potential award for which he or she acts as Delegate. If the Delegate SRO acts as the SRO for all proposals, the Delegate SRO will sign all PRs/MIPRs for that BAA, not just where the SRO has a conflict. If the Delegate SRO acts as

the SRO only for the conflicted proposal, the SRO may approve the PRs/MIPRs for the proposals where there is no conflict.

In other rare circumstances where the Delegate is unable to sign the PR/MIPR as "Office Director," the Comptroller, DARPA, or Deputy Comptroller, DARPA will sign the PR/MIPR as "Office Director." If the COI is not in effect (e.g., the conflicted proposal was not funded), the SRO may sign subsequent PRs/MIPRs once the original ("New Start") awards have been made.

2.C.2.b. PMs. A PM with a COI may be excluded from the Scientific Review Process entirely, unless granted permission to review all but the conflicted proposal(s).

2.C.2.b.1. Who Approves Participation? With permission from SRO, in consultation with GC and CMO, as appropriate, the PM may review all but the conflicted proposal(s).

2.C.2.b.2. When Can a Conflicted PM Participate?

Program-specific BAA: Once granted permission to participate in the process, a conflicted PM can review all but the conflicted proposals(s) at any time.

Financial COIs only: The conflicted PM will brief the SRO on the nonconflicted proposals only after the Delegate PM briefs the SRO about the conflicted proposal(s) and the SRO has made his or her funding decision on the conflicted proposal(s). The SRO will then make his or her decision on all the nonconflicted proposals.

Exception for IPAs: If the conflicted PM has a conflict because of his or her status as an IPA, the PM and Delegate PM may concurrently brief the SRO, as long as the PM is recused from the briefings regarding submissions from his or her sending institution.

Office-wide BAA: Upon receipt of a proposal with which the PM has a conflict, the PM is disqualified from reviewing any other proposal or Reviewer's Evaluation Reports under the same office-wide BAA until the conflicted proposal is assigned to a Delegate PM (see Appendix 2 for definition of assigned). After the conflicted proposal is assigned to the Delegate PM, the PM may resume reviewing proposals submitted against that office-wide BAA.

At no time during the Scientific Review Process may the Delegate PM communicate with the PM about the conflicted proposal.

2.C.2.b.3. How is a Delegate PM Selected? A Delegate PM will usually be named in the SRM; the SRM may be amended, as necessary, to account for any subsequently identified conflicts. The Delegate PM must be, at a minimum, another PM; however, a Deputy OD or OD may also serve as Delegate PM, if appropriate. Under no circumstances may the SRO act as Delegate for the PM. In order to act as a Delegate, the individual must be determined to have no COIs or appearance issues with any of the proposals submitted against that BAA.

2.C.2.b.4. What is the Delegate PM's responsibility in the Scientific Review Process?

Program-specific BAAs: Delegate PMs must have access to all the information available to the conflicted PM, including all proposals, Evaluation Reports, and PM briefings provided to the SRO, so the Delegate PM can determine if the conflicted proposal(s) best meets the overall program objectives based on the results of the Scientific Review Process. The Delegate PM will review the conflicted proposal(s) and make recommendation decisions on any conflicted proposal(s).

Office-wide BAA: Because the Technical Offices typically appoint PMs on a rotating or ad hoc basis for office-wide BAAs and convene Review Teams as proposals come in, as necessary, the Technical Office will not necessarily have appointed a single PM or specific set of PMs to review all proposals received. Prior to review of any proposals, each Technical Office will be responsible for appointing a PM or pool of available PMs. Prior to these appointments, the SRO will consult with GC and the CO and/or any approved list of identified conflicts so that any COI issues or appearance issues are identified and addressed. Any PM who has a COI, including one that relates to their IPA status, or an appearance of impropriety with any proposal, is disqualified from reviewing any other proposal under the same office-wide BAA until the conflicted proposal is assigned to other individuals (see Appendix 2 for the definition of assigned).

2.C.2.b.5. What are the Delegate PM's Responsibilities after the Scientific Review Process? If any award is made based on a conflicted proposal, the Delegate PM or another non-conflicted PM, as appropriate, will conduct the day-to-day program management of the resultant award. This includes signing all PRs/MIPRs.

2.C.2.c. Reviewers and SMEs: Reviewers and SMEs cannot review proposals with which they have a conflict.

2.C.2.c.1. Program-specific BAAs: PMs select the Reviewers and SMEs for program-specific BAAs; PMs, in consultation with GC and CMO, also allow Reviewers and SMEs to participate in the process to review all proposals except those with which they have a conflict.

2.C.2.c.2. Appointing Review Teams for Office-wide BAAs only. Because most individual Technical Offices appoint Reviewers and SMEs on a rotating or ad hoc basis for office-wide BAAs and convene Review Teams as proposals come in, as necessary, the Technical Office will not necessarily have appointed Reviewers or SMEs to review all proposals received. Prior to receipt of proposals or before review of proposals, each Technical Office will be responsible for appointing a pool of available Reviewers and SMEs, as necessary. Prior to these appointments, the PM will consult with GC and the CO so that any COI issues or appearance issues are identified and addressed. Any Reviewer or SME who has a COI, including one that relates to their IPA status, or an appearance of impropriety with any proposal is disqualified from reviewing any other proposal under the same office-wide BAA until the conflicted proposal is assigned to other individuals.

2.D. Other Reasons to Appoint a Delegate SRO: If a SRO needs to name a Delegate for non-COI reasons (e.g., planned leave, travel, or other such reasons), the SRO must submit a request to Delegate the SRO function for the BAA to the Deputy Director, DARPA for approval.

2.E. Application of the Procurement Integrity Act 1-Year Compensation Ban: The Procurement Integrity Act (41 U.S.C. §423, implemented at FAR 3.104) 1-year compensation ban prohibits former Federal Government personnel from accepting compensation from a contractor as an employee, officer, director, or consultant of the contractor within 1 year after they served, when the contractor was selected or awarded a contract, as the procuring contracting officer, the SRO, the PM, or a member of the in a procurement in which that contractor was selected for award of a contract (including procurement contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and other transactions) in excess of \$10 million.

Consistent with the definition of Federal agency procurement in FAR 3.104-1, each proposal submitted in response to DARPA BAAs programs shall constitute a separate procurement for purposes of applying the Procurement Integrity Act's 1-year compensation ban. This 1-year compensation ban will apply only to those proposals that a Federal Government member of the Review Team reviews. For example, if a program manager is a member of the scientific review team for a BAA and reviews all proposals except the proposal from company X, the program manager is not subject to the 1-year compensation ban for company X, but is subject to the 1-year compensation ban for all proposals the program manager reviews and that are selected for award of a procurement contract in excess of \$10 million.

2.F. Scientific Review Team Kick-off Meeting. This meeting is held once proposals are received in response to a program-specific BAA and prior to beginning any proposal review. Key aspects of this meeting are the GC Standards of Conduct briefing and Scientific Review Process training. In addition, the PM may discuss how the Scientific Review will proceed, including the schedule for completing the reviews and any electronic evaluation tool that will be used. For office-wide BAAs, the Technical Offices will ensure that all Review Team Members understand the Standards of Conduct and Scientific Review Process, through ad hoc training, a kick-off meeting after the BAA is published, or another process deemed acceptable by the Technical Office, GC, and the CO.

2.F.1. Scientific Review Team Ethics Briefing and Self-Certification. Prior to beginning proposal reviews, all Reviewers, PMs, and SMEs shall receive a briefing prepared and conducted by GC regarding procurement integrity, financial COIs, and personal and business relationship laws (appearance) and regulations relevant to the Scientific Review Process. This briefing will generally be conducted as part of the Scientific Review Team Kick-off Meeting for submissions received in response to program-specific BAAs, but Technical Offices may structure this process in whatever manner best achieves the goal of ensuring a proper briefing to all participants and minimizing administrative burdens for review of proposals submitted against an office-wide BAA. The briefing will include the relevant prohibited conduct under 18 U.S.C. § 208, 41 U.S.C. §§ 2101-2107 and 5 CFR Part 2635, organizational COIs under FAR 9.5, and the information contained in the nondisclosure/self-certification agreement. If a Review Team Member has received the ethics briefing at least once in the calendar year (12 months) prior to the Scientific Review Team Kick-off Meeting and the briefing content has not materially changed since he or she last received the briefing, he or she is not required to attend the ethics portion of the briefing, but must be provided a copy of the presentation slides for reference. Prior to the Kick-off Meeting, the PM or other designated member of the Review Team will confirm with GC the date of the latest material changes to the briefing to ensure all Review Team Members have been briefed on the current material. GC should also alert the Technical

Office ADPM when there have been material changes to the content of the briefing. Any Review Team Member who does not attend the ethics briefing will be required to document and self-certify the date of his or her last ethics briefing in the COI Self-Certification form.

Prior to proposal review, all Review Team Members shall be required to complete and submit a written self-certification, for the record, to document any known or apparent COIs or stating that they have none relevant to reviewing BAA proposals, as well as any other requirements regarding information access during the Scientific Review Process. Review Team Members complete this form after receipt of proposals. The Technical Office will retain the self-certification forms as part of the documentation in accordance with paragraph 2.E. below. The briefing charts and the self-certification form are available on the DARPA portal on the GC home page.

The PM is responsible for ensuring that each Review Team Member has access to or receives a copy of both the briefing charts and the self-certification form. After verifying that each member of the Review Team has sufficiently completed the self-certifications forms, the PM will review the forms with the CO and GC regarding potential COIs and appearance issues in the self-certifications, as necessary. The PM will brief all support contractor personnel having access to the proposals and ensure that no support contractor personnel have any COIs. Support contractor personnel with COIs participating in the Scientific Review Process must work out their participation in the process with GC, the CO, and the PM. The PM must also ensure that support contractor personnel have a nondisclosure agreement on file signed when they began their duties with DARPA. The PM shall remind them of the restrictions and requirements that are contained in that agreement as they relate to the handling and review of proposal material in accordance with section 2.E. below. A sample of a nondisclosure agreement is available in DI 70, "Contractor Relationships: Inherently Governmental Functions, Prohibited Personal Services, and Organizational Conflicts of Interest."

2.F.2. Scientific Review Training. The CO will attend the Scientific Review Team Kick-off Meeting and provide training on how to sufficiently document proposal reviews.

2.G. Protection of Sensitive Data. All participants in the Scientific Review Process (including SMEs and SETAs) are prohibited from, unless permitted by law, knowingly disclosing contractor bid, or proposal information, or source selection information in accordance with FAR 2.101, and the Procurement Integrity Act, 41 U.S.C. §§ 2101-2107 (implemented in FAR 3.104). Unauthorized disclosure of proprietary or confidential information, either before or after the award, is prohibited by the Trade Secrets Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1905, the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552a, and by other laws and regulations. Prior written authorization from DIRO, or the CO must be obtained prior to releasing protected information outside the Scientific Review Team. The requirement for prior written authorization does not apply to the personnel associated with standard operational support activities such as preparing/processing/reviewing funding requests for selected proposals by Financial/Comptroller personnel, or archiving solicitation documentation on the Agency server or SharePoint sites by information technology or SETA support personnel.

The PM shall monitor and maintain all source selection information (as defined by FAR 2.101) within a secured physical and network area. This includes ensuring that information

stored/downloaded to the DARPA network (e.g., Filer 1) is in a location restricted to only those users who have been cleared to access such information. Source selection information includes proposer-produced or Reviewer-generated data, proposal information, working papers, and any other material relating to the Scientific Review Process. If, at any time during the Scientific Review Process, it is determined that there has been an unauthorized data disclosure, the matter will be brought to the immediate attention of the CO for investigation; the CO will then consult with the PM, SRO, and GC to determine resolution. When reproducing or working with any documents pertaining to the Scientific Review Process, precautions will be observed to safeguard the information in accordance with FAR 2.101 and 3.104, the DARPA Security Guide, and other MSO/SID policy. To protect source selection sensitivity, any documentation containing source selection information that is being emailed should be encrypted and emailed with the password sent in a separate email. Alternatively, the unencrypted source selection information may be sent via encrypted email, forwarded via encrypted email or in a password-protected email, with the password sent in a separate email. These requirements are also applicable when the emails are being sent to internal addresses (i.e., darpa.mil). Questions concerning the protection of classified or ITAR/EAR information should be directed to the MSO/SID International Security Section.

The Review Team and any other individual with access to source selection information will ensure that all Scientific Review documentation as described above is marked "Source Selection Information – See FAR 2.101 and FAR 3.104."

2.H. Conforming Submissions (Including Proposals and Abstracts). The CO, with assistance from the PM and GC, as necessary, will determine whether a submission is conforming, as defined in Appendix 2. Only conforming abstracts will be reviewed, and only conforming proposals will be reviewed and considered for award. When a submission is found to be nonconforming, a letter will be sent to the proposer explaining why the submission is nonconforming and that it will receive no further consideration (see Appendix 1 for template). Unless specifically stated otherwise, all references to abstracts and proposals in this Guide are referring to conforming submissions only.

2.I. Interactions After the Receipt of Proposals (Restricted Interactions). After receipt of proposals, all interactions with proposers must go through the CO regardless of communication method (email, in person, telephonic, etc.). Typically, interactions that occur following proposal receipt fall into two categories: a proposer will contact DARPA asking for a status on their proposal, or a PM or Reviewer will want clarification from a proposer on information contained in the proposal. Requests for clarification do not include giving a proposer a chance to provide substantive information that, per the BAA, should have been included in the proposal at the time of submission. It is important to note that the PM or CO cannot advise or direct a proposer how to revise their proposal. All interactions must avoid "technical transfusion," which is sharing one proposer's technical solution with another, including unique technology, innovative and unique uses of commercial items, or any information that would compromise a proposer's intellectual property. Discourse with a proposer must not reveal information that will give one proposer an unfair competitive advantage over another. Sometimes the questions are more significant and require electronic, face-to-face, or telephonic communication sessions among the Review Team, CO, and proposer. The CO

must be present during all electronic, face-to-face, and telephonic interactions. The PM must get the CO's prior written approval on all subject email interactions.

3. SCIENTIFIC REVIEW PROCESS

Once any COIs have been mitigated, participants have been briefed on standards of conduct by GC, and the PM has held the Scientific Review Kick-off Meeting, the Scientific Review may begin. The PM may assign proposals for Scientific Review to all Reviewers and SMEs or some subset thereof, at his or her discretion, with a deadline for reviews to be completed. The time provided for Scientific reviews can vary based on the length and complexity of the proposal, the number of proposals received, and other factors, but generally reviews should take no longer than 2 weeks to complete.

For program-specific BAAs where it is anticipated that there will be awards valued at more than \$1 million (inclusive of all options), each conforming proposal must be reviewed by a minimum of three Government Reviewers. In this case, all proposals must be reviewed by three Reviewers, even if some proposals submitted against that program-Specific BAA are valued at less than \$1 million. With the SRO's approval, for program-specific BAAs where it is anticipated that all awards will be valued at \$1 million or less, each conforming proposal may be reviewed by one DARPA Reviewer. With the SRO's approval, proposals submitted against an office-wide BAA where it is anticipated that a resultant award will be valued at \$1 million or less, conforming proposals may be reviewed by one DARPA Reviewer. In the cases where only one Reviewer is permitted, the PM may be the sole Reviewer. For both office-wide and program-specific BAAs, the PM must document the SRO's approval allowing only one Reviewer in the signed SRM (See Exhibit 5).

3.A. Scientific Review.

3.A.1. Review of Abstracts. There is no prescribed way to review an abstract, but all conforming abstracts must receive consideration and a written response either encouraging or discouraging submission of a fully proposal. The PM or Government reviewer must respond to abstracts in writing with a statement as to whether DARPA is interested in the idea (See Exhibit 6, Sample Letters 1 and 2.). The PM will respond to the technical point of contact listed on the abstract cover sheet. The PM should attempt to reply to the abstracts within a reasonable timeframe to allow feedback to be incorporated in a proposal submission, but within no longer than 30 calendar days of receipt. If the PM indicates no interest in the idea, the PM's written response must include the rationale for this decision. Chapter 1, Section 6 of the Guide provides general guidelines for what information the PM should and should not provide when communicating with proposers prior to receipt of proposals. Even though a PM may indicate that DARPA has no interest in the proposer's ideas, the proposer is not subsequently precluded from submitting a full proposal, and the PM should remind the proposer of this in the letter to the proposer.

3.A.2. Review of Proposals. All Scientific Reviews of proposals are based on the evaluation criteria detailed in the published BAA. Proposals shall not be evaluated against one another since they are not submitted in accordance with a common work statement. Using the evaluation criteria detailed in the published BAA, the Reviewers will evaluate each assigned

proposal in its entirety, assess the proposal's strengths and weaknesses, and make a selectability determination. The results of the Reviewer's Scientific Review must be documented in an Evaluation Report (see template at Appendix 1, Exhibit 1). Each Evaluation Report must contain a detailed, substantive narrative describing his or her identified strengths and weaknesses relative to each evaluation criterion and supporting his or her selectability determination. Each Reviewer must complete a separate Evaluation Report for each proposal. SMEs shall review only those portions of proposals assigned to them by the PM based on their technical area(s) of expertise and document their findings on the SME Worksheet (see template at Appendix 1, Exhibit 2). Each Reviewer must finalize and date his or her Evaluation Reports upon completion of the review and prior to submitting the Reports to the PM for review. (For definitions of terms, see Appendix 2). Guidance regarding appropriate narrative statements is included in Appendix 3.

3.B. PM Review and Recommendation for Award. Once complete, the Evaluation Reports and SME Worksheets are forwarded to the PM (or the Delegate PM, as appropriate) for review. The PM will ensure the Evaluation Reports adequately document the review conducted. It is the PM's responsibility to ensure the Reviewers have provided sufficient, substantive rationale for their review findings. For example, adjectival descriptions such as "Good" or "Excellent" without further detailed narrative elaboration are not sufficient. The PM shall consult with the CO prior to making a formal recommendation of funding as outlined in section 3.B.2 if there is any question about the sufficiency of the evaluation narratives (see also guidance in Appendix 3).

Should the PM disagree with the rationale or selectability determination provided on an Evaluation Report, he or she may discuss it with the Reviewer. If the Reviewer concurs with the PM's assessment, the Reviewer will modify the Evaluation Report and sign and date the edited version, noting the changes. The modifications to the Evaluation Report by the Reviewer must be preserved in the document file for the Scientific Review, either in electronic or hard copy. If the Reviewer does not concur, the PM may still select the proposal for award, but must specifically document the rationale that overrides the Reviewer's Evaluation Report on the PM Summary Sheet.

Once the PM is satisfied that all Evaluation Reports are complete and substantive, he or she shall consider these documents in determining which of the proposals best meet his or her program objectives. This determination must include consideration of available funding and appropriate levels of risk. The PM designates the proposal(s) he or she is recommending for funding in a PM Summary Sheet (see template at Appendix 1, Exhibit 3) that will be attached as a cover sheet to all the associated Evaluation Reports and SME Worksheets. For each recommended proposal, the PM must include a short statement describing the rationale for funding that particular proposal. Cutting and pasting the same rationale for every recommended proposal and just changing the performer name is insufficient (see sample language in the guidance in Appendix 3). If the PM is recommending partial funding, he or she must include sufficient rationale to support why only part of the work is recommended. For proposals determined to be selectable but not recommended for funding, the PM must include a statement describing the rationale for this decision. If rationale for any decisions in this process is documented elsewhere (e.g., the SRO briefing), the PM may reference this document and its location in the summary sheet. The PM must sign and date the PM Summary Sheet. The

resultant recommendation package and all proposals shall be made available to the SRO for his or her review and concurrence. In accordance with DI 66, "Protection of Human Subjects in Research," the PM must inform the SRO should any proposals involving human subject's research be recommended,

3.C. SRO Review and Concurrence. The PM must conduct a briefing with the SRO and CO regarding the overall Scientific Review and his or her specific award recommendations. The SRO, in consultation with the CO, may choose to review the Scientific Review documentation without a briefing if he or she determines the briefing to be unnecessary. In that case, the SRO will document his or her rationale for this decision in the SRO Independent Review Memorandum. For office-wide BAAs, the SRO must have a briefing for all proposal evaluations or none; the PM cannot brief some proposals and not others. For office-wide BAAs, the briefings may be ad hoc as proposals come in. A read-ahead package of all the Scientific Review documentation must be provided to the SRO and CO prior to the briefing with adequate time for its review. A prebriefing with the CO is encouraged.

The SRO will review the recommendation package to ensure the Scientific Review Process complied with DI 20 and the procedures in this Guide and that the PM has adequately justified and documented the rationale for selecting proposals for award. The SRO may review any of the proposals and may request additional information necessary for him or her to make the funding decision. Should the SRO take exception to the documentation or recommendations included in the recommendation package, he or she will discuss these concerns with the PM.

As a result of this discussion, any of the following actions may occur:

- The SRO may withdraw his or her concerns and approve the recommended proposals for funding.
- The PM may modify the recommendation package in accordance with the SRO's concerns and resubmit it to the SRO for approval.
- The SRO may direct the PM to cancel and reissue the BAA to clarify program objectives.
- The SRO may require the PM to re-evaluate one or more proposals.
- The SRO may withdraw approval and funding for the program.
- In rare circumstances, the SRO may substitute his or her funding selection decision for the PM's recommendations.

The SRO will document his or her findings in the SRO Independent Review Memorandum. If the SRO does not concur with the PM's recommendations, the SRO must include a substantive rationale supporting this decision. The SRO Independent Review Memorandum will be attached to the review documents before the package is forwarded to the CO for negotiation and award. The signed SRO Independent Review Memorandum indicates the SRO's final concurrence, indicating that funds are available for the effort.

In accordance with DI 66, the SRO must receive approval from the DARPA Human Protection Administrator (HPA) for any proposals involving human subjects research that are recommended. Also see Section 4.D of this Chapter.

4. POST-SELECTION ACTIVITIES

4.A. Documentation for CO. Before the CO can begin negotiations, he or she must receive either electronic copies the following documentation or notice where the following documentation may be found for the award file: the PR/MIPR and all associated Scientific Review documentation supporting the proposal selection, including all the selected proposals, scientific review decision supporting documentation, PM Summary Sheet, and SRO Independent Review Memorandum. The contracting agent will need only file copies of the proposals for the award he or she is negotiating. The required file documents, particularly the PM Summary Sheets and SRO Independent Review Memorandum, should be included in the PR/MIPR package and will be forwarded to the appropriate CO to facilitate negotiation and award on request from the CO to the Technical Office. To protect source selection sensitivity, all documentation sent outside the Defense Agencies Initiative containing source selection information should be encrypted and emailed with the password sent in a separate email. Alternatively, the unencrypted source selection information may be sent via encrypted email, forwarded via encrypted email or in a password-protected email, with the password sent in a separate email. The requirements are also applicable when the emails are being sent to internal addresses (i.e., darpa.mil). Unselected proposal locations may be retained elsewhere (e.g., Technical Office or a DARPA-approved proposal evaluation and retention website) as long as the location is documented in the contract file.

4.B. Notification to Proposers. Following SRO approval of the PM's funding recommendations, the PM shall send letters to the proposers notifying them of their selection/nonselection for award (see sample letters at Exhibit 6). When the SRO has selected a proposal for partial funding, notice of this partial selection and a request for revised proposal must be sent by the DARPA/CMO Contracting Officer to the proposer. In the case of a partial selection, where a proposer will have to update their cost proposal, the SRO should not sign the PR/MIPR prior to receiving an updated proposal. If the selected proposal involves human subject research, approval from the DARPA HPA must be received prior to the proposer being notified.

4.C. Informal Feedback Sessions. FAR 35 allows PMs to hold informal feedback sessions with prime proposers after the proposers have been notified that their proposal was not selected. Subcontractors may attend the feedback session at the invitation of the prime proposer, but they may not initiate the meeting request. Prior to informal feedback sessions, the proposer must provide the PM a list of attendees for the session. If the proposer plans to include their legal counsel in the feedback session, DARPA GC and the CO must be present. The PM and CO will determine whether the CO must be in attendance for all feedback sessions. If the CO will not be present, the PM should review the planned discussion with the CO prior to the feedback session. The CO shall provide advice on appropriate responses that may be given during an informal feedback session. In the feedback sessions, the PM and other Government representatives may discuss only the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal that is the subject

of the feedback session. PMs and other Government representatives shall not disclose reviews or reveal information from other proposals submitted against the same BAA nor shall they disclose specific content of the Evaluation Reports. The PM and other Government representatives shall not discuss how many proposals were received in response to the BAA, how many proposals were selected for funding, or who was on the Review Team. After the informal feedback session has concluded, the PM or the CO will prepare a memorandum that documents the session (e.g., who attended, questions asked, and answers given).

4.D. Document Retention. All preproposal submissions, conforming proposals, PM Summary Sheets, SRO Independent Review Memoranda, COI certifications, and Scientific Review Memoranda generated during the Scientific Review Process and selected for award must be retained for 6 years after final contract payment, as part of the contract file, per FAR 4.805. All conforming proposals and formal documentation (see Appendix 1) generated during the Scientific Review Process and not selected for award must be transferred to MSO/Records Management and be retained for 6 years after notification has been made to the proposer. Electronic copies of all documents are satisfactory for proper document retention. Hard copies are not required.

4.E. Quarterly Review. Once per quarter, CMO will provide a randomly selected complete Scientific Review Package (see definition in Appendix 2) to the Deputy Director, DARPA for his or her review. Review comments will be tracked by the CMO Policy, Quality and Training Office for trends and possible development of training opportunities. Additionally, findings will be provided to the Technical Office ADPM as appropriate.

Appendix 1

Exhibits

Exhibit 1: SAMPLE EVALUATION REPORT

(Instructional note: Ensure each criterion from the BAA is included on the Evaluation Report.)

BAA/RA Number: _____
BAA/RA Title: _____
Reviewer Name: _____
Reviewer Signature: _____

Selectable <input type="checkbox"/>
Not Selectable <input type="checkbox"/>

Date: _____ Date of Modifications (if necessary) _____

Proposal Number: _____
Proposer: _____
Proposal Title: _____

Evaluation Criteria (address strengths and weaknesses in each narrative. Use a continuation sheet as necessary for each criterion. Any additional pages must include the Proposal Number, Reviewer Name and Source Selection Information marking.)

1. Overall Scientific and Technical Merit

Narrative Evaluation:

Strengths: _____

Weaknesses: _____

2. Potential Contribution and Relevance to DARPA's Mission

Narrative Evaluation:

Strengths: _____

Source Selection Information – See FAR 2.101 and 3.104

Weaknesses: _____

3. Cost Realism

Narrative Evaluation:

Strengths: _____

Weaknesses: _____

Reviewer Name: _____

Proposal #: _____

Source Selection Information – See FAR 2.101 and 3.104

Exhibit 2: SAMPLE SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT (SME) WORKSHEET

BAA/RA Number: _____

BAA/RA Title: _____

SME Name: _____ Date: _____

SME Signature: _____

Proposer: _____

Proposal Title: _____

Proposal Number: _____

Technical Area: _____

Findings: _____

Source Selection Information – See FAR 2.101 and 3.104

Exhibit 3: SAMPLE PM SUMMARY SHEET

BAA/RA Number: _____
BAA/RA Title: _____
PM Name: _____ Date: _____
Proposer: _____
Proposal Title: _____

I have reviewed the above referenced proposal and the associated evaluation materials and find that this proposal merits DARPA funding based on the evaluation criteria included in the BAA. Based on this review, I recommend full/partial funding.

Rationale for this decision is as follows: [If recommending partial funding, include an explanation in the below rationale.]

[For proposals determined to be selectable but not recommended for funding, the PM must include a statement describing the rationale for this decision or detail where the rationale for the decision was made (e.g., the SRO briefing materials).]

PM Signature/Date

Source Selection Information – See FAR 2.101 and 3.104

Exhibit 4: SAMPLE SRO INDEPENDENT REVIEW MEMORANDUM

BAA/RA Number: _____

BAA/RA Title: _____

PM Name: _____ Date: _____

I have reviewed the PM's analysis of the conforming proposals received in response to the subject BAA/RA as well as conducted my own independent review of the Scientific Review documentation. The PM has recommended the following proposals for funding:

<LIST ALL PM-RECOMMENDED PROPOSALS BY IDENTIFYING NUMBER,
PROPOSER NAME AND PROPOSAL TITLE>

Based on my review of the PM's analysis:

I concur with the recommendation made by the PM and approve the above proposals for award negotiation.

I do not concur with the recommendation made by the PM. Rationale for this decision is as follows:

- The Scientific Review Process complied with DI 20 and the DARPA Guide to BAAs and RAs.
- Funding is currently available.

SRO Signature/ Date
SRO Name
Director, Technical Office
DARPA-BAA-xx-xx Scientific Review Official

Source Selection Information – See FAR 2.101 and 3.104

Exhibit 5: SAMPLE SCIENTIFIC REVIEW MEMORANDUM

DARPA-BAA/RA-XX-XX

Program Manager (PM): _____

Scientific Review Official (SRO): _____

Delegate PM: _____

Delegate SRO: _____

The following individuals will act as Reviewers for the subject BAA/RA:Name:

Organization:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Include the following for Office-wide BAAs:

Any conforming proposals submitted against this BAA valued at \$1 million or less, inclusive of all options, may be evaluated by only one Reviewer, in accordance with DARPA policy and procedure.

Include the following text for Program-specific BAAs where all anticipated awards are capped at \$1 million or less:

Any responses or conforming proposals submitted against this BAA/RA will be evaluated by only one Reviewer, in accordance with DARPA policy and procedure.

The following individuals will act as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for the subject BAA/RA:

Name:

Organization:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Proposed Scientific Review Schedule [Edit dates to accurately reflect the actual dates]

Receipt of Proposals	X
Completion of Conflicts of Interest Review	X+3 days
Complete Individual Scientific Reviews	X+18 days
PM Recommendations	X+25 days
SRO Concurrence	X+28 days

PM Signature/Date

SRO Signature/Date

Source Selection Information – See FAR 2.101 and 3.104

Exhibit 6: SAMPLE FORMAT LETTERS 1-6

Sample Letter #1: Advises an organization to submit a full proposal based on the review of its abstract and gives advice to the organization to focus on certain items contained in the abstract. This letter should be signed by the Program Manager.

<Date>

<Inside Address>

Ref: <Identifying Number>, <Submission Title>

Dear <Proposer>:

This letter is in response to the above referenced abstract, submitted to the <Program Name> Broad Agency Announcement/Research Announcement, <BAA/RA number>, and posted on Federal Business Opportunities/Grants.gov on <FedBizOpps/Grants.gov date>.

Your abstract was reviewed in accordance with the criteria set forth in that announcement. We recommend you submit a full proposal according to the guidelines set forth in <BAA/RA number>. The following feedback is provided to assist in proposal development. The full proposal should focus on: <provide details >.

Thank you for your participation in this announcement. Your efforts in expressing the concepts and plans in your abstract are appreciated.

Sincerely,

<Name>

< Program Manager>

< Technical Office Name>

cc:

Contracting Officer, CMO

Sample Letter #2: Advises an organization *not* to submit a full proposal based on the review of its *abstract*. This letter must be signed by the Program Manager.

NOTE: All letters must provide feedback to the proposer as to the rationale behind not recommending submission of a full proposal.

<Date>

<Inside Address>

Ref: <Identifying Number>, <Submission Title>

Dear <Proposer>:

This letter is in response to the above referenced abstract, submitted to the <Program Name> Broad Agency Announcement /Research Announcement, <BAA/RA number>, and posted on Federal Business Opportunities/Grants.gov on <FedBizOpps/Grants.gov date>.

Your abstract was reviewed in accordance with the criteria set forth in that announcement. Based on careful review of the abstract, we cannot recommend that you submit a full proposal for the following reasons: <Provide feedback to the proposer regarding the rationale for the decision not to recommend a full proposal be submitted>.

If you decide to submit a full proposal, the proposal should be submitted according to the guidelines set forth in <BAA/RA number>.

Thank you for your participation in this announcement. Your efforts in expressing the concepts and plans in your abstract are appreciated. DARPA encourages your participation in future programs.

Sincerely,

<Name>

< Program Manager>

< Technical Office Name>

cc:

Contracting Officer, CMO

Sample Letter #3: Informs an organization its Proposal is *selected* for negotiations. This letter must be signed by the PM or SRO.

<Date>

<Inside Address>

Ref: <Identifying Number>, <Submission Title>

Dear <Proposer>:

This letter is in response to the above referenced proposal, submitted to the <Program Name> Broad Agency Announcement/Research Announcement, <BAA/RA number>, and posted on Federal Business Opportunities/Grants.gov on <FedBizOpps/Grants.gov date>.

Your proposal was reviewed in accordance with the criteria set forth in that announcement. I am pleased to inform you that your proposal has been selected for negotiation for a potential award. A Government agent will contact you in the near future to start the negotiation process. Should the negotiating parties not be able to come to terms, DARPA is not required to make an award. Should you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 703-696-xxxx, or contact me at xxxx@darpa.mil. This letter is not a notice of award or an authorization to incur costs.

Thank you for your participation in this announcement. I look forward to working with you on your exciting project.

Sincerely,

<Name>

< Job Title>

< Technical Office Name>

cc:

Contracting Officer, CMO

Sample Letter #4: Informs an organization that its Proposal is *selected in part*. This letter must be signed by the CO.

<Date>

<Inside Address>

Ref: <Identifying Number>, <Submission Title>

Dear <Proposer>:

This letter is in response to the above referenced proposal, submitted to the <Program Name> Broad Agency Announcement/Research Announcement, <BAA/RA number, posted on Federal Business Opportunities/Grants.gov on <FedBizOpps/Grants.gov date>.

Your proposal was reviewed in accordance with the criteria set forth in that announcement. I am pleased to inform you that your proposal has been selected for negotiation of a potential award based upon a proposed modification to your statement of work as follows: <details of partial funding>.

Please submit a revised proposal to recognize this reduced scope to the attention of the undersigned by <Insert date>. Please note that should the negotiating parties not be able to come to terms, DARPA is not required to make an award.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (703) 696-xxxx, or contact me by e-mail at xxx@darpa.mil. This letter is not a notice of award or an authorization to incur costs.

Sincerely,

<Name>

Contracting Officer

cc:

<Name>, Program Manager

**Sample Letter #5: Informs an organization that its Proposal *is not selected* for funding.
This letter must be signed by the PM or SRO.**

<Date>

<Inside Address>

Ref: <Identifying Number>, <Submission Title>

Dear <Proposer>:

This letter is in response to the above referenced proposal, submitted to the <Program Name> Broad Agency Announcement/Research Announcement, <BAA/RA number>, and posted on Federal Business Opportunities/Grants.gov on <FedBizOpps/Grants.gov date>.

Your proposal was reviewed in accordance with the criteria set forth in that announcement. We regret to inform you that your proposal was not recommended for funding.

Thank you for your participation in this announcement. Your efforts in expressing the concepts and plans in your proposal are appreciated. We look forward to your continued participation in future solicitations. Should you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 703-696-xxxx, or contact me at xxxx@darpa.mil.

Sincerely,

<Name>

< Title>

cc:

Contracting Officer, CMO

Sample Letter #6: Informs an organization that its Abstract or Proposal is *nonconforming*. This letter must be signed by the CO.

<Date>

<Inside Address>

Ref: <Identifying Number>, <Submission Title>

Dear <Proposer>:

This letter is in response to your abstract/proposal referenced above, submitted to the <Program Name> Broad Agency Announcement/Research Announcement, <BAA/RA Number>, posted on Federal Business Opportunities/Grants.gov on <FedBizOpps/Grants.gov date>.

We regret to inform you that your abstract/proposal was found to be nonconforming to the requirements in the Broad Agency Announcement/Research Announcement and, in accordance with the guidance in the announcement, will not be reviewed.

Thank you for your participation in this announcement. Your efforts in expressing the concepts and plans in your abstract/proposal are appreciated. We look forward to your continued participation in future solicitations. Should you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 703-696-xxxx, or contact me by e-mail at xxxx@darpa.mil.

Sincerely,

<Name>

<Contracting Officer>

cc:

DARPA PM

Appendix 2

Glossary of Terms

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Assign: When a senior review official, program manager, or other Government personnel involved in the Scientific Review Process makes an assignment, he or she communicates, in writing, that the Review Team Member will participate in their designated roles in the process as it relates to the specific proposal(s). A communication in writing can be an email, a memoranda, or other documented and dated communication.

Broad Agency Announcement (BAA): The BAA is a solicitation procedure used to obtain proposals for basic and applied research and that part of development not related to the development of a specific system or hardware procurement. Pursuant to FAR 6.102, the BAA solicitation procedure is considered a competitive acquisition if the BAA is general in nature identifying areas of research interest, includes criteria for selecting proposals, solicits all capable proposers, and is evaluated using a peer or scientific review. The BAA is described in FAR 6.102, and 35.016. Under FAR 35.016, BAAs, unlike Requests for Proposals (RFPs) as defined in FAR 15.203, do not necessarily require a formal Source Selection Plan. However, either the BAA or the BAA together with supporting documentation must describe the Agency's research interest, the criteria for selecting the proposals, their relative importance, the method of evaluation, the period of time during which proposals will be accepted, and proposal submission instructions in accordance with FAR 35.016(b). There are two types of BAAs at DARPA:

- Program-specific BAAs are issued to solicit proposals for a specific program. While there is no common statement of work for program-specific BAAs, the program-specific BAAs seek proposals that address a common problem or issue.
- Office-wide BAAs are issued by each Technical Office within the Agency or by the Agency itself and allow proposers to submit proposals that support the mission of the Technical Office or the broader Agency mission.

Conforming /Nonconforming Submissions: Abstracts and proposals that comply with the requirements of the BAA will be considered conforming and will be evaluated. Abstracts and proposals that do not comply may be determined nonconforming by the Contracting Officer (CO) after consulting with the program manager and General Counsel (GC), as appropriate. The program manager may solicit input from the Reviewers. If the CO determines a submission is nonconforming, the CO will provide written notice to the proposer. A sample letter is provided in Appendix 1, Exhibit 6, Sample Letter #6.

Contracting Officer (CO): The CO has the authority to enter into, administer, and/or terminate awards and make related determinations and findings. The DARPA Contracts Management Office (CMO) may be the contracting agent. Therefore, for purposes of this Instruction and Guide, CO refers to a member of the CMO staff unless reference is expressly made to the CO being an external contracting agent. For grants and agreements, the CO will be referred to as the Grants Officer or Agreements Officer, respectively.

Cooperative Agreements. Cooperative agreements are assistance instruments governed by

2 CFR §200 and are used whenever the principal purpose of the relationship is the transfer of a thing of value to the recipient to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by Federal statute, and substantial involvement is expected DARPA, acting for the Federal Government, and the recipient during performance of the contemplated activity.

Grants. Grants are a type of assistance instrument governed by 2 CFR §200. Grants are used whenever the principal purpose of the relationship is the transfer of a thing of value to the recipient in order to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by a Federal statute, and no substantial involvement is expected between DARPA acting for the Federal Government and the recipient during performance of the contemplated activity.

Other Transactions (OTs): OTs are awards governed by 10 U.S.C. § 2371a and 10 U.S.C. § 2371b and are not subject to the FAR or applicable grant and cooperative agreement regulations. The clauses in OT awards can be negotiated between the awardee and the Government. DARPA primarily awards two kinds of OTs:

- Technology Investment Agreements (TIAs): TIAs are assistance instruments governed by 10 U.S.C. § 2371 and are used to stimulate or support research designed to (a) reduce barriers to a commercial firm's participating in defense research, to give the DoD access to the broadest possible technology and industrial base; (b) promote new relationships among performers in both the defense and commercial sectors of that technology and industrial base; and (c) stimulate performers to develop, use, and disseminate improved performance and contracting practices.
- Other Transactions (OTs) for Prototypes are governed by 10 U.S.C. § 2371b and are used for prototype projects directly relevant to enhancing the mission effectiveness of military personnel and the supporting platforms, systems, components, or materials proposed to be acquired or developed by the Department of Defense; or to improvement of platforms, systems, components, or materials proposed to be acquired or developed by the Department of Defense; or to improvement of platforms, systems, components, or materials in used by the Armed Forces.

Preproposal Submissions: Under many of its BAA/RAs, DARPA will request preproposal submissions to screen topics for relevance. They include, but are not limited to, abstracts, executive summaries, and white papers. For convenience, the term "abstracts" as used in the Guide and its attachments will refer to all preproposal submissions. Submission of an abstract allows the proposer to receive feedback on the viability of the proposed concept and the likelihood that a proposal would be of interest to DARPA.

DARPA often receives hundreds of proposals in response to BAAs and RAs. To keep the evaluation manageable and to spare proposers undue proposal expense, a BAA/RA may call for submission of abstracts prior to the submission of full proposals. These abstracts are reviewed and proposers are either encouraged to submit full proposals or discouraged from further submissions. This phase neither guarantees nor rules out eventual award. The proposers who were discouraged from submitting full proposals after abstract submission are not precluded from subsequently submitting a proposal. There is no minimum required response time for

proposers to submit an abstract. Having an abstract phase does not change the requirement for a minimum response time of 45 calendar days for proposal submission. The abstract phase potentially saves time and money for the proposers, by giving an early indication of the relevance and acceptability of the technical ideas. While an abstract phase may add to the overall timeline for the program, it may also save time for the program manager and Reviewers by potentially decreasing the number of unacceptable proposals that would have to go through the Scientific Review Process.

Procurement Contracts. The principal purpose of this instrument is the acquisition by purchase, lease, or barter of property or services for the direct benefit or use of the Federal Government or whenever DARPA determines in a specific instance that the use of a type of procurement contract is appropriate. Procurement contracts are authorized by the FAR, and, for DARPA, as a DoD activity, any procurement contract awarded will contain the appropriate FAR and DFARS clauses, depending on the type of contract selected (e.g., Cost Plus Fixed Fee, or Cost Reimbursement), the value of the contract award, and other considerations.

Recommendation Package. The Recommendation Package includes the following completed documentation: Evaluation Report(s), subject matter expert worksheet (as applicable), and program manager Summary Sheet.

Research Announcement (RA): An RA is a competitive solicitation for research efforts when assistance instruments (i.e., grants, cooperative agreements, and Technology Investment Agreements) or Other Transactions for Prototypes agreements are the contemplated award type. At DARPA, an RA is similar to a BAA and evaluated under the same procedures, as detailed in Chapter 1, "Guide to BAAs and RAs."

Reviewers: Reviewers are Government employees who independently review every assigned conforming proposal received in response to a BAA or RA in accordance with the evaluation criteria. Reviewers may be DARPA program managers or qualified personnel from other DoD organizations and Government agencies who are deemed proficient in the pertinent technical area(s) of the solicitation.

Review Team: The Review Team comprises the program manager (and Delegates, as necessary), senior reviewing official (and Delegates, as necessary), Reviewers, and any subject matter experts. Individuals on the Review Team are referred to as Review Team Members.

Scientific Review Package: The Scientific Review Package includes the following completed documentation: published BAA, Evaluation Report(s), subject matter expert worksheet (as applicable), program manager Summary Sheet, senior review official Independent Review Memorandum, Scientific Review Memorandum, and letters to successful and unsuccessful offerors. One Technical Office will provide this package to the Deputy Director, DIRO, quarterly for review.

Scientific Review Process: The process whereby abstracts and proposals submitted against DARPA BAAs or RAs are reviewed and, for proposals, determined to be selectable or not selectable for award negotiations.

Selectable/Not Selectable: A proposal is considered Selectable if the positive aspects of the overall proposal outweigh its negative aspects, and there are no deficiencies or accumulated weaknesses that require extensive negotiations and/or a resubmitted proposal. A proposal is considered not selectable if the positive aspects of the overall proposal *do not* outweigh its negative aspects, and there are deficiencies or accumulated weaknesses that require extensive negotiations and/or a resubmitted proposal.

Submissions: Submissions include abstracts (e.g., abstracts, white papers, and executive summaries), proposals, and any documents submitted by a proposer for review by the Review Team.

Appendix 3

Scientific Review Narratives

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW NARRATIVES

Procedures for the Scientific Review Process are detailed in Chapter 2 of this Guide. All scientific reviews are based on the evaluation criteria as published in each individual BAA. According to DARPA Instruction (DI) 20, "Soliciting, Evaluating, and Selecting Proposals under Broad Agency Announcements and Research Announcements," each DARPA BAA must contain, at a minimum, the following evaluation criteria: overall scientific and technical merit, potential contribution and relevance to the DARPA mission, and cost realism. The Program Manager (PM), in consultation with the Contracting Officer (CO), may include other evaluation criteria in the BAA as necessary and appropriate.

As detailed in this Guide, each Reviewer must complete an Evaluation Report for each conforming proposal assigned. For each evaluation criterion in the BAA, the Report must contain a detailed and substantive narrative describing the Reviewer's findings that will ultimately support his or her selectability determination. These findings should be stated in the form of "Strengths" and "Weaknesses" in relation to each criterion and should reflect the Reviewer's expert judgment of the proposal. It is important that these findings reference specific details in the proposal to enable the PM to ultimately defend the recommendation to the Scientific Review Official (SRO) and explain the rationale in informal feedback sessions with unsuccessful proposers and potentially in response to audit or protest.

Every BAA is different, and there is no rule about how long or complex the Evaluation Reports' narrative must be. A good rule of thumb, however, is that they should be written such that the reader is able to recognize and understand the opinion of the Reviewer without having to read the proposal in depth. While it is difficult to provide sample narratives or a template that works well for all BAAs, some examples of both good and bad narrative practices are provided as guidance.

- Each Evaluation Report requires the Reviewer to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal evaluated against the evaluation criterion. On occasion, a proposal will not have an identified strength or weakness for a particular criterion. This is an acceptable opinion; however, writing nothing in the applicable section of the criterion narrative on the Evaluation Report is not appropriate. Silence or lack of a statement suggests that the Reviewer ignored or skipped that section. Every criterion's strengths section and weaknesses sections should contain a narrative, even if that narrative is as simple as "The proposal had no strengths in this area."
- Certain words used without further explanation do not provide enough detail to support the review.
 - Use of adjectival descriptions such as "Good," "Excellent," "Fair," or "Poor" are a good starting point but need more detail to explain what specifically about the proposal justified this opinion. Reviewers should not substitute a scoring scale (including an adjectival or numerical scale) in lieu of providing a narrative for each criterion that clearly calls out the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal.

- Some words are too generic or open to interpretation to stand alone. These terms include, but are not limited to, “(in)adequate,” “(un)reasonable,” “(ir)relevant,” “(un)satisfactory,” “(in)significant,” and “(un)realistic.” More detail referencing specific content within the proposal is necessary to explain why the Reviewer believes this was a positive or negative review point.
- It is not enough to restate the evaluation criteria as the narrative. For instance, if the evaluation criterion is the “Potential Contribution and Relevance to the DARPA Mission,” a narrative that states “This effort is extremely relevant and will make a significant contribution to the DARPA mission” is not detailed enough. How is it relevant and to what mission objective? Why does the Reviewer believe, not only would the Proposer make a contribution to DARPA’s objectives, but that the contribution would be significant? Significant in what way?
- Subjective opinions in a review are not only acceptable, but encouraged. However, these opinions must be supported by specific details from the proposal. For instance, stating “Proposers have plans and a proven track record that points to successful transition of the technology they are developing” does not contain enough supporting information. What are the plans, and what gives the Reviewer confidence they will be successful? How is their track record proven? What information have they provided that will support that conclusion? Why does the Reviewer believe the transition efforts will be successful?
- Merely stating the proposal is strong in a certain area or weak in another is not sufficient. Point to specific details from the proposal that were relied on to form that opinion. Copying or restating language from the proposal itself is not enough. The narrative must include the value judgment of the Reviewer regarding the completeness, credibility, and feasibility of the proposed approach.
- For each strength and weakness comment, Reviewers should include the corresponding page from the proposal where the necessary supporting information is found. Not only will this make future discussions with other Reviewers, the program manager or the senior review official easier if the review is questioned, it will also facilitate the informal feedback sessions with unsuccessful proposers. Being able to point to specific language in their proposal often diffuses any challenges (or a potential protest) from an unsuccessful proposer as well as showing that the Reviewers performed a fair and complete evaluation of the proposal.
- It is critical that each Reviewer complete a narrative for each evaluation criterion for each proposal. Reviewers can consider only the criteria published in the BAA when reviewing a proposal and can consider only the information contained in the proposal. Ignoring a criterion, evaluating a criterion that is not in the BAA, or considering information that is not contained in the proposal may result in a protest being sustained. For example, a Reviewer with knowledge of a proposer’s prior performance cannot comment on that in an evaluation unless the prior performance was referenced in the proposal
- Each proposal should receive an individualized review tailored to the information contained in the proposal. It is not appropriate, for instance, to utilize the following language in reviewing one proposal: – “[Proposer’s name] has proposed work that is of

value to the DARPA mission. [Proposer's name] has demonstrated they have the subject matter expertise and resources to successfully complete the work proposed" – and then utilize the exact same language for the other proposals with just the contractor's name changed. Not only is the language too vague and generic to support a selectability determination, such a practice shows a detailed and tailored evaluation of each proposal was not completed.

While it is critical that each Reviewer provide the necessary detail on his or her Evaluation Reports, it is equally important that PMs consider the guidance above when crafting a detailed narrative to support their funding recommendations on the PM Summary Sheet. It is especially important that the PM provide a statement if he or she decides to override a Reviewer's rationale. When overriding a Reviewer's rationale, the PM should include specific proposal information or an argument supported by his or her own opinion or expertise to justify the decision. Examples include statements such as "With limited funding, selections were limited to those proposals with the greatest chance of success or the most likely technological advancement. While this proposal was feasible, [the inherent risk factors made accomplishment of the objectives a concern] [the associate cost/benefit consideration did not make it a credible option] [it was a duplicative approach and the chance of success was questionable]." While a Reviewer cannot compare proposals when evaluating, a PM can/should when making their funding recommendations. A PM must take all proposals into consideration when building a overall program portfolio. When a PM is acting as both PM and Reviewer on a BAA, they must follow the guidance/procedures outlined for each role. For example, a PM cannot make comparative statements on his or her Evaluation Report, but may do so on the PM Summary Sheets.

There is no "right" way to craft these narratives, and each BAA has its own criteria and issues. The examples given above are intended to give Reviewers and PMs insight into the general concepts, but are not intended to be used as form language or repeated verbatim. BAA evaluations are subjective and are intended to allow Reviewers to use their unique expertise and value judgment in creating opinions. Each BAA should be approached with a fresh eye, and the length and complexity of the narrative statements will vary accordingly. The length of the narrative is not nearly as important as the content. Being clear, concise, and brief is preferred as long as the argument is made with some specificity and clarity.