

# FY 2020 NOAA SBIR PHASE I NOFO

## Questions and Answers (Q&As)

January 17, 2020

Q#1: My company does not have any previous SBIR awards, we are recently entering the government contracting world, does that disqualify or handicap our ability to apply and win SBIR's?

We can build just about anything. But we need to know the problem we need to solve. Is there anyway I can be connected with a PM at NOAA who might be able to describe what would be ideal for them?

I don't want to submit at SBIR that says "we will investigate, find a pain point, and then build something that solves that problem".

**A#1:** Not having previous SBIR awards is not an issue at all and will not disqualify or limit your acceptability. In fact, a large number of proposers are new companies or new to the SBIR program.

To clarify, the NOAA SBIR Program awards financial assistance grants and not contracts. Therefore, NOAA is not looking for a specific problem to be solved. We will not provide specifications.

The overall intent of the SBIR program is the development and commercialization of innovative products or services by U.S. owned and operated, small high tech firms. SBIR funding allows these small businesses to better compete with medium and large businesses. The federal government takes the risk (by providing the funding) and at the end of the period of performance, the company retains ownership of the technology developed. The intent is for the company to then either find follow-on funding to conduct further R&D or to commercialize the product or service, thereby helping the small business to succeed, creating jobs, stimulating the economy, etc.

The topics listed are NOAA mission areas, not necessarily research or work that NOAA conducts or needs in-house. Therefore, you would need to determine where the industry need is. What would be innovative and cost effective enough for folks to adopt a new or improved technology? What does the specific industry actually need? An SBIR application would propose a solution to a problem, which falls under one of the stated subtopic areas in the NOFO.

Propose a solution to an industry need (again, this is not a NOAA need. It must have commercial potential). If awarded, Phase I, which has a six-month period of performance, is a feasibility study to determine if the proposed solution is...well, feasible. If feasible and a Phase II grant is awarded, then the Phase II grants (2 year time frame) serves as the prototype development/full R&D stage.

**Q#2:** I am interested in submitting a proposal under NOAA-OAR-OAR TPO-2020-2006320. Where can I find a standard application package?

**A#2:** The FY 20 solicitation was published on Grants.gov on December 19, 2019. Therefore, all the requirements and forms can be found there if you are interested in applying for a FY2020 Phase I grant proposal before the closing date of February 3, 2020. Go to the “Package” tab and click on “Preview” link to see the required forms.

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**Q#3:** Our company currently has a CRADA with NOAA. Does this make us ineligible to apply for this grant?

**A#3:** See the NOFO section 3.2.02(10) for this language: “An Agency may NOT enter into, or continue, a CRADA with an awardee under this NOFO on the subtopic of the award.” If the scope of the work for the CRADA and SBIR are clearly different and easy to differentiate, you may have both simultaneously. However, if there is overlap, you would need to end the CRADA activity prior to the SBIR being awarded. The CRADA legislation does not allow us to contribute funding directly to a company for the CRADA work.

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**Q#4.1:** 1. Page 62 of this year’s NOAA SBIR solicitation states: “Items (6) through (12) must be completed and attached by clicking on “Add Attachments” found in item 15 of the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.” That refers to items described in earlier pages of the section. I started an application in Grants.gov, and it has forms called “project narrative attachment form” and “budget narrative attachment form,” which would seem to take care of items (6) and (7) from the items in question. Is that correct? Then, should I only attach items (8) through (12) to the SF-424?

**A#4.1:** Yes that is correct the “project narrative attachment form” and “budget narrative attachment form” do take care of items (6) and (7). So yes, you only need to attach items (8) - (12) to the SF-424.

**Q#4.2:** 2. Item (12) on page 60 says “Registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). Attach proof of registration.” What is “proof of registration”? Is it simply a PDF of the web page showing our “active” status in SAM?

**A#4.2:** Yes a PDF of the web page showing an active status in SAM is sufficient.

**Q#4.3:** 3. A one-page document with a project abstract and summary of potential commercial applications is asked for on page 26. Should this appear just after the “SBIR cover sheet” and before the rest of the narrative? If so, is it OK that that results in a 26-page document (pages 1-2 for the cover sheet, an uncounted page for the one-page abstract, and pages 3-25 for the “technical content” sections)?

**A#4.3:** After reviewing the FY 2020 NOAA SBIR Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), I see where the issue lies. The NOFO states that there is a 25-page count limit. The Cover Sheet should be pages 1 -2 and the Technical Content should be pages 3-25. However, within the second paragraph of section 3.2.01 it is stated that a

one page abstract should be included but does not provide information on what page it should be or if it counts toward the page limit. This clearly is confusing and needs clarification.

The answer is, yes, the one-page Abstract does count toward the total page count. However, the NOFO should state that the page limit is actually 26 pages and not 25 (since the Cover Sheet is 2 pages long). Previously the Cover Sheet was one page. Once it grew to two pages, however, we decided to increase the proposal page limit to 26 in order to allow for the additional page of the Cover Sheet.

**Q#4.4:** 4. Letters of commitment are required for consultants/contracts/sub-awards (page 28) and letters of support are allowed (same page). Are these letters included in the page count? If so, can they be made as images on the page, with full-size versions available upon request?

**A#4.4:** Yes, both letters of commitment and letters of support are included in the page count. You can include them as an image. However, they must follow the same requirements for margins and font as in the rest of the proposal, which is "...margins of 2.5cm and type at least 10-point font"

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**Q#5:** Can you please let me know is this extends to businesses in Micronesia (Federated States of Micronesia)?

**A#5:** Yes, small businesses owned and operated in Micronesia are eligible to submit applications/proposals to the NOAA SBIR Program (or any federal agency's SBIR program). Only small, United States owned and operated firms are eligible to participate in federal agency SBIR programs. For the purposes of the SBIR program, the following is the definition of "United States":

United States. The 50 states, the territories and possessions of the Federal Government, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau.

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**Q#6:** Is there a limit to how many SBIR proposals from one company per year?

**A#6:** There is no limit to how many proposals one company can submit in response to the annual NOAA SBIR Notice of Funding Opportunity.

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**Q#7:** Is there a limit to the number of Phase I SBIR awards a single company can get in one year?

**A#7:** There is currently no limit on the number of Phase I awards a company can get in one year. However, we do look at the number of employees and other projects/involvements by key personnel.

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**Q#8:** We are interested in your the Tool Development of Aquaculture Farm Management SBIR topic 9.1.01. In the NOFO, 9.1.01 was very broadly defined. It seems that the SBIR was

identifying a broad area that needs some help, rather than a specific use case or need. Is that a fair impression? We build web-based tools all of the time, and would be very happy to apply for this SBIR grant. Is there anyway we can learn more?

**A#8:** Yes, your assumption is correct. The subtopic is purposely broad as we are looking for investigator (your) initiated ideas that would help the aquaculture farming industry. We certainly don't know what all of the issues/struggles/innovation needs are, so we are looking to small businesses, like your own, to submit proposals for potential solutions to aquaculture farming management needs. Conduct research to determine what the industry needs are and provide NOAA with your best, most innovative solution(s).

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**Q#9:** I am a first time NOAA SBIR offeror and I understand the first two pages of the SBIR proposal are a specific cover sheet. Can you send me a link to the cover sheet? It is mentioned in the SBIR instructions, but I can't find it in the announcement.

**A#9:** This form is located on [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) under this particular NOAA SBIR RFP under the "Related Documents" tab.

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**Q#10:** Is there a NOAA specific template available for us to follow so we write the best possible proposal?

**A#10:** Some parts of your application package will include formatted "fill in the blank" templates and some parts are free formatted, for example the project narrative section has no template beyond what the NOFO specifies for the various required information in that section. The "cover sheet" is a formatted PDF template as are the various mandatory forms (e.g., the SF424 application form, CD511 form, etc) that you will find available for download in [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) (check under the "Package" tab and the "Preview" link therein once you go to this specific NOAA SBIR grant opportunity on [grants.gov](https://grants.gov)). The Cover Sheet template is under the "Related Documents" tab.

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**Q#11:** I have been monitoring the NOAA SBIR site for release of the FY20 funding cycle and have not seen anything published. In FY19, I believe proposals were due in January so I am wondering about the timing of the FY20 announcement.

**A#11:** The FY2020 NOFO has been posted to [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) on Dec. 19, 2019 and can be found using keywords "NOAA SBIR", or the CFDA number 11.021. Proposals are due no later than 11:59 pm on February 3, 2020.

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**Q#12:** Please clarify the following. In 9.1 Aquaculture, subtopic 9.1.01 Tool Development of Aquaculture Farm Management, for real time tracking of toxic blooms, is the expectation to develop sensor systems for tracking toxic blooms or to use available data from NOAA and other sources in an app for tracking toxic bloom.

**A#12:** NOAA does not have a specific expectation for responses to this subtopic. Those items listed are a few examples of types of management tools, which could be applied to this subtopic. Applicants should decide, based on available information, industry needs, and

experience, how they would like to reply to the broad need for the development of aquaculture management tools. The subtopic is the broad problem statement and applicants are expected to provide innovative solutions...investigator-initiated versus NOAA-initiated.

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**Q#13:** The RFP mentions "SBIR-STTR Information Form Cover Sheet" and it is not included in the forms that were included in the application package. Can you please tell from where I can get it or is the same name for one of the forms that I have downloaded.

**A#13:** See answer to Q#9.

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**Q#14:** I have been working on a project that I think would fit well with the recent SBIR NOFO, specifically with section 9.3.02, and I would love to get your take on it. ....POTENTIAL PROPRIETARY MATERIAL REDACTED.... I have other information I can send your way, from business school pitch decks to a small white paper. If any of these would be more helpful in defining the concept, and whether or not you think we would be a good fit for this funding opportunity please let me know! Look forward to talking soon

**A#14:** Sorry, we cannot provide assistance to you in developing your proposal that might give you an unfair advantage over another applicant.

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**Q#15:**

**9.2.02 Low-cost Wireless Temperature and Depth Sensor Package for Deployment on Fishing Gear**

- At what depths do you anticipate this being used?
- What are the size requirements for the underwater device?
- How do you envision users attaching the underwater device?
- What is the preferred flow of data? Is it required that data is transmitted from the underwater device to satellite, or is intermediate transmission to a shipboard computer expected?

**9.5.02 Automated High Resolution Measurement of VOCs**

- What specific VOC molecules are of interest?
- Which is preferred: real-time automated VOC sensing with no gas capture, or automated gas capture for lab analysis?
- Is GCMS required?
- What is your ideal time resolution? On the order of minutes?
- What is your ideal spatial resolution?
- Is particulate sensing of interest? What size range of particulates?
- What are your preferences in how the data is reported?

**A#15:** See answers to Q#1 and Q#8 and Q#12. We fund grants that meet broad commercial needs, not contracts with specific NOAA requirements.

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**Q#16:** We have the following questions regarding topic 9.2.02, “Low-cost Wireless Temperature and Depth Sensor Package for Deployment on Fishing Gear.”

1. What specific types of commercial fishing methods and gear are of interest (e.g. traps, nets, trawls, hooks/lines, etc.)?
2. Do you have any specific fisheries in mind?
3. What are the depth and temperature requirements for the sensor?
4. What is your definition of low cost?
5. The topic states that you desire a sensor that "wirelessly communicates with onboard computers, and transmits data via satellite, cellular, and WIFI."
  - a. What do you mean by onboard computers?
  - b. Are you indicating that the sensor should be able to communicate with these onboard computers in three ways (i.e. satellite, cellular, and WIFI)?
6. The topic states that "a secondary goal is to visualize the temperature and depth data collected by the sensors in near real time."
  - a. What is your definition of near real time?
  - b. What is the desired sample rate for the temperature and depth data?
  - c. What is your preferred visualization method?

**A#16:** See answers to Q#1 and Q#8 and Q#12 and Q#15.

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**Q#17:** I have one question regarding to topic **9.2.01 Lab-on-a-Chip: Ocean Iron Sensor**. Is it applicable to the topic if our Fe detection technology is not based on lab-on-a-chip design?

**A#17:** During the proposal review process we determine appropriateness of a proposed idea. We cannot answer your question here. You should make a determination if your idea addresses this subtopic based on the information provided in the NOFO.

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**Q#18:** My colleagues and I are interested in your SBIR solicitation NOAA-OAR-OAR TPO-2020-2006320; we are specifically interested in **Topic # 9.2.02 Low-cost Wireless Temperature and Depth Sensor Package for Deployment on Fishing Gear**.

We believe that our past experience developing XXXXXX sensors and communications packages makes us uniquely qualified to respond to this topic. To help guide our efforts and tailor our response to best address your desired needs, we have generated a short list of questions, which we have provided below. The answers to these questions will help to paint a better picture of the envisioned CONOPs and usage of the proposed sensor package.

We understand that these questions will be anonymously posted for public review. We appreciate your time and look forward to your responses.

1. To better understand the problem and envision the use cases and users of this technology, can you provide an operational example illustrating the step by step process of fishing with this new technology and using the data it provides? If you can, please include the types of commercial fishing this could apply to or the types of gear used, and how both the operators (i.e. fishermen) and scientists would use the technology and the resulting data. This information will help us understand the optimal cost, size, weight, depth-rating, accuracy, endurance, and communication method to enable this operation and benefit both the fisherman and the scientists.
2. Regarding your secondary objective to visualize the data in near real-time, is the idea to empower the fishermen with data about their gear while its underwater, to provide feedback for real-time adjustments while fishing, or is the desire to simply provide oceanic data to researchers without significant time delays?
3. Would you be satisfied with a Phase I that researches the operational and technical problems and gathers the information to determine the optimal design of the sensor package, or do you expect a preliminary prototype to be developed based on existing or adapted designs?

**A#18:** See answers to Q#1 and Q#8 and Q#12 and Q#15.

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**Q#19:** I am considering submitting a proposal to the topic **9.2.04 Underwater Adhesive for Coral Restoration** in the current NOAA SBIR solicitation, and I have several questions:

1. What 2-part adhesive is currently being used? Can you specify the brand and product name if they are commercial products? If not, can you specify the chemistry being used?
2. What type of storage conditions are available? Can the adhesive be refrigerated until use?
3. Is the gluing done by divers in the ocean? If not, who is doing the gluing and where is it being performed?
4. What is the temperature range of the water where the gluing is performed?
5. Can the "caulk gun" be part of the solution or must a commercial product be used for that?

**A#19:** See answers to Q#1 and Q#8 and Q#12 and Q#15.

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**Q#20:** My colleagues and I are interested in proposing to research subtopic 9.4.01 (Next Generation NOAA Platforms, Unmanned Aircraft System: Rapid Response for Natural Disasters). For Phase I, is a dissemination plan for intra and/or inter agency coordination required? Or, would a sensing / algorithm processing package applied to rapid response be sufficient?

**A#20:** The NOFO Section 9 for this subtopic states that "Proposal submissions should include a clear set of plans and protocols for intra- and/or inter- agency communications...", so a responsive Phase I proposal should include that information.

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