

ED/IES SBIR: Frequently Asked Questions

The U.S. Department of Education’s and Institute of Education Sciences’ Small Business Innovation Research program, known as [ED/IES SBIR](#), makes awards to [eligible small businesses](#) for the research and development and evaluation of the next generation of education technology products for use by learners, educators, and administrators to address pressing problems in education.

This document lists Frequently Asked Questions to assist small businesses in the preparation and submission of an ED/IES SBIR proposal.

ED/IES SBIR program representatives Ed Metz (Edward.Metz@ed.gov) and Laurie Hobbs (Laurie.Hobbs@ed.gov) can be contacted for more information and for technical assistance *prior* to the solicitation release. Per U.S. Government [Federal Acquisition Regulations \(FAR\)](#), ED/IES SBIR program personnel and other government personnel are not permitted to engage with potential offerors to provide technical assistance or answer questions while the solicitations are open and during proposal review. The goal of this list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is to help address many questions that often arise regarding the solicitation and proposal process.

Topics

Questions About the ED/IES SBIR Program: Types of Products Supported, Timing of Solicitations, and Role of Research	2
ED/IES SBIR Eligibility and Award (Funding, Frequency, and Priorities)	4
Eligibility	4
Award (Funding, Frequency, and Priorities).....	5
Solicitation-Specific Questions (Phase IA and IB, Direct to Phase II)	7
Phase IA and Phase IB Solicitations.....	7
Direct to Phase II Solicitations.....	9
Questions About Proposals: Project Team, Preparation, and Submission	12
Project Team	12
Preparing the Proposal.....	13
Submitting the Proposal.....	19
Foreign Investment/Involvement, U.S. Citizenship, and Work Performed Abroad	21
Review Process and Evaluation of Proposals.....	23
Patents and Intellectual Property	26
Post-Award Process	27

Questions About the ED/IES SBIR Program: Types of Products Supported, Timing of Solicitations, and Role of Research

Q: What types of education technology products does ED/IES SBIR support?

A: ED/IES SBIR invests in the development of an array of education technology products including software or hardware delivered through apps, desktop programs, digital platforms, websites, videos, virtual reality, hands-on tools, and assistive technologies, among others. Some examples include learning games, simulations, diagnostic or formative assessments, Artificial Intelligence tutors and engines, data dashboards, professional development modules, accommodation tools for students with disabilities. Abstracts for all ED/IES SBIR awards from 2013 to 2024 include descriptions of all projects and are posted on [this page](#).

Q: Can I submit a proposal to ED/IES SBIR for basic research or for a non-technology related idea?

A: No, ED/IES SBIR only makes awards to small businesses to develop new forms of commercially viable education technology products. See [Part II. Solicitation Details](#) in each solicitation for more information on the range of projects that are a good fit for ED/IES SBIR.

Q: What program solicitations does ED/IES SBIR release each year?

A: ED/IES SBIR expects to release four program solicitations each year, typically in the Fall/Winter. Two are for Phase I awards to develop an initial prototype, and two are for Phase II awards to undertake full-scale development and pilot evaluation to ready the product for use at scale.

- A **Phase IA** solicitation requests proposals for \$250K awards for 9-month projects for the development of a prototype of a novel (i.e., first of its kind, not successfully tried before) education technology product for which no or limited previous technological development has occurred.
- A **Phase IB** solicitation requests proposals for \$250K awards for 9-month projects to develop a prototype of a new component to be integrated within an existing research-based education technology prototype or product.
- A **Phase II** solicitation requests proposals for \$1M awards for 2-year projects for the full-scale development and pilot evaluation of the education technology product that were started in ED/IES SBIR awarded Phase IA and Phase IB projects from the previous year. Only SBIR ED/IES SBIR Phase I awardees are eligible to apply to this solicitation.
- A **Direct to Phase II** solicitation requests proposals for \$1M awards for 2-year projects for the development of a new education

technology product to ready existing evidence-based innovations which were originally developed by researchers at universities or non-profit education research organizations, for use at scale in education settings. The purpose of a Direct to Phase II is to support the transfer of evidence-based research into commercially viable education technology products that are ready for use at scale. Direct to Phase II projects will be funded without a prior Phase I award.

Please review the solicitations for more information and specifications, with links [on this page](#) to current and past solicitations on SAM.gov.

Q: What role does research play in a successful ED/IES SBIR proposal?

A: Research is an essential element for a successful ED/IES SBIR proposal. Within a proposal, offerors must present results from concept testing where eventual users provide feedback on their product mock-ups and plans and pilot research (when relevant) on prototype or product feasibility, usability, and the potential for promise.

All offerors must propose plans for iterative research to inform the development process and pilot research to assess the initial promise of the new product to lead to the intended outcomes when used in school settings. Please review each of the ED/IES SBIR solicitations for more solicitation-specific guidelines.

Q: What is the impact of ED/IES SBIR funding in education settings?

A: Thousands of schools and millions of learners, educators, and administrators use dozens of education technology products that were developed through ED/IES SBIR and successfully commercialized each year. See examples on the [ED/IES SBIR Success Stories page](#). ED/IES SBIR-funded companies have successfully commercialized their products through contracts with school systems, follow-on private capital, and acquisition and licensing agreements with larger organizations. See some examples of ED/IES SBIR awardees that have transferred evidence-based research into education technology products being [used in practice at scale](#). Many ED/IES SBIR products have won national awards for education innovation, see examples posted on the [News page](#).

ED/IES SBIR Eligibility and Award (Funding, Frequency, and Priorities)

Eligibility

Q: Is my small business eligible to apply?

A: Eligibility requirements are located in [Part VI. Additional Information](#) in all ED/IES SBIR solicitations. Offerors may also watch a [tutorial created by the Small Business Administration](#). SBA maintains a publicly available [SBIR eligibility guide](#) that helps companies and agencies understand the ownership and size requirements for the SBIR program.

Q: Are new startup companies and/or new entrepreneurs a good fit for ED/IES SBIR?

A: Yes, new startup companies are a good fit for ED/IES SBIR. The program has made many awards to new startups over the years. New companies are advised to assemble a team of individuals with expertise across the most relevant key areas (e.g., research, practice, technology development, business, program management) to demonstrate that the proposed product can be successfully completed.

Q: I submitted a proposal last year that did not win an award. May I revise and resubmit the proposal this year?

A: Offerors may submit a revised proposal to support the same (or similar) project from year to year. There is no formal mechanism for documenting or evaluating responsiveness to prior years' reviews. Each year, proposals are considered anew.

Q: Are there opportunities similar to SBIR for nonprofits within the Department of Education?

A: Research grant programs at IES make awards that may involve research and development education technologies across many topics and areas. Visit the IES websites at the [National Center for Education Research](#) and the [National Center for Special Education Research](#) for more information. Several other offices at the Department of Education also provide grant funding for research and development, and evaluation of education technology.

Q: Is a professor at a U.S.-based university eligible to apply for the ED/IES SBIR with a for-profit small business as a collaborator?

A: The awardee must be an eligible for-profit small business. Therefore, a professor at a university cannot receive the award if the proposal is submitted by the university. A university professor in the U.S. is permitted to serve as a consultant to the company, become an

employee of the company, or create a separate small business start-up.

Q: Is a non-profit eligible to submit a proposal to ED/IES SBIR?

A: No. A non-profit organization cannot directly receive ED/IES SBIR awards. However, non-profits may serve as subcontractor for an ED/IES SBIR project.

[Award \(Funding, Frequency, and Priorities\)](#)

Q: Will the 2024 election results alter the availability of funds for ED/IES SBIR programs?

A: ED/IES has a legislative mandate to operate the Department of Education's SBIR program and currently has active funding opportunities that we anticipate fully funding in FY2025.

Q: How does the phased approach work at ED/IES SBIR, and how much funding is awarded during Phase I, Phase II, and III?

A: ED/IES SBIR provides up to \$1.25M in funding over two phases. Phase I awards are for \$250,000 for 9-months and focus on rapid prototype development and the evaluation. Phase II awards (made through a competitive process for which only the previous year's Phase I awardees are eligible to apply) are for \$1,000,000 over 2-years. Phase II and Direct to Phase II awards focus on the full-scale development and evaluation of the products and planning for private sector commercialization. Phase III is the period during which small business pursues private-sector commercialization of products that were developed in Phase I and II. ED/IES SBIR does not offer a Phase III program.

Q: How often are the program solicitations released? What is the timeline for the program solicitations, for notification of awards, and for start dates?

A: ED/IES SBIR releases each of its program solicitations one time per year, typically in late fall, with proposals due between 45 to 60 days later, typically in early winter. ED/IES SBIR aims to provide award notifications to all offerors within approximately 90 days or less of the submission deadline, with projects beginning shortly thereafter. Updates on the timelines appear in the [ED/IES SBIR solicitations](#) in [Part I. Solicitation Overview](#).

Q: What are the priority areas for the ED/IES SBIR program?

A: ED/IES SBIR has open topics across its solicitations for a wide range of education technology products to support learners across different age spans, for educators or administrators, and across many content areas and areas of importance in education. The primary goal is to

improve learning or promote relevant outcomes in one of more of the following areas: early childhood learning and school readiness; English language arts; civics education and social studies; foreign language or English language learning; STEM (science, technology, engineering [including cyber security], math, and data science); social and behavioral skills to support academic and other relevant school and career-related outcomes; the arts; and technical or vocational career readiness skills. Products to support educators and/or administrators may facilitate instruction, improve the efficiency or accuracy of day-to-day administrative tasks or responsibilities, or support decision making on the selection, implementation, or evaluation of interventions including practices, programs, or policies. Other areas not specified above will be considered based on the relevance and significance of the need in the field of education. See [Section II. Solicitation Details](#) within each program solicitation for more information.

Q: Is a workplace development solution for companies something that could be considered for the program?

A: Potential offerors are advised to determine goodness of fit of their project by reviewing [Section II. Solicitation Details](#) of each solicitation describing eligible foci within the field of education. This section states that “other areas not specified above will be considered based on the relevance and significance of the need in the field of education.”

Q: Does ED/IES SBIR also offer an STTR program?

A: ED/IES SBIR does not offer an STTR program.

Solicitation-Specific Questions (Phase IA and IB, Direct to Phase II)

Phase IA and Phase IB Solicitations

Q: We have just started technological development of our education technology prototype. Should we submit a proposal under the Phase IA or Phase IB solicitation?

A: For projects with some limited previous technological development, offerors should consider the nature and amount of the prior development in determining the goodness of fit for a proposal under the Phase IA versus Phase IB program tracks.

In cases where “limited” technological development has already occurred, the prototype should not yet be usable by end-users (e.g., learners, educators, administrators) without the assistance of the developer. This may include cases where an early prototype (such as a wireframe or clickable prototype) functions only when handled by a developer in a laboratory setting but not by an end-user in an education setting without developer assistance. Phase IA would also be appropriate if a prototype was developed that never functioned in or outside of a laboratory setting because the initial technological development failed, and a complete reconceptualization of the technological approach is required.

If limited previous development has already occurred, offerors are required to describe the initial prototype that was developed and how and under what conditions it functions (or does not function), and present research findings that demonstrate the merit of the approach and insights gained which inform the current proposed project and the new technological approach. If a prototype functions when used by end-users outside of a laboratory setting without a developer assistance, such as for testing or research purposes, but there is a need to develop additional components to enhance the prototype’s performance as an education technology product, the project would be appropriate for the Phase IB track. All Phase IB proposals require research to be presented on the current.

Offerors should read each solicitation for additional information to help guide their decision. Because program staff are not permitted to provide technical assistance after the solicitations are released, the SBIR team will be unable to confer with offerors regarding which solicitation is most appropriate if the solicitations are active.

Q: We are working on a prototype but won't have it ready for use without developer assistance by the submission deadline. Does that mean we should submit to the Phase IA program, even though our prototype will be ready to use shortly after the deadline?

A: For projects where limited development of a prototype has already occurred and will be ongoing, offerors must also consider the timing of development cycle in relation to preparing and submitting a Phase IA proposal to the ED/IES SBIR program.

Although projects with limited prior development will be considered for Phase IA, offerors who plan to continue development of a limited prototype to the point of a functioning prototype after submission and before the project start date of April 15, 2024, should not submit a proposal under the 2025 Phase I solicitation. Such offerors may wish to consider deferring their proposal until the following year and apply under the Phase IB program.

Q: I can't decide between the Phase IA and Phase IB track. Can I submit to both solicitations?

A: Offerors are *not* permitted to submit the same or similar proposals under the 2025 Phase IA, IB, or Direct to Phase II solicitations. Any duplicate or similar proposals that are submitted under more than one of these 2025 solicitations will be rejected without review.

Offerors *are* permitted to submit multiple proposals under either or both solicitations provided the proposals have different foci.

Q: In previous SBIR projects my company developed a learning game that does not have an AI component. We would like to now create a new AI-based assessment that could be used as an independent product but could also be integrated with and commercialized with the game. Would this project be a good fit for Phase IA or IB?

A: The concept that is described would likely not be a good fit under the Phase IA solicitation, which requires the proposal to be for a novel product that is independent from (with no plans to be integrated within) any existing education technology product already developed by the offeror. In the above case, the offeror could consider a Phase IB proposal, for a project to add a new component an existing product.

Q: My company previously developed multiple chapters of a virtual textbook. We are thinking of a proposal to add new chapters on different relevant topics following the same template. Would this be appropriate as a Phase IA or IB project?

A: The proposed project is likely not appropriate for either track. The

proposal is adding content but not a new component to an existing education technology product, so it would be neither considered novel product development (appropriate for a Phase IA) nor enhancing an existing product by developing a new technological component (appropriate for Phase IB).

Q: The Phase IB solicitation requires research to be presented on an existing prototype to support the addition of a new component. How much research should we have conducted on the prototype?

A: All proposals through the Phase IB track, to add a new component to an existing prototype or product, are required to include findings to help reviewers evaluate the promise of the product and the value or utility of the proposed new component.

For projects at an earlier stage in the development cycle that are to add a new component to a functioning prototype, offerors must detail prior research on the current prototype's usability and feasibility (and reliability and validity if applicable to the focus of the project). If available, offerors are also encouraged to present research findings on the promise of the prototype to lead to the intended outcomes when used by end-users.

For projects at a later stage in the development cycle that are seeking to add a new component to an already fully developed product, offerors must detail prior research on the product's usability and feasibility (and reliability and validity if applicable to the focus of the project), and empirical findings showing the promise or efficacy of the existing product for improving outcomes. Offerors should also cite and provide URL links to peer-reviewed publications reporting empirical findings to support the argument that the product is research or evidence-based.

All Phase IB offerors must also include results from concept testing research in which users provide feedback after viewing mock-ups detailing the new proposed education technology product (with the new proposed component) and its intended implementation.

[Direct to Phase II Solicitations](#)

Q: If we plan to apply to the Phase IB to develop a new component to enhancing my current product, may we also apply to the Direct to Phase II this year?

A: As noted in all solicitations, offerors are not permitted to submit a duplicate or similar proposals under the ED/IES SBIR Phase IA, IB, or the Direct to Phase II solicitations. Any duplicate or similar proposals

that are submitted under more than one solicitation will be rejected without review. Potential offerors must review the ED/IES SBIR solicitations to determine the best fit for a proposal under Phase IA, IB, or Direct to Phase II.

Q: The Direct to Phase II guidelines indicate that the existing innovation is required to be evidence-based. How does ED/IES SBIR define evidence-based?

A: The proposal must include compelling research findings from one or more well-designed and well-implemented randomized control experimental or quasi-experimental study that support the efficacy of the innovation. The offeror is required to detail the design of the study and present the findings demonstrating that the existing innovation leads to the intended outcomes. Include citations to peer-reviewed published works supporting the evidence base for the outcomes.

Q: For a Direct to Phase II proposal, does ED/IES SBIR expect the compelling research findings to come specifically from research studies conducted on the proposer's intervention? Would research findings that more generally support the use of the features or approach that the product utilizes satisfy this requirement?

A: To qualify for funding as a Direct to Phase II project, the product must have been developed and evaluated by researchers at a university or non-profit education research organization. The purpose is to build on an existing intervention or tool that has accumulated evidence of its effectiveness, in lieu of Phase I prototype development and evaluation. Research on other related but distinct interventions or innovations would not be appropriate for demonstrating that the innovation to be further developed in the proposal is evidence-based.

Q: The Direct to Phase II guidelines indicate that the existing evidence-based innovation is required to have originally been conceptualized and developed by an academic researcher while at an academic institution or by a researcher at a non-profit education research organization. What if the innovation was in part originally developed by a small business that served as a sub-grantee to the academic researcher?

A: If the academic researcher conceptualized the evidenced-based innovation and directed the project at a university or non-profit setting and then sub-contracted to a small business to support the technological development, the project would likely be eligible for the Direct to Phase II program. If the small business co-conceptualized the innovation with an academic researcher and the small business directed the technological development, the Direct to Phase II

program would likely not be appropriate. Offerors must clearly describe by whom and where the innovation was developed. Pre-Review Screening and Reviewers will determine if the proposal is appropriate for the Direct to Phase II program.

Q: What if we would like to apply for the Direct to Phase II program but none of the researchers who originally created and established evidence for the innovation we would like to work on are available to participate in the Direct to Phase II project?

A: As the solicitation states, one (or more) of the researchers are required to participate in the Direct to Phase II project. If none is available, the project would not be eligible for the Direct to Phase II program.

Q: If the evidence-based innovation was fully developed, including technology development, by researchers at a university or non-profit education research organization, and the main needs for launching the product at scale involve developing a website and digitizing some paper-based materials, would the activities be appropriate for a Direct to Phase II proposal?

A: The primary purpose of the Direct to Phase II program is for technological development of a new education technology product to ready an existing evidence-based innovation for commercial use at scale. The budget is set at \$1M. If the technological development and research activities are not commensurate with the award amount, then the Direct to Phase II program is likely not an appropriate fit for a proposal.

Questions About Proposals: Project Team, Preparation, and Submission

Project Team

Q: My business does not have any employees or co-founders, it's just me. Is that allowable? I see that the individual who is listed as the Project Director should not also be listed as the Contractor Security Liaison.

A: ED/IES SBIR Phase I solicitations do require at least two individuals to be named in a proposal, the Project Director and Contracting Security Liaison, although the Contracting Security Liaison may be an independent contractor rather than an employee of the company (the individual who is listed as the Project Director is not permitted to also be listed as the CSL.) (ED/IES SBIR Direct to Phase II proposals also request that a researcher who was part of the original team that created the innovation participate in the project.)

However, as noted in the solicitations, offerors are strongly encouraged to strengthen a proposal by including several team members with complementary areas of expertise across key project areas, including education research, practice, technology development, business, and project management.

Q: Do I have to name specific individuals in the proposal who will be hired as employees or contractors to serve specific project roles?

A: Offerors are strongly encouraged to list the names (and qualifications) of all individuals so that reviewers can evaluate whether the collective team has appropriate expertise to conduct the work that is proposed. Each member of the project team should be listed in the table in Part III. Proposal Contents, Section A. Cover Pages of the solicitation and should prepare a 1-page biographical summary to appear in Section C.

Q: What is the role of the Contractor Security Liaison (CSL)?

A: The Contracting Security Liaison (CSL) manages and coordinates all aspects of the post-award data security moderate risk/public trust process for all team members who are required to complete the public trust vetting process. Section III. Proposal Contents, Section C. Project Team of the Phase IA, Phase IB, and Direct to Phase II solicitations provides additional information in response to this question. The individual who is assigned to be the Contractor Security Liaison should possess strong administrative skills and attention to detail, to ensure compliance with data security requirements. See the [Security Requirements for Contractors Doing Business with the Department of](#)

[Education](#) for more information on contractor security vetting processes and the role of the Contractor Security Liaison.

Q: Is there an estimated number of hours per week the Contractor Security Liaison may be expected to dedicate during the initial contract phase-in period?

A: The number of hours per week and the number of weeks that a Contractor Security Liaison will dedicate to securing a moderate public trust for all required team members on an ED/IES SBIR project will vary from project to project depending on whether the Contractor Security Liaison has already completed the clearance process as well as the number of personnel required to complete the process and whether any of the affected staff have previously completed the process. A typical Contractor Security Liaison would need to dedicate one to two workdays per week for eight to 12 weeks to complete the Contractor Security Clearance process for a contract.

Q: Do all members of my team need to go through the public trust clearance process?

A: Project team members who have contact with students (whether in person or through remote interactions) or who have access to data or networks that include personally identifiable information will be required to undergo the data security moderate risk/public trust process prior to initiating such tasks on the contract.

See "[Security Requirements for Contractors Doing Business with the Department of Education](#)" for more information on contractor security vetting processes and ED information security and privacy requirements.

Preparing the Proposal

Q: Where can I read successful ED/IES SBIR proposals?

A: Proposals from past ED/IES SBIR awardees contain proprietary information and are not made available to the public. Potential offerors to the ED/IES SBIR program may review abstracts from all [past ED/IES SBIR awards](#).

Q: Is there an online application form or are we expected to download the template and fill in our proposal details? What is the most efficient way to complete the proposals? May we copy and paste the blank tables and excel file templates from the solicitation and fill in the answers?

A: Offerors are strongly encouraged to copy and paste the templates from the solicitations into their proposals, including the cover pages

and the budget table. This ensures consistency across proposals which assists reviewers in locating information they need to evaluate a proposal. The WORD version of the solicitation will be available for download on SAM.gov for each solicitation. However, offerors may prepare their own tables or reformat them provided all the information is included and the final submission is a single PDF or MS Word document. Offerors are also advised to follow the guidelines for page length for each section.

Q: Can the proposed Phase I work plan exceed 9-months?

A: The Phase I project timeline in a proposal is required to be 9-months. It is possible for a Phase I project to be extended upon request to the Contracting Officer after award. However, a Phase I awardee must have completed its work to be eligible to submit a Phase II proposal, and this deadline is typically only a month or two after the end of a Phase I contract) the Phase I award must be completed.

Q: Does my company need to be registered as a small business concern (SBC) at the time of proposal submission? How do I obtain an SBC Control Number and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)?

A: Yes, all offerors need to qualify as an SBC, be registered in SAM.gov, and have an EIN and SBC Control number **at the time of the submission of the proposal**. The steps to obtain an SBC Control number and register the company can be found at [SBIR.gov](https://www.sbir.gov) | [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) [Company Registration](#). To obtain a UEI number register with [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) or complete the annual update if you are already registered. The Unique Entity Identifier is the 12-digit alphanumeric identifier that will be provided by SAM.gov registration to all entities who register to do business with the federal government (including existing entities). This identifier has replaced the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.

If you do not already have a UEI registered on [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) | [Entity Registrations](#) please be advised, registration can take several weeks.

Q: Should we follow the outline in the Technical Narrative section exactly as it is presented in the solicitation?

A: Offerors are strongly encouraged to follow the order of headers and organization of content presented in the s the Technical Narrative Section of the solicitation. Offerors are also advised to follow the guidelines for page length for each section.

Q: Do we need to present a project pitch to be invited to submit the full proposal? Is a letter of intent or a pre-proposal required to submitted to submit a proposal?

A: The ED/IES SBIR program does not include a “project pitch”, nor does it require a pre-proposal or letter of intent. Small Business Entities are free to submit a proposal without needing to be invited by the ED/IES SBIR program. Proposals must be submitted prior to the stated submission deadline.

Q: Is there a formal definition of "education setting" for Letters of Agreement to Participate in the pilot research? For example, would a community center that administers an adult learner job placement program be considered an educational setting for these purposes, even though it isn't associated with a public school or district?

A: The Education Setting refers to the place where the education technology will be used by learners, educators, or administrators. The requirement for offerors to include a letter in Section E from an “Education Setting” is to demonstrate to reviewers that the proposed research will be feasible if an award is made. A letter may be from a source other than a school or district if it makes a plausible case that the research can be conducted in that setting as proposed.

Q: What activities and expenses are appropriate in a Phase I and Phase II project?

A: Expenses that are allowable include all costs for research and development and evaluation of an education technology product, including direct and indirect costs. Awardees may use up to \$6500 in Phase I and up to \$50,000 in Phase II for Technical and Business Expenses to prepare for commercialization. (See [Part III. Proposal Contents, Paragraph I “Technical and Business Assistance Plane \(TAB A\)”](#) for information on the types of expenses that can be budgeted through TABA. Projects may charge a reasonable profit, although offerors must ensure that sufficient funds are budgeted for activities to ensure that the project will be successfully completed as the principal goal of the award.

Q: Does ED/IES SBIR provide additional funds to cover costs for TABA (Technical and Business Assistance)?

A: TABA is considered an eligible expense but must be included in the base firm fixed budget, which will equal \$250K for Phase I and \$1M for Phase II. No additional funds may be added to an award by the ED/IES SBIR program. See [Part III. Proposal Contents, Paragraph I “Technical and Business Assistance Plane \(TAB A\)”](#) of the solicitation for information on TABA and what can be covered.

Q: What costs can be covered by TABA?

A: The purpose of TABA is to assist SBIR awardees with technical and business assistance services, such as access to a network of scientists and engineers engaged in a wide range of technologies, product sales, IP protections, market research, market validation, development of regulatory plans, manufacturing plans, or access to technical and business literature available through on-line data bases. See [Part III. Proposal Contents, Section I. TABA](#) of the solicitation for information on TABA and what can be covered.

Q: May a single company submit more than one proposal to the same competition or in -the same competition year?

A: Offerors are permitted to submit multiple proposals to ED/IES SBIR, provided the proposals are not similar and there is no overlap in the research and development of the final product to be developed. Please see [Part III. Proposal Contents, Section H. Disclosure of Similar or Closely Related Awards or Proposals](#) for additional guidance.

Q: May we include a Table of Contents that links to each section for ease of proposal navigation?

A: No table of contents is requested in the solicitation for proposals that are submitted. No cover sheet or other content should appear prior to the Section A cover page.

Q: Should page numbers appear sequentially across sections or should they begin anew with "1" on the first page of each section?

A: Page numbers should begin with Page 1 at the start of B. Project Narrative and continue from there for the remainder of the proposal.

Q: Does the SBIR contract cover any cost of equipment required for the research component such as virtual reality headsets or does the government anticipate that the business will provide all equipment?

A: Equipment necessary for the project's R&D and evaluation may be included in the budget. Offerors must be mindful that the contracts are firm-fixed at \$250K in Phase I and \$1M in Phase II, and that all costs associated with the project must fit within these budgets.

Q: Should I include a video demonstration within the proposal?

A: Offerors under the Phase IA solicitation are encouraged to submit a YouTube video demonstration, and offerors under the Phase IB, Direct to Phase II, and Phase II are required to submit a video demo as a part of the proposal.

- **Phase IA** offerors are encouraged to submit a YouTube video demo. Where no development has previously occurred, a video could present mockups or plans for the development of the proposed novel product to give reviewers context for project. Where limited development has already occurred, offerors are encouraged to include a video that presents the limited prototype that has been developed and how it is functioning, while highlighting the goal for the novel product concept.
- **Phase IB** offerors are required to submit a YouTube video present the current version of the education technology prototype or product, by providing a brief use-case, and briefing explaining the new component to be developed in the proposed Phase IB project.
- **Direct to Phase II** offerors are required to submit a YouTube video and should briefly highlight the existing evidence-based innovation originally conceptualized and developed by a researcher and the proposed project to develop a new education technology product to ready the innovation for use at scale and to plan for commercialization.

See section Part III Proposal Contents, [Section A. Cover Pages](#) in each solicitation for additional specifications and guidance on the video demo.

Q: How important are letters of support? What should a strong letter of support contain?

A: Letters in Part III Proposal Contents, [Section F. Commercial Pathway Letters](#) are important for demonstrating that the offerors have viable plans for disseminating and sustaining the new product and to show that partners are aware of and supportive of the potential new product. An assessment of the presence and quality of the letters is part of the Technological Evaluation Criteria that reviewers will be judging. Historically, the highest scoring proposals have tended to include three (3) letters in Phase I and (5) five letters in Phase II proposals indicating a clear interest in supporting the product's commercial success and offering a concrete mechanism of support (e.g., investment, adoption, licensing). See Section Part III Proposal Contents, [F. Commercial Pathway Letters](#) for additional guidance and specifications on the letters in each solicitation.

Q: If a small business that previously won a Phase I and II award from ED/IES SBIR has yet to have commercial success from the product that was developed, may the company still prepare a proposal for a new, totally different project?

A: Small businesses and Project Directors (when at the small business or previously at a different firm) who have received any prior SBIR

Phase I or II awards from any U.S. Federal agency since 2010 for a project related to topics in this solicitation are required to provide information in this section Part III Proposal Contents, [Section G. Documentation And Status of SBIR Phase I and Phase II Awards Since 2010](#) on those SBIR awards. Reviewers will evaluate past performance as part of the Technical Evaluation Criteria and will take past success into consideration when evaluating potential contributions of a novel project. No further guidance can be provided on whether a proposal should be submitted as such.

Q: Can a proposal include two or more Project co-Director?

A: ED/IES SBIR offerors may not designate co-PDs.

Q: May offerors submit a proposal that includes multiple subcontracts?

A: Offerors may propose a budget with multiple subcontracts provided that budgetary allocation requirements for the solicitation are met (see the solicitations). For each requested subaward, a full subcontractor budget must be prepared with an accompanying justification at the same level of detail as the main project budget.

Q: Is human subjects clearance required at the time of the proposal submission?

A: The guidelines do not require offerors obtain Human Subjects approval or provide a plan for Human Subjects at the time of submission. All small businesses that receive awards must be in compliance with the regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education to safeguard the rights and welfare of human research subjects during the project. All projects must undergo initial Institutional Review Board (IRB) review for the protection of human subjects prior to conducting any pilot research with users. See [Part VI. Additional Information](#) in the solicitations for more details on human subjects.

Q: What percentage of the project budget must be spent directly by small business and what percent may be spent by subcontractors?

A: During Phase I, a minimum of two-thirds (66 2/3%) of the R&D, as reflected by budget expenditures, must be performed by the small business, and the remainder may be performed by a subcontractor(s). For Phase II SBIR projects, a minimum of one-half (50 percent) of the R&D must be performed by the awardee, and the remainder may be performed by a subcontractor(s).

Submitting the Proposal

Q: Could you provide guidance on how and where to submit proposals for these opportunities?

A: This information is provided in all program solicitations in Part IV, Instructions for Submission.

Q: May we submit the proposal without including all components, such as a letter from an education setting regarding research participation?

A: Proposals that are submitted without a letter from an educational setting will be declined without review. Proposals without the required components (to include certifications and signatures) will not be reviewed.

Solicitations include detailed instructions and a proposal checklist in Part IV, Instructions for Submission.

Q: May we update the proposal after submission?

A: No. All components of the proposal, including the Video Demonstration and the letter from an education setting, must be submitted in a single PDF or Word Document prior to the deadline and may not be amended after submission.

Solicitations include detailed instructions and a proposal checklist in Section IV, Instructions for Submission.

Q: May we submit the same SBIR proposal to more than one agency?

A: Yes, as is indicated in the solicitation in Part III Proposal Contents, Section H. Disclosure of Similar or Related Awards or Proposals, offerors are permitted to submit similar proposals to another federal agency. However, this information must be disclosed within a proposal to ED/IES SBIR in Section H. Small businesses may not accept funding from multiple agencies to conduct the same work, should more than one award be offered.

Q: Can subcontractors perform work independently during the project?

A: It is acceptable for a subcontractor to lead work independently (with direction by the small business).

Q: Does ED/IES utilize Grants.gov for its SBIR proposals?

A: ED/IES SBIR is administered using a contract mechanism rather than a grant mechanism. As a result, Grants.gov is not utilized. See the solicitations Section IV for information on preparing and submitting a proposal in response to the solicitations.

Q: May I submit my proposal by mailing a hard copy or by fax?

A: Only proposals submitted to the email addresses listed in the solicitation prior to the submission deadline will be considered. No other method of proposal submission (e.g., faxed proposals, mailed packages) will be accepted. See Part [IV. Instructions for Proposal Submission](#) of the solicitation for more specific information.

Q: If my business is not able to register on SAM.gov in time and obtain a UEI? May we still apply and add the UEI after the submission?

A: A UEI is required at the time of submission of the proposal. Proposals without a UEI will be rejected without review. If you do not already have a UEI registered on [SAM.gov | Entity Registrations](#) please be advised, registration can take several weeks.

Foreign Investment/Involvement, U.S. Citizenship, and Work Performed Abroad

Q: If the small business were to raise funds through a friends and family member round where a contributing family member lives outside the US, should that be reported as foreign funding in Section M?

A: All foreign investments in the small business, including through friends and family, must be disclosed in Part III Proposal Contents, Section M. Foreign Funding Information.

Q: Does ED/IES SBIR support non-U.S. companies or work that is performed abroad?

A: SBIR eligibility guidelines state that the majority (more than 50%) of a small business' equity must be directly owned and controlled by individuals (one or more) who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Additionally, any work conducted on ED/IES SBIR awards (including work performed by subcontractors and consultants) is required to be performed in the U.S. A non-U. S. citizen working in the U.S. and assigned to an ED contract must have been admitted legally to the U.S. or have acceptable Department of Homeland Security Credentials to prove immigrant status or employment authorization as listed on the Form I-9, Employment Verification.

Q: Does the Project Director have to be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident with a green card?

A: An individual who is not a U.S. Citizen or green card holder but who is in the U.S. on an H1B visa is permitted to serve in the role of the Project Director. All work must be conducted by individuals who are located within the U.S. who are either citizens or hold a green card. Offerors should ensure that any proposed team members who are non-U.S. citizens Contractor are lawful permanent residents of the United States or have the appropriate work authorization documents required by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Appeals, to work in the U. S.

Individuals who are in the U.S. without citizenship, a visa, or a green card, and U.S. citizens working outside the U.S. are not eligible to conduct work on the contract.

See Part III Proposal Contents, Section C: Project Team of the solicitation for additional details.

Q: May I subcontract to a company to do technical work (such as coding) that operates outside of the U.S.? What about if it is a U.S.-based company that has offices both in and outside of the U.S.?

A: All work during an ED/IES SBIR award must be performed within the U.S. by majority U.S.-held organizations.

Q: Is the Section K, SBIR Foreign Influence Self-Certification Form required of all applicants or only those that have concerned individuals and/or any foreign country involvement?

A: Small businesses that submit a proposal must include the information that is requested in Part III Proposal Contents, Section K for all personnel considered covered individuals.

Q: In reference to existing educational tech product in the form section K referring to a website, if the company is already utilizing an employee in another country, could the company continue to use that employee? If yes, then what specific part in Section K must this person sign to meet the requirements of the proposal?

A: Offerors are permitted to propose personnel that meet the requirements of the program, including that all work under an SBIR contract is conducted by individuals in the United States unless an exemption is provided by the Contracting Officer. Offerors are required to complete the forms in Part III Proposal Contents, Section K. Foreign Influence Disclosure and Certification with all requested information for personnel considered covered individuals.

Q: Is Hong Kong considered a Foreign Country of Concern?

A: Hong Kong, an administrative region of the People's Republic of China, is considered a Foreign Country of Concern.

Review Process and Evaluation of Proposals

Q: How does ED/IES SBIR proposal review process work?

A: ED/IES SBIR uses a three-stage process to independently evaluate proposals which is described in detail in the solicitations.

- **Stage 1** is a pre-review screening to determine responsiveness to the specific requirements of the solicitation. ED's Contracting Office will remove any proposals that are not responsive.
- **Stage 2** is the Triage Evaluation Round to determine whether a proposal is recommended for review by a full panel.
- **Stage 3** is the Technical Evaluation Review Panel Round, where a panel of three reviewers independently evaluate and score proposals, with the proposals receiving the highest overall scores recommended for awards based on the availability of funding and pending a final review by the ED Contracting Office. Final award decisions are made by the Contracting Officer.

Reviewers in Stage 2 and 3 evaluate proposals based on the Technical Evaluation Criteria listed in the solicitation. See Part V. Method of Selection and Evaluation Criteria of each solicitation for more detailed information.

Q: Who are the proposal reviewers?

A: ED/IES SBIR employs an internal review process - all reviewers are Federal employees from ED or other Federal agencies, including experts in education research and practice, education content, and education technology.

Q: Will I get confirmation that my proposal has been received?

A: Yes, approximately 48 hours to one week after the proposal is received, ED Contracting Office representatives will send an email to the individual listed as the Project Director to provide notification that the proposal was received.

Q: When and how will I find out if I will receive an SBIR award?

A: ED Contracting Office representatives will send an email to all applicants within 90-days after the submission with a list of the companies that have been selected to receive the awards. This e-mail will be sent to the individual listed as the Project Director.

Q: How many awards will the program make?

A: The number of awards varies from year to year and is dependent on the funding level in any particular year. Please see these [award pages](#) for 2013 to 2024 for information on the number of awards by the specific program solicitation per year.

Q: Will I receive feedback on the proposal if I did not receive an award?

A: An ED Contracting Office representative will email all offerors whose proposals were submitted. Offerors whose proposals were judged to be non-responsive will receive an explanation for why the proposal was removed from further review. Offerors whose proposals were removed from the review during the Triage Round will receive one (1) evaluation with feedback. Offerors whose proposals made it to the Technical Evaluation Round will receive three (3) evaluations with scores and with feedback based on each of the evaluation criteria in the solicitation.

Q: Are offerors who have not received previous funding through the ED/IES SBIR or another SBIR program at a competitive disadvantage?

A: A prior record of SBIR awards is not a factor in the score a proposal will receive for an offeror that has not previously received an SBIR award. Reviewers will consider the outcomes of a past SBIR projects for projects that have previously won an SBIR award in judging the new proposal.

Q: What criteria are used to evaluate ED/IES SBIR proposals?

A: All ED/IES SBIR proposals are evaluated following the Technical Evaluation Criteria listed in the solicitation. See [Part V. Method of Selection and Evaluation Criteria](#) in each solicitation for the specific criteria.

Q: How does ED/IES SBIR ensure confidentiality and that conflicts of interest do not occur during the peer review process? What can offerors do to ensure that their proprietary information is kept safe?

A: All ED/IES SBIR proposals are confidential. All reviewers sign certifications that include a non-disclosure agreement and confirmation that there is no conflict of interest with the assigned proposals; if there is a conflict of interest, the proposal is reassigned to another reviewer. Proposals are not made public, and the names of the offerors are not published. SBIR data are protected from disclosure by the participating agencies for a period of not less than twenty years. The SBA has a full set of FAQs addressing data rights [on this page](#).

Q: What advantage does an applicant have if they have certifications such as HUBZone or Women-Owned Small Business?

A: There is no advantage in terms of the evaluation of the proposal. HUBZone, Women Owned Small Businesses, and other certifications are for informational purposes and are reported to and tracked by the Small Business Administration on an annual basis.

Q: What is the typical success rate of the ED/IES SBIR Program?

A: ED/IES SBIR is a highly competitive program, typically around 5 to 7% of Phase I proposals receive awards each year, around 9% of Direct to Phase II proposals received awards in 2022-2024, and around 50% of Phase II proposals receive awards. Success rates for the program in recent years are available to the public in [SBIR annual reports](#) provided by the SBA.

Patents and Intellectual Property

Q: If an offeror proposes work that leverages existing IP owned by another organization (in this case, a non-profit), would the IP resulting from the award belong to the awardee or to the non-profit?

A: The awardee and other entities would need to determine the owner of the existing and new IP. ED/IES SBIR recommends that this negotiation occur prior to the submission of a proposal so it can be clearly described in the proposal. Neither the ED/IES SBIR program nor any other aspect of the federal government would play a role in determining the owner of the new or existing IP.

Q: If we are in the process of submitting a provisional patent (we anticipate filing before the SBIR contract start date) how should we fill out Section L about Patents? Should we leave this blank or note our intention to file?

A: Offerors should note the intention to file for reference in the proposal.

Post-Award Process

Q: How and when do ED/IES SBIR awardees invoice and receive contract payments as a part of the contract?

A: During Phase I, three payments are made directly to awardees after approval by ED in accordance with the payment schedule negotiated and agreed to by the Contracting Officer. During Phase II, eight payments are made directly to awardees after approval by ED in accordance with the payment schedule negotiated and agreed to by the Contracting Officer. All payments are arranged through the government's IPP system. ED/IES SBIR does not offer supplemental funding during or after a Phase II award.

Q: Does the government retain the right to use the invention developed under an ED/IES SBIR award?

A: Yes, the government retains a royalty free license to use SBIR funded innovations should it make the request. It is noted that ED has never utilized this right since the inception of its SBIR program in 1982.

Q: Do we need to report any patents that we are awarded related to the ED/IES SBIR award?

A: Recipients of Federal research awards are obligated to report all patents, patent applications, and invention disclosures that are a direct result of ED/IES SBIR funding to adhere to requirements in FAR clause 52.227-11 PATENT RIGHTS--OWNERSHIP BY THE CONTRACTOR (MAY 2014). The contracting office provides information to all awardees on reporting patents.

Q: Does ED/IES SBIR operate a Phase III program?

A: No, ED/IES SBIR does not offer a Phase III program. The objective of Phase III, where appropriate, is for the small business to pursue commercialization of the education technology product developed in Phase I and II. ED/IES SBIR does not acquire technologies developed under the SBIR program, so it does not offer a Phase III option.