

HQ003422NFOEASD01 Attachment D: Q&A Responses

Question 1: In reading [the NFO], it seems that the vision is for the lead institution to be a community college that would link to a 4-year, or several 4-year institutions. I ask, since I have a different model, based on the academic opportunities available at my institution. We are interested in creating a consortium where by 4 neighboring community colleges would link to the [State University] via a pipeline program. Is there interest by DoD in funding this type of initiative?

Question 2: We would like to form a state-wide consortium to put together a program led by a four-year non-profit public university, under this proposed program, we will provide opportunities for students to earn credits from the community colleges to 4 year institutions in cybersecurity and manufacturing. So our immediate question is: can a four-year public university be the leading institution? A few other two year community colleges that we have transfer agreements will be joining the consortium and serving as co-PIs.

Question 3: A few of the US Midwest 2 year colleges and 4 year colleges are interested in building a DoD STEM consortium in the field of the IT/Cybersecurity. Could you please clarify whether a 4-year institution can be the Leading institution (and faculty members from 2 year colleges serve as Co-PIs), OR it must be a 2 Year college to serve as the leading institution?

Question 4: I read in the NOFO that any of the consortium partners is eligible to apply. However, I'm wondering if there is an expectation that the 2 year college serve as the applicant.

Question 5: Do you have a sense yet if and when there will be a competition for the NDEP? I saw the one for community colleges and wanted to confirm that a four year institution can participate. Are 4 years able to take the lead or must it be a community college?

Question 6: Is this opportunity (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=337549>) only available to 2YI and CCs, or can 4YI participate if they have a program with a 2YI/CC?

Question 7: A consortium of institutions in the [Geographic Region] is working on a proposal for the community college/4-year STEM education grant, and I have a quick question. The proposed lead organization, of which I am executive director, is a regional higher education center, under the auspices of the [State University System]. Essentially, we offer classrooms and technologies for university partners to offer bachelor's completion, master's and PhD programs that specifically meet workforce needs. In the case of [Geographic Region], the largest workforce needs are at [U.S. Navy installations], though we hope to include [additional U.S. Navy installation] in our circle of support. As part of the [State University System], we are a non-profit organization. Organizationally, the center in [Geographic Region] is administratively managed by the [State University System flagship institution]. Procurement, payroll, HR, and IT are all managed by [State University System flagship institution] and I pay them a management fee. This is because the system office itself does not have an infrastructure to do these things, and in fact, the system employees, including the Chancellor, work with [State University System flagship institution] for these management services. [State University System flagship institution] will submit our grant proposal, but [the regional higher ed center] will be LO, and I will be PI. We have 3 community colleges and 2 HBCUs, along with [State University System flagship institution] School of Engineering that will be co-PIs and/or certainly subawards. I recognize this is a fairly lengthy context, but I wonder if you anticipate any problem that the submitting entity, [State University System flagship institution], is also the managing partner for

the LO ([the regional higher ed center]), even though [the regional higher ed center] is really part of the [State University System]?

Question 8: Can a 4-year university employee serve as Co-PI, so long as a community college remains lead organization and consortium focuses on 2-yr STEM ecosystem?

Question 9: Can you clarify whether both state community colleges and State Universities qualify as a "political subdivision of a State", such that either is an eligible applicant for this award?

Question 10: (1) Can [University] be a Lead Organization on this grant? (2) Is there a maximum number of institutions that can be on this grant (2YI/CCs) and (4YIs)? (3) Can we have institutions from different states?

Question 11: Our university is a four year non-for-profit Hispanic serving institution. (1) Can our university be served as a lead organization? (2) Can I serve as a PI? (3) If our university can be served as a lead organization, how much money (percentage?) should be proposed for lead organization? The rest will be proposed for other organizations.

Question 12: I was wondering if this grant opportunity is only for nonprofit educational institutions.

Answers 1-12: As stated on Pages 6 and 7 of the NOFO, it is strongly recommended, although not required, that a 2 Year Institution, Community College, or Nonprofit Organization serve as the award LO, and a member of the LO serve as the Primary Investigatory (PI). When other institutions are a Recipient, it is strongly recommended that a representative from a 2YI/CC be the Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI. Activities should support the goals on Page 3 aimed at STEM education at 2-Year Institutions and Community Colleges. Eligibility information can be found on page 11 of the NOFO. Community Colleges and State Universities are eligible. There is no limit to the number of institutions that can be part of the Consortium. Answers 33-35 address questions regarding the geography of the consortium. The percentage of the proposed budget used for activities is at the proposer's discretion.

Question 13: Pg 21 of the NOFO states: Financial Breakdown – The application must include a cost proposal detailing direct labor, administrative and clerical labor, fringe benefits and indirect costs, travel, sub-awards, subcontracts, consultants, materials and supplies, recipient acquired equipment of facilities, and other direct costs. Pgs 25-27 show all of those same budget categories as well. However, pg 28 under G. Funding Restrictions, states: DoD will only fund salary, fringe benefits and indirect costs on awards under the announcement. Funds from an award may not be used to attain fee or profit. Does this mean that we can only bill salary, fringe and indirect costs to the grant, and all other expenses would be paid via match/cost share?

Question 14: I also need clarification on the cost share. While not the primary basis for selection, the language in the NOFO makes it seem that those applicants who propose cost-share will be looked upon more favorably. Is it safe to assume that we should commit to cost sharing and expect our consortium partners to do the same?

Question 15: Is there a requirement for cost-matching for this proposal? To reduce the organizational and management burden on a CC, can a 4YI or a research university be a lead, as it works closely with a CC to build programs that are designed specifically for CC students?

Question 16: We are preparing a proposal for DoD STEM Community College Consortium Cooperative Agreement Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). We have a question regarding

including equipment purchase for training and demonstration purposes. Is this allowed? If yes, what is the maximum amount allowed?

Question 17: We have a fantastic project called [Project] that directly ties K-12, Industry and University partners through a pipeline of students trained and educated at the [University]. [Project] is a building project that is already designed with construction documents completed. The construction cost is \$42 million and \$30 million has already been raised. May we apply for \$11 million in construction funding through this grant opportunity?

Answers 13-17: Funds may not be used to attain fee or profit. Acceptable costs associated with the award are described on Pages 21 and 25-27, as long as they are not used to attain fee or profit. Cost sharing is voluntary, but proposed cost sharing becomes a binding term of any award. Lead Organization questions are addressed in Answers 1-11.

Question 18: We have been talking to IBAS (Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment) for roughly a year about funding the creation of a blended-learning technologist certificate program for students who have of an associate's degree in a technical field or have worked in manufacturing as a technician. The new program would allow graduates to become shop-floor leaders. We've gone through many rounds of questions and answers with IBAS and are hopeful that this project will be funded. Because IBAS would fund the creation of the content but not its dissemination, we will apply for EDA Good Jobs Challenge funding to disseminate the technologist program to 12 community college campuses across three states – RI, CT, and MA. In addition to partnering with community colleges, we are also partnering with workforce boards, companies, and universities in each state. We have built a strong regional consortium. We've been transparent about our plan with both IBAS and EDA. As I mentioned, our technologist program includes online content and in-person labs. We would like to create VR/AR simulations and game-based learning exercises that would significantly enhance the technologist program, but would also stand alone as very valuable online tools for our partners' current manufacturing programs. We have already approached RI and CT, and they said they would like to team up again if you see no conflict. Please let us know if our pursuit of IBAS and EDA funding would hurt our chances of submitting a competitive NDEP proposal.

Answer 18: Per Section III.C.2 on page 13 of the NOFO, collaborations on research and development projects are generally the result of close collaboration prior to the submission of applications for support. Accordingly, these collaborations should be considered when considering potential conflicts of interest. The potential conflict is mitigated by the disclosure of these collaborations, and the list of current and pending support you provide for senior and key researchers. Therefore, you must include in your list of current and pending support all collaborators, even if they did not formally provide support.

Question 19: Is there a way we could identify local or state industries that are DoD facilities? Is there a list somewhere that we could access?

Question 20: To enhance the effectiveness of the program, we are interested in collaborating with one or more DoD facility partners. Do you know which DoD facilities are willing to

cooperate with a consortium? If Yes, is there a designated contact at each DoD facility that we can reach out to?

Answers 19-20: A list of DoD STEM partners can be found at <https://dodstem.us/about/partners/>. DoD laboratories and centers can be found at <https://rt.cto.mil/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-DoD-Laboratories-and-Centers-Map-6-7-19-x.pdf>. Bases and installations can be found at <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/view-all>.

Question 21: As part of our [University] institution, we have a community college, [Community College]. [Community College] functions as a community college with certificate and associate degree offerings and its own campus. It does have its own leadership, entrance requirements, and graduation requirements. Would we be able to submit an application for this opportunity provided we do meet the consortium requirement? Our plans are to partner with area industries and local high schools.

Answer 21: As stated in Section 1.C.1 on page 6, a suggested, but not mandatory, Consortium structure may include multiple 2YI/CCs, and is strongly encouraged to also include regional 4YI, industry, and/or nonprofit organization.

Question 22: My colleague and I are interested in submitting a proposal to this DoD STEM program. We prepared a letter of intent related to addressing shortage of CTE teachers and welding workforce in east Virginia. Would you please review the attached LIO and let us know if this idea fits in your program?

Question 23: We have been working a project to improve graduation rates of URM and First-Generation college students who begin at [Community College], complete an AS degree in Engineering Technology, then transfer to one of the BS programs. We would like to discuss if our project is a good fit for the DoD STEM Community College Consortium Cooperative Agreement and glean any advice you can provide. Would you be willing to speak to us via Zoom or another virtual platform?

Answer 22-23: During the solicitation process, DoD cannot provide any approval, endorsement, or unofficial support of any activities referenced in a letter of intent, however, the program description and objective can be found in Section I.B on pages 4-8, and in Section IV.F.A. pages 16-27 of the NOFO instructions.

Question 24: Is there a contact person for this program? The last time I submitted we never got any feedback, so I do not want to put in the effort again unless I can find out about your review and selection process.

Answer 24: Under 'Award Administration Information' on page 30, the NOFO states that applicants who did not receive an award are not entitled to a de-brief. Questions regarding program policy, program content, or technical issues should be directed to: osd.dodstem@mail.mil. Questions regarding administrative problems or grant administration should be directed to: Cognizant Procuring Grants Officer (PGO) and

Administrative Grants Officer (AGO). Details on the evaluation criteria and selection process can be found in Section V.

Question 25: If we wanted to help evaluate NDEP Funding opportunities, do you know who we should talk to to help with such?

Answer 25: Only government civilians and military personnel are eligible to review Cooperative Agreements.

Question 26: (1) Can a 2-year college participate in more than one DOD consortium application? (2) Can an applicant be the lead applicant on more than one application? (3) If 'yes' to either of the above, will applications be reviewed and selected based on scoring alone, or will geographic distribution of awards be considered?

Question 27: Is it permissible for an organization to be included as a sub-awardee/Consortium Member on more than one proposal application?

Question 28: Is there a limit on the number of times that an institution may participate as a prime or subaward for proposals submitted? Regarding the focus of consortiums within a geographical area, is there a preference for partnerships: 1. within a city 2. across the state or 3. multiple states?

Answers 26-28: There is no limit to the number of applications an organization can be involved with. The selection criteria can be found on pages 28-29 of the NOFO. Geography of the consortia is described in Answers 33-35.

Question 29: (1) Currently we have two major regional consortiums: NM/TX and CA. My first question is the size of the "region". We have unique assets in both of our consortiums. Is a CA/NM/TX region considered too large, too broad? (2) DOD priority areas. We realize that on face value, all matters Algae do not automatically lead you to the DOD, but we have major foci in biotechnology and developing new applications for remote sensing, sampling, and monitoring. We view our curricula in these areas as preparing young people for careers in broader technology and not just algal-base biotechnology. Would our approach gain serious consideration in the application review process when it comes to serving the DOD priority areas? (3) The DOD has indicated that global climate change caused refugees represent a future security issue for the USA, would algae's potential significant role in global climate change mitigation qualify as to serving perhaps an undeclared DOD priority area? Thank you in advance. Will a response be directly received and/or uploaded directly to grants.gov.

Answer 29: As outlined in Section 1.A on page 3, each regional DoD STEM Community College Consortium should collaboratively work with members of their geographical area to promote partnerships that enhance STEM education at 2YI/CCs. Pages 5 includes examples and a link to all the modernization priorities. This was a suggestion, not a requirement. The scope of the project is at the proposer's discretion. Recommend having a clear vision in the proposal which address unique challenges and needs in respective regions, and that is ready to implement upon award and complete within the parameters of the FOA. This Q&A is published as an appendix to the NOFO on grants.gov.

Question 30: Specifically, as our institution is not currently a federal contractor, would this agreement, if funded with our community college as the lead applicant and/or with subawardee partners who may have that status, require us to comply with EO 11246 and/or other applicable terms for federal contractors? And, can you confirm, based on the terms referenced on p. 31 of the NOFO, that this cooperative agreement is also considered “Research and Development” and, hence, will require all applicable conflict of interest and other support disclosures (applicable to NSPM-33) for the duration of the project?

Answer 30: Per the DoD Grant and Agreement Regulations (DoDGARs), all contracts awarded by a recipient, including those for amounts less than the simplified acquisition threshold, shall contain a provision requiring compliance with E.O. 11246. Any resulting cooperative agreements shall require all applicable conflict of interest and other support disclosures in accordance with the NFO’s referenced terms and conditions.

Question 31: I am a lecturer at [University], and also have a small (for profit) start-up company involved in education. I/we make an online course on the study of disruptive technologies as the T in STEM education. For example Artificial Intelligence or Robotics. Am I (are we) eligible to apply for this award? I have reviewed the eligibility, but I am not clear about this. Also are we to apply for this award by ourselves, or do we need a 2-year college as our partner?

Answer 31: Eligibility information can be found on page 11 and states “The cooperative agreements will be awarded to “eligible entities” as defined at 10 USC §2192(b)(3) which includes a State, a political subdivision of a State, an individual, and a not-for-profit or organization in the private sector”, which includes for profit organizations. A suggested, but not mandatory, Consortium structure may include multiple 2YI/CCs, and is strongly encouraged to also include regional 4YI, industry, and/or nonprofit organization. Lead Organization questions are addressed in Answers 1-11. Note in Section II.C, on page 10, fee/profit is unallowable under assistance agreements at either the prime or sub-award level.

Question 32: We have questions I hope you can clarify: 1. The Estimated Total Program Funding is not filled in on the General Information section. Should we interpret the Award Floor (\$5,000,000) and Award Ceiling (\$11,000,000) to be for each single grant award, or is this the total for all 5 expected number of awards (Total Program Funding)? If \$5,000,000 is the floor for one award and we put together a program with a budget that falls under that amount, will it be considered or not? 2. Page 26, section iv, Recipient Acquired Equipment or Facilities. The [Community College] consortium is proposing to add a new drone program as part of its STEM careers pathway. As a new program, the college will need to purchase, install, and maintain facilities and equipment (a flight cage with netting suitable for drone flight training and a charging station for recharging drone batteries near the flight cage) to operate this new program on campus. There is unused space the college can provide to install the flight cage and locate the charging station. With the detailed justification for purchase, would this equipment and facilities be allowable? 3. Where on grants.gov will we be able to see the posted responses to questions?

Answer 32: (1) Each Cooperative Agreement, of which there will be approximately 5, could have a maximum award ceiling of \$11,000,000 over 6 years, consisting of: a base period of three (3) years with a maximum base award amount of \$5,000,000. There are three (3) annual option periods with a maximum of \$2,000,000 per option year. Applications may not exceed the \$5,000,000 maximum budget for the base period, and may not exceed the maximum \$2,000,000 per option period (i.e. years 4, 5, and 6). There is no minimum budget requirement. (2) All costs associated with the award are described on Pages 21 and 25-27 are acceptable, as long as they are not used to attain fee or profit. (3) The posting will be under the Attachments tab.

Question 33: Pa7 of the NOFO states "The Consortium, as an entity, will not solicit or accept funding from outside sources without the approval of the Grants Officer and the CAM." Does this apply to nonprofit partners that seek grants to advance their mission? Does this apply to grants the consortium seek to make itself more sustainable over the long haul?

Answer 33: If selected for award, the Consortium must get approval for outside funding from the Grants Office and the CAM. Individual Members may apply for non-Consortium related activities without approval.

Question 34: How is a region defined for this opportunity? Is a region a city/state or can it be defined more broadly e.g. like **New** England or the mid-Atlantic? Additionally, must a region be defined geographically? Does the evaluation have to be performed by a third-party evaluator (who would be part of the consortium) or can it be done by the Lead Organization, if they have those capabilities in house?

Question 35: We wish to confirm that the nationwide network we plan to propose qualifies for a DoD STEM Community College Consortium Cooperative Agreement. The non-profit Inclusive Engineering Consortium is a national consortium of ECE programs at HBCUs, HSIs and TCUs who work together on issues and opportunities that are difficult or even impossible to address individually. [HBCUs, HSIs and TCUs]. In addition, there is now a growing number of affiliated universities [Affiliated Universities] and companies [Companies] who join with the 20 MSIs in a variety of equitable educational and research partnerships. With the consortium members serving as hubs for local community colleges, does this nationwide network meet the NOFO definition of regional DoD STEM Community College Consortia?

Question 36: As far as regional breakdown is concerned, is [State] considered its own region, or is it coupled with another state?

Answers 34-36: As stated in Section 1.A, each regional DoD STEM Community College Consortium should collaboratively work with members of their geographical area to promote partnerships that enhance STEM education at 2YI/CCs. The Consortium should identify key regional challenges and work towards collaborative solutions. As such, the technical application should address the needs in the regional community. The definition of a "region" is at the Applicant's discretion. The methods for evaluation and evaluator are at the proposer's discretion.

Question 37: Is the Department of Defense requesting proposals on how a consortium intends to facilitate STEM training in the existing certificate programs only? Or are proposals that address

training in new STEM areas acceptable too? In other words, can we propose a new STEM credential that we have developed, along with a plan for our consortium to train the workforce towards certificate achievement?

Answer 37: As outlined in Section III.A, the proposed Consortium may be either already existing, or new partnerships and/or programs are being proposed. The scope of the project is at the proposer's discretion. Recommend having a clear vision in the proposal that is ready to implement upon award and complete within the parameters of the FOA.

Question 38: (1) K-12 Related: • Does the scope of the NOFO support the professional development of new-to-STEM K-12 teachers? Examples of funding requests would include stipends for the K-12 educators and their corresponding mentors participating in professional development (e.g. MiStar)? a. Stipends for K-12 educators enrolled in professional development or mentorship programs; examples would include apprenticeship master teacher certification or education licensure for non-traditional teacher pathways. b. Stipends for lead teachers or college instructors that are acting as mentors for new to STEM K-12 educators. • Does the scope of the NOFO support K-12 in-the-classroom transitional or remediation resources to improve student success in STEM coursework; an example would include paid student teaching positions in K-12 classrooms? (2) Community College Related: • Does the scope of the NOFO include funding additional staff to support running the program across the 15 county region comprising the [Collaborative program]? • Would the scope of the NOFO support new summer youth programs provided by collaboration partners to mitigate students impacted negatively by not being in the classroom due to COVID related policies? a. Programming supplies, food, transportation, housing, trainers, scholarships, or other expenses eligible for funding. b. Development of P-based (Project-, Problem-, and/or Place) STEM curriculum developed with industry partners. • Does the scope of the NOFO support community college transitional or remediation resources to improve student success in STEM coursework; an example would include paid teaching assistants in community college courses? • Could the scope of the NOFO support building renovations to make existing space more accessible for STEM programs or industry-related training centers? (3) 4-Year University Related: Does the scope of the NOFO include scholarships for Master level course work for K-12 teachers to integrate the design process into curriculum? Does the scope of the NOFO include scholarships for community college instructor professional development to integrate the design process, project based learning, or DOD industry defined curriculum? (4) Employer Related: Does the scope of the NOFO include stipends to encourage employers to participate with collaborative curriculum development; examples of activities would include curriculum review, focus group participation, advisory board participation, work-based learning opportunities, or development of STEM related apprenticeships?

Answer 38: Pages 3-6 describe the funding objectives. The scope of the project is at the proposer's discretion. Recommend having a clear vision in the proposal that is ready to implement upon award and complete within the parameters of the FOA. Acceptable costs associated with the award are described on Pages 21 and 25-27.

Question 39: Question 1: NOFO states “to enhance the STEM workforce through regional consortia.” May we kindly have some guidance on the lower limit of the size of the region encompassing the “regional consortia,” please?

Question 2: NOFO states “Promote and support the completion of technical training and certificate programs.” May we kindly have some guidance on the lower limit of the number of students DoD is seeking to complete these “technical training and certificate programs,” please?

Question 3: NOFO states “Develop, support, and increase the transition of students, ..., from 2-year institutions and/or Community College STEM programs to STEM degrees at 4-year institutions.” May we kindly have some guidance on the lower limit of the number of students DoD is seeking to “transition,” please?

Question 4: NOFO states “Each Consortium should promote the capacity of 2YI/CCs to create impactful STEM educational experiences....” May we kindly have some guidance on metrics sought to measure how “impactful” the experiences should be, please?

Question 5: NOFO states “The DoD will prioritize Consortia that support placement of qualified students, ..., to DoD and DIB manufacturing, research, and career opportunities.” May we kindly have some guidance on the nature of these “career opportunities,” please? For example: FT, PT, Internships, and/or Apprenticeships.

Question 6: NOFO states “The DoD will prioritize Consortia that support placement of qualified students,..., or a pathway to other educational opportunities. May we kindly have some guidance on the nature of these “other educational opportunities,” please? For example: additional courses, majors, certificates, and/or training.

Question 7: NOFO states: “Proposed programs should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of 2YI/CCs in regards to STEM education, potential solutions, and outcomes from enhanced quality and effectiveness of 2YI/CC support.” May we kindly have some guidance on metrics with which to measure “quality and effectiveness of 2YI/CC support,” please?

Question 8: NOFO states: “The Consortium should identify key regional challenges and work towards collaborative solutions.” May we kindly have some guidance on what is desired by “regional challenges,” please? For example: employer workforce needs, skills gaps, participant diversity, program inclusivity, and/or barriers to student academic success.

Answer 39: (1,8) Answers 33-35 address the geography of the consortium. (2-3) Activities and scope are at the discretion of the Applicant. (4,7) It is at the P.I.’s discretion on how to conduct research and evaluation. (5-6) NDEP activities should support the DoD STEM effort in providing authentic learning experiences through a variety of education and outreach initiatives. Examples can be found on page 4. The activities are at the discretion of the Applicant, but must address the program objectives as stated on pages 3 and 5.

Question 40: I noted down incorrect date for the letter of intent and failed to notify you of our intent by 2/22. Please accept my apologies and advise if [Institution]’s application, if submitted before March 29 will be considered or not.

Question 41: May we still apply although we did not submit the Letter of Intent?

Question 42: I noticed that the letter of intent was due yesterday. Can we still submit a letter? Can we still submit a proposal? We would really like to participate.

Answer 40-42: Per page 14, submission of a LOI is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory.