

FY2026 DEPSCoR Competition Frequently Asked Questions

1. Webinar Logistics & Key Resources

Will the webinar slides and recordings be made available?

The FY26 webinar session was not recorded. However, the presentation slides are posted in the DEPSCoR Program section of the official basic research website:

<https://basicresearch.defense.gov/Programs/DEPSCoR-Defense-Established-Program-to-Stimulate-Competitive-Research/>.

How can I find out what projects have been funded recently under DEPSCoR?

You can view past award announcements on the Department of War (DoW) News portal or access awardee lists and proposal titles directly on the DEPSCoR program website.

Is there a portal or platform to find collaborators for this opportunity?

Yes. Our partners at Nobilis have established a "Connect and Collaborate" website: <https://dod-basicresearch.nvision.nobilis.org/program/depscor>. Prospective Applicants and Collaborators seeking partnerships can post their interests and view others in the network.

2. General Jurisdiction & State Eligibility

Which states and territories are eligible for the FY26 DEPSCoR program?

DEPSCoR eligibility is determined annually based on legislative requirements and federal research funding rankings.

- Important FY26 Correction: Although an early draft amendment to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) listed Arizona (AZ) and Indiana (IN) as eligible, the Program Director confirmed this was an error. Arizona (AZ) and Indiana (IN) are no longer DEPSCoR-eligible for the FY26 competition. This applies to both the Research Collaboration (RC) and Capacity Building (CB) opportunities.
- Eligible states and territories are: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, U.S. Virgin Islands, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Are DEPSCoR-eligible states identical to NSF EPSCoR states?

Not necessarily. While there is significant overlap, DEPSCoR has its own legislative evaluation metrics. Always consult the active DEPSCoR NOFO to verify current eligibility before

preparing your proposal. Receiving other federal EPSCoR awards (e.g., NSF, NASA, NIH) does not disqualify you from DEPSCoR.

What qualifies as an "Institution of Higher Education" (IHE)?

An IHE is a standard accredited university or college. National Laboratories, DoW/Government Labs, commercial businesses, and non-profit research organizations do not qualify as IHEs.

3. Applicant Eligibility & Roles (Research Collaboration)

Do both the Applicant (PI) and the Collaborator (Mentor) need to be from DEPSCoR-eligible states?

Yes. Both the Applicant and the Collaborator must be employed by Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) located within DEPSCoR-eligible states or territories.

Does the Collaborator need to be in the same state/territory as the Applicant?

No. There is no program preference. The Applicant and Collaborator can be at the same university, different universities in the same eligible state, or different universities in two different eligible states. The partnership should be driven by what is best for the proposed research collaboration.

Who is eligible to apply as the Principal Investigator?

To be eligible as the Applicant (PI) under the DEPSCoR-RC FOA, you must:

1. Be a full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty member at an Institution of Higher Education (IHE) in an eligible DEPSCoR state or territory.
2. Never have been listed as the Principal Investigator on a previous, directly funded prime DoW research award.

Does serving as a Co-PI or Sub-PI on a previous DoW award disqualify me from applying?

No. Being listed as a "Co-PI," "Co-Investigator," or "Sub-PI" on a prior DoW-funded award does not count as being the lead "PI" on a prime award. You remain eligible to apply as the Applicant.

Does receiving a DURIP award disqualify me from applying as the Applicant?

Yes. A Defense University Research Instrumentation Program (DURIP) award is considered a prime DoW research award. If you received a DURIP and were the PI listed on the official award document, you are ineligible to apply as the Applicant. You would, however, be eligible to serve as a Collaborator/Mentor.

Does a participant in the Visiting Faculty Research Program (VFRP) count as a prime DoW PI?

No. Fellowships, visiting faculty programs, or travel awards do not constitute prime, directly funded DoW research awards. You remain eligible to apply as the Applicant.

What if I have a pending DoW proposal when I apply for DEPSCoR?

You are fully eligible to apply while you have other DoW proposals pending. However, if one of those pending proposals is awarded and you are listed as the PI *before* DEPSCoR selections are finalized, you will immediately become ineligible to receive the DEPSCoR award as the Applicant.

Are there citizenship or residency requirements for the Applicant?

There are no citizenship or permanent residency requirements to apply. Faculty on visas (such as H1B) are eligible. However, all selected proposals must successfully pass the standard DoW research risk review process.

If I was the PI on a DoW SBIR/STTR award while working in industry, can I apply as a DEPSCoR Applicant now that I am at a university?

No. An SBIR/STTR award is a prime DoW contract. If you were the officially listed PI on that prime award, you have received direct DoW funding and are ineligible to be the DEPSCoR Applicant. You are eligible to serve as a Collaborator/Mentor.

4. Collaborator / Mentor (Co-PI) Eligibility & Roles

Who is eligible to serve as the Collaborator/Mentor?

The Collaborator must have served as a Principal Investigator (PI) on a directly funded, prime DoW research award active within the specified eligibility period (typically within the last 5 to 8 years, e.g., active between October 1, 2018, and September 30, 2026).

What are examples of qualifying DoW Prime Awards?

Prime research awards include, but are not limited to: DURIP, MURI, DARPA, VBFF, AFOSR, ARO, ONR, DTRA, and DIA awards. The mentor must have been the lead PI on the prime award, not a subawardee or Co-PI. Contact the DEPSCoR PM if there are questions on eligibility.

Does a DARPA Young Faculty Award (YFA) or AFOSR Young Investigator Program (YIP) award qualify someone to serve as a Mentor?

Yes. Both are prime research awards. For older awards (e.g., an AFOSR YIP active from 2016–2019), they qualify as long as the active project period overlapped with the program's eligibility window (e.g., active after October 1, 2018).

Does the Collaborator/Mentor need to be in the exact same field of research as the Applicant?

No. Interdisciplinary pairings are highly welcome.

What is the expected role of the Collaborator/Mentor?

The Mentor is expected to participate actively in the scientific execution of the project. Additionally, they must provide mentorship on navigating the DoW research ecosystem, understanding department procedures, and building relationships with DoW Program Officers. It does not need to be a general career mentorship.

Can a postdoc serve as the Co-PI/Collaborator?

No. Postdocs are not eligible to serve in this role because they do not meet the core requirement of having previously served as a lead PI on a prime, directly funded DoW research award.

Can a Mentor serve on multiple white papers or proposals?

Yes. A mentor may serve as the Co-PI on multiple submissions. However, you should consider the strategic commitment required; focusing on a single, high-quality collaboration is often highly advantageous.

5. Budget, Funding, and Personnel

Is there a required budget split between the Applicant (PI) and Collaborator (Mentor)?

The only strict requirement is that the Applicant's IHE must receive more than 50% of the total award funding. Beyond this limit, the team has the flexibility to split the remaining budget in whatever manner best supports the research.

Can the award fund graduate students and postdocs?

Yes. Project funds can be used to support graduate students and postdocs working on the research at both the Applicant's and the Collaborator's institutions. However, keep in mind overall funding caps when budgeting for multiple personnel.

Can we use project funds for industry partners or subcontractors?

DEPSCoR funding is intended to build academic capacity in eligible states; thus, all core funding must remain at eligible IHEs. While you can utilize vendor/service agreements for specialized commercial services, or have industry partners collaborate as unpaid senior personnel, prime funding cannot be directed to industry partners or small businesses.

Can we collaborate with National Laboratories or use their facilities?

Yes. You can leverage national laboratory facilities (e.g., specialized equipment or beamlines). If the laboratory is located within a DEPSCoR-eligible state, some funding may support that

access, but a substantial portion of the award cannot go to a National Lab. Any planned usage must be thoroughly justified in the White Paper.

6. Capacity Building (CB) Specific Questions

Can a CB proposal focus on a single type of activity, like purchasing equipment?

Yes. A CB proposal can focus heavily on a single thrust, such as acquiring state-of-the-art shared instrumentation. However, the proposal must clearly outline how this equipment supports a cohesive, long-term strategic plan to enhance research capacity and sustainability across the entire institution.

Who is eligible to lead a CB proposal as PI? Does it have to be the Vice President for Research (VPR)?

While the VPR is the typical applicant, other high-level administrators (e.g., the Associate Dean for Research) are eligible to serve as PI. Because institutions are structured differently, the exact title is flexible, provided the proposal demonstrates that basic research excellence in the proposed area is a strategic objective of the entire IHE.

Can CB proposals involve multiple universities or span across state lines?

Yes. Institutions can apply individually or in partnership with other IHEs, including partnerships that span state lines, provided all participating universities are located within DEPSCoR-eligible jurisdictions.

7. Proposal Submission Logistics

Is a detailed budget required for the White Paper stage?

No. A formal, detailed budget package is not required for the White Paper. However, basic cost estimates, duration, and high-level split estimations must be included.

Who submits the White Paper—the PI or the AOR?

- White Papers are submitted directly by the PI using the [online submission portal](#). A formal Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) submission is not required at this stage.
- Full Proposals (if invited) must be formally submitted by your institution's AOR through Grants.gov.

8. Engaging with DoW Program Officers

What is the recommended way to initiate contact with a Program Officer?

Send a brief introductory email outlining your research concept.

- Length: Keep your concept summary brief. A good rule of thumb is between half a page and two pages. Less than half a page lacks necessary detail, while more than three pages is too long for an initial inquiry.
- Structure: Clearly state what you want to do, how it is done today, what is new in your approach, why it matters to the DoW, and your central scientific hypotheses.