

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 693JK326NF0003 – Competitive Academic Agreement Program
(CAAP)

Questions & Answers

Question Number	RFP Section #/Page #	Question	Government Response
1.	Section B.1 Eligible Applicants and Activities	The NOFO states “PHMSA will only accept one application per topic from each applicant” in section B.1 Eligible Applicants and Activities. Are there limitations on the number of sub recipients for each applicant? In other words, if a university submits one proposal for a topic (e.g., Topic 1), can this university serve as a sub recipient in a proposal that is led and submitted by a different university for the same topic?	• Sub-recipient Limit: The NOFO does not limit the number of sub-recipients an applicant can include, but it explicitly encourages partnerships among institutions. • Serving as a Sub-recipient on the Same Topic: Yes, this is allowed. The strict restriction in the NOFO is that PHMSA will only accept one application per topic from each applicant. Because a sub-recipient is a partner and not the primary "applicant" submitting the proposal, a university can submit its own lead proposal for Topic 1 and simultaneously be listed as a collaborative partner/sub-recipient on a separate Topic 1 proposal submitted by a different institution. • Funding Rule for Partners: If you participate as a partner or sub-recipient, remember that the partner's financial contribution/share cannot exceed the contribution of the applying lead university.
2.	Award timeframe	Just checking on the 12 month from award timeframe. Standing start to 12 months completion. Are you guys going to reconsider that time limit? Universities can't, due to their calendars and burdensome regulations/rule, generally tie their shoes in 12 months.....our university is going to make a run at a number of the research topics, but 12 months is really tough...maybe private universities are much more nimble than public institutions	Unfortunately, PHMSA will not reconsider the timeline. The CAAP NOFO explicitly states that the period of performance is a maximum of 12 months. It strictly warns that "No extensions will be authorized under any circumstances". The NOFO makes no distinction between public and private institutions. All applicants must be nonprofit higher education institutions and are bound by the exact same rules. If any university fails to complete the project within 12 months, PHMSA will terminate funding for any incomplete work and potentially disallow costs incurred after the deadline.

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 693JK326NF0003 – Competitive Academic Agreement Program
(CAAP)

Questions & Answers

			The timeline is rigid, so keep that in your mind when preparing the proposals: • Apply only for funding and activities that can realistically be completed within 12 months. • CAAP is designed to validate a theory or thesis, not to deliver a final commercial product. • Scope the project so that successful results can be transferred to PHMSA's Core Research Program for future deployment. • Since student involvement is mandatory and a final list of students must be confirmed before the project begins, identify your undergraduate or graduate students during the application phase to prevent administrative delays.
3.	Partnership	If there were any restrictions against having a DOE partner in the work and be funded by CAAP (e.g., the National Technology Energy Laboratory). To be clear, our university is the lead and would receive and utilize the majority of the funds.	The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) stated eligible applicants must be nonprofit higher education institutions located in the United States or a U.S. territory. Because a DOE National Laboratory or the DOE itself is a Federal agency/entity and not a nonprofit higher education institution, they cannot be a direct recipient or co-recipient of the CAAP cooperative agreement.
4.	A.1 Funding	'Applicants may submit multiple applications, but can submit only one application per topic, each capped at \$1 million.' Does the term Applicants in this case refer to the University or it refer to the PI ?	PHMSA will only accept one application per topic from each applicant. This means one university can have multiple applications. However, one applicant (PI) can submit only one application per topic.
5.	A.1 Funding	Can you clarify if I can submit two proposals in response to two different topics?	yes, one researcher/PI can submit two proposals in response to different topics.
6.	Section B.1 Eligible Applicants and Activities	If the project involves more than two institutes, should the leading institute's budget be greater than any other involved institutes, or must it be more than 50% of the total? In addition, in this link regarding	Lead Institute Budget Rule: The NOFO states that the contribution of any partner or private organization cannot exceed the contribution of the applying college/university. This means the lead

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 693JK326NF0003 – Competitive Academic Agreement Program (CAAP)

Questions & Answers

		detailed budget requirements: https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/about-phmsa/working-phmsa/grants/pipeline/caap-budgetcost-application-and-budget-narrative, it states that the total cost of consultants and/or subcontractors must not exceed 40 percent of the proposed federal contribution to the project.	institute's budget must simply be greater than that of any other individual involved institute. It does not have to exceed 50% of the total project budget, as long as the lead institute remains the largest financial contributor among the partners. The 40% Subcontractor Rule: While that specific 40% threshold link text is referenced as a general guideline for detailed cost elements, the core NOFO rule is what governs this specific academic program: the partner's share cannot exceed the lead university's share. However, to ensure full compliance with the external link's strict 40% cap on subcontractors/consultants, the lead university should ensure its own share of the federal contribution is at least 60%, leaving the remaining combined partner/subcontractor share at or below 40%.
7.	Topic 2	My colleague and I plans to explore novel agent of bacteria phage to destroy bacteria to mitigation of MIC. She is an expert in design of phage for targeted functions and leverage my experience with pipe. Since the duration of the CAAP project is 12 months, we feel it will be challenging schedule wise to develop and validate phage cocktail agents that target at a variety of bacteria. So we are thinking to target our efforts on one or two representative bacteria strain that causes MIC, and verify its performance. Will this plan be Ok?	To ensure a fair evaluation process, we refrain from answering technical questions about the solicitation or individual topics directly. For any specific contractual or procedural questions, please reach out to the agency personnel listed on the NOFO.
8.	Topics 1&2	Would appreciate clarification regarding the expected scope and level of effort for Topics 1 and 2. In the topic descriptions, the project scope states that proposals "must include the following tasks," followed by multiple detailed bullet points covering literature review, that include laboratory studies, modeling, validation, stakeholder	Mandatory Scope Coverage: Yes, you must fully address every bullet point. The NOFO explicitly states that the project scope "must include the following tasks" for both Topic 1 and Topic 2. Omitting tasks or focusing only on a subset will likely make the application non-responsive.

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 693JK326NF0003 – Competitive Academic Agreement Program (CAAP)

Questions & Answers

		engagement, standards coordination, and evaluation activities. Given the 12-month period of performance, we would appreciate clarification on how comprehensively each bullet point is expected to be addressed within a single proposal. Specifically: • Are applicants expected to fully address every bullet point listed under a topic? • Or may proposals focus more deeply on a subset of the listed tasks, provided the overall project objectives remain aligned with the topic goals? • For proof-of-concept or exploratory research projects, what level of maturity or completeness is expected for each task area within the one-year performance period? • Would PHMSA consider a proposal responsive if it emphasizes a focused approach to selected aspects of the topic rather than attempting broad coverage of all listed elements?	<u>Expected Level of Maturity (Proof-of-Concept):</u> Because the period of performance is strictly capped at 12 months with no extensions, PHMSA defines the expected outcome as validating a "proof of concept for a thesis or theory". You are expected to establish the foundational scientific and engineering elements across all tasks, not deliver a fully mature or commercialized field technology. <u>Responsiveness Warning:</u> A proposal that chooses a "focused approach" by skipping listed elements will not be considered responsive. To remain compliant, your proposal must lay out a work plan that maps all required bullet points—from the literature review and lab testing to stakeholder input—into a tightly managed 12-month timeline
9.	Indirect costs (F&A)	I was wondering if industry participation is required for this proposal. Given the relatively short timeline, I would also appreciate your guidance on whether commitment letters from SDOs and industry partners are expected or required as part of the submission. In addition, regarding the 20% cost-share requirement, would a reduction or waiver of indirect costs (F&A) be acceptable as part of the cost share?	While the NOFO states that PHMSA "encourages partnerships", participation becomes practically required. All topics also mandate the incorporation of input from pipeline operators, industry experts, and Standards Development Organizations (SDOs). <u>Waived Indirect Costs (F&A) as Cost Share:</u> Yes. The NOFO notes that evaluation and research costs are allowable as either direct or indirect costs under 2 CFR Part 200. Under standard 2 CFR Part 200 rules governing the mandatory 20% CAAP cost-share, unrecovered or waived indirect costs are an acceptable form of cost-sharing, provided

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 693JK326NF0003 – Competitive Academic Agreement Program
(CAAP)

Questions & Answers

			they are clearly justified in your Budget Narrative.
10.	Topic#5, Partnership and Letter of support	Please find the attached proposal idea for your reference. We propose to develop and validate an active infrared thermography for severity assessment of graphitic corrosion in cast iron pipe materials. Two preliminary laboratory observations support our proposed concept, and the initial results look promising. We believe this method can help address the current challenges in older gas distribution systems. We completed the main proposal documents and are currently reaching out to industry partners for their support. If an industry support agreement is finalized after the submission due date (June 19), would it be possible that we submit our proposal first and provide the support documentation later? We also realize that Washington DC ranks first in the percentage of distribution mains made of cast iron. If PHMSA can provide any guidance and suggestions on industry partners in Washington DC, we would greatly appreciate it.	PHMSA refrains from directly answering technical questions about the solicitation or individual topics. Please see the answers below for other questions: <u>Submitting Support Documentation After the Deadline</u> No, you cannot submit required support documentation after the deadline. The NOFO states that the strict application deadline is June 19, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. EST. Furthermore, if these industry agreements involve mandatory matching funds, the NOFO explicitly warns that "firm commitment letters for cost-sharing must accompany applications or proposals, or they will not be reviewed". Failure to include these completed documents at the time of submission will result in your application being rejected without evaluation. <u>Guidance on Industry Partners in Washington, D.C.</u> The NOFO encourages research teams to collaborate closely with PHMSA-regulated operators to ensure real-world field relevance. PHMSA cannot recommend anyone, as it is the researcher's freedom to form a partnership with their chosen stakeholders.
11.	Topic 5	We are interested in Topic 5 - can PHMSA or the project sponsor provide cast iron pipe samples and a test facility?	Unfortunately, PHMSA will not provide any cast iron pipe samples and a physical test facility. However, NOFO explicitly encourages partnerships among institutions and operators to fulfill the need of real-world field relevance.

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 693JK326NF0003 – Competitive Academic Agreement Program
(CAAP)

Questions & Answers

12.	Section B.1 Eligible Applicants and Activities	Are post-doc allowed to participate in this research, in addition to students?	<u>Post-Doc Participation:</u> Yes, post-docs are allowed to participate. The NOFO specifies that faculty, staff, and students must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents, or hold valid visas, to complete the project. Post-docs would fall under the "staff" or "labor" categories. <u>Mandatory Student Requirement:</u> While post-docs can participate, they cannot replace undergraduate or graduate students. The NOFO strictly mandates that the research "must involve undergraduate, graduate, or PhD students". Faculty or staff must design the scope and oversee its execution.
13.	Section B.1 Eligible Applicants and Activities	If TEES (Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station), TAMU (Texas A&M University), and AgriLife each have unique UEIs and submit applications, are they considered separate applicants for the purposes of this grant? Or are they viewed collectively as part of Texas A&M?	They are considered separate applicants. The NOFO explicitly states that each applicant must maintain an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) with their application. <u>The "One Application Per Topic" Rule:</u> Because PHMSA uses the active SAM.gov registration and unique UEI to identify an organizational applicant, TEES, TAMU, and AgriLife are recognized as distinct legal entities under Federal grant guidelines. Therefore, each entity can submit its own independent application for the same research topic without violating the rule that restricts a single applicant (PI) to one submission per topic. Also, keep in mind that if the principal investigator (PI) is different, then each entity can submit as many proposals as it wants on the same topic.
14.	Due date	If the attached NOFO has a hard deadline of June 19 th 11.59pm or if due to the Federal holiday will application be accepted on June 22.	The hard deadline is the 19th of June. Any submission time and date stamped after the 19th of June will not be accepted.
15.		Are examples of previously funded CAAP proposals available for review?	Unfortunately, PHMSA cannot provide direct links to full examples of previously funded CAAP proposals. To prepare your current proposal, please follow the directions provided in the Notice of Funding

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 693JK326NF0003 – Competitive Academic Agreement Program
(CAAP)

Questions & Answers

			Opportunity (NOFO) for details and review the topic description and review criteria for how your proposal will be evaluated. Also, for your information, PHMSA's Pipeline Safety R&D Program is publicly available on its official website: https://primis.phmsa.dot.gov/matrix/home.rdm. While this site lists active and completed research projects, it typically provides project summaries and deliverables rather than full copies of the original winning proposals.
16.		For software development projects, what is PHMSA's expectation regarding the final product and technology deployment?	PHMSA expects the software to validate a "proof of concept for a thesis or theory along a logical path toward commercialization". The immediate goal is to build scientific foundations and develop software tools that improve pipeline safety, consistency, and efficiency. The software must be developed using input from industry operators and Standards Development Organizations (SDOs) to ensure field relevance and alignment with existing engineering integrity practices. NOFO states that the research "may deliver solutions that can be transferred to PHMSA's Core Research Program for demonstration and deployment". Furthermore, for AI software topics, PHMSA expects the tool to restrict outputs to authoritative repositories and to include cybersecurity controls to prevent unauthorized access or modification. PHMSA will not provide examples or past outcomes for prior CAAP-funded software projects. You can review general program performance details from https://primis.phmsa.dot.gov/matrix/home.rdm.
17.		Is there a mechanism for sharing applicant questions and PHMSA responses publicly?	Yes, PHMSA will post all the Q&A to the grants.gov site after the Q&A submission deadline.
18.	Attachment A	Attachment A instructions say narrative should be 20 pages without the information page. But the attachment automatically counts those pages when displaying page	In attachment A of the instructions, it says, "Please delete this instructions page before submitting your proposal." You can follow the template that is provided in the table

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 693JK326NF0003 – Competitive Academic Agreement Program
(CAAP)

Questions & Answers

		number. Please clarify if information page and the first page of attachment is counted in the 20 page requirement.	"Technical Proposal Information Page", which will start counting the first page of your proposal.
19.		Is there a format for references at the end? Can they be placed in appendix?	There is no format for the references at the end. Yes, you can place it in the appendix.