GENERAL INFORMATION

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DESCRIPTION

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) - This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes - it does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. Solicitations are not available at this time. Requests for a solicitation will not receive a response. This notice does not constitute a commitment by the United States Government to contract for any supply or service whatsoever. All information submitted in response to this announcement is voluntary; the United States Government will not pay for information requested nor will it compensate any respondent for any cost incurred in developing information provided to the United States Government. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued. If a solicitation is released, it will be synopsized on SAM.GOV and GRANTS.GOV. It is the responsibility of the potential offerors to monitor this site for additional information pertaining to this requirement.

Do not submit any CUI or classified information to this RFI.

The US Army Contracting Command-Aberdeen Proving Ground-Research Triangle Park (ACC-APG-RTP) Division, 800 Park Offices Drive – Suite 4229 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 is exploring options for support to the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Army Research Laboratory (ARL).

The purpose of this notice is to encourage competition and exchanges of information. Additionally, response to this notice will be used to gather market research in order to identify potential offerors having an interest in and the resources to support this requirement.

PURPOSE

ARL serves as the foremost basic research institution for the U.S. Army. It is dedicated to producing groundbreaking scientific discoveries through research, identifying opportunities to Operationalize those discoveries, and contributing to the creation of new Army capabilities. A key aspect of ARL’s mission is to foster collaborative partnerships in academia to expand the Army’s access to expert talent and expedite the transition of science-driven capabilities.

The purpose of this RFI is to obtain feedback on an effort that will establish a cadre of trusted partners made up of external academic entities, both Institutes of Higher Education and their associated entities, capable of rapidly spinning up activity on basic scientific research across the breadth of disciplinary perspectives at ARL. A Multiple Award Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) contract is being considered to facilitate the anticipated structure, needs, and requirements. Individual projects will be competed between the trusted partner cadre members allowing for an agile approach to basic and applied extramural research to rapidly leverage recent scientific discoveries and facilitate technology development and transition.

Beyond helping the Army, the research outcomes from the Trusted Partner Program (TPP) are likely to deliver across the national security enterprise, as well as be applicable to challenges in academia and industry.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this RFI is to get a better picture of potential interest of academic institutions in providing science, technology, and engineering support for ARL. This partnership will cover both basic and applied research, as well as advanced technology development, which can be uniquely facilitated with dedicated and trusted academic partners capable of handling, producing, and storing sensitive information and work products.

The institutions will provide support to ARL focused eleven technical fields (with some non-exhaustive examples of CUI+ type projects in each field):

1. **Biological & Biotechnology Sciences** (non-medical focus): Exploring the potential of biological systems for Army applications, including synthetic biology, biomaterials, and bio-integrated technologies.
2. **Electromagnetic Spectrum Sciences**: Advancing capabilities in sensing, counter-sensing, electronic warfare, and spectrum protection.
3. **Energy Sciences**: Developing innovative solutions for power generation, storage, conversion, and directed energy technologies (including lasers).
4. **Humans in Complex Systems** (non-medical focus): Investigating how humans interact with and benefit from advanced technologies, focusing on cognitive enhancement, integrated sensors, and human-technology teaming.
5. **Mechanical Sciences**: Pioneering advancements in robotics (including swarm robotics), autonomous vehicles (including shape-shifting designs), and human-machine interfaces.
6. **Military Information Sciences**: Leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning for improved decision-making, predictive maintenance, logistics, and communication.

7. **Network, Cyber & Computational Sciences**: Securing information and systems through advanced encryption, cyber defense, and integrated cross-domain operations (land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace).
8. **Photonics, Electronics & Quantum Sciences**: Exploring the frontiers of quantum computing/information, advanced timing technologies, and photonic/electronic devices based on emerging quantum materials.
9. **Sciences of Extreme Materials**: Designing and developing advanced materials with exceptional properties, including lightweight strength, self-healing capabilities, and novel manufacturing processes.
10. **Terminal Effects**: Analyzing weapon-target interactions, material properties under impact, and mechanisms related to human injury and protection.
11. **Weapon Sciences**: Conducting research into ballistics, guided weapon systems, and the development of new weapon concepts.

Furthermore, we anticipate interdisciplinary projects covering two or more research areas and requiring teams of people with disparate expertise to successfully address the research questions or goals. The following topics are included, although this list is not comprehensive.

12. Sensing and Intelligence
13. UAS Engineering and Control
14. Energetics
15. Autonomy and collaboration
16. Protection Technologies and Accurate Modeling

Interested performers can get examples of topics, questions, and discipline-specific interests of ARL by reviewing the DEVCOM ARL BAA topics (https://arl.devcom.army.mil/collaborate-with-us/opportunity/arl-baa/), though reviewing this other funding opportunity should not be interpreted to represent the full breadth and scope of work intended under this TPP RFI.

SCOPE

This program is intended to primarily result in multiple five (5)-year academic ID/IQ contracts with ARL. The academic institution shall be well-positioned to provide support to ARL in solving Army-centric problems, focused on CUI+ security tiers.

It is not anticipated that every proposer will fulfill all technical areas across all security levels; instead, the goal is to assemble a collection of pre-vetted and trusted partners who collectively can meet the complete range of requirements, among whom individual task orders will be competed.

ARL has recognized essential elements for achieving successful performance as a reliable partner. The Government anticipates institutions to possess elements 1 and 2 below. Elements 3 and 4 are optional.

See the four elements below.

1) First, the academic research institution should provide access to their talented pool of faculty, staff and students to perform cutting edge research. To meet ARL's needs, the academic research institution should propose a plan that leverages its diverse research capabilities, including secure facilities and active individual security clearances (certified for handling and processing information from Controlled Unclassified Information up to Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information (CUI to TS/SCI)).
2) Second, the academic research institute shall have access to an Information Technology (IT) network certified for communicating at the necessary research classification level (CUI to TS/SCI).
3) Third, the academic research institute may also have or establish a not-for-profit engineering institute that includes such things as an agreement to share costs for shared services with the parent academic partner designed, but limit costs for the academic research institute to Defense expenses to lower non-academic or non-research costs.
4) Fourth, the academic research institute may have or create a rapid experimentation lab that facilitates collaborative projects across various disciplines, enabling quick prototype development, including facilities “behind the fence” (i.e. within certified secure facilities).

OTHER RFI INFORMATION

The successful Trusted Partner Program (TPP) members will share an overlap with ARL on core ARMY values, as well as the ARL mission, especially a history of leveraging research successes to operationalize science. Therefore, experience with basic research into technology transition pipelines, processes, and unique needs will set up a particularly productive partnership.

Success in the TPP may require a multidisciplinary effort with flexibility to onboard new personnel capable of successful Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) adjudication, or to host personnel who have already been vetted. It may also be necessary for TPP members to work jointly to take advantage of individual strengths and capabilities, or to work with other partner federal agencies.

The capability statement documentation must address at a minimum the following items:

Please provide any questions, comments, and feedback on the RFI.

Interest and Intent

1. Would your institution propose on this effort, why or why not? If yes: How long would you need to submit a proposal (e.g. 14, 21, 30, 45 days)?

Security Clearances & Facility Accreditation

2. Please provide a summary of your institution's DCSA-adjudicated facility clearances, including the highest level currently authorized (and the date of authorization). Include any planned upgrades or modifications to these clearances.

3. What percentage of your faculty and research staff currently hold active security clearances (and at what tiers – Secret, Top Secret, SCI, and handling procedures – SCI, SAP)? What is your institution's capacity and process for managing that?

4. Describe your institution's experience with handling and processing CUI, Secret, and Top Secret information. Include details on your security protocols, data handling procedures, and compliance with appropriate DoD policies and regulations.

IT Infrastructure

5. Describe your IT network infrastructure, specifically its certification level for processing and communicating classified information up to TS/SCI. Include details on segmentation, access controls, and cybersecurity measures.

6. Do you have dedicated, isolated networks capable of supporting CUI+ research? If so, please describe their capabilities and capacity.

Research Infrastructure

7. Describe your institution's research infrastructure relevant to the ARL's competencies (list provided in the RFI). Be specific about unique facilities, equipment, and capabilities. Highlight any 'behind the fence' (within access controlled secure spaces/IT networks) facilities and capabilities.

8. Do you have or are you a not-for-profit engineering institute or similar entity associated with an Institute of Higher Education? If so, please detail its structure, capabilities, and cost-sharing arrangements with the Institute of Higher Education.

9. Describe your rapid prototyping and experimentation capabilities. Do you have dedicated labs or facilities designed for quick turnaround prototyping and testing?

Research Expertise & Alignment with ARL

10. Please provide a matrix mapping your institution's research expertise to the eleven ARL focus areas listed in the RFI. Indicate the strength of your expertise in each area.

11. Within each focus area, identify 3-5 key faculty members and their relevant research experience. Include links to their faculty profiles and recent publications.

Interdisciplinary Research

12. Describe your institution's experience with conducting interdisciplinary research projects. Provide examples of successful projects that combined expertise from multiple fields. Reference to DoD funded projects preferred.

Transition & Technology Development

13. Describe your institution's track record of transitioning basic research findings into practical applications or technologies. Provide examples of successful technology transfer, licensing agreements, or spin-off companies.

14. Describe your experience working with DoD or other government agencies on research projects. Include details on any successful collaborations or partnerships.

Programmatic & Financial Considerations

15. Describe your institution's experience with ID/IQ contracts and task order competitions. What are your internal processes for responding to task orders and managing contract deliverables?

16. Describe your institution's intellectual property (IP) policy and approach to managing IP generated from government-funded research projects. How would you ensure that research outcomes benefit both the Army and the broader scientific community?

Other input and considerations

17. Are there any other federal funding instruments you think might work for this program? What are they and what is your institution's history with them?

18. Are there any modifications you would suggest to this RFI that you feel would improve the ability of the Trusted Partner Program to meet the stated goals?

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Potential offerors interested in this requirement are requested to submit a capabilities statement. Microsoft Word or Portable Document Format (PDF) is acceptable. Please be sure to include the company's cage code and a company point of contact. The deadline for responses to this request is due no later than 4:00 PM EST, 31 December 2025.

All responses must be submitted via e-mail to meaghan.l.pimsler.civ@army.mil. All data received in response to this notice that is marked or designated as corporate or proprietary will be fully protected from any release outside the Government.