



AIRC Proposers Meeting

April 28, 2021

Summary and FAQ Sheet

Link to the full Call for Research Proposals can be found [here](#).

Summary: The U.S. Congress established the Acquisition Innovation Research Center (AIRC) to innovate defense acquisition policies and practices through academic analyses and policy alternatives, as well as to showcase demonstrations and pilot programs. The AIRC Call for Proposals seeks to fund summer incubator project studies **in academia** that fulfill the following objectives: 1) create innovative improvements in defense acquisition by bringing novel and interdisciplinary approaches to bear on the identified challenges and needs, and have strong potential for breakthrough results; 2) design applied piloting and experimentation; and 3) generate seminal journal publications.

Submissions to the Call for Proposals should address one (1) of the following five (5) focus areas:

1. Workforce Upskilling Under Continuous Change:

- 1.1. Technology and educational approaches for training contracting officers on challenging approaches.
- 1.2. Technology and educational approaches for training new cost estimators.

2. Management and Business Knowledge Representation for Decision-making:

- 2.1. Corporate memory.

3. Aligning Workforce and Organizational Incentives for Agility or Innovation:

- 3.1. DoD organizational incentives for agility and innovation.
- 3.2. Contractor innovation and performance incentives.

4. Innovative Test Approaches to Enhance Organizational Agility:

- 4.1. Insights from Test and Evaluation (T&E) into requirements, operational concepts, and design.
- 4.2. Integrated T&E and Validation, Verification, and Accreditation (VV&A).
- 4.3. Testing digital engineering and AI artifacts.
- 4.4. T&E of cybersecurity.

5. Return-on-investment (ROI) from Digital Transformation:

- 5.1. Nature of benefits and returns in a government context.
- 5.2. Measuring returns.
- 5.3. ROI in the context of organizational business models.
- 5.4. Mission and portfolio decision models.

Proposals are limited to two (2) pages, with one (1) additional page allowed for endnote references, graphics, and URL links to faculty/researcher bios or CVs. Applicants are asked to address the first six (6) Heilmeier Catechism criteria questions: 1. What are you trying to do? 2. How is it done today, and what are the limits of the current practice? 3. What is new in your approach, and why do you think it will be successful? 4. Who cares? If you are successful, what difference will it make? 5. What are the risks? and 6. How much will it cost (Phase I)?

If there are other sponsors within the DoD who may be interested in your proposed research and might provide matching funds or project guidance, please include this information in your submission.



Submissions should be made through the AIRC website [submission form](#) and are **due by May 14, 2021 by 11:59 pm EDT**. Please contact Kara Pepe at kpepe@stevens.edu with any questions about this opportunity or the proposal response format

The evaluation criteria include: intellectual merit, clarity of the vision, novelty, past performance of the investigators, the potential strategic impact on and importance for the DoD, and the degree of taking full advantage of academia's multi-disciplinary research capabilities. For past performance, please include references to previous research reports and published papers.

Phase I is expected to begin in Summer 2021 and last approximately three (3) months. Funding has been identified for five (5) to seven (7) projects (possibly more), with funding for each project estimated at between \$75K and \$100K. Expected project outcomes include: development of ideas and concepts; engagement with relevant DoD and industry experts; possible inclusion of preliminary proof-of-concept exploration/experimentation; and a proposal for a Phase II application pilot, prototype, or experiment for consideration by government champion(s). Phase II is expected to be initiated in Fall 2021, subject to funding availability, and the period of performance for the proposals (pilot program results within one (1) to two (2) years).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is qualified to submit and who is not qualified to submit proposals?
All Faculty and Researchers (Fellows, Staff, etc.) from United States academic universities are qualified to submit proposals.
2. Are these opportunities limited to SERC members or are FFRDCs eligible?
This Phase 1 opportunity is only for academic universities. Universities that are not SERC members are eligible to apply. Mechanisms, such as designating AIRC Fellows from non-SERC universities is one example. AIRC is working with the sponsors to make this opportunity as open as possible to all U.S. universities. FFRDCs are not eligible.
3. Can organizations submit more than one application?
Yes, each university may submit more than one application. (Note: Phase 1 is only open to academia.)
4. Is a budget required as part of the May 14 submission?
At this point, a ROM (rough order of magnitude) budget would suffice. We wish to keep this process as simple and straightforward as possible.
5. Is a Phase I project necessary to submit a proposal for Phase II?
Yes. This is a phased program: funding is awarded in Phase I with the goal that those projects will advance to Phase II. Phase II is expected to be initiated in Fall 2021, subject to funding availability.



6. Is this considered 6.1 (basic research)?
No. This may be considered as 6.2 (applied research) or 6.3 (advanced technology development).

7. Can universities subcontract with commercial companies?
No. Universities cannot subcontract with commercial companies due to contracting policies. Program funds cannot flow to non-academic entities. However, there is no conflict in a case where an adjunct faculty member who works in industry will participate in the program.

8. Are small businesses required to have a university partner in order to submit proposals?
Small businesses or other industry partners are not qualified to submit proposals. This program is for academia only. (Note: Academic organizations applying to this opportunity may foresee partnering with small businesses or other non-academia organizations in Phase II. This should be indicated in the application as parallel funding mechanisms may be available for Phase II.)

9. Is DoD employee collaboration favorable/acceptable?
Yes. We hope academic researchers establish collaborations with DoD employees.