



# TUTORIAL 10

## Preparing a Letter of Intent

The Department of Energy (DOE) is unique in its requirement that Phase I SBIR/STTR applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) before submitting a full proposal on a Topic/Subtopic pair. The LOI is mandatory

**The Letter of Intent (LOI) is NOT a letter!**

at DOE, meaning the agency will not accept a Phase I SBIR/STTR proposal from a small business applicant if it did not submit an LOI by the deadline. The deadline for the LOI is typically 7 weeks after the Department of Energy has announced its topics/subtopics for the current SBIR/STTR funding period and approximately 3 weeks after DOE releases its Funding Opportunity Announcement or FOA.

### WHY DOES DOE REQUIRE A LETTER OF INTENT?

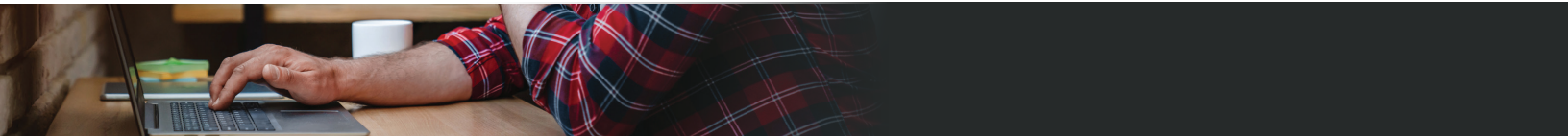
The Department of Energy has two reasons for requiring the LOI from its Phase I SBIR/STTR applicants. The primary reason is to allow DOE the time to line up appropriate technical reviewers for the proposals it anticipates receiving. The latest reauthorization of the SBIR/STTR programs requires agencies to make award decisions within 90 days of the proposal submission deadline. Part


of DOE's strategy for meeting this tight timeframe is to identify reviewers based on the technical approaches specified in the LOIs rather than waiting until the full proposals are received.

The second reason for the LOI is to advise applicants if their proposed R&D appears to be inconsistent with the intentions of DOE's topics/subtopics. Unlike many other granting agencies, DOE has fairly specific topics and expects applicants to submit proposals that are consistent with them. If a submitted LOI suggests to

DOE that an applicant's direction is inconsistent with the vision of the topic author, then DOE can warn the applicant who in turn has the opportunity to take corrective actions. We will discuss later what to do if you receive an "apparently nonresponsive" warning to your LOI.


**A well-prepared LOI enables DOE to select reviewers early so that they can assess the proposals and make announcements within 90 days of SBIR/STTR Phase I submissions.**





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OMB Number: 1910-5178  
Expiration: 07-31-2022

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(Example: Mr., Ms., Dr.)

None ▾

\* First Name

Middle Initial

\* Last Name

Suffix  
(Example: Jr., Sr., III)

\* Username

## SUBMIT YOUR LOI THROUGH PAMS

The LOI must be submitted electronically via DOE's Portfolio Analysis & Management System (PAMS) as a pdf file. The applicant's principal investigator (PI) and/or business official must register on PAMS as individuals, and then link or "associate" their individual registrations to the applicant small business' within PAMS. If this is the applicant's first SBIR/STTR proposal to DOE, chances are the company doesn't yet have a PAMS account. The company registration step can be done after the PI/business official creates their PAMS registration. The process takes only a day or so but must be done before the LOI can be submitted.

We, therefore, suggest you complete PAMS registration as soon as possible. Be sure to see the DOE Phase I FOA for detailed registration and submission instructions, and links to the PAMS help desk.

## LOI FORMAT

There are several components to the LOI, but its key content is a technical abstract of your envisioned Phase I project. The abstract is limited to 500 words, and should not exceed 2 pages including any graphics. Remembering the primary and secondary purposes of the LOI, this abstract must provide information needed by DOE to begin identifying appropriate technical reviewers, and

confirm that this proposal aligns with the intentions of the DOE topic/subtopic.

Therefore, the LOI abstract should include a strong paragraph that describes the Phase I project in adequate technical detail so that DOE personnel can decide what kinds of disciplines and expertise will be required among the proposal reviewers. Further, the abstract should include a clear, concise, and convincing paragraph on how the proposed project addresses the DOE's topic/subtopic. "This is what DOE said it wanted/needed, and this is how this project will provide it" is the gist of this paragraph.

It is advantageous for the LOI abstract to begin with a short paragraph generally describing the proposed project and its importance. This can help "set the stage" for the two main paragraphs suggested above. Given the ever-increasing emphasis on commercialization in the SBIR/STTR programs, if space allows, you might include in the LOI abstract a statement about the market opportunity, strategy, and your overall vision for the business opportunity that your project presents and how you will exploit that opportunity.

**You submit your LOI through DOE's Portfolio and Management System (PAMS). Be sure to register with PAMS in advance.**





Some additional suggestions on the content of the LOI:

1. Do not include anything proprietary in the LOI
2. Graphics can be included, but they count toward the 2 page limit
3. The LOI should be consistent with the proposal that you subsequently submit, so make sure you have your project thought out fully before you write the LOI
4. A Phase I project should prove the technical feasibility of your approach in solving the problem specified in the DOE topic/subtopic
5. The LOI should be well written and professional. However, do not strive for perfection when "well done" is good enough. Remember, if you don't submit the LOI, you can't submit the full proposal, so ensure the LOI meets DOE's requirements but don't let it be a stumbling block to submitting a proposal.

Once you submit your LOI to DOE via PAMS, you should receive an email confirming that it was received. If you don't, this might signal a problem, and you should call the PAMS help center to rectify it.

#### APPARENTLY NON-RESPONSIVE E-MAIL

It is important to note that you will NOT receive communication about your LOI unless it appears non-responsive. Quoting the DOE Phase I SBIR/STTR FOA, "Feedback will only be provided to those applicants where the proposed R&D described in the LOI appears to be nonresponsive to the selected topic and subtopic." So, this is definitely a situation where "no news is good news." Be sure to see the Tutorial on what to do if you receive an "Apparently Non-responsive" e-mail from DOE.

**If you submit your LOI on a topic/subtopic pair – you can still submit an application on that topic, even if you receive an "Apparently Non-Responsive" e-mail from DOE.**