TUTORIAL 6

Start Proposal Preparation Once Topics are Released

PRIORITIZING YOUR TIME

If this is your first time preparing a Phase I SBIR/STTR application to the Department of Energy (DOE), you will need as much time as possible to develop a responsive submission. The challenge for every new applicant is – how to find that time. One option, that many applicants fail to consider is starting to work on proposal preparation once the Department of Energy's Topics document is released. Starting then will give applicants approximately five extra weeks to consider their technical approach to the topic/subtopic pair of interest.

GIVE YOURSELF FIVE EXTRA WEEKS

DOE's SBIR/STTR guidelines are released in the Funding Opportunity Announcement approximately five weeks after the Topics document is released. However, these guidelines vary little from year to year. That said, there is no reason why an applicant cannot begin to work on their proposal once the DOE topics are released, using the previous Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) as the initial guide. The parts of the FOA to initially review are the required registrations and the
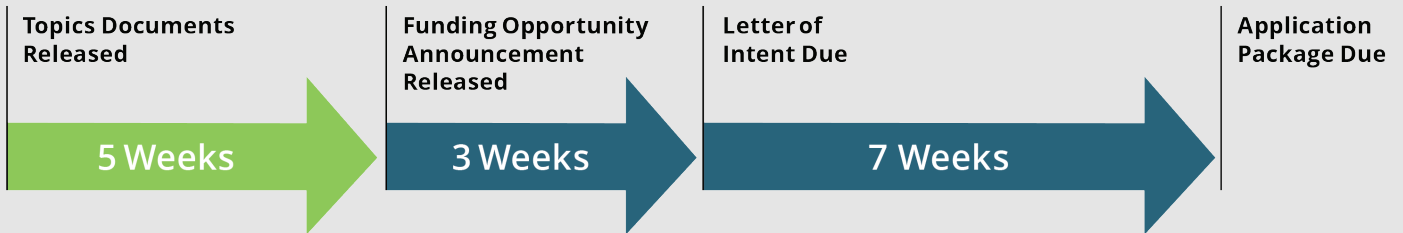
format of the Project Narrative. The Project Narrative is the heart of the application package. If the applicant doesn't do a good job preparing this 15-page document – nothing else really matters. Once DOE releases the new FOA, then only use the new Funding Opportunity Announcement as your guide.

If you start to work on your proposal in this fashion, you will have gained approximately five extra weeks for developing your Phase I

> **Be sure to use the new Funding Opportunity Announcement as a reference, once released.**

SBIR/STTR application package. This time would have been lost if the applicant waited to begin proposal preparation until the new Funding Opportunity Announcement was released. Use this precious time and divide your attention between those activities that require your creativity and those that require your perseverance. Set aside unfettered time to address creative tasks and time to tackle the required registrations.

More Time for Proposal Preparation

Topics Documents Released	Funding Opportunity Announcement Released	Letter of Intent Due	Application Package Due
5 Weeks	**3 Weeks**	**7 Weeks**	

THE PROJECT NARRATIVE

The Phase I SBIR/STTR application package has numerous components –all of which relate to the Project Narrative. In other words, the budget, the resumes, the forms which are all part of the Application package provide implementation details related to the Project Narrative. Therefore, once you have selected a Topic/Subtopic pair, use your creativity and excitement to start working on the first three sections of the Project Narrative. This lays the foundation for developing your Phase I application package. The sections of the project narrative that you should start to develop include:

> **During this period, start working on the Project Narrative and some registrations.**

» **Identification and Significance of the Problem or Opportunity, and technical Approach**

» **Anticipated Public Benefits**

» **Technical Objectives**

Once you have decided upon a Topic/subtopic, drafting these three sections of the Project Narrative will raise potential questions to discuss with the Topic Managers (TM), provide the foundation for preparing a responsive Letter of Intent (LOI) and result in more time for you to address the subsequent details associated with preparation of your Phase I SBIR/STTR application.

REGISTRATIONS

During the period between the time that the Topics document is released, and the new Funding Opportunity Announcement is provided, complete some of the registrations required by the Department of Energy. There are numerous systems with which you must register – but start with the two most important: **PAMS** – the **DOE Office of Science Portfolio Analysis System and SAM – the System for Awards Management**. Both are important. However, start with PAMS as this is the system through which you will submit your LOI. With respect to the System for Awards Management (SAM), be aware that it can take up to 6 weeks to complete this registration process. Therefore, if you delay starting the SAM registration process, you run the risk of not completing this registration in time to submit your Phase I SBIR/STTR application.

In summary, use the time between the release of the Topics document and the subsequent release of the Funding Opportunity Announcement to your advantage. Use your creativity and excitement to start drafting sections of the Project Narrative and counterbalance that with your ability to complete some of the required registrations. This will put you in a good position to complete the various tasks involved with developing a responsive application package. Be sure to refer to additional Tutorials for more details on preparation of the Letter of Intent, the Project Narrative, and various registrations.

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