Rapid Innovation Fund (RIF)

How to Write A Winning Proposal
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RIF Proposals: Key Considerations

- Know your customer
- Selling Your Product
- Effective Communication to DoD
- Transition Considerations
- Quad Charts and White Papers
- DoD Requirements as Capability Needs
➢ DoD Procurement Focus:
  • Planning
  • Training
  • Buying
  • Fighting

➢ DoD purchases *capability*, not necessarily stuff

➢ DoD strives to be an informed buyer

➢ Convince DoD your expertise and capability are in its best interest
Know Your Customer

➢ Market Research---Identify who in DoD is interested in your capability
  • Look at previous RIF BAAs
    https://www.fbo.gov/
  • SBIR search tools
    https://sbir.defensebusiness.org/search#/  
    https://www.sbir.gov/sbirsearch/topic/current

➢ Develop relationships with interested DoD organizations
➢ Understand their issues and requirements
➢ Adapt your technology to solve their problems
➢ Ensure the “contracting vehicle” is preliminarily identified
Set your company up to facilitate doing business with DoD as easy as possible; must obtain the following first:

- **NAICS** (North American Industry Classification System) code
- **DUNS** (Data Universal Numbering System) number
- Register in the **SAM** (System for Award Management)
- **WAWF** (Wide Area Workflow) registration

Great resource with links that will walk you through the process:

Selling To DoD

Show DoD you understand:

➢ The **Problem** (BAA Requirement)

➢ What is a **Sound Solution**

➢ How to shape your product into an **Effective Capability**

➢ Interdependence and Management of **Cost, Schedule, and Performance**

➢ **Risks** to success and thought through **mitigation** of each

“Convince us you understand our problem, have a well thought-out solution, know how to deliver that solution in a timely manner at acceptable risk, and will deliver for a fair price.”

Distribution Statement A. Approved for public release
All about the stated Problem/Challenge:

➢ 90% of a *Good Answer* is a *Good Definition* of the Problem

➢ Explain Requirement in your words – no regurgitation

➢ DoD will not give your proposal serious consideration if we are not convinced you understand the problem or challenge
Straight Line from Problem to Solution

➢ Explain how your solution/technology solves our problem

➢ Backup your claims with data when possible

➢ Describe how the technology is innovative and achieves the desired effect

➢ Convince us of the efficacy of the technology
Putting Idea into Practice

➢ Demonstrate you know how to mature technology into an operational capability to meet DoD needs

➢ If your proposal does not get into the hands of the warfighter, explain how your proposal gets closer to a total warfighter solution

➢ Describe proposed verification events:
  • How will you demonstrate your solution solves the problem?
  • What is the compelling evidence to be presented to prove your solution works?
Project Stability: Performance, Schedule, Cost

- Assure you know how to deliver product performance within reasonable cost and on time

- Avoid stretching schedule to keep annual costs low

- Provide a realistic schedule estimate –
  - Do not take two years because we allow you two years

- Describe the “inflection point” where higher performance drives cost at a higher rate so we know how much “good enough” costs relative to “unobtainable”
Managing Risk

➢ Address potential showstoppers and explain mitigation

➢ Risk comes in the form of money, time, technology, access, people – not limited to cost and schedule

➢ Phase your work to demonstrate progress and “see over the next hill”
Learn “DoD-Speak”

➢ DoD and the Services/Agencies have their own lingo, become familiar or risk being misunderstood

➢ When in doubt explain don’t imply ideas or concepts else you risk “talking past” the evaluator

➢ Take advantage of opportunity to talk to DoD representatives
Requirements

➢ Requirements are tricky – they need to balance between being descriptive while avoiding being prescriptive

➢ “Context is worth 50 IQ points” – vital to understand the context of the requirement

➢ Verify you understand the effect DoD is trying to accomplish under what conditions

➢ Verify you understand how well the solution must perform to achieve the desired effect
Quad Charts & White Papers

They matter a great deal!

➢ Quad charts and white papers are for different purposes and audiences

➢ White papers educate and confirm the quality of the proposal
  • Information source for making recommendations to buy
  • Read by evaluators

➢ Quad charts justify investments
  • Source of understanding alternatives
  • Read by funding decision makers

“White Papers create informed buyers. Quad Charts inform which problems should be solved with limited resources.”
Transition

Without transition it’s just cool technology

➢ Transition is a team sport, technology doesn’t move out of the lab to the warfighter without heavy collaboration

➢ Understand how technology moves via DoD R&D and acquisition processes – nothing like commercial sector!

➢ User advocacy is critical to great solutions moving forward, “social engineering” holds equal importance to technical engineering