



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**



Know Your Customer



- 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



DoD Contracting Basics

- 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:
<http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/about/attachments/guide-to-dod-contracting-fc20061016.pdf>



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.”



Effective Communication to DoD

(1 of 6)



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



Effective Communication to DoD

(2 of 6)



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



Effective Communication to DoD

(3 of 6)



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?



Effective Communication to DoD

(4 of 6)



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”



Effective Communication to DoD

(5 of 6)



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”



Effective Communication to DoD

(6 of 6)



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