Frequently Asked Questions

YFA - FAQ

1Q: I am interested in submitting a proposal to the 2021 YFA Research Announcement (RA), but my research topic does not fall under any of the Topic Areas (TAs). Does DARPA encourage proposals outside of these TAs?

1A: Unfortunately, no. If you feel that your research is not directly related to one of the topic areas, you may look into submitting a proposal to another active DARPA solicitation, including the DARPA Office-wide Broad Agency Announcements (http://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/office-wide-broad-agency-announcements). It is important to note that any such submission cannot be referred to as a "YFA" proposal. Prior to any submission, you should carefully review technical area description to ensure the proposed concept is in line with that solicitation and/or office's technology investment portfolio.

2Q: My idea fits into multiple topic areas. May I submit to multiple topic areas and/or submit multiple applications?

2A: You may submit only one YFA executive summary per TA and only one full proposal to the RA (total). Proposers must specify ONE and only one TA for their full proposal submission and identify this on the cover page. If your research idea spans multiple topics, then you should choose one, best-suited topic for that idea. Do not submit the same idea to multiple topic areas. DARPA reserves the right to assign proposals to a different topic area than indicated by the proposer.

3Q: My proposed idea is [insert research idea]. Is this of interest? Can I get confirmation that my research fits within the scope of one of the TAs in the RA?

3A: Proposers are strongly encouraged to submit an executive summary in advance of a full proposal to determine DARPA's interest and minimize the effort and expense of preparing an out of scope proposal. If proposers have technical questions about a TA that can be shared with the general public via the FAQ, they can submit those questions to the YFA2021@darpa.mil inbox for response.

4Q: Under what topic area is my research most applicable?

4A: It is up to you to choose the most appropriate TA for your proposed research. Please note that DARPA reserves the right to assign proposals to a different TA than that which was indicated by the proposer.

5Q: Will the YFA solicitation go out every year, and will the topic areas vary over the years?

5A: We are unable to make good-faith predictions about future solicitations. While this program has received positive feedback in the past, the future of the program depends on the availability of funding. The topic areas for YFA solicitations tend to vary, but are designed to meet the needs of DARPA Program Managers at the time that the solicitation is issued.

6Q: I would like to request a meeting with a specific YFA topic POC. Is this possible?

6A: No. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of responses to this RA, YFA topic POCs are unable to accommodate such meetings. However, if you have specific technical or administrative questions that may be shared with the general public, you may send them to YFA2021@darpa.mil .

7Q: Can I view a sample of a previously-awarded proposal?

7A: No.

8Q: What is the effort requirement for the PI? We plan on having other FTEs working on this project so we want to budget appropriately for the PI.

8A: DARPA cannot determine this for you. The PI's level of effort should be substantial enough to ensure that the proposed research can be completed during the grant period.

9Q: Are preliminary results required, allowed but not required, or not allowed in this solicitation?

9A: Preliminary results are allowed but not required.

10Q: If proposers are intending to include human or animal use in their research study do they need to include a document detailing human or animal use?

10A: For projects anticipating human or animal use, proposals should briefly describe plans for Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review and approval. A description of these plans should be included in the proposal.

11Q: Does the limit of $500,000 for the Base Award include indirect costs?

11A: Yes.

12Q: May proposers include research students or visitors in the proposed travel budget?

12A: Proposers should submit a realistic and appropriate travel budget. If you propose a travel budget for multiple individuals you will be expected to justify this in the cost proposal. All requests for travel funding (for both the Principal Investigator and others) will be reviewed by the DARPA Program Manager as well as the Grants Officer for those proposals selected for award. Any requests for travel funding that are deemed excessive will likely be reduced during negotiations, if selected. Please also note, foreign travel cost can be proposed, but justification will need to be provided. Please read the RA very carefully regarding guidance for travel costs.

13Q: Is there a DARPA list of labor categories and associated qualifications I can use in my cost proposal?

13A: There is no such list maintained by DARPA. You may use the categories established by your institution.

14Q: Is a Letter of Support from the University Department Head required for the full proposal submission?

14A: No. However, an official transmittal letter is required for a full proposal submission. This is typically a brief, signed statement from an official at the submitter's organization (perhaps a Director of Research or Sponsored Programs) in support of the research proposed. Please reach out to your University's Office of Sponsored Research for further information and guidance.

15Q: If I took a leave of absence (i.e. maternity, sabbatical, etc.) within 3 years of being hired or promoted to a tenure position, should this period be included in the 3 year window?

15A: Situations like this are highly case-dependent. If the institution has approved leaves of absence, these dates may be listed on the cover sheet of the submission under "PI's Approved Leaves of Absence, if any." DARPA will only accept the official tenure start date according to the university. If the time between the tenure start date and full proposal submission deadline exceeds the 3 year eligibility window, DARPA will expect to see the excess amount justified in the approved leaves of absence section. Failure to provide any/all relevant information relating to the PIs eligibility on the cover page of the submission may result in the proposal being determined non-conforming and subject to rejection without review.

16Q: Is it recommended for proposers to include a budget for the Director's Fellowship in the third year?

16A: Yes. The proposer should include cost information as defined by the RA, for both the base and Director's Fellowship Option. Note that there is a maximum budget of $500,000 the Director's Fellowship. If a proposer does not include a Director's Fellowship Option in the proposal, they may not add the option later should the proposal be selected for funding.

17Q: Should we include a budget for equipment, and is there a funding limitation on equipment purchases?

17A: If you will need to purchase equipment to perform your research, then it should be included in your budget via a priced Bill-of-Materials. (All equipment priced at over $5,000 requires supporting documentation, such as a vendor quote.) There is no specific limit for equipment purchases; however, your total budget for the 24-month base period cannot exceed $500,000.

18Q: I am [a non-U.S. citizen/a Permanent Resident/Green Card holder/etc.]; can I apply to YFA if I meet eligibility requiments? Do I need to be able to obtain a security clearance to be eligible for YFA?

18A: There is no language in the RA prohibiting a non-U.S. citizen/Permanent Resident/Green Card holder/etc. from applying to this RA; all such persons MAY apply to this RA **as long as the application comes from a U.S. institution**. It is NOT a requirement of the RA that proposers be eligible to obtain a U.S. security clearance. Non-U.S. citizens who are employed at non-U.S. organizations may NOT participate in the YFA program in any capacity.

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19Q: I am considering applying to other Young Investigator programs sponsored by other agencies. Does that disqualify me from proposing to (or being selected for) the DARPA YFA grant?

19A: No. Submission to other programs by DARPA or other agencies is not restricted. Recipients of non-YFA DARPA awards are eligible to propose. Proposers must provide a listing of federal support (past, current, and pending). This list must include the sponsor, amount, and performance dates of all federally-funded research efforts. Please note that proposals previously funded by other agencies should NOT be submitted to the RA.

20Q: The RA specifies single-investigator proposal only. Am I allowed to include subcontractors, vendors, or other faculty members, if they are included in a supporting role, and not listed as a Co-PI?

20A: This RA solicits single Principal Investigator (PI) proposals; no co-PIs are allowed. However, investigators will be given the opportunity to propose teaming if the nature of the proposal requires it. Combined, teaming and subcontract awards will be limited to no more than 30% of the total grant value. Specific content, communications, networking, and team formation will be the sole responsibility of the participants. Non-U.S. citizens who are employed at non-U.S. organizations may NOT participate in the YFA program in any capacity.

21Q: I see that researchers working at Federally Funded Research and Development Centers and DoD and other Government Laboratories are not eligible to apply for funding under this program as Principal Investigators. Can proposers team with these organizations for support?

21A: Yes. Principal Investigators can choose to team with Federally Funded Research and Development Centers and DoD and other Government Laboratories, not to exceed 30% of the total grant value.

22Q: Is a Ph.D. required?

22A: Current Tenure-Track Assistant/Associate Professors, and Tenured faculty within 3 years of their Tenure date are NOT required to have Ph.D. However, an equivalent at a non-profit research institution is required to be within 12 years of the receipt of their Ph.D. to be eligible for the YFA program.

23Q: I am a young investigator at a non-profit research institute that does not have Tenure-Track positions. Do I qualify as part of an equivalent non-profit research institution?

23A: If the proposer is from a non-profit science and technology research institution a determination of eligibility must be made using the following guidance:

- The appointment must be a continuing appointment (soft-money appointments and/or visiting appointments do not apply and will not be considered).

- If the employing organization DOES NOT offer Tenure-Track appointments, then the PI must be within 12 years of the receipt of their Ph.D.

- If the employing organization DOES offer Tenure-Track appointments, then only current Tenure-Track associates and Tenured faculty within 3 years of their Tenure date are eligible for the YFA program.

24Q: If I am an Assistant Professor not in a Tenure-Track position (even though my institution offers tenure-track positions) am I eligible to submit a proposal?

24A: Unfortunately no; eligible applicants must be Tenure-Track or Tenured professors (or their equivalents) at the time of submission.

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25Q: If I was previously in a Tenure-Track or Tenured position, but have changed universities and am currently in a Tenure-Track or Tenured position, am I still eligible to submit a proposal?

25A: Proposers must meet the eligibility requirements of the RA for current positions. Previous positions do not apply.