

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

PLEASE REFER TO THE GENERAL FAQS SECTION OF ARPA-E'S WEBSITE ([HTTP://ARPA-E.ENERGY.GOV/?Q=FAQ/GENERAL-QUESTIONS](http://arpa-e.energy.gov/?q=faq/general-questions)) FOR ANSWERS TO MANY GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT ARPA-E AND ARPA-E'S FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS. ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO THIS FOA ONLY ARE INCLUDED BELOW. PLEASE REVIEW ALL EXISTING GENERAL FAQS AND FOA-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS BEFORE SUBMITTING NEW QUESTIONS TO ARPA-E.

I. Concept Paper Phase Questions:

Q1. WE ARE A SMALL BUSINESS AND WE HAVE AN ELIGIBILITY QUESTION REGARDING THE DE-FOA-0003164 SOLICITATION, "SPURRING PROJECTS TO ADVANCE ENERGY RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE SWIFTLY (SPARKS) – CONCEPT PAPERS."

CAN A SMALL BUSINESS BE THE LEAD/PRIME OF A PROPOSED PROJECT OR ARE THEY ONLY ABLE TO BE A SUBRECIPIENT TO A NATIONAL LAB OR UNIVERSITY? THE SOLICITATION IS A LITTLE UNCLEAR AND WE WOULD APPRECIATE SOME CLARIFICATION AS WE MAY BE INTERESTED IN APPLYING.

ANSWER: Domestic small businesses are eligible to apply and be the lead/prime of a proposed project. Please refer to Section III. Eligibility Information of the DE-FOA-0003164 funding opportunity announcement.

Q2. I AM INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE SPURRING PROJECTS TO ADVANCE ENERGY RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE SWIFTLY PROGRAM. IS THERE A CONTACT I CAN SCHEDULE A QUICK 15-MINUTE MEETING WITH TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE UPCOMING TIMELINE FOR THIS PROGRAM AS WELL AS THE PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS?

I REPRESENT AN ENGINEERING FIRM WHO MAY BE ABLE TO OFFER SERVICES TO THE PROJECT RECIPIENTS IN ORDER TO HELP THEM HIT THEIR PROJECT GOALS. MY MAIN QUESTIONS ARE,

- **HOW ARE PROJECTS SELECTED?**
- **WHEN ARE PROJECT SELECTIONS ANNOUNCED?**

ANSWER: Please refer to the DE-FOA-0003164 funding opportunity announcement for Technical and submission guidance, submission deadlines, "Concept Paper Review Information" and notification schedules. Also, Section VII. Agency Contacts provides guidance on how to communicate with ARPA-E about the content of this funding opportunity.



Q3. I AM INTERESTED TO APPLY IN THE CATEGORY 5 OF THE ARPA-E SPARKS SOLICITATION. CATEGORY 5 FOCUSES ON CARBON CAPTURE FROM THE OCEAN AND THE ATMOSPHERE. ACCORDING TO THE THE FOA I AM STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT ONE OF THE ARPA-E PROGRAM MANAGERS PRIOR TO THE SUBMISSION OF A CONCEPT PAPER. HOWEVER, NONE OF THE PROGRAM MANAGER LISTED ON THE ARPA-E WEBPAGE HAS A BACKGROUND IN CARBON CAPTURE ACCORDING TO THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WEBSITE.

[HTTPS://ARPA-E.ENERGY.GOV/ABOUT/TEAM-DIRECTORY/PROGRAM-DIRECTORS](https://arpa-e.energy.gov/about/team-directory/program-directors)

THEREFORE, I AM UNSURE WHO TO CONTACT. CAN YOU GIVE ME A RECOMMENDATION, WHICH PROGRAM MANAGER I SHOULD CONTACT?

ANSWER: Please refer to the DE-FOA-0003164 SPARKS funding opportunity announcement Section VII. Agency Contacts subsection A.3 Technical Inquiries.

Q4. READING THE SPARKS CONCEPT PAPER FOA (ISSUED NOVEMBER 7, 2023), THERE ARE STATEMENTS THAT APPEAR TO CONTRADICT EACH OTHER ABOUT WHETHER SMALL BUSINESS CAN APPLY. I'M GUESSING THIS IS UNINTENTIONAL AMBIGUOUS WORDING, BUT I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT CONCEPT PAPERS FROM SMALL BUSINESS, WHICH TRANSFORM COMPUTING IS, ARE ACCEPTABLE.

NAMELY, ON P. 10, IN III.A.2., IT SAYS "FOR-PROFIT ENTITIES[FN12] ... ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR FUNDING", AND FOOTNOTE 12 SAYS "FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (OTHER THAN SMALL BUSINESSES) (OR LARGE BUSINESSES): MEANS ENTITIES ORGANIZED FOR-PROFIT OTHER THAN SMALL BUSINESSES AS DEFINED ELSEWHERE IN THIS GLOSSARY." IF I UNDERSTAND CORRECTLY, THE "OTHER THAN SMALL BUSINESSES" MEANS SMALL BUSINESS MAY NOT APPLY. HOWEVER, ON P. 11, IN III.B, THE FIRST BULLET POINT SAYS "COST SHARING WILL NOT BE REQUIRED FOR FULL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BY ... DOMESTIC SMALL BUSINESSES", WHICH IMPLIES THAT SMALL BUSINESS MAY APPLY.

CAN YOU CLARIFY WHETHER SMALL BUSINESS ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY TO THE SPARKS FOA?

ANSWER: See the answer to FAQ1.

Q5. IT IS NOTED IN THE FOA THAT “APPLICATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO OTHER CURRENTLY ISSUED ARPA-E FOAS”. WE ASSUME THIS INCLUDES ALL PAST FOAS TOO. HOWEVER, WHAT IS THE STANCE IF IT WAS AN UNAWARDED CONCEPT THAT HAS NOW BEEN REFORMULATED AND IMPROVED FOR BETTER EFFICACY AND INCREASED TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT?

ANSWER: See FAQ 9.

Q6. PLEASE CONFIRM THAT SINCE FFRDCS ARE EXCLUDED FROM BEING STANDALONE APPLICANTS, THAT A PROJECT TEAM ALSO CANNOT BE EXCLUSIVELY INCLUDING MULTIPLE FFRDCS. WE ASSUME THIS IS THE CASE BASED ON THE WORDING OF THIS STATEMENT IN SECTION III.A.2 BUT WANT TO REMOVE ANY AMBIGUITY:

“FFRDCS/DOE LABS ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR FUNDING AS THE LEAD ORGANIZATION FOR A PROJECT TEAM OR AS A MEMBER OF A PROJECT TEAM THAT INCLUDES INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, COMPANIES, RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS, OR TRADE AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS, BUT NOT AS A STANDALONE APPLICANT.”

ANSWER: Confirmed.

Q7. I’M WRITING IN RESPONSE TO THE SPARKS FOA ANNOUNCEMENT FROM NOVEMBER 7, 2023. MY TECHNOLOGY FALLS INTO WHAT I BELIEVE IS TECHNOLOGY AREA 7. ---REDACTED--- - I’M REACHING OUT TO DETERMINE IF WHAT WE’VE INVENTED WOULD FALL UNDER THE SPARKS PROGRAM, IS THERE A WAY TO TALK WITH SOMEONE BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH AN APPLICATION?

ANSWER: Please refer to the DE-FOA-0003164 SPARKS funding opportunity announcement Section VII. Agency Contacts subsection A.3 Technical Inquiries.

Q8. I HAVE A QUESTION.

- 1.) DO I HAVE TO PURCHASE SPECIFICALLY ADOBE PDF (AS NOTED IN THE DIRECTIONS) IN ORDER TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION. I HAVE MY APPLICATION WRITTEN UP, IN THE FORMAT REQUESTED -- USING LIBRE-OFFICE 7.6 WHICH HAS PDF CAPABILITIES. - THE SAME AS AND COMPATIBLE WITH ADOBE PDF.**
- 2.) WHERE ARE PRECISE, STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO UPLOAD MY DE-FOA-0003164 (SPARKS) APPLICATION TO ARPA-E; AS THERE IS NOTHING IN THE Q&A SECTION?**

ANSWER: 1. The document that is submitted must be in a compatible Adobe PDF format. The purchase of Adobe PDF is not required.

2. Please refer to the DE-FOA-0003164 SPARKS funding opportunity announcement for submission requirements. Also, the ARPA-E Exchange Applicant guide is published in the "Manuals" section of the website. The guide provides guidance on the use and operations of the ARPA-E Funding Opportunity Exchange website.

Q9. FOR THE SECTION ON APPLICATIONS SPECIFICALLY NOT OF INTEREST, WE WOULD LIKE CLARIFICATION ON THE TERM "CURRENTLY ISSUED" IN THE STATEMENT: "APPLICATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO OTHER CURRENTLY ISSUED ARPA-E FOAS." DOES THAT MEAN FOAS THAT ARE CURRENTLY OPEN AND ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS? OR DOES THAT MEAN THOSE FOAS ISSUED IN THE PAST AND ARE NOW CLOSED.

ANSWER: Applications that have been submitted in response to other currently issued ARPA-E FOAs as listed on the ARPA-E Funding Opportunity Exchange will be deemed nonresponsive. This does not include Archived Funding Opportunities.

Q10. I'M INTERESTED IN APPLY TO BOTH SPARKS AND IGNITE FOA'S, HOWEVER, I AM UNCLEAR ON THE ELIGIBILITY OF SMALL BUSINESSES FOR EACH OF THESE. ON PAGE 10 OF THE SPARKS FOA DOCUMENT, IT LISTS "FOR-PROFIT ENTITIES" WITH A SUBNOTE #12 STATING "FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (OTHER THAN SMALL BUSINESSES)...

I WOULD INTERPRET THIS TO MEAN THAT SMALL BUSINESSES ARE NOT ELIGIBLE. HOWEVER, ON THE NEXT PAGE, SECTION B: COST SHARING, IT STATES THAT DOMESTIC SMALL BUSINESSES ARE NOT REQUIRED TO COST SHARE. SO THIS MAKES ME WONDER IF SB'S ARE ACTUALLY ALLOWED TO APPLY AND I'M MISUNDERSTANDING THE USE OF THE "OTHER THAN.." PHRASE.

ANSWER: Small businesses may apply. See answer to FAQ 1.

Q11. I'M INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING A CONCEPT PAPER TO THE SPARKS PROGRAM, BUT THERE IS NO DEADLINE LISTED ON THE ARPA-E EXCHANGE WEBSITE. WOULD YOU KNOW WHEN THE DEADLINE WILL BE ANNOUNCED, OR IS THIS A ROLLING SUBMISSION?

ANSWER: Please see the Cover Page of the FOA. This FOA is open continuously until otherwise amended.



Q12. FOR ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN THE SPARKS FOA, IT STATES UNDER INDIVIDUALS: "U.S. CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS MAY APPLY FOR FUNDING IN THEIR INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY AS A STANDALONE APPLICANT, AS THE LEAD FOR A PROJECT TEAM, OR AS A MEMBER OF A PROJECT TEAM". UNDER DOMESTIC ENTITIES, IT STATES "FFRD/DOE LABS ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR FUNDING AS THE LEAD ORGANIZATION FOR A PROJECT TEAM OR AS A MEMBER OF A PROJECT TEAM THAT INCLUDES INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, COMPANIES, RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS, OR TRADE AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS, BUT NOT AS A STANDALONE APPLICANT." WHEN APPLYING AS AN FFRDC APPLICANT, DOES THIS MEAN ONLY U.S. CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS CAN APPLY?

ANSWER: No. Please refer to Section III.A of the FOA. If someone is applying in their individual capacity, then they must be US citizens or permanent residents. If they are applying as an FFRDC applicant, then they are applying as a domestic entity rather than as an individual.

Q13. I WOULD LIKE TO CONFIRM THAT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT REFERS TO TOTAL PROJECT COSTS OR TOTAL AWARD, PLEASE CLARIFY.....

"SPARKS AWARDS ARE DEFINED AS SINGLE-PHASE EFFORTS OF DURATIONS OF 18 MONTHS OR LESS WITH A TOTAL PROJECT COST OF \$500,000 OR LESS AND WILL BE ISSUED THROUGH GRANTS.2 "

ANSWER: See answer to Q16.

Q14. I AM LOOKING TO GET IN TOUCH WITH A PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR THE SPARKS PROGRAM TO DISCUSS A RESEARCH CONCEPT. I WOULD LIKE TO VERIFY IF IT WOULD BE A FIT FOR THE SPARKS PROGRAM. ---REDACTED--- COULD YOU PROVIDE ME WITH AN APPROPRIATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR TO DISCUSS THIS WITH?

ANSWER: Please refer to FAQ 7.

Q15. WE ARE PREPARING A CONCEPT PAPER FOR DE-FOA-0003164 (SPARKS). THE PROVIDED TEMPLATE DID NOT INCLUDE A SECTION FOR REFERENCES. IS THERE A PREFERRED FORMAT FOR REFERENCES?

ANSWER: Please use the font, size, and spacing requirements listed in Section IV.B of the SPARKS Concept Paper FOA. Beyond those requirements there is no preferred format for references.

Q16. I AM WRITING TO YOU REGARDING OPPORTUNITY NO. DE-FOA-0003164 IN NEED OF CLARIFICATION ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- 1. SPARKS AWARDS ARE DEFINED AS SINGLE-PHASE EFFORTS OF DURATIONS OF 18 MONTHS OR LESS WITH A TOTAL PROJECT COST OF \$500,000 OR LESS AND WILL BE ISSUED THROUGH GRANTS.2**

MY QUESTION ON THIS IS THE PROJECT COST NOT TO EXCEED \$500,000, OR JUST THE GRANT FUNDS NOT TO EXCEED \$500,000?

- 2. ARPA-E FUNDS RESEARCH ON, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF, TRANSFORMATIVE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MISSIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT. THE AGENCY FOCUSES ON TECHNOLOGIES THAT CAN BE MEANINGFULLY ADVANCED WITH A MODEST INVESTMENT OVER A DEFINED PERIOD OF TIME IN ORDER TO CATALYZE THE TRANSLATION FROM SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY TO EARLY- STAGE TECHNOLOGY.**

IS THIS IN REFERENCE TO ONLY NEW TECHNOLOGY AND NOT EXISTING TECHNOLOGY?

ANSWER: 1. The project cost is not to exceed \$500,000 (NOT just the grant funds).

2. "Technologies that can be meaningfully advanced" can involve existing technology. However, please refer to Section III.C.2 of the SPARKS Concept Paper FOA, which deems "Applications for large-scale demonstration projects of existing technologies" and "Applications for proposed technologies that represent incremental improvements to existing technologies" as non-responsive to the FOA.

Q17. HI, WAS CURIOUS IF **REDACTED ARE A CONSIDERATION FOR THE SPARKS GRANT (DE-FOA-0003164)?**

ANSWER: Please refer to FAQ 7 and ARPA-E General FAQ 2.7.

Q18. I REALIZE YOU CANNOT GUARANTEE ANY SUCCESS IN APPLYING, BUT WANTED TO GAUGE WHETHER THIS IDEA COULD BE ENTERTAINED OR IF IT WAS COMPLETELY OFF THE RESERVATION.

ANSWER: ARPA-E will not pre-assess a proposed submission. Applicants are encouraged to review Section I.D of the SPARKS Concept Paper FOA, Technical Categories, and make an independent determination whether to submit a Concept Paper. See also FAQ 14; ARPA-E General FAQ 2.7.

Q19. WE ARE APPLYING FOR THE SPARKS PROGRAM FUNDING, AND ARE CURIOUS IF WE WILL SUBMIT OUR CONCEPT PAPER, WILL STILL BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR SBIR/STTR DOE OR AT LEAST SEND IN THE LETTER OF INTENT. ALSO WE'LL BE ABLE TO APPLY AT THE AMERICAN MADE CHALLENGE WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY DOE WITHOUT ANY INTERFERENCE OR POSSIBLY REJECTION BY ARPA-E?

ANSWER: There is no SBIR/STTR FOA for SPARKS. Applications to SPARKS that are not scientifically distinct from existing funded activities supported elsewhere, including within the DOE, will be deemed nonresponsive and will not be reviewed or considered. See SPARKS Concept Paper FOA Section III.C.2. SPARKS Applicants are not prohibited from also applying to other agencies, including DOE, for funding related to the same proposed project activities, however, if you receive an award from both programs for the same project, you will not be permitted to receive overlapping funding for the same project activities.

Q20. WE HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TECHNICAL INQUIRIES THAT ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED WITH THE SPARKS FOA.

- 1) SHOULD WE COPY THE ARPA-E-CO@HQ.DOE.GOV EMAIL WHEN TRYING TO ENGAGE ONE OF THE PROGRAM DIRECTORS OR PROGRAM FELLOWS THAT ARE SPECIFIED IN SECTION VII.A.3?**
- 2) IS THERE A PREFERRED FORMAT FOR THIS INITIAL CONTACT EMAIL WHEN ENGAGING ONE OF THE PROGRAM DIRECTORS OR PROGRAM FELLOWS THAT ARE SPECIFIED IN SECTION VII.A.3?**
- 3) IS THERE A PREFERRED FORMAT FOR THE INITIAL VIRTUAL MEETING (I.E. MEETING DURATION, PRESENTATION, ETC)?**
- 4) WHAT APPROACH IS RECOMMENDED IF AN EMAIL SENT TO ONE OF THE SUGGESTED PROGRAM DIRECTORS OR PROGRAM FELLOWS GETS NO RESPONSE? SHOULD WE JUST REACH OUT TO A SECOND PERSON?**
- 5) SHOULD NON-RESPONSIVENESS RELATED TO MEETING REQUESTS BE INTERPRETED AS NON-SUPPORT OF THE CONCEPT?**

ANSWER:

1. No, you should not copy that email address.
2. No, there is no preferred format for the initial contact email.
3. No, there is no preferred format for the initial virtual meeting.
4. You are not prohibited from reaching out to a second person or following up with the same Program Director or Fellow.
5. No, non-responsiveness does not indicate non-support. Program Directors and Fellows will respond to Applicant inquiries as their availability permits. See SPARKS Concept Paper FOA Section VII.A.3.



Q21. OUR COMPANY, *REDACTED***, IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF DEVELOPING TWO DISTINCT TECHNOLOGIES THAT ALIGN WITH THE SPARKS PROGRAM'S OBJECTIVES.**

GIVEN THE UNIQUE POTENTIAL OF EACH TECHNOLOGY, WE ARE CONSIDERING THE SUBMISSION OF SEPARATE CONCEPT PAPERS FOR THEM. COULD YOU PLEASE INFORM US ABOUT THE PROGRAM'S POLICY REGARDING MULTIPLE SUBMISSIONS FROM THE SAME ORGANIZATION AND ANY SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WE SHOULD BE AWARE OF?

ANSWER: Please refer to SPARKS Concept Paper FOA Section III.C.3. You may submit separate concept papers provided they are scientifically distinct.