NASA SBIR Ignite 2025

Frequently Asked Questions & Applicant Guidance

Helpful Resources

- **NASA SBIR/STTR Help Desk**: agency-sbir@mail.nasa.gov
- **SBIR Ignite Website**: nasa.gov/sbir-sttr/sbir-ignite
- **Solicitation on SAM.gov**: https://sam.gov/opp/f5df74709bb541c5aa37e0ce40a6e70a/view
- **Join the Ignite Slack Workspace**: https://nasa-sbir-ignite.slack.com/ssb/redirect

Program Structure & Funding

Q: What is the funding structure and schedule for SBIR Ignite in 2025?

- The 2025 structure is designed to accelerate the timeline from Phase I to Phase II.
- **Phase I** awards are for **$150,000 over six months**, with an option to transition to Phase II.
- Proposals for Phase II are due **by the end of the fourth month** of the Phase I performance period to ensure no gap in funding.
- **Phase II** awards are up to **$850,000** for up to 24 months (shorter durations are encouraged).
- **Phase III** involves **non-SBIR funding** from NASA or other agencies for commercialization.
- Additional funding options such as **Phase 2E, Phase II Sequential, and CCRPP** are available. For Phase II-E and CCRPP, **matching funds** from outside investors are required.

Q: What are the expected Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) for each phase?

- NASA Ignite targets more mature technologies than traditional SBIR programs.
- While starting TRL varies by firm, technologies typically begin **around TRL 3** (lab demonstration) and are expected to reach **TRL 5 or 6** by the end of Phase II—meaning the technology is **demonstrated in a relevant environment** or has a clear path to get there.

Q: How many Phase I and Phase II awards are planned for the AI subtopic?

For Phase I, a total of 15 awards are planned across **four topics and five subtopics**. See "Subtopics and Clarifications" below for the full listing.

Q: How many SBIRs are typically awarded?

We anticipate 15 awards for 2025. Each firm may submit only one proposal to the 2025 SBIR Ignite solicitation.

Q: Can we see examples of projects that have successfully made it through your process?

Check out the award notifications from previous cycles at
https://www.nasa.gov/sbir_sttr/sbir-ignite/

Eligibility & Application Requirements

Q: Who should apply to SBIR Ignite?

- SBIR Ignite is open to **U.S.-based small businesses** working in the **priority technology areas** listed in the solicitation.
- The program welcomes **university spin-outs, venture-backed startups**, and companies that are **new to working with NASA**.
- Companies with **active investor interest or past investment** are encouraged to apply, but **first-time applicants** and **small teams** are also competitive.

Q: Can I apply if I already have a mainline SBIR Phase I under review?

Yes. However, applicants must **clearly disclose** any related or overlapping work in their Ignite proposal and **notify NASA of the review status** of the other application.

Q: Can a publicly traded small business apply?

- Eligibility is unique to each firm and determined by SBIR rules detailed in **Section 1.5 of the solicitation** and you can reach out the SBIR/STTR Program Help Desk with specific questions.
- Generally, the company must be at least **50% U.S.-owned or majority venture capital-owned**. Refer to the specific SBA regulations cited in the solicitation.

Q: Can a firm submit proposals to multiple Ignite topics?

No. Each firm may **submit only one proposal** to the 2025 SBIR Ignite solicitation.

Q: What if there is technology that applies to more than one topic?

- The Ignite solicitation is organized around four topics, which are divided into five total subtopics. See "Subtopics and Clarifications" below for the full listing.
- Please review the appropriate AMA sessions to learn more about the subtopics. You may only submit to one subtopic and you must decide which subtopic to submit to.
- Each firm may submit only one proposal to the 2025 SBIR Ignite solicitation.

Q: Also, can a consortium apply?

Please review the eligibility requirements described in Section 1.5 for more information.

Q: Can the PI be a university faculty member and propose SBIR from the faculty member's founded company?

Review the requirements for the PI participation to determine if your approach is eligible.

Q: Is being backed by capital a requirement for Ignite?

- **No.** Investment or revenue traction is not required but **having it can help**.
- The evaluation rubric does **account for investor or customer interest** when assessing commercial potential.

Q: Does an applicant need an investor before submitting a Phase One proposal?

- No. An investor is not required at submission.
- However, including any **proof of interest, letters of intent, or early-stage funding** may increase a proposal's competitiveness under commercialization criteria.

Q: Does having or working toward VC/investor funding need to be demonstrated?

- While VC/investor funding is **not mandatory**, it is **beneficial**. Funding strategy is one of the three evaluation criteria within the Business Model dimension. Evidence of funding interest (e.g., conversations, letters of intent, investment raised) can **enhance the perceived viability** of the business. See Appendix A, Evaluation Rubrics, for more information.
- From the solicitation Section 3.2.3.6 Part 6:

   To strengthen your proposal, you should provide evidence of follow-on funding commitments to strengthen your proposal. Examples include:
   1. A letter of commitment for follow-on funding and/or product sales.
   2. A letter of commitment for matching funding to be provided for a future Phase II-E application.
   3. A letter of capital commitment, signed by the proper authority (CEO, CFO, etc.), that indicates a
   commitment to provide funding and/or product sales, should the Phase II project be successful, and the market need still exists.
   4. A specific plan to secure Phase III funding.

Q: Is being a solo founder a negative at the Phase One stage?

- No. Solo founders are eligible and have been funded in the past.
- While a broader team may be advantageous, the **capability and credibility of the founder** is important.

Q: Is there a way to demo the current product as part of the submission for Phase One?

Phase I outputs are usually reports. Demonstrations can be referenced but must fit into requested documentation formats. Links to videos are not accepted as official submissions.

Q: Does the Phase Two proposal need a prototype? Can you elaborate on security and reliability use cases for NASA and where to find requirements?

Yes, Phase II proposals typically require a prototype demonstrating hardware in a relevant environment (TRL 6+). Requirements and guidelines are referenced in the subtopic-specific AMAs, NASA website, NASA Technical Reports Server (NTRS), and on industry standard-producing websites.

Q: Are sample templates available to help prepare for the Phase One solicitation?

Yes, templates are available on the NASA SBIR webpage in the "Forms Library" section.

Q: By the end of Phase I or Phase II, what is the ideal outcome or deliverable NASA expects to see?

The official guidance is to refer to the solicitation posted on SAM.gov. The specific subtopic outlines expectations for the type of work and level of maturity sought. As mentioned during the session, Ignite is focused on high TRL, commercially viable applications. Please consult the solicitation for full details.

Q: Is this opportunity limited to organizations with specific NAICS codes?

Yes. You must be registered under the appropriate NAICS codes listed in the solicitation at the time of award (if selected). Please review the solicitation to confirm your eligibility based on the designated codes.

Q: If we have a product that is already Phase II-ready, can we apply directly to Phase II?

No. NASA SBIR currently does not offer a Direct-to-Phase II option. All applicants must complete Phase I before being eligible for Phase II.

Q: Is this opportunity SBIR-only, or is STTR a possibility?

This is SBIR-only and part of the Ignite cohort. STTR proposals typically go through the mainline SBIR solicitation, and that window has closed for 2025.

Q: Does NASA encourage dual-use technologies that support both Earth-based applications—like FEMA disaster zones—and future space missions?

Yes, absolutely. While not specific to this solicitation, NASA generally values dual-use technologies that can benefit both terrestrial and space-based applications. In fact, dual-use potential is a key consideration for Ignite.

Q: Can two companies collaborate on a proposal submission?

Yes, joint ventures are generally allowed. For details on eligibility, refer to the solicitation and the links provided within it—they outline all the specific requirements.

Q: If our proposed technology fits under two topic areas, should we submit to both?

Each firm is only allowed one submission per solicitation. It's your responsibility to determine which subtopic is the best fit for your proposal. See "Subtopics and Clarifications" below for the full listing of topics and subtopics.

Q: How much detail should proposals include on target applications?

Proposals should clearly describe what is being developed and its intended application. Infusion potential and how the technology can be applied and advanced is key. More detail is generally better as long as it fits within the page limits.

Proposal Guidance & Evaluation

Q: What level of commitment from industry partners is expected?

- While not required, **letters of commitment** from potential customers, collaborators, or investors are **strongly encouraged**.
- These letters should demonstrate intent to support downstream development and help signal real-world interest and demand. Examples of this level of commitment can include commitments for follow-on funding, product sales, Phase II-E matching funding, capital commitments, and/or intent for post-Phase II funding. See Section 3.2.3.6 for further details.
- NASA views these commitments as evidence that a company has a **clear commercialization path**.

Q: What are important changes in the 2025 Ignite solicitation?

- A new **technical proposal layout** and updated submission platform: **Valid Eval** replaces the former ProSAMS system.

- Revised **evaluation rubrics** are included in the solicitation appendix—be sure to review them carefully.
- All applicants must be **registered in SAM.gov** at time of submission (no exceptions).

Q: What are the key deadlines for the 2025 Ignite solicitation?

- Proposal Submission Deadline: **July 22, 2025, by 5 PM ET**
- Award Notifications: **Fall 2025**
- Phase I Start: **Early 2026**

Q: Are proposals reviewed individually or evaluated against one another?

Per the SBIR policy directive, proposals must be reviewed competitively. For more information, please refer to the solicitation available on the NASA SBIR Ignite website.

Q: Is there any communication after submission of the initial proposal and is funding uniform for all proposals?

We are in a communications blackout related to this solicitation until awards are made. Funding maximums for each Phase are listed in the proposal.

Subtopics & Technical Clarifications

Q: How many awards do you anticipate for the Ignite subtopics overall?

Historically, NASA Ignite has awarded between 9 and 12 Phase I contracts. For this cycle, the target is to award approximately 15 proposals.

Q: Where can I find details about the five subtopics for this year?

Subtopics are listed in **Section 9** of the solicitation:

- **Topic I01: Advanced Manufacturing**
    - Subtopic I01.01: Advanced real-time monitoring and control technologies for additive manufacturing
    - Subtopic I01.02: Computational design of new materials, processes, and products leveraging the microgravity environment of space
- **Topic I02: Artificial Intelligence**
    - Subtopic I02.01: Multidisciplinary Space Hardware design automation leveraging AI techniques
- **Topic I03: Radar**
    - Subtopic I03.01: Low-cost mm-wave and cm-wave radar for planetary exploration vehicles
- **Topic I04: Robotics**

○ Subtopic I04.01: Modular, scalable robotic subcomponents to unlock scalable robotic manufacturing & assembly in remote, challenging environments

Q: In IO1, I saw nuclear thermal propulsion (NTP). What aspects are relevant?

This will be covered in greater detail during the Advanced Manufacturing AMA on June 10. NASA Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) will be available to discuss which elements of NTP are of interest. Please review the recording and Q&A from this session on our website.

Q: Can you be more specific on 102.01 topic?

Attend the **Advanced Manufacturing & Robotics AMA** on **June 10** for clarification from NASA SMEs. Please review the recording and Q&A from this session on our website.

Q: For AI, does it have to be hardware design focused or can it be software related?

Attend the **AI AMA on June 5**. A NASA SME will clarify the scope of acceptable AI applications. Please review the recording and Q&A from this session on our website.

Q: If developing AI tools in-house for our own engineering process, do we need to commercialize these tools to be eligible for the Ignite program? Or can we use the tools to develop hardware that we commercialize?

The SBIR Ignite program focuses on investing in technologies destined for commercial markets. Make sure your proposal aligns with the solicitation language to ensure eligibility.

Q: What qualifies as preparing existing technology for space? Are there required tests or certifications?

- Qualification depends on the target environment (LEO, GEO, lunar, Mars, etc.).
- NASA has reference documents—such as the [Goddard Gold Rules](#), design guidelines, and handbooks—that outline environmental requirements. Understanding and referencing these early is important, even if full qualification comes later.

Submission Support & Staying Informed

Q: Where can I get help with submission or eligibility questions?

- For technical or eligibility-related questions, contact the SBIR/STTR Help Desk (see Helpful Resources, below).
- Eligibility guidance is found in Section 1.5 of the solicitation.

Q: How can I stay updated on Ignite news and events?

- Subscribe to the **NASA SBIR/STTR newsletter**
- Join the **BMNT-led Ignite Slack channel** (see Helpful Resources, below)
- AMA session **recordings** will be made available on the SBIR Ignite webpage
- Check **sbir.gov** for broader SBIR/STTR news

Q: Is there a mailing list for future Ignite opportunities?

- Yes. Sign up for the SBIR/STTR newsletter on NASA's SBIR Contact page to be notified of future solicitations.

Q: Can NASA be a committed customer?

- Potentially, but it's **case-specific**. Refer to the solicitation's **commercialization guidance** and provide **evidence of NASA alignment or interest**, if applicable.

Q: Are these entrepreneurial engagements for the community only for those selected or for all interested?

- Most entrepreneurial engagements are open to all interested participants, not just those selected for awards. These activities are designed to help startups and small businesses understand NASA's missions needs, explore how their technologies might align, and connect with peers, subject matter experts and potential partners. Be sure to check out our website and sign up for our newsletter to learn about future events!

  Key engagements include:
  - Catalyst events, which are interactive sessions focused on specific technology areas of interest to NASA
  - A moderated Slack channel, managed by BMNT, where companies can engage with each other and stay up-to-date on upcoming activities and opportunities (see Helpful Resources, below)

Unanswered Questions from NASA SBIR Ignite General AMA

Q: I worked on OSD233-003: Specialized Crystal Growth and Material Characterization in Phase I for NGA. After the completion of Phase I, I submitted Phase II (A Novel Method for Large Scale Production of High-quality Thorium-Doped CaF2, MgF2 and CaMgF2 Nano powders for IR Applications). But due to the budget cuts, we didn't win Phase II. Now I would like to see help from any other funding agency to develop this technology further. Please help me in finding a suitable Project manager who is interested in this topic.

Reach out to an SBIR/STTR Center Liaison if this is not related to an Ignite proposal. They can be found on our [Get in Touch](#) page.

Unanswered Questions from Subtopic AMAs

Q: Is there any emphasis on intellectual property across the subtopics?

With SBIR, you as the small business keep your IP.

Q: Does NASA offer any matchmaking or partnership opportunities with primes or integrators during or after Phase I?

We support our awardees in a variety of ways during their period of performance including support with networking.

Q: Will NASA provide the relevant technical requirements and standards, or are proposers expected to develop their own?

If appropriate requirements exist, those can be provided during your period of performance.

Q: Will intellectual property and potential patents belong to the prime contractor?

In the SBIR program, the small business retains its IP.

Q: Where can we find a list of committed or upcoming notional NASA missions?

Check out NASA's website- www.nasa.gov

Q: If we propose an alternative approach that achieves the same results as what NASA is looking for—but uses a different method than what's outlined—would that still be considered?

Read the subtopic carefully to determine if your solution addresses the defined problem statement.