



**NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION
(NASA)**

**GUIDEBOOK FOR PROPOSERS
FOR THE PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION
OF
UNSOLICITED PROPOSALS**

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PREFACE

NASA encourages the submission of unique and innovative proposals that further the Agency's mission. Most NASA requirements and research opportunities are addressed through publicly available competitive solicitations. An unsolicited proposal is a distinct pathway for an independently originated, innovative and unique idea or approach that is not submitted in response to a formal or informal Government request.

This Guidebook provides potential Offerors with the information needed to determine whether an unsolicited proposal is appropriate, how to prepare a proposal, protect proprietary and export-controlled information, submit through the NASA Front Door, and understand NASA's review and disposition process per the current requirements in Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Overhaul Part 15 and NASA FAR Supplement (NFS) Subpart 1815.5.

Important distinction

NASA Front Door replaces the NASA Solicitation and Proposal Integrated Review and Evaluation System (NSPIRES) unsolicited-proposal intake process for new unsolicited proposals. NSPIRES continues to support many competed NASA Research Announcements (NRA) and Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO); therefore, potential Offerors must review current NSPIRES opportunities before deciding whether an unsolicited proposal is appropriate.

NASA Front Door: <https://frontdoor.nasa.gov/s/>

Doing Business with NASA: [NASA Doing Business page](#)

1. BEFORE PREPARING AN UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL

FAR 15.502(c), encourages early exchanges because preliminary contact with appropriate agency personnel before preparing a detailed proposal or disclosing proprietary information may save time and effort. Early discussions may help a potential Offeror determine whether NASA has an existing competitive pathway, whether the idea is relevant to NASA, and which NASA organization may have interest. Such discussions do not constitute Government endorsement, direction, authorization to begin work, or a commitment to make an award.

Before investing significant effort in a full proposal, potential Offerors must:

- Review NASA's current Strategic Plan and relevant Mission Directorate, and Center, plans to determine whether the proposed effort is relevant to current NASA objectives.
- Review current and anticipated competitive opportunities, including Request for Information(s) (RFIs), Request for Proposal(s) (RFPs), Board Agency Announcements (BAAs), Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR)/ Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) [NASA SBIR/STTR Program - Information Hub - NASA](#) program research and development announcements, NOFOs, and other NASA solicitations. An unsolicited proposal is not a substitute for responding to a **competitive opportunity and may not be used to bypass a missed solicitation deadline.**
- Review NASA acquisition forecasts and available information on current awards and activities to determine whether the proposed work duplicates or closely resembles work NASA is already acquiring or funding.
- If an Offeror anticipates that the proposed effort may be appropriate for a grant or cooperative agreement, the Offeror should review NASA's grants guidance for

submission and budget requirements. Any proposal resulting in a grant and cooperative agreement will be governed by the NASA Grants Cooperative Agreement Manual (GCAM) and the Grant Cooperative Agreement Terms and Conditions (GCAT), available on NASA's Grant Operations Management Website: <https://www.nasa.gov/grants-operations-management/>

NOTE: Submission by a college or university does not automatically mean that an award will be made as a grant or cooperative agreement. NASA will determine the appropriate award instrument based on the principal purpose and nature of the proposed effort.

- Consider a brief, non-proprietary preliminary exchange with an appropriate NASA technical point of contact or through NASA Front Door before preparing a proposal. Do not disclose proprietary, export-controlled, classified, or other restricted information during preliminary outreach unless NASA has provided an authorized method for doing so.

2. ELIGIBILITY AND SCOPE

2.1 What is a Valid Unsolicited Proposal?

An unsolicited proposal must satisfy FAR 15.503-1 to be considered a valid proposal. [FAR 15.503-1 - Scope of Proposals](#).

NASA also expects the proposal to demonstrate adequate qualifications, capabilities, and experience; be relevant to NASA and to the NASA organization to which it is routed; contain reasonable and realistic proposed costs/price; and provide enough detail and organization for reviewers to assess the proposal.

2.2 What Is Not an Unsolicited Proposal?

The following generally **are not** valid unsolicited proposals:

- Advertising or marketing material intended primarily to acquaint NASA with an organization's existing products, services, or capabilities.
- A routine commercial product or commercial service offer. An innovative or unique configuration or use of a commercial product or service offered for further development may qualify if the other unsolicited-proposal requirements are met.
- A contribution or routine technical correspondence on technical issues,
- A proposal addressing a known NASA requirement that can be acquired competitively, or a proposal that resembles a response to a current, recent, pending, or previously published NASA solicitation.
- A late response to a solicitation or an attempt to avoid the requirements of an existing competitive opportunity.
- A proposal for a new award or renewal that falls within the scope of an open NASA research announcement or other competitive opportunity, except as NASA specifically directs.

2.3 Eligibility of Organizations and Teaming

Any category of organization or institution may submit an unsolicited proposal, subject to applicable legal, regulatory, funding, and program restrictions. When more than one organization participates, the proposal should be a stand-alone document and should clearly

describe each organization's role, responsibilities, facilities, equipment, funding relationship, and expected contribution.

The proposal should identify key personnel and collaborators whose participation is material to the proposed effort.

2.4 Foreign Participation and China Restrictions

In general, research with foreign organizations and foreign entities is accomplished on a no-exchange-of-funds basis unless another arrangement is authorized. Proposals involving non-U.S. organizations or foreign participation should clearly identify the foreign participants, their roles, the work to be performed, the source of support, and any international-agreement or export-control implications. NASA's policy on performing research with foreign organization and foreign public entities on a no-exchange-of funds basis is set forth at NASA FAR Supplement (NFS)1835.016-70 and 1835.016-72

NASA is restricted by law from using appropriated funds to engage in bilateral participation, collaboration, or coordination with China or Chinese-owned companies. This restriction, established through NASA annual appropriations legislation, applies to all activities conducted under NASA awards. Proposals must accurately identify any proposed China-related participation or activities involving China, or any Chinese-owned companies. Proposals that include such activities are ineligible for award unless NASA has sought a waiver for such activities pursuant to Pub.L.118-42 Sec. 526.

2.5 Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

NASA's unsolicited-proposal guidance requires proposers to identify whether the submission includes, or is reasonably expected to include, the development, training, procurement, or use of artificial intelligence or machine learning (AI/ML), including generative AI, whether as a primary capability or incidental to the proposed work. If applicable, briefly describe the intended use, safeguards, human oversight, data protection, validation, and responsible-AI considerations.

Generative AI and protected information

Proposers remain responsible for the accuracy, authenticity, integrity, and protection of all proposal content. Do not enter proprietary, export-controlled, classified, sensitive, or otherwise restricted proposal information into a public generative-AI service unless the information is authorized for that use. Program-specific NASA guidance may impose additional disclosure or citation requirements for generative-AI assistance.

3. SUBMISSION THROUGH NASA FRONT DOOR

3.1 How to Submit

NASA Front Door is the centralized intake point for new unsolicited proposals.

- Submit the proposal through NASA Front Door and complete the required intake questionnaire. *Submit only one (1) version of a proposal to NASA.*
- Follow any current file-format, attachment, certification, acknowledgement, or instructions displayed in NASA Front Door at the time of submission

Front Door controls the current intake mechanics

System fields may evolve, the live NFD instructions govern the mechanics of submission. This Guidebook governs the substantive information an Offeror should be prepared to provide and the protections that apply to proposal information.

3.2 When to Submit

There is no general annual deadline for unsolicited proposals. Offerors should submit sufficiently in advance of the desired start date to allow for initial review, technical evaluation, funding decisions, and award processing. Offerors are recommended to submit proposals at least six (6) months before the desired start date; but it does not guarantee completion of NASA's review or award process within six (6) months. Proposals submitted late in the fiscal year are less likely to result in an award during that same fiscal year due to the time required for evaluation and award processing.

3.3 Revision or Withdrawal

An Offeror may withdraw an unsolicited proposal from consideration before award.

If a proposer wishes to submit additional material or a proposal revision, an Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must withdraw the proposal and, after revision, resubmit the revised proposal. The resubmitted proposal will be assigned a new proposal number. It is important for proposers to note that major proposal revisions will likely delay the evaluation process.

3.4 Interagency Coordination

NASA does not transfer formal submissions to or accept similar submissions from other agencies, except as they may be related to an interagency funding arrangement. Unsolicited proposals submitted to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) are not considered as submissions to NASA since JPL is not a NASA Center but is the Agency's only Federally Funded Research and Development Center.

4. PROPOSAL FORMAT AND CONTENT

FAR 15.503-2, establishes minimum information that every unsolicited proposal must contain to permit objective and timely consideration. The NASA Guidebook also provides useful NASA-specific content guidance. The following sections incorporate the FAR requirements and NASA-specific guidance to help an Offeror prepare a complete, self-contained proposal. Offeror should review the current requirements in [FAR 15.503-2 - Content of Proposals](#).

4.1 Format and Length

Proposals should be clear, organized, concise, and focused on information needed to understand and evaluate the proposed effort. The technical section should be concise and commensurate with the scope and complexity of the proposed effort, including only the technical information necessary to demonstrate the proposed approach. In most cases, the technical section should not exceed approximately 15 pages. NASA encourages potential proposers to first consider a brief 1-3 page non-proprietary summary focused on what is proposed, why it matters to NASA, and the Offeror's unique qualifications.

Unless NASA Front Door specifies otherwise, supporting figures, tables, diagrams, biographical information, cost/price information, and other necessary material should be included in the submitted proposal package.

4.2 Basic Information Required

Every unsolicited proposal must contain the basic information required by FAR 15.503-2(a).

[FAR 15.503-2 - Content of Proposals.](#)

4.3 Project Summary: Objectives/Rationale

Provide a concise, non-proprietary summary of the proposed effort that explains the objective, proposed approach, anticipated results, and relevance to NASA. Because proposal titles and summaries may be used for routing, award reporting, or public-facing records if an award is made, the summary should not contain proprietary, export-controlled, classified, or other information that is not suitable for public release.

4.4 Scientific / Technical

The main body should provide a reasonably complete discussion of the proposed objectives, technical approach, methods, scope, level of effort and the anticipated results. Clearly explain what will be done, why it is proposed, when the work will occur, and the expected significance or benefit.

- Explain the relationship of the proposed work to the current state of knowledge, prior work by the Offeror, and related work known to be underway elsewhere.
- Describe experiments, observations, hardware or instrument development, software/model development, testing, analysis, or other implementation methods at a level sufficient to demonstrate feasibility and likelihood of success.
- Identify significant technical uncertainties, risks, potential pitfalls, and reasonable alternatives or mitigation approaches.
- For large or complex efforts, explain management responsibilities, interfaces, decision-making, coordination among participating organizations, and major milestones.
- Describe any important working relationship with NASA or another Government organization that is material to the proposed effort.

4.5 Innovation and Uniqueness

Innovation and uniqueness are threshold requirements under FAR 15.503-1, the proposal should contain a specific explanation of what is new or unique about the proposed method, approach, concept, configuration, technology, or application. Do not rely on general statements that the proposal is innovative. Explain how the proposed effort differs from known alternatives, existing commercial offerings, prior NASA work, or previously published requirements.

4.6 Personnel

- Identify qualifications, capabilities, and experience of the proposed principal investigator, team leader, or key personnel critical to achieving the proposal objectives.

- Do not include Social Security numbers, birth dates, home addresses, or other personally identifiable information that NASA does not need to evaluate the proposal.

4.7 Facilities, Equipment, and Government Support Requested

FAR 15.503-2 requires a description of the type of support the Offeror requests from the agency, such as Government property, facilities, equipment, data, information, or personnel resources. Be specific enough for NASA to understand what Government support would be required to perform the proposed effort.

4.8 Proposed Costs / Price

Provide a proposed price or total estimated cost with enough detail for meaningful evaluation and for NASA to assess realism. The level of detail should be appropriate to the proposed effort.

- Identify major labor categories or personnel effort, salaries/wages and fringe benefits as appropriate (i.e., Key Personnel)
- Identify equipment, materials and supplies, services, travel, information-technology expenses, publication charges, consultants, subcontracts, subawards, other direct costs, and indirect costs as applicable.
- For multi-year efforts, show estimated costs by year and, where useful, by major phase or milestone.
- Provide explanatory notes for major equipment, travel, indirect-cost assumptions, subcontract/subaward amounts, and other items that are not self-explanatory.
- Identify the requested NASA funding level and any other sources of funding or contributions supporting the proposed effort.

4.9 Additional Supporting Information Required by FAR 15.503-2(c)

In addition to the technical and cost information described in this Guidebook, Offerors must provide all supporting information required by FAR 15.503-2(c). [FAR 15.503-2 - Content of Proposals](#).

4.10 Data Management, Research Compliance, and Other Matters

Where the nature of the proposed work makes them applicable, address data management or archiving; human-subject research; animal care and use; environmental impacts; conflicts of interest; research integrity; cybersecurity; export control; security; intellectual property; and other requirements imposed by current law, regulation, Executive Order, or NASA policy.

A Data Management Plan may be appropriate or required for certain research activities. Because requirements differ by NASA program and type of award, the offeror should explain how data and research outputs will be managed when relevant and follow any additional instructions NASA provides during review.

5. PROTECTING PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Three different concepts

Do not treat proprietary/restricted data, export-controlled information, and classified information as interchangeable. Each

is governed by different requirements. A proposal may contain properly marked proprietary/restricted data; export-controlled information is not prohibited but should be limited and specially identified; classified information must not be included in the ordinary unsolicited-proposal submission.

5.1 Proprietary, Confidential, and Restricted Data - FAR 15.503-3

Offerors that wish to restrict the Government's use or disclosure of proposal data must comply with the marking and legend requirements of FAR 15.503-3, Restricting Use and Disclosure of Data.

[FAR 15.503-3 - Restricting Use and Disclosure of Data.](#)

USE AND DISCLOSURE OF DATA

This proposal includes data that must not be disclosed outside the Government and must not be duplicated, used, or disclosed, in whole or in part, for any purpose other than to evaluate this proposal. However, if a contract is awarded to this Offeror as a result of, or in connection with, the submission of these data, the Government must have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting contract. This restriction does not limit the Government's right to use information contained in these data if they are obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in Sheets [insert numbers or other identification of sheets].

Offerors should not modify the prescribed FAR legends and should clearly identify the proposal pages or data to which the restrictions apply. FAR 15.504-2 provides procedures and protections applicable to proposal information carrying restrictive legends.

5.2 NASA Limited Use and Outside Evaluation

FAR 15.502(e), prohibits Government personnel from using unsolicited proposal's data, concept, idea, or other content as the basis for a solicitation or negotiation with another firm unless the Offeror is notified and agrees, except for information available from another source without restriction. Government personnel also must not disclose restrictively marked information except as authorized by law.

NFS 1815.503-370, recognizes that unsolicited proposal information may, with the required NASA approval, be disclosed to outside evaluators for evaluation purposes. FAR 15.504-2, establishes additional protection and, in specified circumstances, requires the Offeror's written permission before release outside the agency or Government. Offerors should therefore mark protected information correctly and understand that NASA may use qualified external evaluators subject to applicable safeguards.

5.3 Export-Controlled Information - ITAR and EAR

Export-controlled information is distinct from proprietary information. Explicit inclusion of export-controlled material in an unsolicited proposal is not prohibited. However, NASA strongly encourages Offerors not to include export-controlled material unless it is essential to NASA's evaluation because its inclusion can complicate the review process and restrict who may evaluate the proposal.

Offerors are responsible for determining whether proposal information is subject to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), 22 CFR parts 120-130, the Export Administration Regulations (EAR), 15 CFR parts 730-774, or other applicable export-control requirements.

If export-controlled information is essential to the proposal:

- Clearly identify the specific pages, sections, figures, tables, or data that are export controlled.
- Prominently display an export-control notice on the first pages of the proposal, before the table of contents when practicable.
- Visually distinguish the export-controlled material so NASA can identify and, when necessary, segregate or redact it for review. Current NASA research guidance commonly uses red font or a red-bordered box for this purpose; follow any marking instructions NASA Front Door or the reviewing office provides.

Do not place export-controlled information in the public-facing project summary or abstract.

NASA's longstanding unsolicited-proposal export-control notice states:

"The information (data) contained in [insert page numbers or other identification] this proposal is (are) subject to U.S. export control laws and regulations. It is furnished to the Government with the understanding that it will not be exported without the prior approval of the Proposer under the terms of an applicable export license or technical assistance agreement."

For proposals involving foreign organizations or foreign participation, include a discussion of compliance with applicable U.S. export laws and regulations. Describe the proposed foreign involvement and whether licenses, technical-assistance agreements, exemptions/exceptions, or other approvals may be required; if approval is expected, address timing and potential schedule effects.

5.4 Classified Information

Do not include national security classified information in an unsolicited proposal submitted through NASA Front Door. If the proposed effort requires access to classified information or could generate classified information, identify that fact at an unclassified level without including classified material. If NASA elects to pursue the effort, applicable Government security requirements will govern further exchanges.

5.5 Personally Identifiable and Other Sensitive Information

Do not include Social Security numbers, birth dates, home addresses, personal financial information, passwords, or other sensitive personally identifiable information that NASA does not need to evaluate the proposal. Use only the minimum personal information necessary to identify and evaluate proposed personnel.

6. NASA RECEIPT, INITIAL REVIEW, AND EVALUATION

6.1 Initial Review - FAR 15.504-1

NASA conducts an initial review of each unsolicited proposal in accordance with FAR 15.504-1, to determine whether the proposal is eligible to proceed to comprehensive evaluation. [FAR 15.504-1 - Initial Review](#). NASA will notify the Offeror of the proposal's disposition in accordance with applicable FAR requirements and NASA Front Door procedures.

6.2 Comprehensive Evaluation - FAR 15.505

Unsolicited proposals that proceed beyond initial review are evaluated using the factors prescribed by FAR 15.505. [FAR 15.505 - Evaluation of Unsolicited Proposals](#). NASA may use Government personnel, external subject-matter experts, or review panels as appropriate. Proposal information must be handled in accordance with applicable restrictions, conflict-of-interest controls, and disclosure safeguards.

6.3 Reasons NASA May Return or Decline a Proposal

NASA may return or decline an unsolicited proposal when it does not satisfy the initial-review requirements or when it's substance:

- Is available to the Government without restriction from another source.
- Closely resembles a pending competitive acquisition requirement.
- Does not relate to NASA's mission or current priorities.
- Does not demonstrate an innovative and unique method, approach, or concept.
- Does not have sufficient scientific, technical, socioeconomic, or cost merit.
- Duplicates or substantially overlaps existing NASA-funded work.
- Cannot be supported because funding is unavailable or because other programmatic priorities take precedence.

7. SELECTION, FUNDING, AND AWARD

A favorable technical evaluation does not itself authorize an award, only an authorized NASA Contracting Officer or Grant may bind the Government.

7.1 Contract Award Based on an Unsolicited Proposal

A favorable evaluation itself does not authorize a sole-source contract award. The conditions that must be satisfied before a Contracting Officer may begin sole-source negotiations are established in FAR 15.506. [FAR 15.506 - Criteria for Acceptance and Negotiation of an Unsolicited Proposal](#).

If NASA elects to pursue a procurement contract, NASA may request revised technical information, cost or pricing information, representations and certifications, responsibility information, organizational conflict-of-interest information, security information, intellectual-property or data-rights information, facilities information, or other material necessary to negotiate and award the action

7.2 Financial Assistance or Other NASA Instruments/ Selecting the Appropriate Award Instrument

NASA determines the appropriate award instrument based on the proposed effort- not the type of organization submitting it.

- If NASA is acquiring property or services for its direct benefit or use, a procurement contract may be appropriate.
- If the purpose is to support or stimulate a public purpose, a grant or cooperative agreement may be appropriate, depending on the level of NASA involvement.

A Space Act Agreement or other authorized mechanism may also be appropriate. **Selection of an unsolicited proposal does not entitle the Offeror to a particular award instrument.** Applicable regulations and content of the proposal will govern the resulting award.

AUTHORITIES AND CURRENT RESOURCES

FAR Overhaul Part 15 - Subpart 15.5, Unsolicited Proposals:

<https://www.acquisition.gov/far-overhaul/far-part-deviation-guide/far-overhaul-part-15>

NASA FAR Supplement- Subpart 1815.5:

<https://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/regs/NFS.pdf>

NASA Unsolicited Proposal Submission: <https://www.nasa.gov/unsolicited-proposal-submission/>

NASA Strategic Plan: <https://www.nasa.gov/ocfo/strategic-plan/>

NASA Science Plan: <https://science.nasa.gov/about-us/science-strategy/>

Data Management Plan https://www.nasa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/206985_2015_nasa_plan-for-web.pdf?emrc=b40042

NASA NSPIRES (for competed research opportunities and transition notices): <https://nspires.nasaprs.com/>

SAM.gov Contract Opportunities: <https://sam.gov/>

ITAR https://www.pmddtc.state.gov/ddtc_public?id=ddtc_public_portal_itar_landing

Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200 (2 CFR 200)

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-20>

Export Control https://www.pmddtc.state.gov/ddtc_public and <https://www.bis.doc.gov> and <https://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/oer/nasaecp/contacts.html>

Current awards (e.g., by doing key word searches at the below links to learn what, if any, related work is already funded by NASA.)

- **USA Spending:** USAspending.gov
- **Research:** <https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/simple-search/>
- **NSSC Grant Status Page:** <https://www.nasa.gov/forms/grant-status-form/>
- **Tech Port:** <https://techport.nasa.gov/>
- **NASA Life and Physical Sciences Task Book**
<https://taskbook.nasaprs.com/Publication/welcome.cfm>

U.S. Department of State - Directorate of Defense Trade Controls:

<https://www.pmddtc.state.gov/>

U.S. Department of Commerce - Bureau of Industry and Security: <https://www.bis.gov/>