

USDA SBIR/STTR Phase I Application Evaluation Criteria

To facilitate consistency in the review process, please pay careful attention to the evaluation criteria below as you prepare your reviews. You should address your comments to the overall criterion for each section while considering the points emphasized under each criterion. Remember, resubmissions are allowed for Phase I and should contain a 1-page response to previous reviews within the project narrative.

For the evaluation criteria below, approximately equal consideration will be given to each criterion, except for items (1) Phase I Scientific and Technical Feasibility) and (2) Market Potential), which **should receive twice the consideration of any of the other items when making a final score.**

The following points should be considered in preparing your review.

1. Phase I Scientific and Technical Feasibility:

- a. Project objectives and outcomes are clearly described, adequate, and appropriate. All project components (*i.e.*, research and commercialization) are reflected in one or more project objectives;
- b. Proposed approach, procedures, or methodologies are innovative, original, clearly described, suitable, and feasible;
- c. Expected results or outcomes are clearly stated, measurable, and achievable within the allotted time frame requested by the applicant;
- d. Proposed research fills knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of new innovations to address the stated problem or issue;
- e. Proposed research is up to date on the current state of the art (*i.e.*, literature reviews have been completed);
- f. Proposed research includes agriculturally related Manufacturing and/or Energy Efficiency and/or Alternative and Renewable Energy technologies; and
- g. Proposed research includes documentation to support access to facilities, equipment or expertise.

2. Market Potential:

- a. Does the outcome of the proposed activity lead to a marketable product, service or process that warrants significant USDA SBIR/STTR support?
- b. Has the proposing firm provided adequate information to validate the market opportunity? Is there enough information to validate the market opportunity? Has the proposing firm included information that indicates they understand business economics and market drivers in the target industry?
- c. Given the stage of the proposed effort, is the team well-balanced between technical and business skills?
- d. Where prior awards have been made, has the proposing firm successfully commercialized SBIR/STTR supported innovations?
- e. Does the application demonstrate that the company has initiated dialogue with relevant stakeholders (potential customers or end users, strategic partners or investors) for the

proposed innovation and that a legitimate business opportunity may exist should the technology prove feasible through the inclusion of letters of support? Does the application clearly justify why letters of support are not being included due to business considerations as it relates to the technical and commercial aspects of the innovation?

3. Importance of the Problem:

- a. There is sufficient justification for the importance of the problem.
- b. The proposed project is in the public interest.

4. Investigator and Resource Qualifications:

- a. Roles of key personnel are clearly defined;
- b. Key personnel have sufficient scientific and business expertise to complete the proposed project, and where appropriate, partnerships with other disciplines and institutions are established;
- c. PD and Co-PD biographic information/resumes provide relevant employment history;
- d. Support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation are sufficient;
- e. A clear plan is articulated for project management, including time allocated for attainment of objectives and delivery of products, maintenance of partnerships and collaborations, and a strategy to enhance communication, data sharing, and reporting among members of the project team;
- f. Consultants, subcontractors, or CRADA cooperators that are involved in the project have provided letters verifying their willingness to participate in the project; and
- g. Personnel on subcontract(s) and consulting agreement(s) have defined roles and responsibilities.

5. Budget:

- a. The budget is appropriate for the proposed project; and
- b. There is sufficient budget detail to indicate clearly how the funds would be utilized.

6. Duplication:

- a. There is no duplication of any ongoing or previous research by the small business firm or by other researchers; and
- b. Application clearly indicates how the proposed technology would differ significantly.

Additional factors that will be considered in the review process are whether an SBIR/STTR application involves a CRADA with a USDA or other Federal laboratory. For SBIR or STTR, in the event that two or more applications are of approximately equal merit, the existence of a CRADA with a USDA or other Federal laboratory or a follow-on funding commitment for Phase III will be an important consideration to break the tie.