



Program Announcement
Smash
Microsystems Technology Office

DARPA-PA-26-04
February 18, 2026

OVERVIEW INFORMATION:

- **Federal Agency Name:** Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Microsystems Technology Office (MTO)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Smash
- **Solicitation Type:** Initial Solicitation
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** DARPA-PA-26-04
- **Assistance Listing Number:** Not applicable
- **Dates/Time: All Times are Eastern Time Zone (ET)**
 - Posting Date: February 18, 2026
 - Proposers Day: February 24, 2026
 - Proposal Abstract Due Date: March 9, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.
 - Questions Due Date: April 10, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.
 - Deadline to Notify of Intent to Submit Proposal: April 10, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.
 - Proposal Due Date: April 24, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.
 - Anticipated Oral Presentation Dates: May 5–14, 2026
 - Estimated Period of Performance Start: September 1, 2026
- **Anticipated Individual Awards:** Multiple awards are anticipated
- **Types of Instruments That May Be Awarded:** Other Transaction for Research under 10 U.S.C. § 4021
- **NAICS Code:** 541715
- **Agency Contact:**

The PA Coordinator for this effort may be reached at:

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**Program Announcement
DARPA-PA-26-04**

**Smash
Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)
Microsystems Technology Office (MTO)**

Section I: Funding Opportunity Description

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is soliciting innovative proposals around materials processing to enable efficient, scalable element separation across the periodic table. This capability would establish a new technological basis for domestic resource independence.

Specifically, the Smash program aims to create technologies that leverage parallel processing to: (1) drive process yield across multiple elements; (2) maximize energy utilization in the intrinsic separation processes; and (3) ensure solutions are scalable across industrial processing operations.

Proposed research should investigate innovative approaches that enable revolutionary advances in science, devices, or systems. Specifically excluded is research that primarily results in evolutionary improvements to the existing state of practice.

A. Background

The United States faces a perceived raw materials problem: although domestic resources contain sufficient raw precursors to critical materials needed for existing manufacturing demand, most materials used for manufacturing are imported. Modern mining is optimized to extract high-value metals such as zinc and copper, while discarding accompanying trace elements—even when those elements are themselves critical. This occurs because existing industrial processes are designed to isolate a single target component rather than recover all constituents of an ore. As a result, the U.S. depends on foreign processing capabilities to access many essential materials, creating a national security vulnerability.

Separation technologies used by industry today progressively purify a single element using equilibrium reactions, often by introducing sacrificial additives such as surfactants or reducing agents. These processes are highly efficient and scalable but inherently render other elements inaccessible. Techniques capable of retaining all elements do exist, but are primarily used in niche scientific and analytical applications (e.g., mass spectrometry), which are intended for small-scale, laboratory operations. Attempts to scale analogous approaches, such as plasma-based separations, require immense energy while producing only a few milligrams per day.

The Smash program posits that the key to surpassing today's limitations lies in redirecting efforts from incremental improvements of existing technologies to revolutionizing innovations in parallel processing. Inspiration can be drawn from the petroleum industry, in which a multitude of useful products are extracted from a single feedstock with great efficiency. There, staged reactions achieve local separability and global efficiency through circularity.

As detailed below, Smash seeks technologies that provide an asymmetric advantage in yield, purity, and energy utilization by leveraging parallel processing to achieve efficient separation of the entire periodic table.

B. Program Description

Smash aims to revolutionize material processing in the United States, addressing critical vulnerabilities in the nation's supply chain for essential minerals. The program will develop technologies that enable universal processing of diverse feedstocks with near-zero waste and high energy efficiency, fundamentally transforming how the nation sources and uses raw materials. The primary technical challenge lies in the development of separation techniques capable of generating a multitude of high purity products in an energy-efficient manner.

Smash will pursue system-level innovation rather than incremental improvements, pioneering approaches that enable efficient parallel processing of solid feedstocks into multiple elemental streams. Accordingly, proposers should focus on the technological feasibility of separating any and all elements within a feedstock. Specifically discouraged are proposals that outline efficient processing technologies without evidence of applicability to the entire periodic table, or those building upon separation approaches incapable of scaling to meet project goals and metrics without sound technical reasoning as to why this can be met.

A key objective of Smash is a clear transition pathway to commercial or government adoption. Proposals must include a commercialization plan describing how the technology will mature and achieve practical deployment. This will be further developed throughout the program, as described under "Program Structure."

C. Program Structure

Smash is a 48-month, 2-phase program comprising a single technical area. Phase 1 (24 months) emphasizes proof-of-concept experiments and modeling, while Phase 2 (24 months) drives prototype development. The end goal of the program is a system-level demonstration of efficient separations across the entire periodic table.

Phase 1: Proof-of-Concept

This 24-month phase will focus on the core design, modeling, and demonstration of parallel element separation. At the month 11 milestone, performers will need to demonstrate mid-phase metrics. Phase 1 will conclude with an initial performer test using government furnished feedstock comprising a total of 16 elements across the periodic table. Performers may use simulations or modeling to show that their process can scale to meet the efficiency and throughput targets of Phase 2. While Phase 1 efficiency may be demonstrated through modeling, any models must be informed by lab measurements.

Phase 2: Prototype, not solicited under this PA

Phase 1 proof-of-concept experiments will inform models to determine suitability for prototype development in Phase 2. Phase 2 will continue the scientific development of the Phase 1 techniques to expand the number of elements achievable, culminating in approaches that can process the entire periodic table. Simultaneously, Phase 2 will emphasize prototype design, build, and test to achieve the program's efficiency and mass throughput goals with an emphasis on commercialization and transition.

Phase 2 Milestones and Deliverables are to be determined.

It is anticipated that in Phase 2 all results, data, and process information regarding the design of tools and devices for Smash will be controlled at the Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) level.

Proposals responding to this announcement must address all the goals of Phase 1 of the Smash program; partial solutions will not be considered. While proposals should address how the solution must scale to meet Phase 2 metrics, a detailed performance plan for Phase 2 is not required. Any reference to Phase 2 is provided for informational purposes only and is not solicited under this PA.

Participation in Phase 1 neither guarantees nor precludes selection for Phase 2 of the Smash program. Phase 1 participation is not required for consideration for Phase 2. DARPA will carefully evaluate the findings and results from Phase 1, along with stated program objectives and mission needs, to determine the most appropriate method for identifying and selecting performers for Phase 2. Potential approaches include, but are not limited to, issuing a Phase 2 solicitation or announcement, leveraging rapid-acquisition marketplaces such as ERIS or Tradewinds, pursuing limited- or non-competitive options, or other methods deemed suitable. DARPA retains full discretion in determining the Phase 2 selection process and will provide additional details during Phase 1.

Commercialization Strategy:

Throughout the program, performers will be required to provide and update a commercialization strategy. DARPA intends to conduct regular engagement with performers as commercialization strategies are being developed. Within the proposal, the commercialization plan must include exploratory techno-economic and risk analyses that show the economic viability of the proposed solution. Plans may describe a technology licensing path or the creation of an entirely new company to manufacture and market the technology. Where applicable, technology transition letters of support are encouraged (i.e., written by a follow-on funding source, licensee, etc.). A full commercialization plan must be in place by the month 11 milestone. See Attachment C for additional details.

Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V):

The government will assemble and fund an IV&V team to engage and collaborate with performer teams throughout the duration of the program. The role of the IV&V team will be to (1) create feedstocks for use in performer assessments, (2) interact with performers to develop IV&V plans specific to individual solutions, (3) provide subject matter expertise to the government to assess performer progress, and (4) validate metric assessments and facilitate demonstrations to support program goals.

Technical Program Metrics:

Modern processing techniques can be compared using three key metrics: process efficiency, purity, and mass utilization. For Smash, purity and mass utilization are combined into a figure of merit (FOM) called element utilization, which is the sum of the purities of each element present in the process output,

$$\text{Element Utilization FOM} = \sum P_i$$

where P_i is the purity of each separated element.

Process efficiency is defined as the ratio of the minimum separation energy density to the process energy density,

$$\text{Process Efficiency} = \frac{\Delta G_{Sep}}{\hat{U}} = m_{out} \cdot \frac{\Delta G_{Sep}}{U}$$

where ΔG_{Sep} is the Gibbs free energy (in units of energy per mass) to separate a given feedstock into its elemental constituents, including, but not limited to, standard energy of formation and heat of mixing. The process energy density, \hat{U} , is the ratio of the total process energy consumption, U , to the total mass output of separated elements, m_{out} , used in the Element Utilization FOM. Mass throughput is the ratio of total mass output of the separated elements to the duration of the process.

A summary of the program metrics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Program Metrics

	Early Phase 1	Mid-Phase 1	Phase 1	Phase 2*
Element Utilization FOM	3	6.4	15	79
Process Efficiency	N/A	N/A	> 0.3%**	20%
Mass Throughput	N/A	0.001 g/hr**	1 g/hr	1000 g/hr

* For informational purposes only

** Simulated, informed by experiment

The program metrics in Table 1 are computed with the following assumptions.

Table 2. Metrics Assumptions

	Early Phase 1	Mid-Phase 1	Phase 1	Phase 2*
Average Purity	37.5%	80%	95%	99.9%
Yield	N/A	0.5%	5%	50%
Feedstock Element Count	8	8	16	80

* For informational purposes only

For the purpose of evaluating performance against the metrics, standardized solid feedstock with known composition will be provided by the government. Throughout the program, performers are encouraged to evaluate their performance in processing feedstock of their choosing, particularly feedstock with economic or transition significance.

As a requirement, performers must demonstrate a resolvable concentration of any separated element of <0.1% in Phase 1 and <100 ppm in Phase 2.

D. Schedule, Milestones, and Deliverables

Smash is a two-phase program comprising a single technical area that will produce highly efficient, near-zero-waste systems to process diverse raw materials and extract a wide array of elements with high purity. Early Phase 1 will develop approaches that emphasize elemental utilization to retire risk associated with emergent or entirely novel separation techniques. Phase 2 is not solicited in this PA.

A summary of the program schedule is presented in Figure 1. For planning and budgetary purposes, proposers should assume a program start date of September 1, 2026.

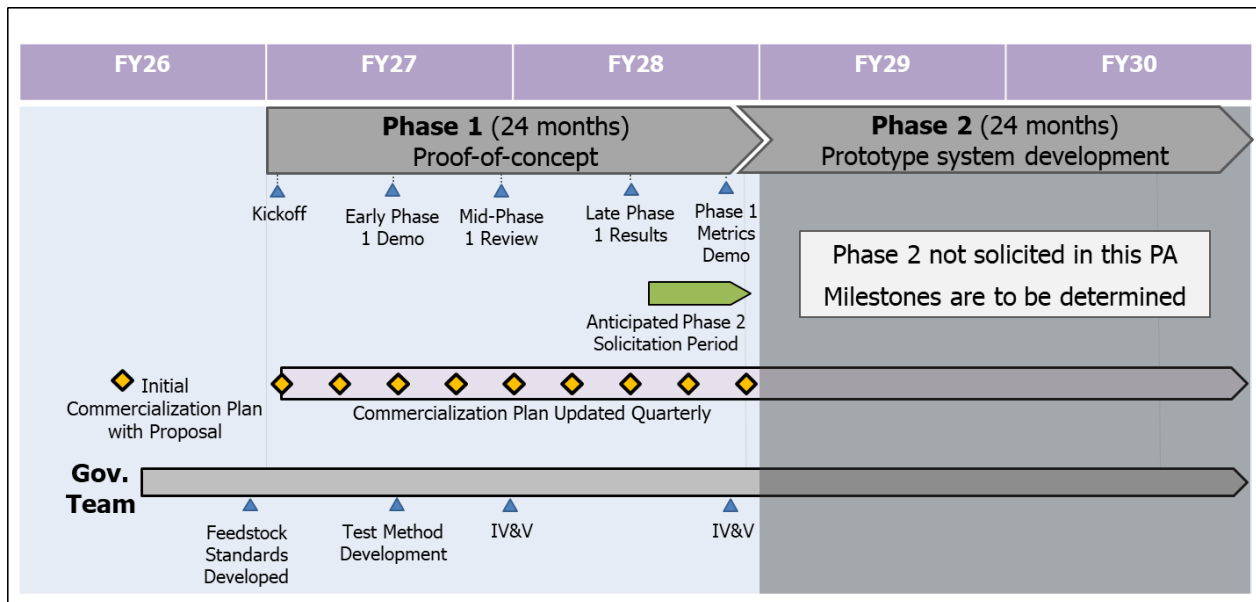


Figure 1. Program schedule

All proposals must include the following meetings and travel in the proposed schedule and costs:

- To foster collaboration between teams and disseminate program developments, a 2-day Principal Investigator (PI) meeting will be held approximately every 12 months, with locations split between the East and West Coasts of the United States. For budgeting purposes, plan for a kickoff and two 2-day meetings per program phase: two meetings in the Washington, D.C., area and one meeting in the San Francisco, CA, area.
- Regular teleconference meetings will be scheduled with the government team for progress reporting as well as problem identification and mitigation. Proposers should also anticipate at least one site visit per phase by the DARPA Program Manager, during which they will have the opportunity to demonstrate progress towards agreed-upon milestones.

Meetings

Kickoff

An in-person review for all teams will be held at DARPA. Performers will prepare a presentation and development plan that outlines their proposed approach to address the requirements of the Smash program. Presentation and materials will detail the refined technical approach, proof-of-concept design, test strategy, risks, and milestones. The review will feature open and closed sessions for each performer. The audience for the open sessions will include performer teams, government team including IV&V as

well as interested government parties. All presentation materials must be submitted two working days prior to the review.

Monthly Technical Reviews

Technical review meetings with the Smash Program Manager will be held every month in a teleconference format. Written technical reports or slides, in a format decided by the Program Manager, must be submitted monthly—beginning after the kick-off meeting—approximately two working days prior to each scheduled technical review meeting. Other proposed deliverables specific to the objectives of the individual efforts may include experimental protocols, raw element analysis data, publications, data management plan, and models and/or modeling data.

Quarterly Program Reviews

Once per quarter, a detailed technical review meeting with the Smash Program Manager will be held in a teleconference format. Written technical reports or slides, in a format decided by the Program Manager, must be submitted approximately two working days prior to each scheduled quarterly program review meeting. Other proposed deliverables specific to the objectives of the individual efforts may include experimental protocols, raw element analysis data, publications, data management plan, and models and/or modeling data.

Annual Reviews

The Principal Investigator (PI) from each performer team (with additional key personnel at the discretion of the PI) will be required to present research progress in person at annual program review meetings. The purpose of these reviews is to ensure adequate management with the DARPA team to discuss progress towards milestones and scientific goals and any ongoing technical or programmatic challenges that must be overcome to achieve the overarching goals of the program. Details for annual review agendas and reports will be in collaboration with the Program Manager and performers.

Annual Site Visits

The government team will visit the performer site at least once per year. Performers should provide the government team with in-depth technical and programmatic updates, as well as facility tours to demonstrate experimental separation capability. Details for site visit agendas and reports will be in collaboration with the Program Manager and performers.

Performer Capability Tests and Exams

Performers will conduct three capability demonstrations throughout the course of the program that will be used to evaluate advancement of teams through the program and realize programmatic goals of the program. In collaboration with the IV&V team, these demonstrations will be conducted at the performer site. The IV&V team will furnish feedstocks to validate the performer systems. For each test, the performers will be responsible for providing a report outlining the outcomes of the testing no later than one month following the conclusion of the tests.

Program Deliverables and Milestones

All products, materials, and other deliverables to be provided to the government as outcomes from conducted research should be defined in the proposal.

The following deliverables are required on an ongoing basis throughout all active phases of the program.

Table 3. Recurring Deliverables

Deliverable	Frequency / Cadence	Description
<p>Monthly Technical Reports</p>	<p>Monthly</p>	<p>Brief monthly technical updates in either written or slide presentation format to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of the previous month’s progress. • Notable achievements. • Areas of technical and/or programmatic concern. <p>Submitted two working days prior to each monthly technical review meeting.</p>
<p>Quarterly Technical Reports</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Both slide presentations and written reports. Slide presentations shall be provided to the government team prior to the quarterly progress report (QPR) meeting and written reports shall be due two business days prior to each QPR meeting. Reporting shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of technical work to date. • Charts and explanations of how well the system meets, exceeds, or falls short of specified program goals (as described in this PA). • Technical and/or programmatic concerns. • Risk assessment and risk mitigation strategies. • Plans for the next quarter’s work. <p><i>At PM discretion, Quarterly Reports may take the place of monthly reports when due.</i></p>
<p>Quarterly Commercialization Plan Updates</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Due within ten business days of the end of the given quarter.</p>
<p>Principal Investigator (PI) Reviews</p>	<p>Yearly</p>	<p>Both slide presentations and written reports. Slide presentations shall be provided to the government team prior to the PI Review meeting and written reports shall be due within ten business days of meeting. Reporting shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of technical work to-date. • Charts and explanations of how well the system meets, exceeds, or falls short of specified program goals (as described in this PA). • Technical and/or programmatic concerns. • Risk assessment and risk mitigation strategies. • Plans for the next year’s work.

Phase 1 Milestones and Deliverables (Months 1-24)

A summary of the expected program milestones and deliverables is presented in Table 4. It is anticipated that proposers will tailor the milestones to capture the key technical events and demonstration specific to the proposed technical approach. Proposers should anticipate that the government will conduct a thorough review of progress at each milestone throughout the program. If it is determined that sufficient progress is not being made or that the effort is unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes, the government may decide not to fund subsequent milestones.

Table 4. Phase 1 Milestones

	Milestone	Month	Accomplishment Criteria/Deliverable	%Budget*
1	Phase 1 Kickoff/ Initial Technical Approach & Development Plan	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kickoff meeting at DARPA Slides and materials outlining technical approach and development plan Initial material and equipment procurement 	15
2	Initial Results	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First quarterly program review (QPR1) meeting with DARPA Quarterly technical report including description of initial experimental apparatus establishment, setup, and calibration 	10
3	Early Phase 1 Metrics Demonstration	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QPR2 meeting with DARPA Quarterly technical report providing experimental demonstration of Early Phase 1 metrics 	10
4	Preliminary Throughput Correlation Results	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QPR3 meeting with DARPA Quarterly technical report detailing correlation between model and experimental results for mass throughput; report should address both rate and duration of operation 	10
5	Mid-Phase 1 Review	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PI Review with DARPA Report detailing a forward-looking plan and schedule that supports the feasibility of meeting the technical metrics by the end of Phase 1 and demonstration of Mid-Phase 1 metrics Full Commercialization Plan (See Attachment C) 	15
6	Expanded Feedstock Demonstration	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly technical report detailing initial experiments with expanded standard feedstock options demonstrating advancement beyond Mid-Phase 1 metrics 	10
7	Late Phase 1 Results	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly technical report describing system and scaling models to inform projections to Phase 2 metrics; report should include Late Phase 1 experimental results and the correlation between model and experimental measurements; experimental progress towards Phase 1 metrics 	15
8	Final Phase 1 Metrics Demonstration and Completion Report	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final PI Review with DARPA Delivery of final report detailing the experimental results towards Phase 1 metrics and details of the final system and scaling models to inform projections to Phase 2 metrics 	15

* Use as guidance for an approximate allocation of funds. Allocation amounts are based on careful consideration of the technical value of the milestone deliverable to the government as well as the time, effort, and resources necessary to complete each milestone.

E. Government Furnished Equipment/Property/Information

At the start of the program, the government will specify standard feedstock composition for the evaluation of performance against the program metrics. Standard feedstock samples will be provided to performers ahead of key metric evaluation milestones.

F. Intellectual Property

Proposers shall identify in their proposal any pre-existing technical data, software, or other intellectual property (“Background Intellectual Property” or BIP), or portions thereof, that is proposed to be used in performance of the effort or that is necessary to use, test, evaluate, or transition the deliverables produced under the Program for government purposes, and that will be subject to restrictions. For each item of BIP, proposers shall clearly identify the nature of any restriction and the rights proposed to be granted to the government. Identification of BIP in a proposal does not constitute government acceptance of such restrictions. The government expects to receive a non-exclusive, royalty-free license sufficient to allow performance of the Program and to use, test, evaluate, and transition the deliverables solely for government purposes.

Intellectual property first developed under the agreement (“Foreground Intellectual Property” or FIP), including software, technical data, and other program-generated deliverables, shall be provided to the government with a minimum of **Government Purpose Rights (GPR)**, unless otherwise approved by the government. These rights must be sufficient to permit full use, testing, evaluation, and transition of the deliverables by the government and its support contractors in furtherance of Program objectives.

Proposers shall appropriately identify any potential restrictions on the government’s use of any IP contemplated under the award; if no restrictions are intended, the proposer shall state “NONE.” Proposers shall provide the documentation described in **Attachment C** to support IP assertions and deliverable rights.

For the purposes of this announcement, the following definitions apply:

- **“Data”** refers to recorded information, regardless of form or method of recording, including technical data, software, mask works, and trade secrets, but excluding financial, administrative, cost, pricing, or management information and inventions.
- **“Government purpose”** means any activity in which the United States government is a party, including cooperative agreements with international or multi-national defense organizations, or sales or transfers by the United States government to foreign governments or international organizations. Government purposes do not include the rights to use, modify, reproduce, release, perform, display, or disclose technical data for commercial purposes or authorize others to do so.
- **“Government purpose rights”** means the rights to use, duplicate, or disclose Data, in whole or in part and in any manner, for government purposes only, and to have or permit others to do so for government purposes only.

G. Acquisition Strategy

The government's acquisition strategy for Smash is structured to minimize the administrative burden of entry and reduce program risk. To facilitate this objective, the government will use the following acquisition process:

- 1) **Proposers Day.** DARPA will hold an in-person event on February 24, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET to introduce the science and technology community (industry, academia, and government) to the Smash program's vision and goals, to collect questions that the government may answer during the Question-and-Answer (Q&A) session, and to facilitate potential teaming. Attendance at this event is optional.
- 2) **Questions and Answers.** DARPA will post a consolidated Q&A document on a regular basis. To access the posting go to: <https://www.darpa.mil/research/programs/smash>. Under the DARPA-PA-26-04 summary will be a link to the Q&A document. Submit your question(s) by email to smash@darpa.mil. In order to receive a response sufficiently in advance of the Proposal due date, send your question(s) on or before the due date and time stated in the Overview section.
- 3) **Abstracts.** Abstracts are required to submit a full proposal. Abstracts are due no later than the due date and time stated in the Overview section. Required abstract content is described in Attachment A (see Section III for abstract submission guidance).
- 4) **Abstract Response Letters.** DARPA will respond to all abstracts with a statement as to whether DARPA: (1) Recommends the proposer submit a full proposal or, (2) Does not recommend the proposer submit a full proposal with a rationale for this decision. Regardless of DARPA's response to an abstract, proposers may submit a full proposal.
- 5) **Notification of Intent to Propose.** Proposers must provide a notification of their intent to propose no later than the due date and time stated in the Overview section, to aid in scheduling Proposal Oral Presentations. Submit your notification by email to smash@darpa.mil.
 1. Proposers must submit an eForm 60 for all U.S. Permanent Residents and foreign nationals who will be participating in the Oral Presentations no later than the due date for the Notification of Intent to Propose specified in the Overview Information section. Failure to submit the required documentation in a timely manner may result in the individual being denied access to the oral proposal without exception.
 2. It is the responsibility of the prime contractor to ensure that all personnel, including those from sub-awardees, who are U.S. Permanent Residents or foreign nationals comply with these requirements.
 3. **Submission Link:** The form must be submitted electronically via the following secure portal: <https://dtsn.darpa.mil/eform60/>.
- 6) **Proposals with Oral Presentation.** Proposals and Oral Presentation slides are due no later than the due date and time stated in the Overview section. There will be 40-minute Oral Presentations with 20-minute Q&A sessions scheduled for each conforming full proposal following receipt. The Oral Presentations will be held in-person during the time window specified in the Overview section. See Section III for proposal submission guidance.

H. Award Detail

- Given the program's focus on dual-use technology development and commercialization, this PA will result in the award of Other Transaction (OT) for Research agreements under 10 U.S.C. § 4021 for Phase 1. This approach leverages the flexibility of the statute to foster collaboration with a diverse range of performers, to include commercial entities that have a vested interest in developing technologies with both military and civilian applications. By emphasizing dual-use potential, the

program aims to attract innovative solutions and investments from industry partners, ensuring alignment with both commercial and defense objectives.

- In addition to single performer agreements, DARPA will consider multiparty awards and joint funding agreements that include commercial companies supporting existing and ongoing research and that may have a commercial interest in developing technology with DARPA. Proposers who wish to explore this option may include as part of their Phase 1 proposal letters of support or teaming agreements from interested entities to demonstrate collaboration and alignment with program goals.
- Additionally, in consideration for Intellectual Property rights and mutually beneficial capability development, the government will consider resource share commensurate with the proposed approach for Phase 1. To the maximum extent practicable, proposers are encouraged to include resource sharing contributions, which may consist of labor, materials, equipment, software, and facilities costs directly related to the project. The final amount of any proposed and recognized resource share will be based on full consideration of factors such as the team's existing tools, equipment, and staff, commercial versus military relevance, and unusual performance risk. Proposers are responsible for providing detailed justification for any proposed resource sharing, including value assessments and determinations, rationale as to the relevance to the proposed scope of work, and a commitment schedule.
- DARPA will not consider foregone profit or fee on this resultant award or other awards, previously funded government research, pre-existing IP, Internal Research and Development (IR&D) conducted prior to the OT award, or cost of money as resource share.
- Regardless of the type of resource-shared asset offered, any resource-shared Research OT will not include payment of profit or fee to the performer. Such a payment would skew the share ratio and would be contrary to the principles behind the purpose of resource sharing.

Section II: Evaluation Criteria

- Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria listed in **descending order of importance**: Overall Scientific and Technical Merit; Potential Contribution and Relevance to the DARPA Mission; and Budget and Price.
 - **Overall Scientific and Technical Merit:** The proposed technical approach is innovative, feasible, achievable, and complete. The proposed technical team has the expertise and experience to accomplish the proposed tasks. Task descriptions and associated technical elements provided are complete and in a logical sequence with all proposed deliverables clearly defined such that a final outcome that achieves the goal can be expected as a result of award. The proposal identifies major technical risks and planned mitigation efforts are clearly defined and feasible.
 - **Potential Contribution and Relevance to the DARPA Mission:** The potential contributions of the proposed effort bolster the national security technology base and support DARPA's mission to make pivotal early technology investments that create or prevent technological surprise. The proposed intellectual property restrictions (if any) will not significantly impact the government's ability to transition the technology and/or impede the intent to partner and commercialize.
 - **Budget and Price:** The proposed solution is realistic and affordable. The budget is realistic and accurately reflects the technical goals and objectives of the solicitation and reflects a sufficient understanding of the level of effort and staffing needed to successfully accomplish the proposed technical approach. The milestone cost is appropriately apportioned according to the government expectations above.

Section III: Submission Information

- **Proposer Instructions and General Terms and Conditions:** [Proposer Instructions and General Terms and Conditions](#)
- **Other Transaction agreements:** [Proposer Instructions: Other Transactions](#)
- This announcement contains an abstract phase. Abstracts are required. Abstracts are due no later than the due date and time stated in the Overview section. Additional instructions for abstract submission are contained within **Attachment A**.
- Full proposals are due no later than the due date and time stated in the Overview section. **Attachments B, C, D, E, F, G, and H** contain specific instructions and templates and constitute a full proposal submission. Please visit [Proposer Instructions and General Terms and Conditions](#) for specific information regarding submission methods through the Broad Agency Announcement Tool (BAAT).
- DARPA is interested in whether, and to what extent, proposers are using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to contribute to Volume 1 of proposals submitted in response to DARPA announcements. Therefore, proposers must answer the following questions on the cover sheet of Volume 1 of this announcement:
 - Did you use AI tools to assist in preparing this proposal?
 - If yes, what tools did you employ?

Any content in Volume 1 that utilized an AI tool to generate information, assist in technical understanding, or guide the technical work should have a citation and a corresponding reference in the Bibliography section of Volume 1. The citation should specify the tool, content, and purpose. For example, “[AI tool] was used to understand existing state of the art in manufacturing.”

NOTE – THIS INFORMATION WILL NOT BE USED FOR EVALUATION PURPOSES. Proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the Evaluation Criteria outlined in the announcement regardless of whether AI tools were employed.

- **PA Attachments:**
 - **Attachment A:** Abstract Instructions and Template
 - **Attachment B:** Proposal Summary Slide Template
 - **Attachment C:** Proposal Instructions and Volume I Template (Technical and Management)
 - **Attachment D:** Proposal Instructions and Volume II Template (Price)
 - **Attachment E:** DARPA Standard Price Summary Spreadsheet
 - **Attachment F:** Other Transaction Certification Template
 - **Attachment G:** Task Description Document (TDD) Template
 - **Attachment H:** Schedule of Milestones and Payments
 - **(informational) Attachment I:** Model Other Transaction for Research
 - **(informational) Attachment J:** Smash Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) Guide signed February 13, 2026

- All technical, contractual, and administrative questions regarding this notice must be emailed to smash@darpa.mil. Emails sent directly to the Program Manager or any other address may result in delayed or no response. All questions must be in English and must include the name, email address, and telephone number of a point of contact. DARPA will attempt to answer all questions in a timely manner and post an FAQ list on the DARPA/MTO Opportunities page at (<http://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/opportunities>). The list will be updated on an ongoing basis until one week prior to the proposal due date.

Section IV: Special Considerations

- This announcement, stated attachments, and websites incorporated by reference constitute the entire announcement. In the event of a discrepancy between the announcement, attachments, or websites, the announcement shall take precedence.
- All responsible sources capable of satisfying the government's needs, including both U.S. and non-U.S. sources, may submit a proposal that shall be considered by DARPA. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Small Businesses, Small Disadvantaged Businesses and Minority Institutions are encouraged to submit proposals and join others in submitting proposals; however, no portion of this announcement will be set aside for these organizations' participation due to the impracticality of reserving discrete or severable areas of this research for exclusive competition among these entities. Non-U.S. organizations and/or individuals may participate to the extent that such participants comply with any necessary nondisclosure agreements, security regulations, export control laws, and other governing statutes applicable under the circumstances.
- As of the time of publication of this announcement, all proposal submissions are anticipated to be unclassified.
- This program is subject to **Attachment J: Smash Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) Guide** signed February 13, 2026. All individuals accessing CUI agree to protect CUI in accordance with *DoD Instruction 5200.48 CONTROLLED UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION (CUI)* and *NIST Special Publication 800-171 rev 2 Protecting Controlled Unclassified Information in Nonfederal Systems and Organizations*.
- DARPA encourages technical solutions from all responsible sources capable of satisfying the government's needs. To ensure fair competition across the ecosystem, DARPA prohibits performers from concurrently providing Systems Engineering Technical Assistance (SETA), Advisory and Assistance Services (A&AS), or similar support services and being a technical performer, unless the DARPA Deputy Director grants a written waiver. DARPA extends this prohibition to Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), University-Affiliated Research Centers (UARC), and Government Entities including national laboratories, who, as a result of their specialized expertise and areas of competencies, are able to accomplish integral tasks that cannot be met by government or contractor resources.
- Due to their specialized roles and longstanding regulatory relationships with the government, FFRDCs, UARC, and Government Entities including national laboratories present potential conflicts and advantages that would compromise fair and open competition. If an FFRDC, UARC, or Government Entity believes they offer unique and innovative approaches to this solicitation and are interested in this solicitation, either as a prime or a subcontractor, they should contact the Agency Point of Contact

(POC) listed in the Overview section prior to the abstract due date to discuss potential participation as part of the government team or eligibility as a technical performer. These entities typically may only receive funding through existing awards they hold with their sponsoring agencies. If these entities are proposed as subawardees, their costs must be clearly segregable in the price proposal. If scientifically merited, DARPA may fund work proposed by these entities with the following caveats:

- FFRDCs: (1) FFRDCs must clearly demonstrate that the proposed work is not otherwise available from the private sector. (2) FFRDCs must provide a letter, on official letterhead from their sponsoring organization, that (a) cites the specific authority establishing their eligibility to propose to government solicitations and compete with industry, and (b) certifies the FFRDC's compliance with the associated FFRDC sponsor agreement's terms and conditions. DARPA, under this solicitation, will not award separate contracts to FFRDCs as prime or subawardees but will instead leverage their existing sponsors; agreements.
- UARCs: While UARCs typically have statutory authority to compete with industry, internal DARPA policy views them as trusted advisors who are only eligible to act as performers in fields where they do not serve in an advisory role. Even in those situations, DARPA still considers UARCs as having organizational conflicts of interest (OCI) when applying for a performer role. Proposals with UARCs as prime or subawardees must include an OCI mitigation plan.
- Government Entities: Government Entities (e.g., government/national laboratories, military educational institutions, etc.) are subject to applicable direct competition limitations. Government Entities must clearly demonstrate that the work is not otherwise available from the private sector and provide written documentation citing the specific statutory authority and contractual authority, if relevant, establishing their ability to propose to government solicitations and compete with industry. This information is required for Government Entities proposing to be awardees or subawardees.
- Authority and Eligibility: At the present time, **DARPA does not consider 15 U.S.C. § 3710a to be sufficient legal authority to show eligibility**. While 10 U.S.C. § 4892 may be the appropriate statutory starting point for some entities, specific supporting regulatory guidance, together with evidence of agency approval, will still be required to fully establish eligibility. DARPA will consider FFRDC and Government Entity eligibility submissions on a case-by-case basis; however, the burden to prove eligibility for all team members rests solely with the proposer.

DARPA will not establish new contractual agreements for their participation. Accordingly, any proposal submitted directly by these entities in a prime contractor capacity may be deemed non-conforming and not evaluated. Proposals that include a UARC, FFRDC, Government Entities, or national laboratory as a subcontractor may also be deemed non-conforming unless: (1) their role is clearly defined in the technical proposal with a point of contact, and (2) a rough order of magnitude cost is provided in the technical proposal only—cost proposals must exclude their funding, as DARPA will not fund them through the prime. It is important to note that if funded, these organizations will be required to share their work and findings with other performers also supporting the same program. Additionally, DARPA may contact these entities directly to discuss proposed activities.

- As of the date of publication of this announcement, the government expects that Phase 1 program goals as described herein may be met by proposed efforts for fundamental research and non-

fundamental research. Some proposed research may present a high likelihood of disclosing performance characteristics of military systems or manufacturing technologies that are unique and critical to defense. Based on the anticipated type of proposer (e.g., university or industry) and the nature of the solicited work, the government expects that all awards will include restrictions on the resultant research that will require the awardee to seek DARPA permission before publishing any information or results relative to the program. For additional information on fundamental research, please visit [Proposer Instructions and General Terms and Conditions](#).

- Effective June 30, 2025, the DARPA Fundamental Research Risk-Based Security Review (FRRBS) will be conducted on all fundamental research awards executed through non-FAR-based instruments. FRRBS is an adaptive risk management security program designed to help protect the critical technology and performer intellectual property associated with DARPA's research projects by identifying the possible vectors of undue foreign influence. The DARPA team will create risk assessments of all proposed Senior/Key Personnel selected for negotiation of a fundamental research award. The DARPA risk assessment process will be conducted separately from the DARPA scientific review process and adjudicated prior to final award. **For any proposal where fundamental research is included, proposers must submit the (1) Common Form for Biographical Sketch, and (2) Common Form for Current and Pending (Other) Support Information form for all covered individuals, in addition to the volumes and required attachments specified elsewhere in this Program Announcement. Both forms are available via the NSF website - [NSPM-33 Implementation Guidance](#).** Please review the DARPA Fundamental Research Risk-Based Security Review Process detailed at [Proposer Instructions: Other Transactions](#).
- As of the date of publication of this announcement, **the government expects that Phase 2 program goals as described herein either cannot be met by proposers intending to perform fundamental research** or the proposed research is anticipated to present a high likelihood of disclosing performance characteristics of military systems or manufacturing technologies that are unique and critical to defense. Therefore, the government anticipates restrictions on the resultant research that will require the awardee to seek DARPA permission before publishing any information or results relative to the program. For additional information on fundamental research, please visit [Proposer Instructions and General Terms and Conditions](#).
- As of the date of publication of this announcement, **the government expects that Phase 2 results as described herein will be controlled at the CUI level.** DARPA anticipates that Smash Phase 2 may also produce unclassified, fundamental research that reflects experimental and modeling progress toward materials and designs in this program. Subject to a review by DARPA, unclassified information can be moved off CUI-compliant information systems. DARPA requires a second pre-publication review of specific materials to establish public releasability. For additional information on fundamental research, please visit [Proposer Instructions and General Terms and Conditions](#).
- The APEX Accelerators program, formerly known as the Procurement Technical Assistance Program (PTAP), focuses on building a strong, sustainable, and resilient U.S. supply chains by assisting a wide range of businesses that pursue and perform under contracts with the DoD, other federal agencies, state and local governments and with government prime contractors. See <https://www.apexaccelerators.us/> for more information. APEX Accelerators helps businesses:
 - Complete registration with a wide range of databases necessary for them to participate in the government marketplace (e.g., sam.gov)

- Identify which agencies and offices may need their products or services and how connect with buying agencies and offices
 - Determine whether they are ready for government opportunities and how to position themselves to succeed
 - Navigate solicitations and potential funding opportunities
 - Receive notifications of government contract opportunities on a regular basis
 - Network with buying officers, prime contractors, and other businesses
 - Resolve performance issues and prepare for audit, only if the service is needed, after receiving an award
- Project Spectrum is a nonprofit effort funded by the DoD Office of Small Business Programs to help educate the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) on compliance. Project Spectrum is vendor-neutral and available to assist businesses with their cybersecurity and compliance needs. Their mission is to improve cybersecurity readiness, resilience, and compliance for small/medium-sized businesses and the federal manufacturing supply chain. Project Spectrum events and programs will enhance awareness of cybersecurity threats within the manufacturing, research, and development, as well as knowledge-based services sectors of the industrial base. Project Spectrum will leverage strategic partnerships within and outside of the DoD to accelerate the overall cybersecurity compliance of the DIB. www.Projectspectrum.io is a web portal that will provide resources such as individualized dashboards, a marketplace, and Pilot Program to help accelerate cybersecurity compliance.
 - DARPAConnect offers free resources to potential performers to help them navigate DARPA, including “Understanding DARPA Award Vehicles and Solicitations,” “Making the Most of Proposers Days,” and “Tips for DARPA Proposal Success.” Join DARPAConnect at <https://www.darpaconnect.us> to leverage on-demand learning and networking resources.
 - DARPA has streamlined our Program Announcements and is interested in your feedback on this new format. Please send any comments to DARPA solicitations@darpa.mil.