

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MINERVA RESEARCH INITIATIVE'S UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ANNOUNCEMENT

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ASSISTANCE LISTING:	12.630 Basic, Applied, and Advanced Research in Science and Engineering
KEY DATES:	White Papers: 29 November 2024 at 1500 Eastern Full Applications: 28 February 2025 at 1500 Eastern

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I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Minerva's University Research program aims to support innovative basic research projects that contribute to the advancement of social science and provides new methods and understandings on social and behavioral questions of security and defense-related interest.

B. BACKGROUND

Minerva aims to improve DoD's basic understanding of the social, cultural, behavioral, and political forces that shape regions of the world of strategic importance to the U.S. The research program seeks to:

- Leverage and focus the resources of the Nation's top universities;
- Define and develop foundational knowledge about sources of present and future conflict with an eye toward better understanding of the political trajectories of key regions of the world; and
- Improve the ability of DoD to develop cutting-edge social science research and foreign area and interdisciplinary studies that is developed and vetted by the best scholars in these fields.

Minerva brings together universities, research institutions, and individual scholars and supports interdisciplinary and cross-institutional projects addressing specific topic areas determined by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION/OBJECTIVE

The Minerva Research Initiative (Minerva) emphasizes questions of strategic importance to U.S. national security policy. It seeks to increase the Department's intellectual capital in the social sciences and improve its ability to address future challenges and build bridges between the Department and the social science community. Minerva brings together universities and other research institutions around the world and supports multidisciplinary and cross-institutional projects addressing specific interest areas determined by the Department of Defense. The Minerva program aims to promote research in specific areas of social science and to promote a candid and constructive relationship between DoD and the social science academic community.

The Minerva Research Initiative competition is for research related to six (6) topics listed below. Innovative white papers and applications related to these research areas are highly encouraged. Detailed descriptions of the interest areas—which are intended to provide a frame of reference and are not meant to be restrictive—can be found in Appendix B: Minerva Research Topics of Interest.

- Topic 1: Societal Cohesion and Conflict
- Topic 2: Advancing Influence Measurement(s)
- Topic 3: Arctic at the Polar Crossroads
- Topic 4: Cultural Resilience, Climate, and Human Security in Oceania
- Topic 5: Social Impact of Technological Change

Topic 6: Deterrence and Competition across Military and Civilian Spheres

NB: Each proposal should be submitted to only one topic area, even if there is overlap with another topic area.

Proposals will be considered both for single-investigator awards as well as larger teams. A team of university investigators may be warranted because the necessary expertise in addressing the multiple facets of the interest areas may reside in different universities, or in different departments of the same university. The research questions addressed should extend across a broad range of linked issues where there is clear potential synergy among the contributions of the distinct disciplines represented on the team. Team proposals must name only one Principal Investigator as the responsible technical point of contact. Similarly, one institution will be the primary recipient for the purpose of award execution. The relationship among participating institutions and their respective roles, as well as the apportionment of funds including sub-awards, if any, must be described in both the proposal text and the budget. As well, the basic research contribution of the project must be clearly described in the proposal text.

The Minerva Research Initiative is a multi-service effort. Ultimately, however, funding decisions will be made by OSD personnel, with technical inputs from the Services.

D. OVERVIEW OF FUNDING PRIORITIES

The award made under this announcement will be governed by the general terms and conditions in effect at the time of the award that conform to DoD's implementation of OMB guidance applicable to financial assistance in 2 CFR 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards." Additionally, the requirements of the DoD Grant and Agreement Regulations at 32 CFR Subchapter C are applicable to this award. These terms and conditions are incorporated by reference in this announcement.

E. FUNDING PRIORITIES

In accordance with 10 USC §4001, Research and Development Projects, OUSD(R&E), Minerva's University Research program aims to support innovative basic research projects that contribute to the advancement of social science and provides new methods and understandings on social and behavioral questions of security and defense-related interest.

F. AUTHORIZATION

The authorization to make awards under this NFO may be found via the Assistance Listing (formerly, the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance [CFDA] Number) [12.630 Basic, Applied, and Advanced Research in Science and Engineering](#).

II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

A. TYPE OF INSTRUMENT

The Government intends to award grants as a result of this NFO. These should be new awards, not extensions or supplementations of previous awards. Substantial government involvement is not expected between the Government and the recipient under these awards. The Government reserves the right to award other assistance instruments, if deemed in the best interests of the Government. Additionally, the Minerva program description does not describe or require substantial involvement from the DoD in carrying out the assistance. Consequentially, as substantial government involvement is not required, the grants officer has determined that a grant is the appropriate vehicle for this assistance.

The anticipated start date for the awards is 1 June 2025, with a base three-year period. If justified, a fourth- and fifth-option-year are possible as part of the original proposal, though three-year awards are the standard.

B. ESTIMATED PROGRAM FUNDING

The Federal Government (DoD) anticipates awarding 15 grants, with each valued up to \$1,000,000.00 per year with a three- to five-year period of performance. (A three-year base period plus up to two option years.) The total amount awarded from this NFO is not expected to exceed \$30,000,000.00 over the selected awards' period of performance. These funding amounts include both direct and indirect costs. Subject to the availability of funds, the total value of this effort may also be augmented by Congress or by other federal government agencies.

C. ANTICIPATED NUMBER OF AWARDS

The Government reserves the right to make 15 awards or no award as a result of this NFO.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

All responsible sources from academia, including DoD institutions of higher education and foreign universities, may submit applications under this NFO.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority Institutions (MIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are encouraged to apply. No portion of this NFO, however, will be set aside for HBCU, MI, or TCU participation.

Teams are encouraged and may submit proposals applications in any and all areas. Non-profit institutions and commercial entities may be included on a university-led team as subawardees only, receiving funding for their efforts accordingly. Federally Funded Research & Development Centers (FFRDCs), including Department of Energy National Laboratories, are not eligible to receive awards under this NFO. However, teaming arrangements between FFRDCs and eligible principal applicants are allowed provided they are permitted under the sponsoring agreement between the Government and the specific FFRDC.

Grants to a university may be terminated if the Principal Investigator (PI) severs connections with the university or is unable to continue active participation in the research. Grants to a university may also be terminated if the university severs connections with the PI.

Number of PIs: A single PI must be designated on the application to serve as administrative and technical project lead. There is no restriction on the number of additional key research personnel who can be included on a single application, but each position should be justified by the scope and focus of the research.

B. COST SHARING OR MATCHING

Cost sharing is not required.

C. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The organization must disclose any potential or actual scientific or nonscientific conflict of interest(s) and must also disclose any potential or actual conflict(s) of interest for any identified sub recipient included in the application. The Government may follow-up with questions.

Depending on the circumstances, the Government may request a conflict of interest mitigation plan. The plan must be approved by the Government. Conflicts of interest which are unable to be mitigated will deem the applicant ineligible for award.

Scientific collaborations on research and development projects are generally the result of close collaboration prior to the submission of applications for support.

Accordingly, these collaborations should be considered when considering potential conflicts of interest. The potential conflict is mitigated by the disclosure of these collaborations, and the list of current and pending support provided for senior and key researchers. Therefore, all collaborators must be included in the list of current and pending support, even if they did not formally provide support.

The Applicant must include the Acknowledgment of Support and Disclaimer on all materials created or produced under our awards. This language may be found in the Terms and Conditions included in the award documents.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Proposals submitted shall be in accordance with this announcement. Proposed sub-recipients or formal collaborators may, however, team on multiple proposals. The proposal must be valid for at least 180 days. All proposals must reference this announcement number. Offerors should be alert for any amendments to this NFO that may adjust submission dates or other submission requirements. All submissions must be unclassified. The Government will not reimburse any cost associated with participation in the proposal process.

The Government reminds offerors that only warranted Grants Officers could bind or otherwise commit contractually the Government. The cost of preparing proposals in

response to this announcement is not an allowable direct charge to any resulting agreement (or any other federal award/contract).

A. CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The Minerva application process is conducted in two stages:

- Stage 1 – White Paper submission (via email to osd.minerva@mail.mil AND the “Appendix B: Minerva Research Topics of Interest” technical point of contact)
 - Deadline: 29 November 2024 at 1500 Eastern
- Stage 2 – Full Application submission (via Grants.gov)
 - Deadline: 28 February 2025 at 1500 Eastern

Stage One – Based on an assessment of the white papers submitted, the grants officer will advise prospective proposers whether the applications outlined in their white papers were judged to be competitive for Minerva University Research award selection, and will then invite the most promising subset of applications to submit a full application for funding consideration. **NB: White Papers are strongly encouraged.**

Stage Two – Interested entities will submit full applications. All proposals submitted under the terms and conditions cited in this NFO will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria stated herein. Subsequent to white paper feedback, interested entities are required to submit full proposals. **NB: Entities may submit a proposal without being invited through the white paper review stage, though this is discouraged.** Interested parties who do not participate in the white paper review stage should contact the appropriate POC prior to submission of a full proposal to discuss options, though feedback at that late stage is not guaranteed. Full proposals submitted after the posted deadline will not be evaluated for funding consideration. Time of receipt will be determined by the date and time the submission is recorded by Grants.gov. Early submission is encouraged.

Applications will be submitted through Grants.gov. **NB: All documents must be submitted in .pdf format.** NOTE: If using Excel for any portion of the application, ensure the document is converted to .pdf format prior to uploading to Grants.gov.

DO NOT SEND: Hardcopies (including facsimiles)

DO NOT SEND: ZIP files

DO NOT SEND: Adobe Acrobat files in portfolio mode

DO NOT SEND: Password protected files.

Full application packages—as indicated by Stage—must be submitted electronically (via E-mail for Stage 1 and via Grants.gov for Stage 2) no later than the dates and times indicated on the Grants.gov listing, the cover page of this NFO, and in Section IV.B. Feedback may be provided by the Program Director or appropriate POC after reviews have been completed.

WHITE PAPERS (STAGE ONE)

1. WHITE PAPER PACKAGE COMPONENTS

Submitted documentation should be in PDF format and include in a single document, ordered as below:

- A cover letter (optional), not to exceed one page.
- A cover page, labeled “APPLICATION WHITE PAPER,” that includes the NFO number, proposed project title, and prospective applicant's technical point of contact with telephone number, e-mail address, and most relevant area number and title (see Appendix B: Minerva Research Topics of Interest).
- The white paper (**four (4) page limit, single-sided**) including:
 - Identification of the research and issues including the state of the field
 - Proposed methods
 - Potential contribution to fundamental social science basic research
 - Potential implications for national defense
 - Potential team and management plan
 - Data management plan for data or tools to be generated in the course of research
 - Summary of estimated costs
 - Reference citations are not required but may be included outside the four-page limit
- Curriculum vitae (CV) of key investigators (optional)

The white paper should provide sufficient information on the research being proposed (e.g., hypothesis, theories, concepts, methods, approaches, data collection, measurement, and analyses) to allow for an assessment by a subject matter expert.

2. WHITE PAPER SUBMISSION

White papers and supporting documentation must be submitted as email attachments to osd.minerva@mail.mil and the research topic's technical point of contact no later than 1500 Eastern on 29 November 2024. E-mail transmission is not instantaneous and delays in transmission may occur anywhere along the route. The Government takes no responsibility for any delays in the transmission of an e-mail. The prospective applicant is responsible for allowing enough time to complete the required application components, upload the white paper and submit the proposal via e-mail before the deadline. It is not necessary for white papers to carry official institutional signatures.

The submission email subject line should indicate relevant area categories (see Appendix B: Minerva Research Topics of Interest), written as: 2024 Minerva NFO WP - Area [Topic Number]

An e-mail confirmation will be sent to the applicant within four days of submission. Documents submitted after the deadline or found to be non-compliant with the requirements described above will not be reviewed.

FULL PROPOSALS (STAGE TWO)

3. PACKAGE REQUIREMENTS

The below chart specifies which forms and attachments are required for the Full Proposal submission and specifies the maximum page lengths for attachments to be submitted along with the completed form.

SF424 (R&R)(V5.0)
Assurances for Non-construction Programs (SF-424B – R&R) (V1.1)
Budget Information for Non-construction Programs (SF-424A) (V1.0)
Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL) (V2.0)
Project Abstract Summary (V2.0) (Suggested length no more than two pages)
Project Narrative Attachment Form (V1.2) (No more than 25 pages)
Research & Related Budget (V3.0)
Research & Related Personal Data (V1.2)
Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (V3.0)

The application consists of a narrative with supporting documentation, and required forms. Both are explained below.

The Narrative is a twenty-five (25) page document consisting of the following items:

- Identification of the research and issues, including the state of the field
- Proposed methods
- Potential contribution to fundamental social science basic research
- Potential implications for national defense
- Team and management plan
- Data management plan for data or tools to be generated in the course of research. Additionally, information on how the data will be shared, organized, and preserved should be included. In instances where this is not possible, the Data Management Plan must explain why it is not possible or scientifically appropriate. Information on the Data Management Plan can be found in DoDI 3200.12, Section 3.c. of Enclosure 3.
(<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/320012p.pdf?ver=2019-04-30-073122-220>).
- Project Schedule and Milestones
- Summary of estimated costs
- Reference citations are not required but may be included outside the 25-page limit

Narratives exceeding the 25-page limit may not be evaluated.

EXCLUDED from the 25-page limit are resumes, curricula vitae (limited to two pages each), references, Initial Work Plan, letters of support (limited to 10 pages), and data management plan. These may be included in the same document as appendices, after the page limit.

Additionally, the following items are EXCLUDED from the 25-page limit:

- A cover letter (optional, but not to exceed one (1) page)
- A cover page, labeled “FULL PROPOSAL” that includes the NFO number, proposed project title, and prospective applicant’s technical point of contact with telephone number, e-mail address, and most relevant topic number(s) and title(s) (see Appendix B: Minerva Research Topics of Interest).
- Table of Contents – A listing of the sections within the application, including corresponding page numbers.
- Executive Summary – An Executive Summary is requested and may be constructed in any manner in which the applicant feels summarizes the entire application.
- Financial Breakdown – The application must include a narrative cost proposal detailing direct labor, administrative and clerical labor, fringe benefits and indirect costs, travel, sub-awards, subcontracts, consultants, materials and supplies, recipient acquired equipment of facilities, and other direct costs.
 - The cost proposal, which is a narrative explaining and justifying budget figures in enough detail so the government can determine reasonableness. It must include all figures, calculations, and supporting documentation for determining cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness. Justifications for costs must be explicitly stated.
 - Additional information may be requested, if needed. If composite rates are used, provide the calculations used in deriving the composite rates. A Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) may be required in order for an awardee to invoice for indirect costs. If the Offeror does not currently hold a NICRA, describe the status of the organization’s request for such an agreement with its cognizant agency.
 - IAW 2 CFR §200.414(f), any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, except for those non-Federal entities described in Appendix VII to 2 CFR §200, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely.
 - If subject to Federal Single Audit coverage requirements, the offeror must submit the latest Single Audit with the application.
 - NOTE: Failure to adequately provide detailed cost data will require the Grants Officer to contact the proposing organization for the requisite information. All Offerors are required to submit a thoroughly detailed cost breakdown. The Grants Officer must be able to determine that all proposed costs are allowable and reasonable. A detailed budget will facilitate this cost analysis.
- Letter(s) of Support (optional) – There is no specified format or content required for the letter(s) of support other than being authored by the appropriate representative on organizational letterhead, and supporting commitment to the offeror and his or her project. Commitment may include (but is not limited to) funding, related materials and/or computer investments, technical advisement, and organizational or infrastructure support. The letter(s) can include any and all commitments and investments made by the

representative towards the offeror and the overall statement about the relevance of the project to the Minerva Research Initiative.

- **Principal Investigator Qualifications (Curricula Vitae/Resumes)** – A discussion of the qualifications of the proposed Project Director/Principal Investigator and any other key personnel. Include resumes or curricula vitae for the Project Director/Principal Investigator and other key personnel. The resumes/curricula vitae shall be attached to the application and must be limited to two (2) pages each.
- **Responsibility** – Offerors must provide the following information to the DoD in order to assist in the DoD’s evaluation of the offeror’s responsibility:
 - Describe how you have adequate resources or the ability to obtain such capability as required to complete the activities proposed;
 - Describe how you have the ability to comply with the agreement conditions, taking into account all existing and currently prospective commitments of the offeror, nongovernmental and governmental;
 - Describe your performance history; specifically, your record in managing Federal awards and the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards;
 - Describe your record of integrity and business ethics;
 - Describe qualifications and eligibility to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations; and
 - Describe your organization, experience, accounting, and operational controls and technical skills, or the ability to obtain them (including as appropriate such elements as property control systems, quality assurance measures, and safety programs applicable to the services to be performed).
- **Initial Work Plan** – Offerors must submit an Initial Work Plan. The Work Plan will become part of the resulting award if the application is selected to be funded. Please review Section XII Appendix A for further guidance regarding the work plan. A completed Work Plan is required for selected application to receive funding.
- **Budget Justification** – A separate document (PDF format) should be included in the application that provides appropriate justification and/or supporting documentation for each element of cost proposed. This document shall be attached under Section K. “Budget Justification” of the Research and Related Budget form. Click “Add Attachment” to attach. This document may be prepared in Excel, but must be converted to Adobe .pdf format when submitted. The itemized budget should include direct and indirect costs, including rates and quantities. This may include the following:
 - **Direct Labor** – Individual labor categories or persons, with associated labor hours and unburdened direct labor rates. Provide escalation rates for out years.
 - **Administrative and Clerical Labor** – Salaries of administrative and clerical staff are normally indirect costs (and included in an indirect cost rate). Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate when a major project requires an extensive amount of administrative or clerical support significantly greater than normal and routine levels of

support. Budgets proposing direct charging of administrative or clerical salaries must be supported with a budget justification which adequately describes the major project and the administrative and/or clerical work to be performed.

- Fringe Benefits and Indirect Costs (F&A, Overhead, G&A, etc.) – The application should show the rates and calculation of the costs for each rate category. If the rates have been approved/negotiated by a government agency, provide a copy of the memorandum/agreement. If the rates have not been approved/negotiated, provide sufficient detail to enable a determination of allowability, allocability and reasonableness of the allocation bases, and how the rates are calculated. Additional information may be requested, if needed. If composite rates are used, provide the calculations used in deriving the composite rates.
- Travel – The proposed travel costs must include the following for each trip: the purpose of the trip, origin and destination if known, approximate duration, the number of travelers, and the estimated cost per trip must be justified based on the organizations historical average cost per trip or other reasonable basis for estimation. Such estimates and the resultant costs claimed must conform to the applicable Federal cost principals. The PI is expected to travel to the annual program review to present her or his research, so these costs—usually to Washington, DC— should be included.
- Sub-awards/Subcontracts – Provide a description of the work to be performed by the subrecipient/subcontractor. For each sub-award, a detailed budget is required to be submitted by the subrecipient(s). An application and any supporting documentation must be received and reviewed before the Government can complete its cost analysis of the application. The DoD’s preferred method of receiving subcontract information is for this information to be included with the Prime’s application. The email should identify the application title, the prime Offeror and that the attached application is a subcontract.
- Consultants – Provide a breakdown of the consultant’s hours, the hourly rate proposed, any other proposed consultant costs, a copy of the signed Consulting Agreement or other documentation supporting the proposed consultant rate/cost, and a copy of the consultant’s proposed statement of work if it is not already separately identified in the prime contractor’s application.
- Materials & Supplies – Provide an itemized list of all proposed materials and supplies including quantities, unit prices, and the basis for the estimate (e.g., quotes, prior purchases, catalog price lists).
- Recipient Acquired Equipment or Facilities – Equipment and/or facilities are normally furnished by the Recipient. If acquisition of equipment and/or facilities is proposed, a justification for the purchase of the items must be provided. Provide an itemized list of all equipment and/or facilities costs and the basis for the estimate (e.g., quotes, prior purchases,

catalog price lists). Allowable items normally are limited to research equipment not already available for the project. General purpose equipment (i.e., equipment not used exclusively for research, scientific or other technical activities, such as personal computers, laptops, office equipment) should not be requested unless they will be used primarily or exclusively for the project. For computer/laptop purchases and other general purpose equipment, if proposed, include a statement indicating how each item of equipment will be integrated into the program or used as an integral part of the research effort.

- Other Direct Costs – Provide an itemized list of all other proposed direct costs such as Graduate Assistant tuition, laboratory fees, report and publication costs, and the basis for the estimate (e.g., quotes, prior purchases, catalog price lists).
- Fee/Profit – Fee/profit is unallowable under assistance agreements at either the prime or sub-award level but may be permitted on subcontracts issued by the prime awardee.

Formatting requirements:

- Single-spaced lines are acceptable.
- Font: Minimum font size is 12 points. The preferred font is Times New Roman, but other fonts are acceptable.
- Tables/Figures: 10 point fonts are acceptable for tables/figures and captions.

FULL PROPOSAL STRUCTURE

- Cover Letter (Optional)
- Cover Page (Required)
- Table of Contents (Required)
- Executive Summary (Required)
- Narrative Proposal (25-page limit, described above)
- Curriculum Vitae of Principal Investigator(s) (Required)
- Responsibility (Required)
- Letter(s) of Support (Optional)
- Financial Breakdown (Required)
- Initial Work Plan (Required)
- Budget Justification (Separate Document, Required)

APPLICATION WITHDRAWAL

An offeror may withdraw an application at any time before award by written notice or by email. Notice of withdrawal shall be sent to the grants officer identified in this announcement. Withdrawals are effective upon receipt of notice by the grants officer.

B. UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

Applications will only be accepted if submitted through Grants.gov. Organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), active System for Award Management (SAM) registration, and Grants.gov account to apply for grants and cooperative

agreements. Please consult SAM.gov and Grants.gov for assistance in registering for SAM and Grants.gov.

The Government may not make a Federal award until the applicant has complied with all unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

The Federal Assistance Certifications Report is an attestation that the entity will abide by the requirements of the various laws and regulations; therefore, as applicable, you are still required to submit any documentation, including the SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable), and informing DoD of unpaid delinquent tax liability or a felony conviction under any Federal law.

Any attachment containing additional certifications should be prefaced by the following statement: “By checking “I Agree” on the SF-424 Block 21 you agree to abide by the following statement: “By signing this application, I certify (1) to the statements contained in the list of certifications and (2) that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 218, Section 1001)”

Offerors are responsible for submitting their applications in sufficient time to allow them to reach Grants.gov by the date and time specified in this announcement. It is strongly recommended that applications be uploaded at least two days before the closing date and time. This will help avoid problems caused by high system usage or any potential technical and/or input problems involving the offeror’s own equipment. It will also allow any application errors detected by Grants.gov to be corrected in time for the application to be resubmitted. If the application is received by Grants.gov after the exact time and date specified as the deadline for receipt, it will be considered “late” and cannot be considered for review.

C. SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

As noted, the Minerva application process is conducted in two stages:

- Stage 1 – White Paper submission (via email to osd.minerva@mail.mil AND the “Appendix B: Minerva Research Topics of Interest” technical point of contact)
 - Deadline: 29 November 2024 at 1500 Eastern
- Stage 2 – Full Application submission (via Grants.gov)
 - Deadline: 28 February 2025 at 1500 Eastern

Important Dates

Last day to submit White Paper questions to Interest Area POCs	15 November 2024
White Papers Due (via email)	29 November 2024, 1500 ET
Notification of White Paper Evaluations*	17 January 2025
Last day for Full Proposal questions to Interest Area POCs	14 February 2025
Full Proposals Due (via Grants.gov)	28 February 2025, 1500 ET
Notification of Selection for Award*	16 April 2025
Planned Award Start Date*	1 June 2025

* Dates are estimates as of the date of this announcement.

The DoD will only accept applications submitted on or before the date specified in this NFO announcement. Read the instructions in <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/grantors/grantor-standard-language.html> about registering to apply for DoD funds. If the offeror experiences difficulties with their submission, Grants.gov provides support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. This ticket number will allow the DoD to verify the issue if it cannot be resolved by the application date.

The application package for this NFO is available on Grants.gov. Amendments to this NFO will be posted to the above website if and when they occur. Interested parties are encouraged to periodically check the above website for updates and amendments.

D. FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

As noted above in the Eligibility section, awards are made to universities/institutions of higher learning, who will use negotiated rates (or lower) for indirect costs.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. CRITERIA

The Minerva program seeks to invest in basic research and to identify challenging fundamental scientific areas of investigation that may have potential for long term benefit to DoD. Proposed research should describe cutting-edge efforts on basic scientific problems. Subject to funding availability, white papers and proposals will be evaluated under the following criteria:

Principal Criteria

- Scientific merit, soundness, and programmatic strategy of the proposed basic social science research; and
- Relevance and potential contributions of the proposed research to research areas of DoD interest as described in Appendix B: Minerva Research Topics of Interest. The Minerva Research Initiative is particularly interested in applications that align with and support the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

Other Criteria

- Potential impact of the basic research on the security-relevant social sciences and defense communities that apply them. DoD encourages innovative submissions that, in addition to knowledge generation in critical areas, also build new communities, new frameworks, and new opportunities for dialogue.
- The qualifications and availability of the university Principal Investigators and other key investigators (if applicable) and the overall management approach; and
- The realism and reasonableness of cost.

The Principal Criteria are of equal importance and are more important than Other Criteria. Other Criteria are of equal importance to each other. The U.S. Government does not guarantee an award in each research area. Further, be advised that as funds are limited, otherwise meritorious applications may not be funded.

All information necessary for the review and evaluation of an application must be contained in the application itself. No other material will be provided to the review panel. Applications should contain sufficient technical detail to allow for in-depth technical assessment.

An initial review of the applications will be conducted to ensure compliance with the requirements of this NFO. Failure to comply with the requirements of the NFO may result in an application receiving no further consideration for award.

An award under this NFO will be made on the basis of the evaluation criteria listed above.

WHS/AD reserves the right to remove Offerors from award consideration if the parties fail to reach agreement on award terms, conditions, or cost/price within a reasonable time; or if the Offerors fail to provide requested or required additional information in a timely manner.

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

The Minerva Research Initiative selects awards using merit-based competitive procedures according to 32 CFR 22.315. Preparation and submission requirements for the two-stage proposal process are described in Section IV of this document. Evaluation processes are described below.

WHITE PAPERS

White papers will be reviewed by the responsible Research Area POC for the interest area and may be reviewed by one or more subject matter experts. Systems Engineering and Technical Assistance (SETA) contractor employees may provide technical and administrative assistance to the evaluation team. Individuals other than the POC will sign a conflict-of-interest statement prior to receiving white papers.

White papers that best fulfill the evaluation criteria will be identified by the white paper reviewers and recommended to the OSD Minerva Steering Committee. The

Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the research and policy organizations within OSD and may include representatives from academia, the DoD Military Components, and/or Defense Agencies. The Minerva Steering Committee expects to invite up to forty (40) PIs to submit full proposals. White papers not invited to submit full proposals are discouraged from doing so. Thorough feedback on white papers will be provided to those invited to submit a full proposal. Feedback will be provided to all other proposers upon request.

FULL APPLICATIONS

Full applications submitted under this NFO undergo another multi-stage evaluation procedure. Technical applications will be evaluated through a peer or scientific review process. Reviewers may include Government personnel and Non-Government reviewers including university faculty and staff researchers.

Each reviewer is required to sign a conflict-of-interest and confidentiality statement attesting that the reviewer has no known conflicts of interest, and that application and evaluation information will not be disclosed outside the evaluation panel. The names and affiliations of reviewers are not disclosed.

Cost proposals will be evaluated by Government business professionals and support contractors. Findings of the various interest area evaluators will be forwarded to senior DoD officials who will make funding recommendations to the awarding officials. Restrictive notices notwithstanding, one or more support contractors or peers from the university community will be utilized as subject-matter-expert technical consultants. However, proposal selection and award decisions are solely the responsibility of Government personnel. Each support contractor's employees and peers from the university community having access to technical and cost proposals submitted in response to this NFO will be required to sign a non-disclosure statement prior to receipt of any proposal submission.

The recommendations of the various area POCs will be forwarded to senior officials from the OSD who will make final funding recommendations to the awarding officials based on reviews, portfolio balance interests, and funds available.

Due to the nature of the Minerva program, the reviewing officials may recommend that less than an entire Minerva proposal be selected for funding. This may be due to several reasons, such as insufficient funds, research overlap among proposals received, or potential synergies among proposals under a research interest area. In such cases, the government will discuss proposal adjustments with the applicant prior to final award.

Each application will be reviewed using merit-based selection criteria rather than against other applications submitted under this Announcement.

Offerors are advised that employees of commercial firms under contract to the government may be used to administratively process applications. By submitting an

application, an offeror consents to allowing access to its application(s) by support contractors. These support contracts include nondisclosure agreements prohibiting their contractor employees from disclosing any information submitted by offerors.

In addition to the technical/program review, the DoD does a budget review and a risk review as directed by 2 CFR 200.206, including a review of the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS). Offerors may review information in FAPIIS and comment on any information entered into that system. Comments made by offerors will be taken into account in addition to other information in considering offerors' integrity, business ethics, and record of performance.

Note: At the time of application, there is no additional material to be submitted for this review. However, there may be additional requests for clarification as these reviews progress.

Options: The agreement allows for the exercise of options via a modification to the agreement and may allow for award and concurrent execution of the exercised option-effort alongside ongoing efforts.

Evaluation Panel: Technical details and budgets submitted under this NFO will be protected from unauthorized disclosure. The cognizant Government Program Officer and other Government subject matter experts will perform the evaluation of technical applications. Restrictive notices notwithstanding, one or more OSD covered support contractors may be utilized as subject matter experts providing technical support, but will not participate in the evaluation of proposals. Each support contractor employee that has access to technical and cost applications submitted in response to this NFO will be required to sign a nondisclosure statement prior to receipt of any application submissions.

VI. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. FEDERAL AWARD NOTICES

The government will notify the recipient of the award via email. The notification e-mail regarding a selection is not authorization to commit or expend DoD funds. A DoD grants officer is the only person authorized to obligate and approve the use of Federal funds. This authorization is in the form of a signed Notice of Award. After selection but prior to award, the government may request additional information. This may include representations and certifications, revised budgets or budget explanations, or other information as applicable to the proposed award. The award start date will be determined after successfully coordinating all pre-award requirements.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

[NP Article I. Nondiscrimination national policy requirements. \(December 2014\)](#)

Section A. Cross-cutting nondiscrimination requirements. By signing this award or accepting funds under this award, you assure that you will comply with applicable provisions of the national policies prohibiting discrimination:

1. On the basis of race, color, or national origin, in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.](#)), as implemented by Department of Defense (DoD) regulations at [32 CFR part 195](#).
2. On the basis of gender, blindness, or visual impairment, in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ([20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.](#)), as implemented by DoD regulations at [32 CFR part 196](#).
3. On the basis of age, in the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 ([42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.](#)), as implemented by Department of Health and Human Services regulations at [45 CFR part 90](#).
4. On the basis of disability, in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ([29 U.S.C. 794](#)), as implemented by Department of Justice regulations at [28 CFR part 41](#) and DoD regulations at [32 CFR part 56](#).
5. On the basis of disability in the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 ([42 U.S.C. 4151 et seq.](#)) related to physically handicapped persons' ready access to, and use of, buildings and facilities for which Federal funds are used in design, construction, or alteration.

Section B. [Reserved]

[NP Article II. Environmental national policy requirements. \(December 2014\)](#)

Section A. Cross-cutting environmental requirements. You must:

1. You must comply with all applicable Federal environmental laws and regulations. The laws and regulations identified in this section are not intended to be a complete list.
2. Comply with applicable provisions of the Clean Air Act ([42 U.S.C. 7401, et seq.](#)) and Clean Water Act ([33 U.S.C. 1251, et seq.](#)).
3. Comply with applicable provisions of the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act ([42 U.S.C. 4821-4846](#)), as implemented by the Department of Housing and Urban Development at [24 CFR part 35](#). The requirements concern lead-based paint in buildings owned by the Federal Government or housing receiving Federal assistance.
4. Immediately identify to us, as the Federal awarding agency, any potential impact that you find this award may have on:
 - a. The quality of the “human environment”, as defined in [40 CFR 1508.14](#), including wetlands; and provide any help we may need to comply with the National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, at [42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.](#)), the regulations at [40 CFR 1500-1508](#), and [E.O. 12114](#), if applicable; and assist us to prepare Environmental Impact Statements or other environmental documentation. In such cases, you may take no action that will have an environmental impact (*e.g.*, physical disturbance of a site such as breaking of ground) or limit the choice of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action until we provide written notification of Federal compliance with NEPA or [E.O. 12114](#).

b. Flood-prone areas and provide any help we may need to comply with the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, as amended by the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 ([42 U.S.C. 4001 et seq.](#)), which require flood insurance, when available, for federally assisted construction or acquisition in flood-prone areas.

c. A land or water use or natural resource of a coastal zone that is part of a federally approved State coastal zone management plan and provide any help we may need to comply with the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 ([16 U.S.C. 1451, et seq.](#)) including preparation of a Federal agency Coastal Consistency Determination.

d. Coastal barriers along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and Great Lakes' shores and provide help we may need to comply with the Coastal Barrier Resources Act ([16 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.](#)), concerning preservation of barrier resources.

e. Any existing or proposed component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system and provide any help we may need to comply with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 ([16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.](#)).

f. Underground sources of drinking water in areas that have an aquifer that is the sole or principal drinking water source and in wellhead protection areas, and provide any help we may need to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act ([42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.](#)).

5. You must comply fully with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA, at [16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.](#)), and implementing regulations of the Departments of the Interior ([50 CFR parts 10-24](#)) and Commerce ([50 CFR parts 217-227](#)). You also must provide any help we may need in complying with the consultation requirements of ESA section 7 ([16 U.S.C. 1536](#)) applicable to Federal agencies or any regulatory authorization we may need based on the award of this grant. This is not in lieu of responsibilities you have to comply with provisions of the Act that apply directly to you as a U.S. entity, independent of receiving this award.

6. You must fully comply with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA, at [16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.](#)) and provide any assistance we may need in obtaining any required MMPA permit based on an award of this grant.

Section B. [Reserved]

[NP Article III. National policy requirements concerning live organisms. \(December 2014\)](#)

Section A. Cross-cutting requirements concerning live organisms.

1. Human subjects.

a. You must protect the rights and welfare of individuals who participate as human subjects in research under this award and comply with the requirements at [32 CFR part 219](#), DoD Instruction (DoDI) 3216.02, [10 U.S.C. 980](#), and when applicable, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations.

b. You must not begin performance of research involving human subjects, also known as human subjects research (HSR), that is covered under [32 CFR part 219](#), or that meets exemption criteria under [32 CFR 219.101\(b\)](#), until you receive a formal notification of approval from a DoD Human Research Protection Official (HRPO). Approval to perform HSR under this award is received after the HRPO has performed a review of your documentation of planned HSR activities and has officially furnished a concurrence with your determination as presented in the documentation.

c. In order for the HRPO to accomplish this concurrence review, you must provide sufficient documentation to enable his or her assessment as follows:

i. If the HSR meets an exemption criterion under [32 CFR 219.101\(b\)](#), the documentation must include a citation of the exemption category under [32 CFR 219.101\(b\)](#) and a rationale statement.

ii. If your activity is determined as “non-exempt research involving human subjects”, the documentation must include:

(A) Assurance of Compliance (*i.e.*, Department of Health and Human Services Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) Federalwide Assurance (FWA)) appropriate for the scope of work or program plan; and

(B) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, as well as all documentation reviewed by the IRB to make their determination.

d. The HRPO retains final judgment on what activities constitute HSR, whether an exempt category applies, whether the risk determination is appropriate, and whether the planned HSR activities comply with the requirements in paragraph 1.a of this section.

e. You must notify the HRPO immediately of any suspensions or terminations of the Assurance of Compliance.

f. DoD staff, consultants, and advisory groups may independently review and inspect your research and research procedures involving human subjects and, based on such

findings, DoD may prohibit research that presents unacceptable hazards or otherwise fails to comply with DoD requirements.

g. Definitions for terms used in paragraph 1 of this article are found in DoDI 3216.02.

2. *Animals.*

a. Prior to initiating any animal work under the award, you must:

i. Register your research, development, test, and evaluation or training facility with the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with [7 U.S.C. 2136](#) and [9 CFR 2.30](#), unless otherwise exempt from this requirement by meeting the conditions in [7 U.S.C. 2136](#) and [9 CFR parts 1-4](#) for the duration of the activity.

ii. Have your proposed animal use approved in accordance with Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 3216.01, Use of Animals in DoD Programs by a DoD Component Headquarters Oversight Office.

iii. Furnish evidence of such registration and approval to the grants officer.

b. You must make the animals on which the research is being conducted, and all premises, facilities, vehicles, equipment, and records that support animal care and use available during business hours and at other times mutually agreeable to you, the United States Department of Agriculture Office of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) representative, personnel representing the DoD component oversight offices, as well as the grants officer, to ascertain that you are compliant with [7 U.S.C. 2131](#) *et seq.*, [9 CFR parts 1-4](#), and DoDI 3216.01.

c. Your care and use of animals must conform with the pertinent laws of the United States, regulations of the Department of Agriculture, and regulations, policies, and procedures of the Department of Defense (see [7 U.S.C. 2131](#) *et seq.*, [9 CFR parts 1-4](#), and DoDI 3216.01).

d. You must acquire animals in accordance with DoDI 3216.01.

3. *Use of Remedies.*

Failure to comply with the applicable requirements in paragraphs 1-2 of this section may result in the DoD Component's use of remedies, *e.g.*, wholly or partially terminating or suspending the award, temporarily withholding payment under the award pending correction of the deficiency, or disallowing all or part of the cost of the activity or action (including the federal share and any required cost sharing or matching) that is not in compliance. See OAR Article III.

Section B. [Reserved]

[NP Article IV. Other National Policy Requirements. \(December 2014\)](#)

Section A. Cross-cutting requirements.

1. ***Debarment and suspension.*** You must comply with requirements regarding debarment and suspension in Subpart C of [2 CFR part 180](#), as adopted by DoD at [2 CFR part 1125](#). This includes requirements concerning your principals under this award, as well as requirements concerning your procurement transactions and subawards that are implemented in PROC Articles I through III and SUB Article II.

2. ***Drug-free workplace.*** You must comply with drug-free workplace requirements in Subpart B of [2 CFR part 26](#), which is the DoD implementation of [41 U.S.C. chapter 81](#), “Drug-Free Workplace.”

3. ***Lobbying.***

a. You must comply with the restrictions on lobbying in [31 U.S.C. 1352](#), as implemented by DoD at [32 CFR part 28](#), and submit all disclosures required by that statute and regulation.

b. You must comply with the prohibition in [18 U.S.C. 1913](#) on the use of Federal funds, absent express Congressional authorization, to pay directly or indirectly for any service, advertisement or other written matter, telephone communication, or other device intended to influence at any time a Member of Congress or official of any government concerning any legislation, law, policy, appropriation, or ratification.

c. If you are a nonprofit organization described in section 501(c)(4) of title 26, United States Code (the Internal Revenue Code of 1968), you may not engage in lobbying activities as defined in the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C., chapter 26). If we determine that you have engaged in lobbying activities, we will cease all payments to you under this and other awards and terminate the awards unilaterally for material failure to comply with the award terms and conditions.

4. ***Officials not to benefit.*** You must comply with the requirement that no member of Congress shall be admitted to any share or part of this award, or to any benefit arising from it, in accordance with [41 U.S.C. 6306](#).

5. ***Hatch Act.*** If applicable, you must comply with the provisions of the Hatch Act ([5 U.S.C. 1501-1508](#)) concerning political activities of certain State and local government employees, as implemented by the Office of Personnel Management at [5 CFR part 151](#), which limits political activity of employees or officers of State or local governments whose employment is connected to an activity financed in whole or part with Federal funds.

6. ***Native American graves protection and repatriation.*** If you control or possess Native American remains and associated funerary objects, you must comply with the requirements of [43 CFR part 10](#), the Department of the Interior implementation of the

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 U.S.C., chapter 32).

7. *Fly America Act.* You must comply with the International Air Transportation Fair Competitive Practices Act of 1974 ([49 U.S.C. 40118](#)), commonly referred to as the “Fly America Act,” and implementing regulations at [41 CFR 301-10.131](#) through [301-10.143](#). The law and regulations require that U.S. Government financed international air travel of passengers and transportation of personal effects or property must use a U.S. Flag air carrier or be performed under a cost sharing arrangement with a U.S. carrier, if such service is available.

8. *Use of United States-flag vessels.* You must comply with the following requirements of the Department of Transportation at [46 CFR 381.7](#), in regulations implementing the Cargo Preference Act of 1954:

a. Pursuant to Public Law 83-664 ([46 U.S.C. 55305](#)), at least 50 percent of any equipment, materials or commodities procured, contracted for or otherwise obtained with funds under this award, and which may be transported by ocean vessel, must be transported on privately owned United States-flag commercial vessels, if available.

b. Within 20 days following the date of loading for shipments originating within the United States or within 30 working days following the date of loading for shipments originating outside the United States, a legible copy of a rated, “on-board” commercial ocean bill-of-lading in English for each shipment of cargo described in paragraph 8.a of this section must be furnished to both our award administrator (through you in the case of your contractor's bill-of-lading) and to the Division of National Cargo, Office of Market Development, Maritime Administration, Washington, DC 20590.

9. *Research misconduct.* You must comply with requirements concerning research misconduct in Enclosure 4 to DoD Instruction 3210.7, “Research Integrity and Misconduct.” The Instruction implements the Governmentwide research misconduct policy that the Office of Science and Technology Policy published in the Federal Register ([65 FR 76260](#), December 6, 2000, available through the U.S. Government Printing Office website: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2000/12/06/00-30852/executive-office-of-the-president-federal-policy-on-research-misconduct-preamble-for-research>).

10. *Requirements for an Institution of Higher Education Concerning Military Recruiters and Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC).*

a. As a condition for receiving funds available to the DoD under this award, you agree that you are not an institution of higher education (as defined in [32 CFR part 216](#)) that has a policy or practice that either prohibits, or in effect prevents:

i. The Secretary of a Military Department from maintaining, establishing, or operating a unit of the Senior Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC)—in accordance with [10 U.S.C. 654](#) and other applicable Federal laws—at that institution (or any subelement of that institution);

ii. Any student at that institution (or any subelement of that institution) from enrolling in a unit of the Senior ROTC at another institution of higher education.

iii. The Secretary of a Military Department or Secretary of Homeland Security from gaining access to campuses, or access to students (who are 17 years of age or older) on campuses, for purposes of military recruiting in a manner that is at least equal in quality and scope to the access to campuses and to students that is provided to any other employer; or

iv. Access by military recruiters for purposes of military recruiting to the names of students (who are 17 years of age or older and enrolled at that institution or any subelement of that institution); their addresses, telephone listings, dates and places of birth, levels of education, academic majors, and degrees received; and the most recent educational institutions in which they were enrolled.

b. If you are determined, using the procedures in [32 CFR part 216](#), to be such an institution of higher education during the period of performance of this award, we:

i. Will cease all payments to you of DoD funds under this award and all other DoD grants and cooperative agreements; and

ii. May suspend or terminate those awards unilaterally for material failure to comply with the award terms and conditions.

11. ***Historic preservation.*** You must identify to us any:

a. Property listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places that will be affected by this award, and provide any help we may need, with respect to this award, to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 ([54 U.S.C. 306108](#)), as implemented by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations at [36 CFR part 800](#) and [Executive Order 11593](#), “Identification and Protection of Historic Properties,” [[3 CFR](#), 1971-1975 Comp., p. 559]. Impacts to historical properties are included in the definition of “human environment” that require impact assessment under NEPA (See NP Article II, Section A).

b. Potential under this award for irreparable loss or destruction of significant scientific, prehistorical, historical, or archeological data, and provide any help we may need, with respect to this award, to comply with the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 ([54 U.S.C. chapter 3125](#)).

12. ***Relocation and real property acquisition.*** You must comply with applicable provisions of [49 CFR part 24](#), which implements the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 ([42 U.S.C. 4601](#), *et seq.*) and provides for fair and equitable treatment of persons displaced by federally assisted programs or persons whose property is acquired as a result of such programs.

13. ***Confidentiality of patient records.*** You must keep confidential any records that you maintain of the identity, diagnosis, prognosis, or treatment of any patient in connection with any program or activity relating to substance abuse education, prevention, training, treatment, or rehabilitation that is assisted directly or indirectly under this award, in accordance with [42 U.S.C. 290dd-2](#).

14. ***Pro-Children Act.***

You must comply with applicable restrictions in the Pro-Children Act of 1994 (Title 20, Chapter 68, subchapter X, Part B of the U.S. Code) on smoking in any indoor facility:

- a. Constructed, operated, or maintained under this award and used for routine or regular provision of kindergarten, elementary, or secondary education or library services to children under the age of 18.
- b. Owned, leased, or contracted for and used under this award for the routine provision of federally funded health care, day care, or early childhood development (Head Start) services to children under the age of 18.

15. ***Constitution Day.*** You must comply with [Public Law 108-447](#), Div. J, Title I, Sec. 111 ([36 U.S.C. 106 note](#)), which requires each educational institution receiving Federal funds in a Federal fiscal year to hold an educational program on the United States Constitution on September 17th during that year for the students served by the educational institution.

16. ***Trafficking in persons.*** You must comply with requirements concerning trafficking in persons specified in the award term at [2 CFR 175.15\(b\)](#), as applicable.

17. ***Whistleblower protections.*** You must comply with [10 U.S.C. 2409](#), including the:

- a. Prohibition on reprisals against employees disclosing certain types of information to specified persons or bodies; and
- b. Requirement to notify your employees in writing, in the predominant native language of the workforce, of their rights and protections under that statute.

Section B. [Reserved]

VII. REPORTING

A. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

This will be negotiated with the Government based on the project circumstances.

B. FINANCIAL REPORTING

1. Interim Federal Financial Report (SF 425). A quarterly Federal Financial Report (SF 425) is required within 30 calendar days after the end of reported quarter period: 3/31, 6/30, 9/30, and 12/31 and must include in the remarks the location of financial records and a point of contact for the Government to obtain access to the financial records associated with this agreement.
2. Final Federal Financial Report (SF 425) is required within 90 calendar days of the completion date for the term of this Assistance Award and must include in the remarks the location of financial records and a point of contact for the Government to obtain access to the financial records associated with this agreement.
3. Federal Financial Report (SF 425) is required if receiving advance payments; the awardee shall submit a Report of Federal Cash Transactions (SF 425) within 15 calendar days following the end of each quarter. The Recipient shall provide forecasts of Federal cash requirements in the "Remarks" section of the report.

C. AUDIT REPORTS

The Recipient shall ensure that if an independent auditor is used for this award, copies of any audits conducted shall be provided to the Government. At a minimum, the following should be provided a certified statement from the independent auditor evidencing that Recipient has complied with all requirements of this agreement. Upon completion or termination of this Grant, the Recipient shall provide a list of all audits conducted which reviewed expenditures under this Assistance Award.

D. PROPERTY REPORTS

The recipient shall submit annual inventory listing to all equipment in excess of \$5,000 acquired under this Assistance Award.

E. DOCUMENT SUBMISSION

All reporting requirements above shall be sent via email to the Government Technical Program Point of Contact.

The terms and conditions of the award will provide the specifics on how to submit the reports and any required sections for those reports.

VIII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

General questions regarding the Minerva Research Initiative should be directed to: <https://minerva.defense.gov/Contact/>. Many questions may also be answered at <https://minerva.defense.gov/FAQ/>.

Technical questions should be directed to:
Dr. David Montgomery, Basic Research Office

Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (OUSD(R&E))
E-mail: David.w.montgomery61.civ@mail.mil

For all other questions on this NFO, please contact Jonathan Bertsch at
jonathan.e.bertsch.civ@mail.mil.

IX. OTHER INFORMATION

All information systems, electronic or hard copy which contain Federal data need to be protected from unauthorized access. This also applies to information associated with DoD grants and contracts. Congress and the OMB have instituted laws, policies and directives that govern the creation and implementation of federal information security practices that pertain specifically to grants and contracts. The current regulations are pursuant to the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), 44 U.S.C. 3541 et seq. The applicability of FISMA to NIH recipients applies only when recipients collect, store, process, transmit or use information on behalf of HHS or any of its component organizations. In all other cases, FISMA is not applicable to recipients of grants, including cooperative agreements. The recipient retains the original data and intellectual property, and is responsible for the security of this data, subject to all applicable laws protecting security, privacy, and research. If and when information collected by a recipient is provided to HHS, responsibility for the protection of the HHS copy of the information is transferred to HHS and it becomes the agency's responsibility to protect that information and any derivative copies as required by FISMA.

Per 2 CFR § 200.216, funds may not be used to procure telecommunications equipment or video surveillance services or equipment produced by:

- Huawei Technologies Company,
- ZTE Corporation Hytera Communications Corporation,
- Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company,
- Dahua Technology Company,
- any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities

X. APPENDIX A: INITIAL WORK PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Applicants may use the format they feel best depicts their project. The work plan should only cover the fiscal years that are supported by the budget included in the application.

In addition to the above, applicants must include the Reporting Requirements in their work plan, as well as the following:

Acknowledgment of Support

The Recipient is responsible for assuring that an acknowledgment of support is made in any publication (including World Wide Web pages) of any material based on or developed under this project, in the following terms: "This material is based upon work supported by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Minerva Research Initiative program under Grant No. <Insert Grant No.>. The views expressed in written materials or publications, and/or made by speakers, moderators, and presenters, do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Defense nor does mention of trade

names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.”

Review for Sensitive Information

Prior to the public release of these materials, the Recipient is responsible for assuring that the Technical Representative is provided access to an electronic version of every publication of material based on or developed under this award, clearly labeled with the award number and other appropriate identifying information, so that the content can be assessed for proper release of sensitive information.

Copies for Minerva

Promptly after publication, the Recipient will provide the Technical Representative access to an electronic version of every publication of material based on or developed under this award, clearly labeled with the award number and acknowledgement of support (see above).

XI. APPENDIX B: MINERVA RESEARCH TOPICS OF INTEREST

A. TOPIC 1: SOCIETAL COHESION AND CONFLICT

POC: David Montgomery, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, david.w.montgomery61.civ@mail.mil

The ability of a group, or society more broadly, to hold together over time is central to social life. As the nature of a social unit varies across cultures and (economic, political, social, etc.) systems, this topic seeks to understand the nuances of shifting social cohesion in the face of diverse and evolving situations of varied magnitude (size, scale, importance, etc.) While part of the concern is a question of societal resilience, a related fundamental interest is in the endogenous and exogenous factors that bring groups together/push them apart, the temporal and situational nature of group solidarity, collective memory, and the relationship between cohesion and motivation toward a stated end. A comparative focus should be given to individual and group behavior within and across different cultures and societies and how the scale of cohesion—micro-, meso-, macro-scales—influences the response and its sustainment in the face of adverse conditions. New approaches to measure social, cultural, religious, political, and economic cohesion—as well as key intermediary variables, including expectations of (self-) performance, perception of status, trust, and morale—that can utilize existing data streams or for which data can be collected with qualitative fidelity, are encouraged.

This topic seeks to develop or elaborate upon descriptive models that can be used to assess or predict societal and group cohesion, as well as analytical models that offer new insights into individual and group formation, particularly in response to events of change and influence. Approaches should employ empirical testing and explicitly consider the generalizability of findings across contexts. Particular interest will be placed on approaches that can assess the relationship between individual change in relation to group and organizational change, and vice versa. This includes not only

concerns at the level of elites but also within quotidian spaces that shape human action.

Factors influencing societal and group cohesion can include change in relation to climate and environment, influence and competing characterizations of events, economics, technological change, conflict, narratives of belonging, food and water insecurity, migration, understandings of the commons, and others. As well, cohesion may be culturally, socially, politically, and economically varied. Understanding a baseline of well-being in relation to local concerns around security will be important to considering factors influencing change in different contexts at different scales (micro, meso, and macro.)

Specific foci may include, but are not limited to:

- How do we describe and measure social cohesion, degradation, adaptation, and well-being across different communities/units (including military units) and political/cultural systems?
- How do factors like well-being, inequality, status, and social division impact sociological distinctions between trust and confidence in relation to group cohesion? To what extent are relationships of cohesion within individual and group control, and what leads to breaking down or building up commitments to a particular cause?
- What are the relationships between environmental change, food and water access, shelter, education, and labor to the performance of financial, political, religious, military, or other institutions, economic sectors, and national security? How does this affect politics, ideologies, and geopolitics, and the formal and informal social structures within and between communities?
- New understandings and approaches to governance managing the relevant Commons for desired collective outcomes in contexts of evolving needs, moral/ethical/societal norms, and population shifts.
- An understanding of the effects and after-effects of violent conflict on societal resilience.
- New insights into the relationship between conflict and “will-to-fight” at the political or national and military levels.
- How can malign activity below the level of conflict (e.g. economic pressure campaigns, information operations and disinformation, and elite capture) affect societal cohesion and resilience?
- An understanding of how social relations break down in ways that increase the risks of mass atrocity. Included here should be a dynamic understanding of the evolving dynamics (re)shaping group solidarity and locally-appropriate opportunities for intervention that might prevent/mitigate further violence. Attention should be given to the specific and generalized contexts of conflict and the challenge of intervention amid uncertainty and incomplete information.
- What are the event characteristics that bring non-cohesive groups into adhesion, and what are the factors that may dissolve the union or enable them to merge into a different cohesive unit?

B. TOPIC 2: ADVANCING INFLUENCE MEASUREMENT(S)

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Influence has and continues to receive increased attention in the research community yet requires additional focus to overcome current, recurring limitations. Over the past few years, especially since the pandemic, there has been a focus on developing new tools to understand what “influence” is and how to categorize it. Yet the definition remains ambiguous, which has compounded challenges for operationalization and measurement. The term has expanded across disciplines to include multiple components, with qualifiers such as social, leadership, informal, relational, personal, cultural, etc. It also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, organizational, regional, and geopolitical. The literature also breaks down into styles and types, which can be positive or negative, and are sometimes equated with specific techniques or processes. There is also a time component, where influence can achieve short- or long-term goals over differing timespans. While these aspects contribute to understanding influence more robustly, they have led to piecemeal, sometimes siloed, interpretations on what influence is. Without a solid definition and framework, influence therefore has become something challenging to quantify.

Despite the increasing attention to influence, research approaches have often led to incremental gains. Approaches to studying influence have primarily been limited to the media, with most studies focused on digital media. Digital, especially social, media are channels that convey messages and narratives that impact people directly and indirectly. Often, the results offer correlation but rarely reveal verifiable causation. Part of this issue may be that many studies rely on built-in social media platform metrics for measurement. While these metrics may have some value beyond some degree of engagement, they often reflect what tech entrepreneur Eric Ries coined in 2009 as “vanity metrics.” Consideration of such metrics highlights some of the current limitations and leads to two significant research gaps. The first is how to move influence research from solely considering media channels to include a more multi-vector approach. It is assumed that influence may occur across singular or multiple vectors, which could be types of information; a combination of real-world and media activity, perhaps primarily due to offline events that are amplified in various ways in the media; and/or in other ways that are not well understood. While these vectors or pathways are not fully explored, clearly there is a need to explore the incorporation of media analyses into a wider set of potential [information-]influence vectors and develop new, reliable metrics that advance a scientific understanding of influence. Such metrics must reduce the measurement gap: what must be measured to understand how influence is gained, spreads, and somehow leads to behavior or attitude change? If there is a gain in influence on one hand, is there a drop on the other? These issues are complex and require focused, nuanced research to advance related measurement(s).

Another area where influence measurement is lacking is in how to make it robust on a system (or system of systems) level. In many studies that compare influence measures,

the work is done through comparing dyads or using other pairwise comparisons based on limited criteria to determine a value of influence for or with an action or partner. These partners and entities have agency to make decisions and/or take actions, which is often overlooked in these analyses, especially when moving beyond dyadic comparisons. Individuals have varying levels of influence over others and their group(s), and groups have varying levels over other individual(s), group(s), or higher level(s), each with some degree of agency. System-level information-influence measurements, where actors have different beliefs, attitudes, motivations, circumstances, and worldview are needed to move beyond dyadic or pairwise measurements. And finally, such measures require validation and clarity on what particular influence indicators signal.

This topic seeks creative approaches to developing new, more comprehensive system level information-influence measurements. It seeks transformative research ideas that address the limitations discussed above. Submissions are expected to include specific research question(s) the effort would investigate. It is anticipated that projects solely examining media, whether digital, social, and/or analog, or those using only network science methods will not be sufficient to address this topic comprehensively. There is an interest in projects that consider non-US use cases as well as those that compare two or more such cases. There is also interest in projects that consider a multi-level and/or multi-layer perspective and tackle its complexities as part of the proposed research.

C. TOPIC 3: ARCTIC AT THE POLAR CROSSROADS

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The Arctic continues to grow as a region of geostrategic and geopolitical importance. While relatively stable and peaceful, the region is experiencing increasing socio-economic, governmental, environmental, and international pressures in the current global order. As it adapts to internal and external pressures, social and cultural adaptations may occur as local and global actors come to terms with the changing reality.

Human populations are fundamental actors at these crossroads. They simultaneously drive and experience effects in the region, whether these changes occur from climate change, environmental transformation, technology, or involve cultural and societal values, security, and sustainability. Such changes may be viewed differently between and among peoples/actors, depending on the circumstances and contexts involved. The presumed opening of the Arctic, as well as growing global interest in its lands and resources, will undoubtedly continue to introduce opportunities and tensions for people, traditions, and national relationships across and beyond the region.

This topic seeks research that explores the opportunities and challenges in the Arctic that stem from multiple, simultaneous realities and possible [re-]imagined futures resulting from a changing physical and ecological environment, increasing access and

human activity, introduction and adoption of new technologies, and evolving strategic competition. All research proposed must be human-centered. Proposers anticipating fieldwork in indigenous territories are strongly encouraged to provide evidence in the technical narrative and/or letters of support to demonstrate local concurrence for and/or partnering in the research.

Specific areas of interest include:

- Cooperation and competition, specifically how these are understood by local and global actors with regional interests.
- Sustainability with the convergence of western and indigenous knowledge.
- Resilience and resilience-building at multiple layers.
- Maintaining national and regional stability while addressing the Arctic region's current (and future) opportunities and challenges.
- Interplay between space infrastructure, science, support, or technologies and societal change in the region.
- Techno-social implications of new technologies adopted within the region for any/all of the interests above.

D. TOPIC 4: CULTURAL RESILIENCE, CLIMATE, AND HUMAN SECURITY IN OCEANIA

POC: Rebecca Goolsby, Office of Naval Research, rebecca.goolsby@navy.mil

U.S. partner nations in the Pacific are facing enormous challenges in the next two to three decades, with rising sea levels, increased storms, and overwash events (i.e., “king tides”) dramatically affecting human security in these large ocean nations. Indigenous peoples will disproportionately be affected by climate-related crises. The disruption of ecosystems affects the availability of plants and animals upon which indigenous peoples rely for food, medicine, and cultural practices. Economic impacts on their livelihoods and income sources are also expected. Indigenous people often have deep knowledge of their environment and have been shown to develop innovative adaptation strategies. This knowledge is an important resource that is also threatened.

Many Oceanic nations can document some of the social, economic, and cultural problems that complicate their ability to develop a resilient society. In the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), for example, the current land tenure system reduces the incentive for businesses to flood proof. And differences between social classes can create tensions as families, clans, and individuals struggle with whether and when to migrate or remain. Many families ardently seek to remain, despite the growing problems they will encounter. Doing so will require cultural resilience—an ongoing process of preservation, adaptation, and innovation of cultural practices to meet the evolving context of change—strong social networks, effective leadership, and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Many of the proposed climate mitigation projects in Oceania involve technical innovations such as the development of mesh networks, the use of drones to improve the supply of goods and equipment, including medical equipment, and the development of telemedicine capabilities. These projects could assist those seeking to remain. At

the same time, technological changes will have an impact on existing social systems. Indigenous culture is deeply ingrained into the social landscape of Pacific Island cultures, including the economic systems, health care, and social networks that underpin both rural and urban areas. A greater understanding of the social systems of these nations is needed to guide technological and socio-technical projects that are intended to assist these nations in self-determination and decision-making to plan for the coming years of change.

Research is sought in the following areas:

- General studies of the cultures, languages, and social systems of Oceania, updated to consider the current crises affecting communities in Oceania. This would include the issues of land tenure, employment, health care, and other social problems affecting island communities.
- “Remain or stay”—Some leaders in RMI have asserted that they need to educate their people to become “climate navigators.” They want the population to get training, education, and guidance so that if and when they do decide to migrate, they will arrive in their new homes with the skills and resources necessary to be successful, rather than arriving as unskilled refugees requiring care. Research to is needed to help further delineate what knowledge, resources, and preparations are needed to prepare migration-seekers and assist migrants in maintaining and sustaining their cultural connections.
- The role of different groups, especially women, in managing the climate crises in Oceania—Women’s role in economic development, for example, has been widely documented and their role in climate resilience is likely to be important. Differences in the roles different generations play in facilitating cultural and climate resilience is also likely to be relevant.

Cultural preservation research, especially as it pertains to language and the collection of oral histories, is likely to be part of some studies. This solicitation will promote multi-disciplinary ethnographic and social science research on the cultures and societies of Oceania relevant to cultural preservation and the significant environmental challenges that these peoples will face in the coming years. The Compacts of Free Association (COFA) nations—which include three sovereign Pacific Island nations of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau—are of particular interest. Ethnographic field research is expected. As funds cannot be provided until an institutional IRB approval is in place, offerors should be prepared to document that these approvals will be in place promptly or separate their field research portion into an option that could be funded separately.

E. TOPIC 5: SOCIAL IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

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Throughout history, technology has been influential in driving societal change. Most recently, this has included an evolving relationship with information, characterized by innovations that have transformed how information is transmitted, stored, and

ultimately used. Advances in high-performance computing, optic networks, near-limitless digital storage, (semi-)autonomous machines, transportation of goods and ideas, artificial intelligence, etc., have impacted sociocultural, economic, political, and even the psychological understandings of social relations. The nature of society across local- to global-scales has been impacted by new networks, interdependencies, and imagined futures that both enhance and threaten existing social orders.

This topic seeks to explore the impact(s) of emerging technologies on social structures and concomitant relationships. Particularly, it is comparatively concerned with how the impact of technological change varies across different societies and across micro-, meso-, and macro-scales. It is assumed that proposals will similarly seek to understand how/if different emerging technologies lead to different categories of social impact(s) and how varied international approaches to emerging technological change may present new opportunities and risks to local-, regional-, and global-orders. Furthermore, proposals should include an appreciation of the moral and ethical implications technological change may present to different societies.

Specific areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- The impact of changing relationships to knowledge and skill development, and the supplanting of expertise, particularly in relation to information that is heavily processed with minimal input by humans, such as artificial intelligence processing information and turning it into “knowledge” and in some contexts, decisions.
- How will institutions traditionally charged to facilitate learning evolve in societies where the construction of knowledge is no longer solely, if at all, undertaken by the human? How would institutions differ across societies?
- The impact of emerging technology on the nature and characterization of work such as organizational structure, division of labor, and what it means to be a professional.
- How has emergent technology impacted society’s relationship with it, what are new risks for individuals and groups, and what are societal impacts when competing interests arise among allies, partners, and competitors.
- How do differences in technology penetration, such as speed and intensity, effect adoption of or resistance to technology? What is the societal impact of uneven adoption rates across different scales and how does this influence perceptions of well-being.
- The impact of increased incorporation of virtual-based and fully-integrated platforms into everyday life.
- How do different approaches to Future Generation Wireless Technology and connectivity, be it centralized or decentralized, restricted or more open and collaborative, impact social relations, perceptions of security, and application/usage.
- How will technology proliferation impact known resource costs, and what are the effects on society and concomitant relationships? Likewise, how can unknown resource costs, along with societal implications, be identified?
- How does technology (current and emergent) impact competition and deterrence dynamics? Do emerging technologies pose novel risks and, if so, are new

approaches to deterrence necessary to address them? How and to what extent can strengths in some domains offset weaknesses in others?

- How might the continued integration of technology, such as human-machine integration, into security structures, decision-making, and everyday life, affect the nature of peace, security, conflict, and war?

F. TOPIC 6: DETERRENCE AND COMPETITION ACROSS MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SPHERES

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Competition and efforts to deter undesirable activities exist across multiple levels of society, and indeed is part of what regulates different aspects of social behavior. Within the national security context, the concept of deterrence has historically helped inform strategic decisions related to planning, investment, and policy. As the global environment has evolved, the concept of integrated deterrence—which is at the center of the [2022 National Defense Strategy](#) and entails working seamlessly across multiple domains, whole-of-government, theaters, the spectrum of conflict, other instruments of national power, and networks of alliances and partnerships—has become a more holistic way of considering the dynamic relationship across complex sociopolitical domains.

This topic focuses on predictive models of deterrence—including third-order effects, decision-points, and trade-offs—and/or escalation management strategies, as well as such models and strategies within a framework of strategic and economic competition. It assumes nuance in how competition and deterrence may be comparatively and cross-culturally understood, and preference will be given to proposals that empirically test such models. We are especially interested in projects that develop and implement innovative causal identification strategies or leverage new measures or data and explicitly address the generalizability of findings and the extent to which similar competition and deterrence logics are applicable across contexts and scale. Multidisciplinary approaches are expected.

Specific foci may include, but are not limited to:

- How do variations in U.S., allied, and competitor (e.g., the People’s Republic of China, Russia) decision-making processes influence the likelihood that specific actions will deter or provoke? With these variations, how and where do competitors make decisions about potential responses across the competition continuum? What signaling mechanisms are most effective at influencing outcomes and in what contexts does this change?
- Deterrence is predicated on holding valued objects at risk. What do leaders—national or within ruling coalitions—value, and how does this vary across political systems? How does this vary across micro-, meso-, and macro-levels? Are these “valued objects” conditional? How do policy tools influence these objects at risk? In what way does competition—economic and otherwise—impact deterrence, and does it do so differently within different socio-political systems?

- What are reliable empirical measures for whether deterrence is being sustained, strengthening, weakening, or at risk of failing? What are the best measures for decision-making? Do gain/loss asymmetry, decision making under uncertainty, or other models of economic actors affect the generalizability of competition and/or deterrence models?
- Can military and non-military (diplomatic, informational, economic, or other activities) instruments of power be used in whole or in part to produce effective deterrence? If so, does the use of military and/or non-military instruments of deterrence differ in impact, and how do the effects of one interact with the other? Do the dynamics change when one side has many options with which to deter while its competitor has few or one, e.g. force alone?
- How can whole-of-government approaches best be leveraged to de-escalate tensions while defending important interests? How do such efforts differ across political, social, and economic systems?
- What approaches can governments take to deter multiple adversaries at once? How do steps taken to deter one adversary impact deterrence of another adversary? How often do signals intended for one adversary impact the decision calculus of another (adversary, ally, or partner)? How does attempting to deter multiple adversaries affect the choice of means, strategies, and ends by the deterring power?
- New areas of research on adversarial uses of economic tools in support of national and military objectives to improve understanding of threats, vulnerabilities, and options to mitigate such threats and vulnerabilities.
- Informing the whole-of-government tools available to defend against economic coercion and manipulation activities, including the use of adversarial capital to acquire technology, real estate, or other infrastructure, or to preemptively deny access to open markets.
- New understandings of traditional nuclear deterrence theory that account for a more multi-polar nuclear threat landscape and how these relate to concepts of deterrence across other domains, including how new technologies and traditional tools of influence deter the behaviors of groups, states, and/or multiple adversaries in similar or different ways, over different periods of time.