

W911NF-23-S-0010

SOURCES SOUGHT NOTICE

REQUEST FOR WHITE PAPERS

BAA TOPIC II A.2.b.i:

COMPLEX COGNITIVE COMPETENCIES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRATEGIC LEADERS

Developmental Experiences Assessment for Officer Strategic Thinking Development

INTRODUCTION

Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) W911NF-23-S-0010 was publicized on FedBizOpps and [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) on 01 May 2023. This Sources Sought Notice calls for white paper submissions in reference to the BAA Topic II A.2.b.i: COMPLEX COGNITIVE COMPETENCIES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRATEGIC LEADERS. The United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) Broad Agency announcement W911NF-23-S-0010, issued under the provisions of paragraph 6.102(d)(2) of the Federal Acquisition Regulation, provides for the competitive selection of basic and applied research and that part of development not related to the development of a specific system or hardware procurement. A white paper submitted in response to this BAA and selected for award is considered to be the result of full and open competition and in full compliance with the provisions of Public Law 98-369, "The Competition in Contracting Act of 1984," and subsequent amendments. Funding of research and development (R&D) within ARI areas of interest will be determined by funding constraints and priorities set during each budget cycle. Any award related to the submission of a white paper and subsequent proposal requested by this Notice is subject to funds availability and priorities. ARI may choose not to select any new award due to unavailability of funds or other factors.

For this specific Sources Sought Notice, the sequence of steps leading to an award is:

- 1) Request for white paper initiated by ARI through this Sources Sought Notice.
- 2) Submission of a timely white paper **no more than six pages in length (one page is the cover page)** to the POC for the U.S. Army Contracting Command, [wilveria.a.sanders.civ@army.mil](mailto:wilveria.a.sanders.civ@army.mil), and copy furnish (CC) the ARI Technical Point of Contact (TPOC), [cary.r.stothart.civ@army.mil](mailto:cary.r.stothart.civ@army.mil).
- 3) ARI will provide written or telephonic feedback for white papers submitted and will provide a response with either "encouraged to submit a proposal" or "not encouraged to submit a proposal," as per established criteria presented in Part III.
- 4) If the white paper merits it, a request of a formal proposal initiated by ARI.
- 5) Submission of a timely, formal proposal.
- 6) Evaluation of the formal proposal as per established criteria presented in Part III.
- 7) Award for selected proposal based on availability of funds or on other factors.

This sequence allows earliest determination of the potential for funding and minimizes the labor and cost associated with submission of a full proposal that has minimal probability of being selected for funding. Note that an interested applicant **must** submit a white paper electronically in order to be eligible to submit a formal proposal under this Notice. This Notice requires that a white paper be submitted electronically no later than **28 August 2023, 5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time**. See Part V, Deadlines, for additional details. BAA W911NF-23-S-0010 allows several potential instrument types (e.g.,

contract, grant, cooperative agreement) to result from a successful proposal. For this Notice, the intention of the Government is to award a contract.

THOSE SUBMITTING A WHITE PAPER/PROPOSAL ARE CAUTIONED THAT ONLY A GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING OR GRANTS OFFICER CAN OBLIGATE THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH AWARD OF A LEGAL INSTRUMENT INVOLVING EXPENDITURE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS.

This Sources Sought Notice for a requested white paper consists of seven parts as follows:

- Part I: Research and Development Interests of the Requested White Paper
- Part II: Preparation and Submission
- Part III: Evaluation Criteria
- Part IV: Feedback
- Part V: Deadlines
- Part VI: Inquiries
- Part VII: References

**ACC (APG) RTP Agency Point of Contact:**

The point of contact (POC) for the US Army Contracting Command (Aberdeen Proving Ground) Research Triangle Park Division is: Ms. Wilveria Sanders, (919) 549-4328, [wilveria.a.sanders.civ@army.mil](mailto:wilveria.a.sanders.civ@army.mil).

**ARI Agency Point of Contact:**

The ARI POC for technical matters for this white paper topic is: Dr. Cary Stothart, (254) 392-0530, [cary.r.stothart.civ@army.mil](mailto:cary.r.stothart.civ@army.mil).

**I. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INTERESTS OF THE REQUESTED WHITE PAPER:**

The United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences is the Army's lead agency for the conduct of research, development, and analyses for Army readiness and performance via research advances and applications of the behavioral and social sciences that address personnel, organization, training, and leader development issues. ARI contracts with educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and private industry for research and development (R&D) in different areas, including the areas specifically identified in Section II - A W911NF-23-S-0010. Efforts funded under this white paper request will only include Applied Research and/or Advanced Technology Development.

Applied Research provides a systematic expansion and application of knowledge to design and develop useful strategies, techniques, methods, tests, or measures that provide the means to meet a recognized and specific Army need. Applied Research precedes system specific technology investigations or development, but Applied Research should have a high potential to transition into the Advanced Technology Development (ATD) Program.

The ARI ATD Program includes the development of technologies, components, or prototypes that can be tested in field experiments and/or simulated environments. Projects in this category have a direct relevance to identified military needs. These projects should demonstrate the general military utility or cost reduction potential of technology in the areas of personnel selection, assignment, and retention;

training strategies and techniques; leader education and development; performance measurement; and team and inter-organizational mission effectiveness. These projects should be focused on a more direct operational benefit and, if successful, the technology should be available for transition.

#### **WHITE PAPER TOPIC: Developmental Experiences Assessment for Officer Strategic Thinking Development**

Field-grade Army officers are largely selected from an internal pool of Army candidates and therefore share many common developmental experiences. While officers build skills throughout their careers that will be useful once the officers reach strategic leadership positions, the degree to which developmental experiences earlier in officers' careers contribute specifically to the development of strategic leadership skills is not well understood. Through a better understanding of how developmental experiences throughout officers' careers are contributing to their development of strategic thinking competencies, the Army will be better able to leverage those experiences to ensure the highest quality talent pool from which to select officers for field-grade positions.

This research will enable the Army to design targeted training and development programs to enhance strategic thinking competencies among officers, ensuring that the Army's competency development initiatives are tailored to effectively address individual learners' experiences. This proposed research follows on the FY23 Requirement titled, *Roadmap to Develop Complex Cognitive Skills for Officer Strategic Thinking*. The FY23 research will identify and map out developmental experiences for Army officers to develop strategic thinking skills. This proposed research will seek to establish an empirical basis for the linkages between career experiences and strategic thinking competency development, and will seek to capture the qualitative and contextual components of experiences that drive strategic thinking development (e.g., task complexity, role diversity). A diagnostic assessment will be produced from this research to serve as a tool for the Army to enhance developmental opportunities for strategic thinking competencies.

The goal of this research is to link the experiences of officers across their careers, which contribute to the development of strategic thinking skills. Through the proposed research, a developmental experience assessment will be produced. This assessment will contribute to enabling the Army to better address gaps in strategic leadership development by addressing what and how developmental experiences impact leader readiness. While commercial assessments of individual career leadership experiences exist, the commercial assessments were developed within business contexts and the development of executive leadership and are inadequate at accounting for the unique context of military careers (e.g., Leadership Experience Inventory, VanKatwyk et al., 2004; Developmental Challenge Profile, McCauley et al., 1994). Moreover, the commercial assessments can be costly. This research will provide the Army with a better means to assess developmental experiences that prepare officers for strategic levels of leadership.

This research will be accomplished through the following objectives:

1. Develop a framework presenting the quantitative and qualitative linkages between officers' developmental experiences and their strategic thinking competency development, facilitating the design of a measurement tool.
  2. Design, pilot, and refine measurement tools targeting developmental experiences across Army officer career stages and associated qualitative characteristics of those experiences.
- Two versions for:

- a) Professional military education (PME) institutions to better understand the types of developmental experiences that will complement the curriculum and enable better alignment of educational goals with follow-on assignments.
  - b) Individual Army officers engaged in self-development activities and in need of resources to help visualize and manage their careers.
- 3. Empirically test, validate, and transition the measurement tool to Army stakeholders for use.
- 4. Develop guidance (e.g., a handbook) presenting the measurement tool, with recommendations for incorporating the assessment and developmental experiences into individual career planning and talent management planning for Army officers.

ARI is also open to alternative ideas that will creatively accomplish the objectives of this planned research in accordance with BAA Topic II A.2.b.i: COMPLEX COGNITIVE COMPETENCIES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRATEGIC LEADERS, and that the Army will consider timely and valuable.

**The award will be a 36-month period of performance (Base, 12 months, not to exceed \$325,000; Option 1, 12 months, not to exceed \$300,000; Option 2, 12 months, not exceed \$275,000) with a total budget not to exceed \$900,000.**

The Army Contracting Command- Aberdeen Proving Ground, RTP Division has the authority to award a variety of instruments, to include contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements. The ACC (APG) RTP Division reserves the right to use the type of instrument most appropriate for the effort proposed (contract, cooperative, or grant).

## **II. PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF A WHITE PAPER:**

### Preparation of White Paper

A white paper should focus on describing details of the proposed research for both the base and if applicable, option (s) approach, including how it is innovative and how it could substantially advance the state of the science. Army relevance and potential impact should also be described, as well as an estimate of total cost for both the base and option approach. White papers should present the effort in sufficient detail to allow evaluation of the concept's technical merit and its potential contributions to the Army mission.

**A white paper must be limited to six (6) pages (page one is the cover page) and an addendum in which the applicant must include a biographical sketch (up to 300 words per individual) of all key personnel (i.e., Principal Investigators and Co-Principal Investigators) who will perform the research, highlighting their qualifications and experience as discussed below. All files and forms must be compiled into a single PDF file or MS Word document before submitting. Reviewers will be advised that they are only to review the cover page and up to five pages plus the addendum. Any pages submitted in excess of the six (6) page limit will not be reviewed or evaluated.**

### TECHNICAL INFORMATION FOR A WHITE PAPERS:

1. Technical Approach: A detailed discussion of the effort's scientific research objectives, approach, relationship to similar research, level of effort, and estimated total cost; include the nature and

extent of the anticipated results, and if known, the manner in which the work will contribute to the accomplishment of the Army's mission related to this request and how this would be demonstrated.

2. Requests for Government Support: The type of support, if any that the applicant requests of the Government (such as facilities, equipment, demonstration sites, test ranges, software, personnel or materials) shall be identified as Government Furnished Equipment (GFE), Government Furnished Information (GFI), Government Furnished Property (GFP), or Government Furnished Data (GFD). The applicant shall indicate any Government coordination that may be required for obtaining equipment or facilities necessary to perform any simulations or exercises that would demonstrate the proposed capability.
3. The cost portion of the whitepaper shall contain a brief cost estimate including research hours, burden, material costs, travel, etc.
4. Key Personnel Biographical Information: As an addendum to the white paper, the applicant must include a biographical sketch (up to 300 words per individual) of all key personnel (i.e., Principal Investigators and Co-Principal Investigators) who will perform the research, highlighting their qualifications and experience.

#### RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS ON WHITE PAPERS:

1. The applicant must identify any proprietary data the applicant intends to be used only by the Government. The applicant must also identify any technical data or computer software contained in the white paper that is to be treated by the Government as limited rights or restricted rights respectively. In the absence of such identification, the Government will assume to have unlimited rights to all technical data or computer software presented in the white paper. Records or data bearing a restrictive legend may be included in the white paper but must be clearly marked. The Army will treat all white papers as procurement-sensitive information before the award and will disclose their contents to only Government employees or designated support contractors for the purpose of procurement-related activities only. Classified, sensitive, or critical information on technologies should not be included in a white paper.
2. An applicant is cautioned that portions of white papers may be subject to release under terms of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, as amended.

#### Submission of White Paper

White papers must be submitted by e-mail to the POC for the U.S. Army Contracting Command, [wilveria.a.sanders.civ@army.mil](mailto:wilveria.a.sanders.civ@army.mil), and cc'd to the ARI Point of Contact (POC), [cary.r.stothart.civ@army.mil](mailto:cary.r.stothart.civ@army.mil), in electronic MS Word document format or PDF file format. **Cite "ARI BAA W911NF-23-S-0010, Developmental Experiences Assessment for Officer Strategic Thinking Development" in the e-mail subject line.**

#### **III. EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

White papers and full proposals received in response to this request will be evaluated by the ARI designated point of contact identified in this request using the following factors/criteria:

1. Scientific and Technical Merit—The overall scientific and/or technical merits of the proposed research.
2. Potential Contribution—The potential contributions to ARI's mission.
3. Qualifications/Capabilities—Proposed principal investigator and key personnel qualifications, capabilities, related experience and techniques, and institutional resources and facilities.
4. Cost—Addresses the level of support requested. Will be considered for realism, affordability, and appropriateness, and may be grounds for rejection independent of evaluation on other factors.

The request for a proposal will be made based on the overall evaluation of a white paper using the four criteria listed above. The overall scientific and/or technical merit of the proposed approach will be weighted more strongly than all of the other non-cost factors combined. All evaluation factors/criteria other than cost, when combined, are significantly more important than cost or price. A request for proposal may not necessarily be made to the lowest proposed price. During the evaluation of white papers, ARI's POC for technical matters may request a telecon with an applicant, but telecons are not guaranteed nor required for competition and award purposes. ARI's POC for technical matters reserves the right to evaluate a white paper and request a proposal without discussions. The applicant's initial submission should contain the applicant's best terms from a technical and price standpoint. Once a full proposal has been requested, all communications must go through the POC for the U.S. Army Contracting Command.

If the white paper evaluation results in the request and submission of a full proposal, the proposal will be evaluated by a panel of scientific peers using the same factors/criteria as those listed above under Evaluation Criteria. A request for a full proposal does not guarantee an award. The decision to award will be based on feedback from the panel, considerations presented by ARI's POC for technical matters identified in this document, and other factors like budgetary constraints. ARI may choose not to select any award due to unavailability of funds or other factors.

#### **IV. FEEDBACK:**

Written or telephonic feedback will be provided to the applicant regarding the white paper's scientific merit and potential contributions to the ARI's mission. If the Government decides to request a full proposal, a written request will be sent to the applicant. The written request will, at a minimum, invite a full proposal. The request may also include feedback intended to improve the proposal's potential for award.

#### **V. DEADLINES:**

Electronic versions of the white paper must be received by the POC for the U.S. Army Contracting Command and the ARI POC, with e-mail subject line **"ARI BAA W911NF-23-S-0010, Developmental Experiences Assessment for Officer Strategic Thinking Development"** by e-mail no later than **5:00 PM**

**Eastern Daylight Time on 28 August 2023.** Any extension to the white paper submission deadline will be posted to SAM.gov and Grants.gov an amendment to this Notice. Note that a timely white paper received under this Notice will be evaluated and considered for proposal requests throughout the period beginning **28 August 2023**, and ending **27 October 2023**. **An extension of this timeline may be granted based on the number of white papers submitted or other factors out of the control of the designated point of contact reviewing the white papers. An applicant will be notified by email if the white paper evaluation timeline is extended beyond 27 October 2023.**

**Please refer to the BAA, W911NF-23-S-0010 for instructions for the submission of a full proposal.**

An applicant is responsible for submitting an electronic white paper or full proposal so as to be received and accepted at the Government site indicated in this Notice no later than the date and time specified above. When sending electronic files, an applicant shall account for potential delays in file transfer from the originator's computer to the Government website/computer server. An applicant is encouraged to submit their response early (48 hours if possible) to avoid potential file transfer delays due to high demand or problems encountered in the course of submission.

An applicant should receive confirmation of delivery at the Government site, not just successful relay from the applicant's system. Acceptable evidence to establish the time of receipt at the Government site includes documentary and electronic evidence of receipt maintained by the Government site. All submissions shall be submitted before the deadline identified above in order to be considered – no exceptions.

If an emergency or unanticipated event interrupts normal Government processes so that a white paper or full proposal cannot be received at the site designated for receipt by the date and time specified above, then the date and time specified for receipt will be deemed to be extended to the same day and time specified in this Notice on the first workday on which normal Government processes resume. An applicant agrees to hold the terms of their white paper and any subsequent proposal valid for 180 calendar days from the date of submission.

## **VI. INQUIRIES:**

### **ACC (APG) RTP Agency Point of Contact (Contractual Questions)**

The POC for the US Army Contracting Command (Aberdeen Proving Ground) Research Triangle Park Division is: Ms. Wilveria Sanders, (919) 549-4328, [wilveria.a.sanders.civ@army.mil](mailto:wilveria.a.sanders.civ@army.mil).

### **ARI Agency Point of Contact (Technical Questions)**

The ARI POC for technical matters for this white paper topic is: Dr. Cary Stothart, (254) 392-0530, [cary.r.stothart.civ@army.mil](mailto:cary.r.stothart.civ@army.mil).

## **VII. REFERENCES:**

McCauley, C. D., Ruderman, M. N., Ohlott, P. J., & Morrow, J. E. (1994). Assessing the developmental components of managerial jobs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79(4), 544.

VanKatwyk, P., Laczo, R. M., & Tuzinski, K. (2004). *The leadership experience inventory technical manual*. Personnel Decisions International.