

## PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT



### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DoD)

#### APEX Accelerator Program- Open Announcement

**Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** DOD2024APEXACCELERATOROPEN

**Assistance Listing Number:** 12.002

**Anticipated Funding Purpose:** Business and Commerce

**Key Dates:** This announcement will be open to receive new applications for Cooperative Agreement awards until 5:00PM Eastern Time, 21 January 2024.

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**Date Issued:** 15 December 2023

# **I. Program Description**

## **A. Short Description of Funding Opportunity**

The Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) seeks applications from eligible entities to serve as APEX Accelerators. Applications should include documentation described in Part IV of this document.

## **B. Background:**

The Procurement Technical Assistance Program (PTAP) was established by section 1241 of the Department of Defense (DoD) Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1985 (Public Law 98-525) to expand the number of businesses capable of participating in government contracts. Under this announcement, the Department of Defense will award cost sharing cooperative agreements to eligible program participants who will establish or maintain APEX Accelerators. The APEX Accelerators serve as a resource for businesses to obtain information and training related to contracting opportunities with DoD, other federal agencies, state and local governments and with government prime contractors. Procurement professionals at the APEX Accelerators provide critical assistance to businesses seeking to participate in government contracts and most of the assistance they provide is free.

## **C. Program Description/Objective:**

Award recipients must establish and maintain an APEX Accelerator with physical location(s) to serve as a resource for large and small businesses to obtain procurement technical assistance. Procurement technical assistance means professional, specialized assistance provided to clients that enables them to identify potential contractual opportunities and obtain or perform under contracts, innovation and technology grants, and other DoD-funded instruments, with DoD, other Federal agencies, State and/or local governments, and with Federal, State and/or local government contractors. Clients may include any business pursuing or performing these types of contracts or subcontracts at any tier. As used in this part, the terms “State” and “local government” have the meanings provided in 10 U.S.C. 4951. Innovation and technology grants refer to awards issued pursuant to the Small Business Innovation Research and/or Small Business Technology Transfer programs. You must collaborate with DoD and other Federal agencies and work cooperatively with them to accomplish the work under this award.

## **D. Authorization**

The authorization to make awards under this funding opportunity may be found via the Assistance Listing (CFDA) Number 12.002 on sam.gov.

## **E. Legal Requirements**

Each cooperative agreement awarded 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,” as implemented by

2 CFR 1104. This is generally 2 CFR 1126 – 1140 Subchapter D—Administrative Requirements Terms and Conditions for Cost-Type Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Nonprofit and Governmental Entities. APEX Award Specific Terms and Conditions Version 3.0 and Apex Accelerator General Terms and Conditions Version 2.0 which are located at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), are incorporated by reference in this announcement.

## **II. Federal Award Information**

The following information applies to awards issued under this announcement:

We expect to award approximately 1 new cost sharing cooperative agreements with a one-year period of performance as a result of this announcement, totaling an estimated \$750K to \$1.5M; however, we are not obligated to make any awards and reserve the right to revise or cancel this announcement.

The Government will review all applications submitted under this announcement, and is specifically looking to increase APEX Accelerator coverage in the below coverage area:

- The State of North Carolina

Cooperative agreements differ from grants in that substantial involvement is expected between the recipient and the Federal agency when carrying out the award. Should you receive an award, we expect you to collaborate with DoD and other Federal agencies to accomplish the work set out in the APEX General Terms and Conditions. DoD will be involved in shaping the strategy used by the applicant to ensure relevant, high-quality service to businesses at a reasonable cost and applicants should expect negotiations where part or all of proposed costs are included in awards.

Applicants should propose a period of performance that begins 01 April 2024 and concludes on 31 March 2025. Applicants may include subrecipients/subawards in their application and may propose direct and indirect costs.

The Federal funding limitations are listed below:

\$750,000 in the case of an entity that operates an APEX Accelerator providing less than statewide coverage;

\$1,500,000 in the case of an entity that operates an APEX Accelerator providing statewide coverage;

\$1,000,000 in the case of an entity that operates an APEX Accelerator wholly within more than one service area of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). This means an APEX Accelerator that provides procurement technical assistance to all the federally recognized Indian tribes or Alaska Native entities in one of the BIA regions and at least half of the tribes or Alaska Native entities in a second BIA region; or

\$450,000 in the case of an entity that operates an APEX Accelerator wholly within one service

area of the BIA. This means an APEX Accelerator that provides procurement technical assistance to federally recognized Indian tribes and/or Alaska Native entities but does not meet the standard for an entity that operates an APEX Accelerator wholly within more than one service area of the BIA as described above.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Only those entities listed in this section are eligible to apply. Individuals are not eligible.

Disclosures of current and pending support made in this application may render an applicant ineligible for funding. Prior to award and throughout the period of performance, DoD may continue to request updated continuing and pending support information, which will be reviewed and may result in discontinuation of funding.

Religious organizations are entitled to compete on equal footing with secular organizations for Federal financial assistance as described in E.O. 13798, “Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty.”

States. State means a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, a territory or possession of the United States, an agency or instrumentality of a State, and a multi-State, regional, or interstate entity having governmental duties and powers (refer to 10 U.S.C. 4951(4)).

Local governments. Local government means a unit of government in a State, a local public authority, a special district, an intrastate district, a council of governments, a sponsor group representative organization, an interstate entity, or another instrumentality of a local government (refer to 10 U.S.C. 4951(4)).

Private nonprofit organizations. Private nonprofit organization means an entity which is exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code, and no part of its earnings inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, and no substantial part of its activities is carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation or participating in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office (refer to 10 U.S.C. 4951(1)(C)).

Economic enterprises. Economic enterprise means any Indian-owned (as defined by the Secretary of the Interior) commercial, industrial, or business activity established or organized for profit purposes or for nonprofit purposes. Provided, that such Indian ownership constitutes not less than 51 percent of the enterprise (refer to 10 U.S.C. 4951(1)(D)).

Tribal organizations. Tribal organization means the recognized governing body of any Indian tribe; any legally established organization of Indians which is controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by such governing body, or which is democratically elected by the adult members of the Indian community to be served by such organization and which includes the maximum participation of Indians in all phases of its activities. Provided, that in any case where a cooperative agreement is made to an organization to perform services benefiting more than one Indian tribe, the approval

of each such Indian tribe shall be a prerequisite to the making of such cooperative agreement (refer to 10 U.S.C. 4951(1)(D)).

## B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing requirements. All awards we make as a result of this announcement require you to provide cost sharing, without which your application is ineligible for an award. Allowable contributions towards cost sharing requirements are discussed in the “Financial and Program Management” part of the APEX General Terms and Conditions. You are required to submit documentation to verify that you have the necessary commitments to meet cost sharing requirements and, if applicable, that your proposed service area is a distressed area.

Cost share ratio. Our share of cost is limited to no more than 65 percent unless you provide procurement technical assistance in a distressed area, in which case our share is limited to no more than 85 percent. You are required to share the cost of operating your PTAC and match our funds accordingly. In accordance with 48 USC 1469a, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are entitled by statute to waiver of cost matching funds up to \$199,999.

Distressed area. Distressed area means an area of local government (i.e., usually a city or county) that has a per capita income of 80 percent or less of that State’s average or an unemployment rate that is one percent greater than the national average for the most recent 24-month period for which statistics are available. In addition, Reservations listed in BIA regions are distressed areas.

## C. Conflict of Interest

### a) General Requirement for Disclosure

You and your organization must disclose any potential or actual conflict of interest(s) to us. You must also disclose any potential or actual conflict(s) of interest for any identified sub recipient you include in your application. We may have to ask you more questions if we need more information.

At our discretion, we may ask you for a conflict-of-interest mitigation plan after you submit your application. Your plan is subject to our approval.

## D. Other

### a) Licensure or Certification

#### i. Certifications, representations, and assurances

1. To apply for grants and other funding opportunities the applicant entity must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). Applications will not be accepted through Grants.gov or other methods unless the entity is registered in SAM. Registration in SAM now includes the acceptance of Certifications and Assurances. See

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/grantors/grantor-standard-language.html> for details on how to register in SAM, and Grants.gov

2. 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.
3. When you check “I Agree” on the SF-424 Block 21 you certify compliance with the following DoD requirements:

As the duly authorized agent for my organization I certify that said organization does not require any of its employees, contractors, or subrecipients seeking to report fraud, waste, or abuse to sign or comply with internal confidentiality agreements or statements prohibiting or otherwise restricting those employees, contractors, subrecipients from lawfully reporting that waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to receive such information;

As the duly authorized agent for my organization, I certify that all key personnel have disclosed the amount, type, and source of all current and pending support received by, or expected to be received by, the individual as of the time of the disclosure;

As the duly authorized agent for my organization, I certify that the disclosure is current, accurate, complete;

As the duly authorized agent for my organization, I agree to update such disclosure at the request of the agency prior to the award of support and at any subsequent time the agency determines appropriate during the term of the award;

As the duly authorized agent for my organization, I agree to update such disclosure at the request of the Department of Defense prior to the award of support and at any subsequent time the Department determines appropriate during the term of the award; and

As the duly authorized agent for my organization, I certify that any entity applying for such award has been made aware of the certification requirements above.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. Submission Date and Time:

DoD will only accept applications submitted on or before 21 January 2024, 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET). Read the instructions in <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/grantors/grantor-standard-language.html> about registering to apply for DoD funds. If you experience difficulties with your submission, Grants.gov provides support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). This ticket number will allow DoD to verify your issue if it cannot be resolved by the application date.

For questions related specifically to this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO), contact the number for the program or grants office listed below.

Grants Officer: Monica Wideman, [monica.k.wideman.civ@army.mil](mailto:monica.k.wideman.civ@army.mil), 520-669-8831

### B. Address to Request Application Package

The application package for Notice of Funding Opportunity is available on Grants.gov.

### C. Application Procedures and Requirements

Organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), active System for Award Management (SAM) registration, and Grants.gov account to apply for grants and other assistance awards. Please see <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/grantors/grantor-standard-language.html> for details on how to go through this process.

Full application packages must be submitted electronically to Grants.gov no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on January 21, 2024. Applicants 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 2 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 applicant'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 may not be considered for review.

Acceptable evidence to establish the time of receipt by Grants.gov includes documentary evidence of receipt maintained by Grants.gov, and Grants.gov e-mails to the applicant confirming receipt. These e-mails will indicate 1) the application was received on time, 2) application was rejected due to errors, 3) application was received after the deadline. Note that this Grants.gov response may occur over several e-mails, e.g., one acknowledging on-time receipt, and a later e-mail rejecting for errors the system detected. Applicants can also track the status of their applications at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/track-my-application.html>.

#### D. Application Withdrawal:

An applicant may withdraw an application at any time before award 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.

#### E. Intergovernmental Review

This opportunity is subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." You are reminded that you may have to contact your state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with your state's process under Executive Order 12372. The names and addresses of SPOCs are listed at The Office of Management and Budget's website., <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>.

#### F. Content and Form of Submission:

See <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/grantors/grantor-standard-language.html> for information on how to complete the application using Workspace on Grants.gov.

- Documentation submitted under this NFO are expected to be unclassified; classified applications are not permitted.
- All documents must be submitted in PDF format except for attachments 10 and 12 (budget spreadsheets) which must be in Excel Format.
- All proposals will be evaluated by Government personnel. The names and affiliations of reviewers are not disclosed.
- All submissions will be protected from unauthorized disclosure in accordance with applicable law and DoD regulations. You are expected to appropriately mark each page of their submission that contains proprietary information.

#### G. Component-specific requirements.

##### Full Application Sections Required

- SF 424, Application for Federal Assistance. Complete the SF 424 and attach your proposed service area listing in block 14. You may use the template for the Proposed Service Area Listing available in the package posted to grants.gov, which provides an example of the information that we need in this attachment.

It is important that the amount you enter in block 18.a. of the SF 424 accurately reflects the amount of DoD funding that you are requesting with your application. By signing the SF 424, you are providing the certifications and assurances in the funding opportunity announcement.

- SF 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs. Complete the SF 424A using the instructions for the form available at the Notice of Funding

Opportunity posting on Grants.gov. The SF 424A should be completed carefully to be consistent with other components of your application.

- SF LLL, Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying. Appendix A in 32 CFR Part 28 requires you to complete and submit the SF LLL if you engage in certain types of lobbying. Review 32 CFR Part 28, “New Restrictions on Lobbying,” and attach the SF LLL if it is applicable.
- Attachments. Applicants shall utilize the APEX Accelerators Streamlined Application document located on grants.gov to complete all attachments required for this award.

Ensure that you follow [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) rules in naming and attaching files because attachments that do not follow the rules may cause the entire application to be rejected or cause issues during processing. Limit file names to 50 or fewer characters and use only the following characters when naming attachments: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore ( \_), hyphen (-), space and period.

- **Attachment 1:** Provide information that attests to the commitment of matching funds to your program.
- **Attachment 2:** Provide information to support any proposed third-party in-kind contributions, if applicable.
- **Attachment 3:** Provide information to describe and provide a basis for fringe benefit amounts included in your budget. Simply stating what the rate is (e.g., 30%) does not adequately fulfill this requirement. Where fringe benefit rates have been approved in conjunction with an indirect cost rate, the negotiated rate memorandum should be provided, and no further explanation is necessary.

Note: For any subawards greater than 20% of the total program cost, provide justification for the fringe benefit costs proposed in accordance with the above instructions.

- **Attachment 4:** If indirect costs are included in the budget, attach a current copy of a negotiated rate memorandum from the cognizant federal agency. Cite the de minimis rate described in 2 CFR 200.414(f) if it applies. If a negotiated rate memorandum is not provided or the de minimis rate is not utilized, then the applicant shall provide information to the government demonstrating why the proposed rate is reasonable and realistic. The applicant shall include forecasted pools and bases for the current year. Additionally, the applicant shall support these rates with three (3) years historical actual pools and bases information that validates the calculations. Below is a sample, formats and dates may vary:

	Historical			Current
	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
<b>POOL</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>BASE</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>RATE</b>	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Note- For any subawards greater than 20% of the total program cost, provide justification for the Indirect Costs proposed in accordance with the above instructions.

- **Attachment 5:** The federal share of cost is limited to no more than 65 percent of the total program cost unless you provide procurement technical assistance in a distressed area, in which case our share is limited to no more than 85 percent. *Distressed area* means an area of local government (i.e., usually a city or county) that has a per capita income of 80 percent or less of that State’s average or an unemployment rate that is one percent greater than the national average for the most recent 24-month period for which statistics are available. Refer to the document titled “Attachment 5- Guidelines how to conduct distressed area analysis” for guidance in conducting your analysis. You do not need to provide an analysis if your proposed service area is designated as a reservation as defined in section 3(d) of the Indian Financing Act of 1974 (Public Law 93–262; 25 U.S.C. 1452(d)) by the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ regions because these are automatically considered distressed areas. If the proposed federal cost share exceeds 65% -
  - 1) Attach an analysis verifying that your proposed service area meets the definition of a distressed area. Refer to the guidance provided on the Notice of Funding Opportunity posting on Grants.gov for additional assistance conducting your analysis.
  - i) Using per capita income. [US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis \(BEA\)](#) data must be used. In conducting your analysis, compare state and local area “per capita personal income” for the most recent year available; or
  - ii) Using unemployment rates. [US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#) data must be used. In comparing national and local area unemployment rates, use the average taken over the most recent 24-month period for which both national and local area statistics are available (use “not seasonally adjusted” data). Use the latest final data available, i.e., do not use “preliminary” data published by BLS.
- 2) If you are proposing two separate budgets for providing services in both distressed and non-distressed areas, explain and justify the methodology that you used to separate the distressed and non-distressed portions of your budget. When preparing this information, ensure that your methodology is clearly and sufficiently explained on where costs have been allocated, in proportions, that

reasonably approximate the costs necessary to serve the distressed and non-distressed portions of your service area.

- **Attachment 6: *Determination of Statewide coverage.*** Statewide means an APEX Accelerator that provides procurement technical assistance in at least one-half of a state's counties or equivalent coverage (e.g., parishes, boroughs, etc.) and serves at least three-fourths of the state's labor force. If you propose a statewide program but will cover less than the entire state, attach documentation to verify that your service area meets the definition of statewide coverage. Refer to the document titled "Attachment 6- Guidelines how to conduct a Statewide Coverage Analysis" for guidance in conducting your analysis. Use the most recent, annual labor force statistics available from the [US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).
  
- **Attachment 7: Program Execution Strategy.**
  - Describe how you will comply with the "Program Requirements" section of the APEX Accelerator Award Specific Terms and Conditions. Include all information necessary for us to conduct an evaluation of your application. Ensure the below information is specifically addressed in the description.
    1. Background on the individual program
    2. Discussion on service area/demographics and facilities, trends in the service area
    3. Personnel Qualifications: experience and education
    4. Discussion on how you will reach your goals using various types of outreach and technical assistance.
    5. Describe the process of technical assistance/counseling.
  
  - If you intend to earn program income, e.g. charge clients a fee for any services rendered or advertising/sponsorship, include a discussion concerning the amount of fees to be charged, how this income will be used to further program objectives, and assert your understanding that you're required to report the gross program income on the SF 270 and SF 425. If you are proposing to utilize Program Income as part of the applicant cost share, provide a narrative detailing how you will ensure compliance with, the Award Specific Terms and Conditions percent cap on the value of program income that may be applied as the cost match.
  
  - For new programs, include an implementation plan including targets for significant implementation milestones such as the hiring of personnel, the execution of subawards and the opening of APEX Accelerator facilities. Identify targets for milestones as the number of calendar days elapsed following the start date of the proposed period of performance. You are encouraged to propose and adhere to the most expeditious implementation plan possible, which we may regard more favorably when evaluating your application.

- **Attachment 8:** Provide information about each of the personnel positions included in your budget.
- **Attachment 9:** Provide a resume for the proposed Program Manager. The resume should describe the Program Manager’s qualifications, but not include personal information such as home address, personal telephone number, or ID numbers such as an Employee ID or social security number.
- **Attachment 10:** Attach budgets for subawards equating to 20% or less of the total program cost in Microsoft Excel format, if you plan to make any, using Section B of the SF 424A (for any subawards greater than 20% of the total program cost, see attachment 12) If you have subrecipients, your budget must show the total amount of each subaward within your budget’s contractual cost category, where you must summarize the total amount of the subaward as a single line item. Use Section B of the SF 424A to show the details of each subrecipient’s budget by cost category (i.e., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, etc.). You can show up to four subawards on one SF 424A by listing subawards in Section B, line 6, column headings (1) – (4). Use additional pages if you need to. You must show Federal and Non- Federal shares or complete the other sections of the SF 424A for subrecipients.
- **Attachment 11:** Attach a copy (or URL) of your latest audit in accordance with Subpart F of 2 CFR Part 200 (formerly OMB Circular A-133). If available, you may provide the URL (i.e., web address) of an audit that is available on the internet in lieu of attaching a copy. If you did not expend Federal awards exceeding the thresholds that trigger these audit requirements, describe the amounts and sources of Federal awards that you did expend during your last fiscal year.
- **Attachment 12:** Attach a budget breakdown in Microsoft Excel format, that shows the individual line items of cost that constitute the higher-level budget that you included in the SF 424A. You must use the Microsoft Excel template available on the Notice of Funding Opportunity posting on Grants.gov, which provides an example of the information that we need in this attachment. Ensure that it is clear how you calculated the total amount of indirect costs (F&A) included in your budget. Use additional pages to show indirect cost calculations if necessary. Program Income rolled over into the proposed award from the prior year annual award must be included in the budget.

A budget breakdown must be provided for each subaward greater than 20% of the total program cost. The subaward budget breakdown can be provided with a separate excel template, or as a new tab on the applicant’s budget breakdown worksheet. The total program cost for each subaward must match the line item for the subaward found in the Contractual section of the Applicant’s budget breakdown.

See Appendix 1 for a detailed description of each line item.

- **Attachment 13:** Provide support for Personnel Costs. Support should include at least one of the following (A, B, C):
  - A. Published Salary Data, with information mapping to position title in proposal.
  - B. Payroll records and/or paystubs showing rate of pay and referenced to the specific personnel or position title in the proposal.
  - C. Salary Survey data, which shall include, at a minimum, the following:
    - Source of data;
    - Job title and description;
    - Geographic location; and
    - Range of salary amounts with reference to applicability of amounts.

Note- For any subawards greater than 20% of the total program cost, provide justification for the Personnel Costs proposed in accordance with the above instructions.

- **Attachment 14:** Provide proposed goals against each metric for the FY24 APEX Accelerator Program. A required excel template, along with the current program goals, will be uploaded to grants.gov when it is finalized and an amendment to this posting will be issued. For any metrics proposed with a goal of “0”, provide a justification in narrative form for the Government to review. Additionally, please note that you are not expected to propose in FY24 a metric for Goal 7, Facilitate Market Research and Commercial Due Diligence. Goal 7 is a task that is required, as applicable. You will not be measured against this goal but will be required to report what you have obtained.
- **Attachment 15:** Past Performance
  - Applicants shall provide information on recent and relevant contracts and assistance awards. Applicants shall submit no more than five (5) recent and relevant contracts and assistance awards. Applicants shall submit only those recent and relevant contracts and assistance awards for identical or similar efforts to the program requirements as stated in the APEX Accelerator Terms and Conditions. These may include Federal, state, and local Government efforts. “Recent” includes performance that has occurred within five (5) years of the date of the posting of this funding opportunity. “Relevant past performance” is defined as past performance that demonstrates support for the Procurement Technical Assistance Program or any other similar activities performed in support of improving Defense Industrial Base or Government Industrial Base Readiness.
  - **Contract Information:** The applicant shall complete a Relevant Past Performance Information form, template available on grants.gov as NFO attachment 15, for a minimum of one (1) and no more than five (5) contracts for the Offeror. To be considered relevant, the applicant must demonstrate for each proposed contract or assistance instrument that it performed a minimum of 33% of the dollar value of the agreement.

- The Applicant shall forward the Past Performance Questionnaire forms, NFO Attachment 15a, directly to the Government Point of contact identified in the Relevant Experience Form. The Government requests the Government Point of contact return the Past Performance Questionnaire forms prior to close of the NFO closing date directly to Army Contracting Command – Aberdeen Proving Ground (ACC-APG) via e-mailing the Agreements Officer identified on the cover page of this NFO.
- The Applicant shall indicate if it has no past performance, and, if applicable, shall clearly state this.
- The Government reserves the right, but is not obligated, to contact references provided by the offeror. The Government may also decide to contact references other than those provided by the Offeror including sources outside the Government.

#### H. Funding Restrictions

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

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Selection Criteria

Evaluation factors. We will use the factors below to evaluate your application. We will make awards to the applicants whose applications we determine to be the best value, cost and other factors considered. The past performance factor is more important than Program Execution and Cost. The factors of Program Execution and Cost are of equal importance.

- i. Past Performance
- ii. Program Execution
- iii. Cost.

Description of evaluation factors.

- i. Past Performance.
  - 1) The Government will evaluate the Applicant's record of recent and relevant past performance to ascertain the probability of successfully performing the Program Requirements.
  - 2) Absent any recent and relevant past performance history or when the performance record is so sparse that no meaningful confidence assessment rating can be reasonably assigned, the Applicant will be assigned an "unknown confidence rating" and its proposal will not be evaluated either favorably or unfavorably on past performance. If the Applicant provides reference information that is not relevant and current as stated in section IV G, the Applicant will receive an "Unknown Confidence" past performance rating for those contracts or assistance instruments.
  - 3) The Past Performance Factor considers each Applicant's demonstrated recent and relevant record of performance in supplying products and services related to the program requirements as stated in the APEX Accelerator Terms and Conditions.
    - Relevancy: The first aspect of the past performance evaluation is to determine how relevant a recent effort accomplished by the Offeror is to the effort to be acquired through the Notice of Funding opportunity. Relevancy is not separately rated; however, the following criteria will be used to establish what is relevant which shall include similarity of service/support and complexity.

<b>Past Performance Relevancy Ratings</b>	
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Very Relevant	Present/past performance effort involved essentially the same scope and magnitude of effort and complexities this NFO requires.
Relevant	Present/past performance effort involved similar scope and magnitude of effort and complexities this NFO requires.
Somewhat Relevant	Present/past performance effort involved some of the scope and magnitude of effort and complexities this NFO requires.
Not Relevant	Present/past performance effort involved little or none of the scope and magnitude of effort and complexities this NFO requires.

- Quality Assessment: Assess the quality of the Applicant’s past performance on those recent efforts that were determined relevant by determining how well the contractor performed on the contracts and assistance instruments. Documented results from Past Performance Questionnaires, interviews, CPARS, and other sources form the support and basis for this assessment.
- Past Performance Confidence Assessment. The final step is for the team to arrive at a single consensus past performance assessment for the Applicant, selecting the most appropriate rating from the chart below. This rating considers the assessed quality of the relevant/recent efforts gathered, and correlates to the appropriate rating from the chart below. Applicants must receive a rating of “Neutral Confidence”, “Satisfactory Confidence”, or “Substantial Confidence” to be eligible for contract award.

<b>Past Performance Relevancy Ratings</b>	
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Substantial Confidence	Based on the applicant’s recent/relevant performance record, the Government has a high expectation that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort.
Satisfactory Confidence	Based on the applicant’s recent/relevant performance record, the Government has a reasonable expectation that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort.
Neutral Confidence	No recent/relevant performance record is available, or the applicant’s performance record is so sparse that no meaningful confidence assessment rating can be reasonably assigned. The offeror may not be evaluated favorably or unfavorably on the factor of past performance.
Limited Confidence	Based on the applicant’s recent/relevant performance record, the Government has a low expectation that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort

Past Performance Relevancy Ratings	
Rating	Definition
No Confidence	Based on the applicant's recent/relevant performance record, the Government has no expectation that the offeror will be able to successfully perform the required effort.

ii. Program Execution

- 1) Personnel. We will evaluate your application to determine which of your proposed personnel meet Program Requirements of the Award Specific Terms and Conditions. Our evaluation will consider qualifications, including relevant experience and education, as well as the availability of the proposed personnel.
- 2) Facilities. We will evaluate your application to ascertain the degree to which the facilities you propose meet Program Requirements. We will also consider the availability of your facilities.
- 3) Technical understanding. We will evaluate your understanding of program requirements. We will not consider a simple statement of understanding or repeat of program requirements to demonstrate your understanding.

We will evaluate the soundness of your approach to implementing a program pursuant to program requirements. In addition, your application must demonstrate credibility, realism, and logic in providing procurement technical assistance to businesses and the required deliverables to us under a cooperative agreement.

- 4) Program management. We will evaluate how you intend to manage and coordinate the effort under a cooperative agreement, including planning, assigning responsibility, controlling personnel, controlling utilization of resources, tracking deliverables, monitoring performance and obtaining feedback from your clients. Our evaluation will also consider your proposed performance goals, your procedures for monitoring and controlling costs; your procedures for identifying problems, resolving them and ensuring that they do not reoccur; any proposed subrecipients and/or subcontractors and the degree to which you will use them; and your Program Implementation Plan, if applicable.
- 5) The Government will consider assigning findings as stated below.
  - Strength: is an aspect of an application that has merit or exceeds program requirements in a way that will be advantageous to the Government during performance.
  - Weakness: means a flaw in the application that increases the risk of unsuccessful performance.

- **Significant Weakness:** means a flaw in the application that significantly increases the risk of unsuccessful performance.

Each element in the Program Execution Factor will be rated as follows:

<b>High Confidence</b>	The Government has <b>high confidence</b> that the Applicant understands the program requirements, possesses the ability to staff the requirement in a feasible and realistic way and will be successful in performing the cooperative agreement.
<b>Satisfactory Confidence</b>	The Government has <b>satisfactory confidence</b> that the Applicant understands the program requirements, possesses the ability to staff the requirement in a feasible and realistic way, and will be successful in performing the Cooperative Agreement.
<b>Low Confidence</b>	The Government has <b>low confidence</b> that the Applicant understands the program requirements, possesses the ability to staff the requirement in a feasible and realistic way, and will be successful in performing the cooperative agreement.

ii. Cost

- 1) We will consider the proposed cost to us for the period of performance in conjunction with the other non-cost factors to determine best value. If your proposed costs appear unrealistic, you are cautioned that we may infer a lack of understanding of program requirements, increased risk of performance or your lack of credibility.
- 2) Cost sharing contributions. We will evaluate the nature and type of commitments you propose to satisfy cooperative agreement cost sharing requirements. We will consider the degree to which your commitments will contribute to the success of your proposed program, the significance of the commitments that you have made and whether those commitments demonstrate that you have taken a meaningful interest in the success of your proposed program.

B. Review and Selection Process:

Review of applications. We will review applications conforming to this announcement in accordance with the procedures in this section. We may provide you the opportunity to cure a flaw resulting from an irregularity in your application or may waive the flaw. We reserve the right to request any additional information we need to evaluate your application and your failure to provide the information in the time frame requested may result in rejection of your application.

Duplicate coverage. Duplicate coverage of service areas exists when the proposed service areas of two or more applicants overlap. We will decide on a case-by-case basis as to the acceptability of duplicate coverage.

Selection process. We contemplate that we will make one award; however, we may not make awards to all acceptable applicants. We will make award decisions to optimize the use of program funds while at the same time maximizing the availability of procurement technical assistance. We will make funding decisions on an agreement-by-agreement basis and in the best interest of the overall program. In making selections among otherwise acceptable applicants, we will generally give funding priority to those applicants that are operating established APEX Accelerators.

Applications that are not rejected by grants.gov or ACC-APG's initial screening process will be evaluated by a team of merit reviewers on the basis of how well the applications meet the Technical Proposal criteria outlined within this Funding Opportunity. The reviewers may be ACC-APG or DoD OSBP employees or employees of other federal agencies. Applicants are therefore encouraged to design proposals that address the criteria listed above in a clear and concise manner.

The merit reviewers will utilize an adjectival rating structure to evaluate eligible applications. The merit reviewers shall measure each application against the requirements of the Funding Opportunity. These criteria and their respective weighting of each criterion are detailed in Section V.A.

The reviewers will determine whether the application, in consideration of each category, respective weighting and then taken in its entirety, should be rated as: 1) Highly Responsive; 2) Responsive; 3) Somewhat Responsive; or 4) Not Responsive.

- a. **Highly Responsive:** Applicant fully addresses all criteria aspects, convincingly demonstrates that it will meet the program requirements, and demonstrates no discernable weaknesses;
- b. **Responsive:** Applicant fully addresses all criteria aspects, demonstrates a likelihood of meeting the OSBP requirements, but may include minor weaknesses;
- c. **Somewhat Responsive:** Applicant addresses most criteria aspects and demonstrates the ability to meet the OSBP performance requirements. However, the Application contains significant weaknesses and/or a number of minor weaknesses. These weaknesses may be addressed by recommending the award and including a specific programmatic or administrative post-award special term(s) and condition(s); or,
- d. **Not Responsive:** Applicant does not sufficiently address the criteria and the information presented indicates a strong likelihood of failure to meet OSBP' requirements.

The reviewers will submit their final evaluations to the Agreements Officer who will take the assessments, along with other information in the possession, and after careful consideration all information, shall draft individual funding determinations which will include: 1) not to fund the application; 2) fund the application but not at the level requested; or 3) fund the application at the level requested.

In making selections among otherwise acceptable applicants, we will generally give funding priority to those applicants that are operating established APEX Accelerators and have a successful performance record (refer to 10 U.S.C. 4954(d)).

On a case-by-case basis, we may request a pre-award credit report, audit, survey or other review to determine if you meet the standards in 32 CFR 22.415. We may delay an award decision until all necessary reviews are complete. Based on the results of a review, we may decide not to make an award, make an award subject to additional conditions or may delay an award until after any identified deficiencies are resolved. 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). Applicants may review information in FAPIIS and comment on any information entered into that system. Comments made by applicants will be considered, in addition to other information in examining the applicants' integrity, business ethics, and record of performance. 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.

#### C. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates:

Decisions are expected to be announced via email. Awards are expected to be issued between February 1, 2024 and March 31, 2024.

### **VI. Federal Award Administration Information**

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. Applicants whose applications are recommended will be contacted by a DoD grants officer to discuss any additional information required for award. 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 at this time.

### **VII. Administrative and National Policy requirements.**

Refer to the “National Policy Requirements”, subdivision C of the APEX Accelerator General Terms and Conditions, which is located at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), for national policy requirements that will apply to awards.

### **VIII. Reporting Requirements**

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

<b>Report</b>	<b>Requirements/Form</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Quarterly Reports	APEX Quarterly Report	Quarterly
Financial Report	SF 425	Quarterly
Grant Voucher Payment Request	SF 270	May be monthly but must be at least once per quarter with billing period end date matching the SF 425

Awardees must comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR 170: Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information.

## **IX. Federal Contacts**

Questions regarding program policy, program content, administrative problems, grant administration or technical issues should be directed to:

DoD APEX Accelerator Program Office: [osd.pentagon.ousd-a-s.mbx.apex-accelerators@mail.mil](mailto:osd.pentagon.ousd-a-s.mbx.apex-accelerators@mail.mil)

Questions regarding Grants.gov should be directed to: the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

## **X. Other Information**

The Federal government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of the announcement. Only grants officers can bind the Federal government to the expenditure of funds.

Applicants are advised to monitor Grants.gov for potential amendments to this Notice of Funding Opportunity. You can also elect to be automatically notified by Grants.gov whenever there is a change to the opportunity.

Applications must not include any information that has been identified as classified national security information under authorities established in Executive Order 12958, Classified National Security Information.

## **Appendix 1-Additional detail for Attachment 12, Budget:**

The budget shall show the separate items of cost included in your proposal and to determine overall reasonableness. Provide detailed descriptions of costs to include how estimates were derived and the basis of your estimates. Ensure that there is no ambiguity as to whether a particular cost is necessary for the efficient operation of an APEX Accelerator. Guidance is provided below on describing costs and including them in the appropriate cost category. Similar to how you describe costs, if your proposal includes third-party in-kind contributions, they must be described, and their values included in the appropriate cost category.

### **1. Personnel**

List all your personnel positions included in the budget. Subrecipient personnel costs must be included in contractual costs, and not in the personnel section.

For each position, describe the percent of time working on the program in terms of the time employed by you. For example, show a staff member who dedicates all of his or her time to the APEX Accelerator while employed as a 100% contributor, regardless of whether that person is a full or part-time employee. Less than 100% contributors are those personnel that share time between the APEX Accelerator and other programs in the course of their employment with you. Describe the position, location, and include the name of the employee occupying filled positions.

### **2. Fringe Benefits**

Show fringe benefit costs for each position you included in the budget. Subrecipient fringe benefits costs should usually not be included here, but instead as contractual costs.

### **3. Travel**

Separate and describe the purpose of each travel item. Provide an estimate that includes, as applicable, the number of travelers, names and positions of travelers, number of days lodging, airfare, meal allowance, rental car, conference registration fees, mileage and mileage rate, etc. Provide the basis for your estimates.

- a. Local travel. Provide the purpose, mileage and mileage rate for any local travel. A summary entry may be made for recurring routine trips. Describe the basis for estimated amounts such as an estimated number of miles per year.
- b. Training. Identify the course to include name, source and duration. Consider the free online training through the Defense Acquisition University (DAU), especially in the areas of Contracting (CON) and Small Business Programs (SBP).
- c. Registration fees. Registration fees related to travel should be listed with the related travel expense. Include conference, seminar, workshop and event fees.

### **4. Equipment**

Equipment means tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by you for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000. Individual items costing less (e.g., most computers and printers) are supplies rather than equipment.

Describe the purpose of any equipment and the basis for your estimated amounts. Where equipment is being replaced, provide the age of the equipment needing replacement and justify the need for its replacement. Note there is a Federal interest in any equipment that you acquire or improve under an award. Refer to the Part 5, "Property Administration," in the APEX General Terms and Conditions.

#### 5. Supplies

General office supplies may be summarized on a monthly basis, showing the monthly amount x 12 and the estimated total. Individual supply items in excess of \$1,000 per month or \$12,000 per year should usually be shown separately. Items such as computers costing less than \$5,000 each should normally be shown as supplies.

#### 6. Contractual

Itemize consultant and contractor costs (may not exceed 10% of total program cost). Include a description of the purchase and an explanation as to why it is necessary. Explain how costs were derived and include the basis for estimates (e.g., number of hours and the cost per hour). Show the cost of subawards under contractual, which can usually be summarized in a single line item.

#### 7. Other

Items may include, but are not limited to, computer software, copying, postage, printing, publications, subscriptions and telephone. Itemize disparate items separately and describe the basis for their cost. Do not include generic, all-inclusive, items such as "event costs" or "utilities" without providing details.

- a. Events. Provide costs for events hosted by you the applicant. A series of events can be proposed as one line item, providing justification is given.
- b. Rental expenses. Show costs for rental of office space and other facilities. Include the address of the property and describe how it is priced such as an annual cost per square foot or a monthly or daily rental rate.
- c. Facilities and utilities. If it is not part of indirect cost, include cost related to facilities and itemize different components such as electrical, telephone and internet access.
- d. Publications and subscriptions. Itemize costs for each individual publication or subscription.
- e. Memberships. Itemize membership costs for business, technical and professional organizations. Note that the costs of individual memberships are not allowable costs (e.g.,

personal memberships for your staff).

#### 8. Indirect Costs

Show your indirect cost base, rate and amount of indirect charges. Ensure calculations are clear, especially if you use more than one rate (for example, if you use on- and off-campus rates or different rates for separate locations). Do not include applicable subrecipient or subcontractor indirect costs, which should instead be included with the corresponding line item under contractual. The Cost Share Budget Information Worksheet (CSBIW) form is useful to document indirect costs when you use subrecipients.

#### 9. Program Income Earned on the Prior Year Award

If applicable, show the amount of program income rolled over from the prior year award and anticipated to be used to fund the proposed award.

#### 10. Supporting Documentation for In-Kind Contributions

Third-party in-kind contributions are non-cash contributions (i.e., property or services) that a third party furnishes to you or your subrecipients that are to be counted towards meeting the award's cost sharing requirements. Refer to FMS Article VI, "Cost sharing or matching," in the APEX General Terms and Conditions for more information on the valuation of cost sharing or matching contributions. Provide the information below to support each third-party in-kind contribution that you propose to use. Note that FMS Article VI requires that you obtain our prior approval before you use any third-party in-kind contribution that was not included your budget.

- a. Describe your need for the contribution so that there is no ambiguity as to whether it is necessary for the efficient operation of the APEX Accelerator.
- b. Show the value that you derived based on the principles in 2 CFR 200.306 (or in 32 CFR 34.13 if you are a for-profit entity).
- c. Cite the paragraph in 2 CFR 200.306 or 32 CFR 34.13 that applies.
- d. Describe how you determined that the value that you propose to use is fair and reasonable. Please do not submit the evidence supporting your valuation unless requested by the Grants Officer. Examples of price analysis techniques include, but are not limited to:
  - 1) Comparison of the value with proposed prices you received in response to a solicitation for the purchase of the same or similar items.
  - 2) Comparison with previous contract prices for the same or similar items, if both the validity of the comparison and the reasonableness of the previous price(s) can be established.
  - 3) Comparison with published price lists or published market prices.
  - 4) Comparison with rates you paid for similar work; and
  - 5) Comparison to an independent appraisal or estimate (see the specific requirement below for donated space).

e. The value of donated space must not exceed the fair rental value of comparable space as established by an independent appraisal (refer to 2 CFR 200.306(i)(3) or 32 CFR 34.13(b)(4)). Upon request by the Grants Officer, provide a copy of an independent appraisal to support your valuation if the third-party in-kind contribution is donated space.

#### 11. Budget Development

When part, but not all, of your service area meets the definition of a distressed area you may, but are not required to, propose a separate budget for your service to the distressed portion of your total service area so that you can utilize the higher federal cost share that we are authorized to provide for service to distressed areas. If you decide to do this, you must include both a distressed area budget and a non-distressed area budget in your application. In preparing your application, you must reasonably estimate the cost of serving the distressed and non-distressed portions of the service area and describe how you did this when determining the cost sharing ratio “Distressed and non-distressed area budgets” section in the “Program Requirements” part of the APEX General Terms and Conditions for additional requirements that apply if you structure your program this way.