

SPECIAL NOTICE (SN) DARPA-SN-26-112-Amendment-01

Firefox Proposers Day

EVENT DATE: **Monday, September 21, 2026**

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: **5:00 PM EDT Friday, September 11, 2026**

REGISTRATION WEBSITE: <https://events.sa-meetings.com/FirefoxPD>

LOCATION: **SPA Arlington Research Collaboration Center, 4075 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22203**

TECHNICAL POC: Dr. Pedro Irazoqui, DARPA/BTO Program Manager

EMAIL: firefox@darpa.mil

The Biological Technologies Office (BTO) of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) will host an in-person-only Proposers Day for the potential proposer community in support of a planned Program Solicitation (PS) for the Firefox Program. The Proposers Day will take place at the **SPA Arlington Research Collaboration Center (SPARCC)** in Arlington, VA, on **Monday, September 21, 2026**, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM (EDT).

Advance registration is required. Please limit in-person attendance to three (3) individuals per organization. Note: all times listed on this announcement, the agenda, and the registration website are in Eastern Daylight Time.

The Proposers Day goals include:

1. Introducing the Firefox program vision and goals to the research community;
2. Explaining the mechanics of a DARPA program in general and the objectives and milestones of this program in particular;
3. Increasing efficiency in proposal preparation and evaluation;
4. Encouraging and promoting teaming arrangements among organizations that have the relevant expertise, research facilities, and capabilities for executing research and development responsive to the Firefox program goals.

The Proposers Day will include brief overview presentations by government personnel as well as an information session during which the DARPA Program Manager and Contracting Officer will respond to questions from participants. The Proposers Day will also include a poster session during which potential performers can highlight their technical capabilities to facilitate teaming relationships.

Attendance at this event is not a requirement for submission of a proposal or selection for funding. Information relayed during the Proposers Day will be made available on the BTO section of the DARPA Opportunities page: <http://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/opportunities>.

To maximize the pool of innovative proposal concepts, DARPA strongly encourages participation by non-traditional performers (e.g., small businesses, academic and research institutions, and first-time Government contractors).

Firefox Program Overview:

DARPA has recently funded the development of a coherent optical sensing system through turbid media. This work leveraged coherent optical interferometry to extract phase velocity of a small population of neurons firing in the human cortex, from a non-invasive fiber placed on the scalp. **The Firefox program seeks to expand the optical capability of this approach by 1) beam-steering our 1310 nm short-coherence length source over a volume of tissue (TA1); and 2) processing the coherently mixed object and reference beams in the analog domain (TA2).** Firefox is a coherent optics program, that proposes to revolutionize brain-computer interfaces. As such, performers are expected to bring deep expertise in a range of areas including (but not limited to) coherent optical sensing, beam steering, and analog (likely but not necessarily optical) signal processing. Knowledge or experience in neuroscience and brain-computer interfaces is optional but not required.

Predicted approaches to Technical Area 1 (TA1) may include but are not limited to the use of spatial light modulators, microelectromechanical systems (MEMS), and Risley-prisms. Predicted approaches to Technical Area 2 (TA2) may include but are not limited to all-optical photonic, in-sensor, or neuromorphic-photonic computing. Proposers are strongly incentivized to challenge standard paradigms and submit highly creative approaches that meet or exceed the program's target metrics and enable extensive scaling of the base technology. Ultimately, Firefox aims to use these performer-developed components and methodologies to prove and de-risk the technology pathway to a high-channel non-invasive brain-computer interface (BCI) with single-neuron spatiotemporal resolution, replacing the need for highly invasive, surgically implanted electrodes in the BCIs of today.

Firefox is a 36-month program with three 12-month phases that address two parallel technical areas (TAs). TA1 will focus on expansive scanning/rastering of a coherent optical beam while TA2 will encompass the development of analog data processing architectures. Performer teams are expected to have a range of expertise including but not limited to laser physics, optical/photonic data processing, wavefront engineering, adaptive optics.

The components and architectures generated by the performers in this program are anticipated to inform the integration and generation of a novel, scalable, and noninvasive brain-computer interface. To this end, performers under both TAs will produce and deliver functional, testable outputs (e.g. components, software models, hardware prototypes) at specified checkpoints within each program Phase. These deliverables will undergo staged validation, integration within the full coherent optical sensing platform, and benchmarking by the government's designated Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V) partner. Animal and/or human subjects research by performers is not anticipated.

Opportunities for Teaming:

DARPA highly encourages teaming to comprehensively address the goals of the program with the appropriate level of expertise. To support team building, Proposers Day registrants may choose to participate in the following opportunities designed to facilitate interaction among attendees, provide opportunities to showcase capabilities, and build strong teams to address the challenges presented in Firefox.

Neither DARPA nor the Department of War endorses any participating organization. Specific content, communications, networking, and team formation are the sole responsibility of participants. DARPA will not provide feedback on submitted material. Submitted materials must not contain any Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) or classified information and must be suitable for unlimited public release. NO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION SHOULD BE SENT.

- 1. Poster Session:** Interested attendees are invited to present one poster that summarizes their teaming interests and capabilities (see **Attachment 1**). Posters must be sized exactly 24" x 36" (either horizontal or vertical orientation). These will be posted during a teaming poster session at Proposers Day. Poster submissions (max of one per attendee) will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, until the maximum number of 30 (thirty) submissions is reached. If multiple posters are received from the same institution, the DARPA team may request consolidation to allow for the maximum number of institutions to present. Interested attendees must identify their intention to submit the poster during registration. These submissions are restricted to those attending the meeting. Submitted posters will be sent via email to all Proposers Day registrants following the meeting. Registrants who submit posters may indicate during registration whether they opt in or out.

All poster session materials must be emailed to firefox@darpa.mil in MS PowerPoint or Adobe PDF format no later than 5:00 PM EDT on Tuesday **September 15, 2026**. DARPA will not provide feedback. Specific content, communications, networking, and team formation are the sole responsibility of participants.

Proposers will bring to the Proposers Day event a printed copy of their poster in the exact size 24" X 36". DARPA will provide easel, board, and clips/pins to mount the poster to the board.

NO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE POSTER SESSION SLIDE SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO THIS SPECIAL NOTICE.

- 2. Sidebar:** There will be an opportunity for individuals or teams to meet with the Program Manager and/or DARPA team during the Proposers Day. 8-minute meetings will be offered. Participants must request a meeting during registration. Meetings will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until the maximum number of meetings (given time constraints) is reached. Due to anticipated high demand for in-person sidebar conversations at Proposers Day (**September 21, 2026**) and time-slots are limited, DARPA offers additional opportunity to meet with the Program manager and DARPA team virtually on **September 22, 2026**. Once the in-person schedule is full, remaining interested Proposers Day attendees will be placed on an overflow list for

virtual sidebars to occur on **September 22, 2026** between 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM ET. Virtual sidebars will only be offered to attendees who are at Proposers Day but cannot make the list for in-person sidebar, interested Proposers Day attendees will be notified of their sidebar status via email, **September 17, 2026**. Those assigned to the virtual overflow list will receive their specific 8-minute time slot and a Microsoft Teams meeting link in that notification. If multiple requests are received from the same institution, the DARPA team may request consolidation to allow for the maximum number of institutions to participate. Please limit participation to 3 people per institution.

Selected meeting participants will be notified of their in-person **September 21, 2026** timeslot or, online TEAMS **September 22, 2026** timeslot by Thursday, **September 17, 2026**, at 5:00 PM ET.

3. **Attendee List:** Participant contact information (name, organization, email address) will be automatically included on a Firefox Proposers Day attendee list, which will be sent via email to all Proposers Day registrants. Registrants may indicate during registration whether they opt in or out.

Registration Information:

PLEASE NOTE: Registration closes 5:00 PM EDT on **Friday September 11, 2026**

Participants must register in advance through the registration website, located here: <https://events.sa-meetings.com/FirefoxPD>. Registration is free. In-person attendance is limited to 160 participants, with a maximum of three (3) individuals per organization, so early registration is recommended. Interested parties are encouraged to coordinate attendance internally within their organizations prior to registration. Individuals unable to register because the deadline has occurred or capacity has been reached will be added to a waitlist. If slots remain open after registration closes or become available due to cancellations, the slots will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis from the waitlist. An online registration form and various other meeting details can be found at the registration website: <https://events.sa-meetings.com/FirefoxPD>.

Potential proposing teams are not required to attend Proposers Day, although participation is strongly encouraged.

All administrative and technical questions should be directed to firefox@darpa.mil. Please refer to Firefox Special Notice number (DARPA-SN-26-112) in all correspondence. This announcement is not a request for proposals; any sent to the Special Notice email address will be disregarded.

All U.S. Permanent Residents and Foreign Nationals must submit a DARPA eForm 60, except foreign government personnel who must submit only an Official Visit Request completed by their respective Embassy based in Washington, DC.

All forms must be submitted no later than **5:00 PM EDT on Friday **September 11, 2026****. eForm 60 submission instructions are provided on the registration website and in the registration

confirmation email. Contact your Embassy staff for assistance in submitting the Official Visit Request.

DARPA hosts Proposers Days to provide potential performers with information on whether and how they might respond to the Government's research and development solicitations; and to increase efficiency in proposal preparation and evaluation. Therefore, Proposers Days are open only to registered potential proposers.

This SN is issued solely for information and potential new program planning purposes; the SN does not constitute a formal solicitation for proposals or proposal abstracts. In accordance with FAR 15.201(e), responses to this notice are not offers and cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract. Submission is voluntary and is not required to propose to Broad Agency Announcements (if any) or research solicitations (if any) on this topic. DARPA will not provide reimbursement for costs incurred in responding to this SN. Respondents are advised that DARPA is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information received, or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted under this SN.