

# Special Notice

Request for Information:

AI Forge Program: University Research Capabilities for  
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategic Thrusts

DARPA-SN-26-80

June 01, 2026

**Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency**



**Information Processing Techniques Office (IPTO)**

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Arlington, VA 22203-2114

## **Request for Information (RFI)**

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AI Forge Program: University Research Capabilities for AI Strategic Thrusts  
Information Processing Techniques Office (IPTO)  
DARPA

Posting Date: June 01, 2026

Responses Due: June 22, 2026, by 5:00 PM Eastern Time (ET)

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### **RFI DESCRIPTION:**

The AI Forge Program is seeking to identify the artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities and research areas of interest of U.S. universities. The program intends to conduct high-impact, fast-paced, university-led, fundamental AI research aimed at solving AI Forge's *Critical AI Challenges for National Security*, which are detailed in the report found on the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) website: <https://www.darpa.mil/research/programs/ai-forge>.

### **BACKGROUND:**

DARPA, in coordination with the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Center for AI Standards and Innovation (CAISI) at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), is seeking brief responses from U.S. universities to inform the AI Forge program development process. AI Forge aims to cultivate a robust ecosystem that combines university research expertise with the advanced capabilities and operational ability of frontier AI companies to drive disruptive AI innovation for national security. Strategically aligned with [America's AI Action Plan](#), the program focuses on advancing research in three core areas: AI interpretability, AI control, and adversarial robustness. The [Critical AI Challenges for National Security](#) were defined during a workshop with eight leading frontier AI companies and over fifteen chief AI officers from the Department of War (DOW), Intelligence Community (IC), and other government stakeholders to surface challenges in these strategic thrust areas.

The AI Forge program seeks to establish a multi-faceted forum comprised of universities, frontier AI companies, and U.S. government defense and security representatives. The program will execute Project Ventures – high-risk, high-reward, fast-paced university-led efforts ranging from \$750K to \$3M or higher – spanning up to one year in duration. DARPA anticipates several Project Venture awards each year of the program.

The purpose of this RFI is to gather information from U.S. universities, including military service academies, regarding their capabilities to conduct Project Venture level research on these [critical challenges](#). Responses to this RFI will be leveraged by AI Forge forum stakeholders to establish a repository of U.S. universities aligned and interested in accelerating next-generation AI research to solve critical national security challenges.

## TARGET AUDIENCE & PARTICIPATION

This RFI is targeting U.S. universities. Further, AI Forge Project Venture designated key personnel (e.g., Principal Investigators [PIs], Co-PIs, and key research personnel) are anticipated to be limited to U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Each university must submit a single, unified response authorized by the university Vice President for Research, Provost, or equivalent position. Individual faculty submissions are prohibited and will not be reviewed. To ensure administrative clarity, only one submission per institution will be accepted; in the event of multiple entries, the government will use only the latest timestamped submission received prior to the closing date and time.

Please note that Intellectual Property (IP) generated from Project Ventures is intended to be shared among AI Forge forum participants, preferably under liberal open-source licensing (e.g., the MIT License). Universities unable or unwilling to agree to a shared IP framework should not respond to this RFI.

## REQUESTED INFORMATION:

Please provide the following information about your University's AI capabilities:

### 1.1. University Overview:

- Name of University.
- RFI Point of Contact (POC) including Name, Title, Email, Phone.
- University Contract POC including Name, Title, Email, Phone.
- Provide a list of all relevant research entities, including the names and roles of key faculty members and research scientists, that contributed to this RFI.
- Describe the physical facilities, dedicated research resources, and data and computing infrastructure available to support fundamental research. In addition, address the following:
  - Does your university have the capability to support research involving Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)? (Yes/No).
  - Does your university have the capability to support classified research efforts? (Yes/No).
- Rapid contracting and subaward capabilities:
  - Briefly describe your university's internal processes for rapidly onboarding new contract vehicles, subawards, or commercial agreements. Highlight any established mechanisms (e.g., Master Research Agreements, pre-negotiated terms, or expedited legal review processes) that enable your institution to accelerate the contracting timeline when working with a prime contractor.
  - Has your university successfully negotiated and executed a subcontract or commercial agreement containing U.S. Government flow-down clauses within 30 calendar days of final selection? (Yes/No).
    - If yes, please provide a brief example (e.g., the Prime Contractor, the associated Government agency) and a short paragraph noting what internal processes enabled a timely award.

- If no, please describe internal institutional requirements or specific Government flow-down terms (e.g., IP rights, publication restrictions) that typically trigger extensive review and limit the institution from signing a subaward within 30 calendar days.

### **1.2. AI Research Capabilities:**

- Provide an overview of past performance and research achievements that demonstrate your university's expertise relevant to the program's strategic thrusts of AI interpretability, AI control, and adversarial robustness [[AI Forge website](#)].
- Describe the university's existing ecosystem of national security partnerships. Specifically, universities should address:
  - Defense Industrial Base (DIB) Integration: Describe existing Master Research Agreements (MRAs) or strategic partnerships with DIB members. How do these relationships assist the university in cross-tier collaboration, technical agility and transition readiness?
  - Scaling & Acceleration Agents: Identify any formal agreements with specialized research organizations, intermediaries, or University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs) that provide the engineering capacity to perform computationally-intensive AI research leveraging frontier-level compute.
  - Transition Track Record: Provide evidence of successful technology transitions (e.g., licensed IP, SBIR [Small Business Innovation Research] and STTR [Small Business Technology Transfer] collaborations, or integration into a Program of Record) resulting from these partnerships.

### **1.3. Expression of Interest in AI Strategic Thrusts:**

- Rank the program's strategic thrusts [[AI Forge website](#)] (AI interpretability, AI control, and adversarial robustness) based on your university's interest from 1 (Highest) to 3 (Lowest). Provide a rationale detailing your university's expertise and interest for each.

## **FORMAT INSTRUCTIONS:**

Use of the attached template is strongly encouraged to formulate a response. Submissions must be no more than eight (8) pages typed in English on 8.5" by 11" pages using 12-point font with 1" margins all around with page numbers. DARPA will only review responses submitted as an unprotected Microsoft Word or PDF file.

## **SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:**

Responses to this RFI should be submitted no later than 5:00 PM ET on June 22, 2026.

All submissions to this RFI must be written at the UNCLASSIFIED level. NO CUI OR CLASSIFIED INFORMATION IS ANTICIPATED NOR SHOULD BE SENT TO [aiforge@darpa.mil](mailto:aiforge@darpa.mil).

DARPA will disclose RFI submission contents to AI Forge forum stakeholders for the purpose of technical review and program development. These stakeholders include federal employees and authorized non-government advisors, such as subject matter experts and national security representatives

from frontier AI companies upon their future participation in the forum.

While submissions will not be released to the general public, respondents must not include proprietary, confidential, or sensitive business information that they are not authorized to share with non-government personnel. By submitting a response, the university acknowledges and consents to the sharing of its unclassified submission with these external entities for review purposes.

NOTE: DARPA may conduct individual discussions with respondents as necessary to gain a full understanding of the technical response. DARPA may contact respondents individually via e-mail.

### **DARPACONNECT:**

Entities who have not worked with DARPA before are encouraged to learn more through DARPAConnect, an initiative established to facilitate collaboration between DARPA and potential performers. The DARPAConnect team offers customized support, resources, and guidance on how to prepare your ideas for high-impact conversations with DARPA program managers. Please visit [DARPAConnect.us](https://DARPAConnect.us) to access a digital hub of online resources, including a curriculum for self-paced learning, personalized support, and in-person and virtual events. In addition to the self-paced online materials, the DARPAConnect team can schedule one-on-one conversations to discuss your specific ideas, questions, and paths to DARPA. You can use the contact form at [DARPAConnect.us](https://DARPAConnect.us) or email the DARPAConnect team directly at [darpaconnect@darpa.mil](mailto:darpaconnect@darpa.mil) to request assistance.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE:**

This announcement and associated template contain all information required to submit a response. No additional forms, kits, or other materials are needed. All administrative and technical questions should be directed to [aiforge@darpa.mil](mailto:aiforge@darpa.mil). Please refer to the Special Notice number (DARPA-SN-26-80) in all correspondence. This RFI is issued solely for information and program planning purposes and 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 of a response is strictly voluntary. DARPA will not provide reimbursement for costs incurred in responding to this RFI.