ERIS Master Program Solicitation

1 December 2024

<mark>(R3 Updated on 1 February 2025)</mark>

I.   Welcome to the DARPA Expedited Research Implementation Series (ERIS)

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), in conjunction with its marketplace manager, The Applied Research Institute (ARI), is initiating a long-term, open call for new and novel technology solutions to support DARPA in advancing research, development, prototyping, experimentation, and adoption of disruptive, DARPA-relevant research and technology solutions. Specifically, DARPA seeks to obtain solutions or capabilities that deliver breakthrough technological advancements that are new as of the date of submission or technologies, processes, research, or methods that represent a new application as of the date of submission. This initiative entitled the "Expedited Research Implementation Series," will solicit, collect, assess, and curate the most disruptive, revolutionary solutions and make those solutions available through rapid acquisition pathways.

II.   What is the ERIS?

ERIS is a digital environment of post-competition video pitches. The video solutions housed within the marketplace have been assessed through competitive procedures that exceed the competition requirements of 10 USC 4021, 10 USC 4022, and 10 USC 4023 and thus are readily available to be viewed, selected, negotiated, and awarded by Department of Defense (DoD) activities via the appropriate Other Transaction Authority. ERIS provides a venue for government organizations to search, view, review, compare, contrast, contact, negotiate, and procure breakthrough technologies and capabilities through rapid acquisition pathways. For industry, academia, and individual developers, ERIS is a tool to promote revolutionary technologies, capabilities, and research to DARPA in an environment with a rapid acquisition, Other Transaction-based pathway.

III.   What are the Goals of ERIS?

The goals of ERIS are to establish a centralized location where DARPA can assess disruptive, cutting-edge technological solutions, and where industry, academia, and individual developers can promote their research, technologies, and related products and services to the government. Further, the structure of the publication and assessment functions of ERIS allow for streamlined procurement of available solutions, addressing a major barrier to small businesses and nontraditional defense contractors. Finally, by leveraging the statutory and regulatory authorities available, ERIS can provide a technology transition pathway from idea to research, research to prototype, and prototype to experimental test and evaluation.

IV.   Who can Participate in ERIS?

All United States (U.S.)-based companies -- traditional and nontraditional, large businesses and small businesses, universities, non-profit companies – and individuals are welcome to participate.

In addition, foreign universities, research institutions, and entities may submit video pitches for their technology solutions, provided that such submissions are compliant with international law, including export laws for both the country of origin of the technology provider and the U.S.

V.   Why Participate in ERIS?

DARPA, as the primary sponsor of this initiative, seeks to establish ERIS as its premier, low-barrier entry point for industry, academia, and individuals to identify the most novel, disruptive, and revolutionary technology solutions, ongoing research efforts, and proposed future development activities that are relevant to DARPA's mission of creating strategic surprise. Participating entities will have their proposed solutions assessed by a peer panel of DARPA and supporting industry and academic subject matter experts (SMEs) and will receive feedback on the technical merit of their solution. Further, by submitting against this open call for solutions, all submitted solutions that are deemed "awardable" by the assessing DARPA Assessment Authority will be considered "post-competitive" under 10 USC 4021, 10 USC 4022, 10 USC 4023 and will be eligible for award of further research, prototyping, and procurement for experimental purposes. Some of the benefits of participation in ERIS include:

•   Exposure and marketing of technology and service solution(s) directly to DARPA program offices.

•   Access to the ERIS streamlined submission process requesting only the required organizational and technical information.

•   Fast track assessment timelines for solution submissions with notifications made within 30 calendar days from the end of each collection period (subject to submission volume).

•   Contract pathways for award of research, development, prototyping, test and evaluation, and procurement for experimental purposes.

•   Fully negotiable award terms, including payment, intellectual property and data rights license terms, schedule, milestones, and pricing.

•   Potential for multiple awards with a single customer, or across multiple customers with no proscriptive price ceilings or limits to duration of effort, based on a single video solution submission.

VI.   Topic Areas

As identified by DARPA, and based on its current set of program office interests, the government is seeking video solution pitches that are relevant to one or more of the following topic areas which are derived from DARPA's direction to create breakthrough technologies and capabilities for national security. This current list of topic areas will evolve as the customer base and mission focus areas supported by ERIS evolve.

The current topic areas for ERIS include:
- Detecting and tracking elusive objects of interest across air, land, and space domains.
- Overcoming limitations of current sensing systems (size, weight, power, and cost (SWaP-C), performance).
- Developing advanced antenna technologies for improved performance and reduced size.
- ==Developing advanced technologies for improved resilience, efficiency, and effectiveness of strategic systems. This topic area supports technologies for critical infrastructure and military command-and-control systems (networks and applications across strategic, command, operational, and tactical edges).==

VII.   Submission Instructions

a.   Submission, Assessment, and Notification Deadlines

i.   ERIS is continuously open for submission of solutions during the period of this Open Call (December 9, 2024 – May 30, 2025).

ii.   Submissions are collected monthly (e.g., December 1 through December 31). This is referred to as the "monthly collection period."

iii.   The cutoff for submissions is the final day of each monthly collection period at 12:00 (Noon) Eastern Time (ET). Submissions received after 12:00 (Noon) ET on the final day of each monthly collection period will be considered submitted in the subsequent monthly collection period.

iv.   Submissions timely received for a given month (the monthly collection period) will be assessed in the following month with results available within 30 days of the end of the relevant collection period (e.g., for the collection period ending December 31 at 12:00 PM (Noon) ET, assessment results will be distributed no later than January 31 (subject to flexibility for instances of high volume)).

b.   Submission Eligibility

i.   Solution videos, ==form information, and Supplemental Slides== must be unclassified and not include any proprietary information, export-controlled information, or controlled unclassified information (CUI). Solution videos must not contain any restrictive markings other than a valid copyright notice. Each video submission shall provide a single technology or service solution. Each solution video submission must be accompanied by a fully completed submission form (automated form populated during the video submission process). Elements of the required submission form include:

1.   Submitting Entity Name (or Individual Name). Use your full legal company/organization/individual name. It should match your SAM.gov profile if you have an existing SAM.gov profile at time of video submission.

2.   Website. Identify your current website address.

3. Unique Entity ID (UEI) (if available). The Unique Entity ID (UEI) is a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an entity by SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM profile, please enter "NA" or "Not Applicable" in the field.

4. Business size. Identify either large or small business size. Business size is defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA) in alignment with 13 CFR Part 121 Small Business Size Regulations. This classification is based upon average annual receipts or the average number of employees. The definition of "small" varies by industry, which is classified by your North American Industry Classification (NAIC) code.

5. Traditional/nontraditional status. Definition: As defined in 10 USC 3014, "nontraditional defense contractor," with respect to a procurement or with respect to a transaction authorized under section 4021(a) or 4022 of this title, means an entity that is not currently performing and has not performed, for at least the one-year period preceding the solicitation of sources by the DoD for the procurement or transaction, any contract or subcontract for the DoD that is subject to full coverage under the cost accounting standards prescribed pursuant to section 1502 of title 41 and the regulations implementing such section.

6. Socioeconomic designation(s). Select all applicable socioeconomic designations your entity currently holds. This designation must match your SAM.gov account.

7. Country. Select the appropriate country for your entity.

8. Address. Location of principal place of business (Street Address, City, State, ZIP).

9. Topic area. The purpose of the topic areas is to collect technology solutions which are relevant to DARPA and its program offices. Often a given solution may fit within multiple topic areas. The topic area selected for your solution has no impact on the assessment of your solution. The topic areas are used for categorization and search within ERIS for those video solution submissions assessed as "awardable."

10. Technology Readiness Level (TRL). Select the current TRL of your solution. A description of the Technology Readiness Definitions is available at Appendix A of this document. Assure that you select the appropriate level, not a range for your submission. The purpose of including the TRL as part of the submission requirements is to help customer organizations understand what types of efforts and funding your company is seeking for future engagements (Research, Development, Prototyping or Test and Evaluation). The TRL is not used to determine whether solutions are assessed as awardable/not awardable. It is important to select the relevant TRL for your solution to align with the proper potential customer organizations and funding.

11. Related keywords. Include at least five relevant keywords to your solution that will help the government find it faster. Please separate your keywords with a comma.

12. Video submission point of contact (POC), email address, and phone. This is the person that will receive the assessment results and any inquiries about the submission. At any point after submitting, you may want to add additional members and POCs to your organization. Once the submission form is completed and you are redirected to your dashboard, you may follow these steps to include another POC: From the Submission Dashboard, locate the video you'd like to

update and click "Actions" and then click "Update Information." This page will allow you to update the Submission Point of Contact information.

13.   Submission Title (less than 128 characters).

14.   Abstract description (1,500 Characters). Use this section to describe your video solution to appear in ERIS for the government user to easily understand your solution prior to watching the video. The purpose of this narrative is to support potential future customers in understanding information about your firm. The narrative is not part of the assessment information. Use this space to identify information (where applicable to your solution) that a prospective customer may want to know (e.g., facilities clearances, accounting system approvals, certifications, authorities to operate, FEDRAMP status, existing contracts, active General Services Administration (GSA) schedules, etc).

15.   ERIS Supplemental Slides: The ERIS Supplemental Slides (attached hereto as Appendix B.) include four distinct slides: 1) ERIS Submission Information, 2) Company Introduction, 3) ERIS Submission Criteria Quad Chart and 4) Solution Overview & DARPA White Space Chart. These supplemental slides are a tool utilized by DARPA program managers to aid in their assessment. By fully completing the "DARPA Supplemental Slides," submitters will assist in giving DARPA program managers a more comprehensive picture of their proposed solution. In order to be deemed compliant, when completing the supplemental slides, submitters **must only utilize the format prescribed within Appendix B, limited to the four (4) slides only.** The slides within Appendix B. shall not contain any proprietary or confidential information and are subject to the same Data Handling / Licenses Granted detailed within Section XIII. of the ERIS Announcement. Some helpful tips/tricks to assist submitters in correctly completing the supplemental slides are as follows:

1) *ERIS Submission Information* – Provide the submission, your company name and all other general information detailed on the slide template.

2) *Company Introduction* – Provide a one slide company overview to introduce you/your company to DARPA and the DoD. Keep the introduction succinct and use this opportunity to explain why you/your company wish to engage DARPA and the DoD.

3) *ERIS Submission Criteria Quad Chart* – This quad chart should be utilized to succinctly summarize the four video content submission criteria required by the ERIS Announcement Section VII.d as they relate to the solution being presented. This summary should allow viewers the opportunity to gain a quick, effective summary of how your presented solution addresses the ERIS video submission content requirements.

4) *Solution Overview & DARPA White Space Chart* – This chart should clearly and efficiently communicate exactly what you are doing and how you intend to do it.

c.   Video submission format requirements. Solution video submission shall conform with the following format requirements or will be deemed ineligible and returned for revision.

     i.   Videos must be no longer than seven (7) minutes (7:00) in length.

- Tip: video submissions that exceed the length limitation of seven minutes will not be assessed. Submitters will be notified that their video solution has exceeded the allowable length and must be revised and resubmitted. Exceeding the seven-minute limit is the primary reason why video submissions are rejected.

     ii.   Minimum video production requirements:

       1.   Resolution: HD 1280x720.

       2.   Encoded for streaming as a .mp4 file under 1 GB.

       3.   Color space: Rec709 or sRGB.

     iii.   Videos shall contain no restrictive markings limiting their use or distribution other than a valid copyright notice. Video submissions that contain restrictive markings other than those expressly permitted herein will not be assessed. Submitters will be notified that their video submission contains unauthorized restrictive markings and must be revised and resubmitted.

d.   Video submission content requirements. There are four required elements that each video must address. The four elements are: (1) defining the problem and current state of the art; (2) advancing the state of the art; (3) team capability (key personnel vision, expertise, and experience); and (4) defense and/or commercial market use case/impact. Tips for addressing the four required video submission elements are as follows:

     i.   **Defining the problem & current state of the art.** Begin your video pitch by clearly and comprehensively defining (1) the scope of the problem(s) that the solution is/will be developed to address and (2) the current state of the art within the field of potential solutions for the problem defined. Explain the scope of the problem and the current state of the art thoroughly but leave time to address all four video submission elements. Assure that your problem falls within at least one of the topic areas described in Section VI above.

     ii.   **Advancing the state of the art.** Detail why the proposed solution, if successful, will advance the current state of the art within the solution's relevant field(s). How is the problem being addressed today? What is "new" within your approach as it compares to current practices? What barriers do you foresee when attempting to advance the state of the art?

     iii.   **Team capability (key personnel vision, expertise, and experience).** Clearly demonstrate that your team has the capability to drive the proposed project to a successful outcome based on your proposed team's unique vision, expertise, and experience. There are a ton of great teams/people operating within your field; why is your team the best and why do they have the "it" factor when it comes to successfully completing the proposed project/solution?

iv.   **Defense and/or commercial market use case/impact.** Clearly demonstrate that your proposed project/solution has or will have an impact on the defense and/or commercial markets. Detail what application(s) or use cases you see your solution/project having in the defense and/or commercial space(s). This is your opportunity to identify the "so what" of the solution/project you are proposing.

e.   Where to submit the video solution. All solutions must be submitted through the ERIS online submission portal available at DARPAConnect.us. No hard copy or physical submissions (CD/DVD/Blu Ray) will be accepted. To submit your solution, navigate to the ERIS submission portal and select "Create Submission." The ERIS submission portal is available at darpaconnect.us/ERIS.

VIII. ERIS Compliance Check and Notification Process

The ERIS internal execution team strives to provide compliance checks in a timely manner (within one (1) business day from submission date, pending submission volume) to allow submitting companies the opportunity to revise and resubmit their videos if deemed non-compliant. The scope of review of the compliance check is as follows:

1.   Review that the video submission is no longer than seven minutes (7:00) in length
2.   Review that the video can be viewed and is audible
3.   Review that any graphics/charts displayed within the video are legible
4.   Review that the video does not contain any prohibited markings
5.   Review that the video conforms to the resolution, file type, and color space requirements
6.   Review that the video contains all required submission criteria in Section VII of the ERIS announcement
7.   Review the submission form data for completeness and accuracy
8.   Review accuracy of business size and nontraditional status using SAM.gov (as applicable)
9.   Review that the effort fits within one of the ERIS topic areas
10.   Review the selected TRL for any inconsistency with the proposed solution
11.   Review that the Supplemental Slides are completed to match the format prescribed in Appendix B. of the ERIS Announcement.

Upon completion of the compliance review, those solutions which conform to the requirements of Section VII of this announcement will be placed into the queue for the next scheduled assessment. Those solutions which contain one or more deficiencies will be notified via email and asked to correct the deficiency and complete a new submission. Submissions on the final day of any monthly collection period may not receive notice prior to closing of the monthly collection, so solution providers are urged not to wait until the final day to submit solutions.

IX. ERIS Assessment Process

Solution videos submitted against this open call will be assessed in accordance with the scoring rubric included as Appendix C and rated as either "awardable" or "non awardable" for the given

assessment round. Solutions are initially assessed for feedback by a peer panel of government, industry, and academic SMEs, with final evaluations and decisions made by the Government Assessment Authority. By submitting a video solution, you authorize the video to be distributed and used for this purpose. During the assessment period, the government and/or supporting SMEs may contact submitting entities to clarify information either within the video submission or within the submission form. Non-government SME assessors will be used in the assessment of solution videos. Such assessors will be operating at the direction of the government and through signed non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). The pool of SME assessors is composed of experts from industry, academia and non-profit research institutions with programs related to DARPA's mission. In conformance with statutory and regulatory requirements for the authorities leveraged by ERIS (10 USC 4021, 10 USC 4022 and 10 USC 4023), government and non-government SME assessors will develop a written initial assessment of each submission applying the established assessment criteria, weighting, and scoring, which is included at Appendix C of this document. The recommended scoring, ratings, and comments for each video solution are presented monthly by the Peer Panel as recommendations to the designated Government Selecting Official, who is ultimately responsible for determining the awardable/non-awardable status of each solution for the rating period.

X.   Resubmissions

ERIS accepts resubmissions of non-awardable solutions at any time while the ERIS Announcement remains active. To assist in preparing resubmissions, at the conclusion of each monthly assessment, each submitting entity receives a rating scorecard along with assessor comments and suggestions for improvement of the non-awardable video submission. Additionally, the ERIS Manager, ARI, provides weekly feedback sessions to review the assessor comments with unsuccessful solution providers during ERIS office hours. The purpose of weekly feedback sessions is to develop a strategy and course of action to address weaknesses identified through the assessment process and prepare a resubmission with a higher likelihood of being assessed as awardable. It is highly recommended that solution providers participate in feedback sessions to maximize the potential for a successful resubmission. Information on office hours can be found at www.darpaconnect.us/ERIS.

An unsuccessful solution provider may resubmit a non-awardable solution in any subsequent collection period, and may continue to resubmit, if unsuccessful, in multiple collection periods while the ERIS Announcement remains active. When submitting a solution as a resubmission, it is important to identify that the submission is a resubmission. Within the solution submission workflow, select "ERIS Resubmission" under the field labeled "Submission Status." Please note that solutions which have been determined "non-compliant" and returned for some technical deficiency (over seven minutes in length; improper markings; missing content; etc.) remain a "New ERIS Submission" when corrected and submitted. "Resubmissions" are only those solutions that undergo a peer assessment and are deemed non-awardable.

XI.   Organizational Conflicts of Interest

DARPA, and ERIS manager, ARI, have identified and evaluated potential organizational conflicts of interest (OCIs) related to the activity of video solution assessment by non-government, industry and academic SMEs. A recognized potential OCI, "providing evaluation services," requires that contracts for the evaluation of offers for products or services shall not be awarded to a contractor that will evaluate its own offers for products or services, or those of a competitor, without proper safeguards to ensure objectivity to protect the government's interests (see Federal Acquisition Regulation 9.505-3). The government and marketplace manager, exercising common sense, good judgment, and sound discretion in both the decision on whether a significant potential conflict exists and, if it does, the development of an appropriate means for resolving it, have determined the following:

a.   A significant potential conflict exists as to SME assessors evaluating their own technology solutions. The government will avoid this potential OCI by excluding any requirement for assessors to evaluate their own technology solutions, or the solutions of another submitter in which the assessor holds any financial interest from their contract requirements. Further, the government will mitigate any potential OCI by prohibiting assessors to evaluate their own technology solutions, or the solutions of another submitter in which the assessor holds any financial interest and requiring assessors to delivering a statement certifying that they recognize this prohibition, including an affirmative duty to identify any such financial interests. All assessors will be required to complete government ethics training, covering this duty to identify financial interests, prior to assessing any solution submissions and will operate under NDAs to protect any information received through the assessment activity.

b.   A potential conflict exists as to SME assessors evaluating the technology solutions of a competitor. This OCI is a lesser risk due to the characteristics of the evaluation effort. Under the ERIS assessment methodology, submissions must be non-proprietary. The non-proprietary submissions are assessed against a published rubric for technical merit to determine whether they are viable solutions and thus rated "awardable" for future requirements. The assessments are performed by a minimum three-member peer panel, and the peer panel is comprised of a government, industry, and academic representative, with the Government Selecting Official responsible for all final decisions. Finally, the assessments are not evaluated against a specific requirement, but on their viability to support future needs. The characteristics of the assessment process, thus, partially mitigate the potential OCI. To fully mitigate this potential OCI, the government will monitor the consistency in scoring of all assessors to identify potential biases or inconsistent scoring. All assessors will be required to complete government ethics training, covering this duty to identify competitors, prior to assessing any solution submissions and will operate under NDAs to protect any information received through the assessment activity.

XII.   Important Information for Participants and Prospective Participants

All costs of preparing and submitting solution videos and submission forms are the responsibility of the submitting entity and not eligible for funding or reimbursement by the government.

Assessment as "awardable" and placement into ERIS does not guarantee any current or future award.

DARPA will publish a list of companies with solutions available on the marketplace on the DARPAConnect.us public website and through ERIS digital media. The list will identify company/individual name; name of solution; and associated strategic focus area. Entities that do not wish to be identified in this manner must submit a written notice to ERIS@darpa.mil.

Solution providers may submit one or multiple video submissions while this announcement remains open.

Scoring and assessor comments will be provided for both awardable and non-awardable submissions at the end of each assessment round. All submitting entities can request a feedback session to review the scoring and comments related to their solution by reserving office hours at www.darpaconnect.us/ERIS.

Feedback sessions are conducted by the ERIS Manager, ARI and the Government Agreement Officer, and are intended to assist solution providers in addressing weaknesses identified in the assessor scoring and comments for the purpose of revising any non-awardable solution, and resubmitting to a subsequent collection period. Any dispute regarding scoring or final rating may be addressed to the Government Selecting Official. ERIS does not provide names, contact information, or any other personal information of the SME assessors themselves.

Any questions related to this announcement or related ERIS matter may be sent to ERIS@darpa.mil.

More information related to ERIS can be found at: www.darpaconnect.us/ERIS.

XIII.   Data Handling / Licenses Granted

a.   Solutions videos placed within ERIS are viewable by all ".mil" government accounts and by the submitting entity or individual. The submitting entity/individual remains the owner of the video and the associated submission data and may request the video and associated submission data be removed from the www.darpaconnect.us/ERIS site at any time. By participating in the ERIS initiative, each submitting entity grants the following governmentwide, nonexclusive, fully paid up, non-assignable, non-royalty bearing licenses in both the video solution submission and the accompanying submission data:

i.   A license for the government to view, review, research, comment, and share the video solution and associated submission data within the government and to covered government support contractors for the purposes of performing assessments of the solution; performing market research; supporting requirements development; considering/planning for procurement; negotiating for award; and making an award of the solution at any time while the video solution and associated submission data remain active within ERIS.

ii.   A license for the government to view, review, research, and share the video solution and associated submission data within the government and to covered government support contractors, whether assessed as awardable or non-awardable, for the purposes of improving/revising the submission, assessment, and/or selection processes, submission criteria, scoring criteria, or user interface/user experience, in perpetuity.

iii.   A license for the government and its covered government support contractors to transcribe the video for the purposes of improving the search functionality of the marketplace, to address accessibility requirements, to support marketing of the solution for potential award, to support government reporting, performing market research, and supporting requirements development. The entity/individual grants and the government retains a perpetual license in the transcription data itself for the purpose identified within this paragraph.

iv.   A license for the government and its covered government support contractors to use the video solutions and associated submission data for government training purposes including training in the planning, implementation, execution, and administration of the ERIS model, ERIS processes, ERIS assessment criteria and scoring, ERIS research, conducting feedback sessions, award of ERIS solutions, and other such related government training.