

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) STTR Quick-Start Guide

This quick-start guide has been designed to get you started with a USDA STTR proposal package.

The current solicitation for USDA can be found at this [link](#). This provides a general idea of all of the requirements necessary to complete a USDA proposal package and what USDA is interested in funding under their SBIR solicitation. A [separate webpage](#) has been setup by USDA to outline all of their topic areas of interest, where they provide background information, points of contact, and anticipated innovations.

For USDA, you will need the following registrations. It is important that you complete these registrations as soon as possible, as some can take up to 14 days to issue, and not having these in place can impact your ability to submit a proposal. Please reach out to the NM FAST team if you need assistance with any of these registrations. Additionally, the New Mexico APEX Accelerator can assist you in the SAM registration processes, including securing a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). You can contact one of their offices to receive one-on-one help. A list of NM PTAC offices can be found at the bottom of their [Contact Us](#) page.

1. **SAM:** The System for Award Management, or SAM, is the first registration to complete in terms of priority. There are a few steps to getting your SAM registration in place. The first one is that you must create a Login.gov account, which you will be prompted to do when you click the registration link below. If you have never registered your business, you will also create a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) during this process; if you have already registered with the government, you will be able to transition your DUNS into a UEI, or it is already available to you in a SAM registration. While the digital portion of this registration can take up to an hour, as it requires quite a few markers for your business, including your foundation date, points of contact (which can all be the same person), and your ACH banking information, the information you input will go through a series of government checks. It is not unheard for it to be a four to six week process. Please plan accordingly. <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>. The following video walks you through this process: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uv1YNAslNk>
2. **SBC Control ID:** This registration is required by the Small Business Administration (SBA), which coordinates the SBIR/STTR programs. You have to have your UEI, at minimum, to complete this registration. <https://www.sbir.gov/registration>
3. **Grants.gov:** This is the submission site for USDA along with a number of other agencies. You must have your UEI and SAM registrations completed. <https://www.grants.gov>

Though USDA does not require an Executive Summary to be submitted for idea validation, it is a good idea to reach out to a cognizant Program Manager for idea validation before starting your proposal narrative. When performing a topic match, NM FAST staff can put you in touch with the most relevant USDA Program Manager to discuss the fit of your innovative idea.

The following are some action items and next steps for you to complete as you start your SBIR package.

1. **Budget** – Phase I awards fund up to \$125,000 for impact driven topics or \$175,000 for innovation driven topics over a period of 12 months for a feasibility study. The feasibility study will typically include researching the proposed methodology, laboratory testing and environment replication if necessary, and any other markers to verify that your idea has merit for prototype production (Phase II). As you know the tentative scope of the work and the budget threshold, it is a good idea to start

formulating some costs and making decisions on materials and equipment needs (if available). Technical and Business Assistance (TABA) funds up to \$6,500 can be applied to the award ceiling.

2. **Collaboration** – If you are working with any other entities for a consultancy or subcontract to the project, it is a good idea to start formulating a work plan and action items for that relationship. This can also shape the budget for that line item.
3. **Required Forms** – Though we will send you a compliance matrix that lays out all of the necessary formatting requirements, sections, and content for your proposal, it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the information that needs to populate those sections, as well as begin any necessary research.
 - a. **Project Summary/Abstract** – This is a one-page PDF that contains a description of the problem or opportunity, project objectives, and a description of the effort. You must also provide an additional paragraph that discusses the anticipated results and potential commercial applications of the proposed research. Do not include any proprietary information in this document. (Further explanation of these requirements can be found in the solicitation document)
 - b. **Letters of Support** – There is a spot in the SF 424 Application to upload general letters of support from potential end-users of the technology or from individuals/organizations that want to express support for the application. Though not mandatory, providing letter of support can greatly increase the strength of your proposal. As it may take some organizations weeks to get a letter of support signed, you will want to start on these as soon as possible to have them ready by submission deadline.
 - c. **Biographical Sketch** – You will need a Biographical Sketch for the PD as well as any co-PDs. USDA does not have a standard format or template to follow for this Sketch, but you will need to include Education and Training, Research and Professional Experience, Collaborators and Affiliations (for conflicts of interest), Publications and Synergistic Activities. Each Sketch should be a single file and is limited to two pages. You will also need to fill out a [Conflict of Interest](#) and [Current & Pending Support](#) for each person.

The forms and items referenced above are simple to generate even if you only have a vague idea of what you would like to accomplish. Once you have a concrete idea of your path forward, the bulk of the writing will be done in other sections.

The NM FAST team has a suite of resources (e.g. YouTube instructional videos, check-lists, compliance matrices, etc.) available for use in proposal creation. Please reach out to Dana Catron (dderego@nmsu.edu) for more information.