

| Number | SON Topic | Question | Category | Answer |
|--------|--|---|----------------|---|
| 1 | Topic 1: Secure Processor Development | Is there a primary target platform class in mind (e.g., attritable UAS, PGMs, ground systems), or is platform agnosticism a stated objective? | Technical | While a specific target platform class is currently undefined, the objective is to develop a modular solution that is relevant and adaptable across a wide variety of systems. |
| 2 | Topic 1: Secure Processor Development | Regarding the side-channel and physical attack resistance requirements, is the primary concern non-invasive collection against a fielded system, laboratory-level exploitation of a recovered asset, or is the solution expected to address both? | Technical | Although solutions addressing only one type of exploitation will still be considered, preference will be given to approaches designed to mitigate both non-invasive field collection and laboratory-level exploitation of recovered assets. |
| 3 | N/A | (1) Is there a maximum period of performance (PoP), specifically for Topics 1 and 4? (2) Should proposers define their own proposed PoP based on technical approach? (3) Are there any government preferences regarding PoP duration (e.g., 12 months, 18 months, 24 months)? | Administrative | 1) 24 Months, 2) Yes, No greater than 36 months, 3) Yes, 24 months is ideal. If more time is required, suggest using pre priced options/phases. |
| 4 | Topic 3: Industrial Forge Quenching Capacity Improvement | For Topic 3, must proposed operational validation occur at a specifically identified forge facility at the time of Solution Paper submission, or is it acceptable to propose validation within existing domestic industrial partner environments that will be finalized during award negotiations? | Technical | The topic encourages teaming arrangements and solutions that expand operations in heavy industrial infrastructure. Forge facility identification prior to proposal submission is flexible. Partner sites do not need to be locked in at submission and can be finalized during award negotiations. |
| 5 | Topic 3: Industrial Forge Quenching Capacity Improvement | For Topic 3, does the Government consider modernization of existing industrial oil quench infrastructure through integration of advanced conditioning, instrumentation, controls, and process validation technologies to satisfy the "advanced quenching infrastructure" requirement, or is the intent limited to entirely new physical quench tank construction or expansion? | Technical | Yes, upgrading existing infrastructure would satisfy the topic. The topic requests proposals that "design, upgrade, and validate improved industrial forge quenching capacity". If the term "upgrade" and "modernization" can be seen as synonyms, this topic would consider "modernization" as a valid approach to meet the advanced quenching infrastructure requirement. |
| 6 | Topic 3: Industrial Forge Quenching Capacity Improvement | For Topic 3, should "significantly increase throughput" be interpreted solely as additional physical quench tank capacity, or may measurable increases in effective throughput through improved process stability, reduced downtime, defect reduction, and cycle consistency also satisfy the requirement? | Technical | No, the "significantly increase throughput" line within the topic should not be interpreted solely as additional physical quench tank capacity. The topic does not specifically define "throughput"; acceptable improvement should include but are not limited to: better process stability, reduced downtime, lower defect rates, etc. |
| 7 | Topic 3: Industrial Forge Quenching Capacity Improvement | For Topic 3, does the Government have minimum forged component size, alloy class, or thermal load assumptions that should be used when sizing prototype relevance (e.g., naval forgings, titanium, ultra-large steel forgings)? | Technical | Validation and testing outputs are not clearly outlined within the topic. The proposals will need to provide their own metrics to prove structural consistency and fracture resilience according to required specifications provided by the DoW. |
| 8 | Topic 3: Industrial Forge Quenching Capacity Improvement | Does the Government expect specific metallurgical validation outputs for Topic 3 (e.g., hardness profiles, distortion measurements, microstructure analysis, crack reduction metrics), or may offerors propose validation metrics aligned to their technical approach? | Technical | Validation and testing outputs are not clearly outlined within the topic. The proposals will need to provide their own metrics to prove structural consistency and fracture resilience according to required specifications provided by the DoW. |
| 9 | Topic 3: Industrial Forge Quenching Capacity Improvement | For Topic 3, is the Government primarily seeking operational demonstration of a scalable modernization prototype, or should the Solution Paper propose immediate production-capable deployment infrastructure? | Technical | The topic's focus is a proven, scalable prototype. |
| 10 | Topic 3: Industrial Forge Quenching Capacity Improvement | Does the Government prefer fixed-site infrastructure upgrades for Topic 3, or are modular/deployable modernization architectures that can be replicated across multiple domestic forge environments considered responsive? | Technical | The topic does not align itself with either a scalable or fixed solution as the sole answer. However, the topic notes that greater evaluation preference will be granted to those proposals that offer a scalable solution. |
| 11 | Topic 3: Industrial Forge Quenching Capacity Improvement | For Topic 3 prototype efforts that integrate pre-existing privately developed industrial technologies, what level of Government technical data rights is expected for foundational pre-existing IP versus Government-funded integration artifacts? | Technical | Limited Rights (Technical Data) / Restricted Rights (Software) should be considered the floor for this topic with end goal to pursue Government Purpose Rights (GPR) i.Limited/Restricted: Applies to technology developed exclusively at private expense. The government is restricted from disclosing this data outside the government, with exceptions. ii.GPR: Allows the government to use data for government purposes only (e.g., competitive procurement) but prohibits commercial use by third parties. |
| 12 | N/A | In the RFS-DIBC-RFS-26-01 document, Section 3.1 states we should include rough order of magnitude (ROM) costs in our Technical Volume. However, the Cost/Pricing Volume (section 3.2) and Attachment 6 seem to indicate that firm pricing is being requested. Can you please clarify if we should include ROM or Firm pricing with our submission? | Administrative | Please include an overview of the cost in the technical volume and a complete cost proposal in accordance with section 3.2 and Attachment 6. |
| 13 | N/A | In Attachment 3 in the Technical Data Rights Appendix, it states "not included in page count"; however, there is no indication elsewhere stating that any part of our response is limited to page count restrictions. Can you please clarify if any part of our response is bound to a page count limitation, or any other formatting requirements? | Administrative | There is no page limit at this time |
| 14 | N/A | Member is requesting an extension until June 5. A two-week turn is very challenging considering bidders need to obtain NDAs, teaming agreements, and pricing. | Administrative | An extension has been granted to May 28th. Please see RFS DIBC-RFS-26-01_Amendment 01. |
| 15 | N/A | Could you please confirm the target/maximum number of pages the submission should be? And whether any supporting letters/attachments count toward that target/max page limit? | Administrative | There is no page limit at this time |
| 16 | N/A | Can you point me toward any resources that explain in greater detail the expectations for Section 4 of Attachment 3 Solution Paper Template (see image below)? I want to ensure our response is comprehensive. SECTION 4: INTEGRATED MASTER SCHEDULE (IMS) <small>The Member must provide an image of the IMS for the project that should be resource loaded with each task including a predecessor (if applicable).</small> | Administrative | IMS - Integrated Master Schedule showing project milestones, PoP, timeline of major events, major deliverables, demonstrations, reviews, etc... with linkages on predecessors (dependent tasks). |
| 17 | Topic 2: Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing | Topic 2 references prototype solutions to establish or enhance domestic manufacturing capabilities for high performance rare earth permanent magnets and states that proposed efforts may use virgin material sources or recycled materials. Would a prototype process focused on upgrading or valorizing recovered NdFeB magnet powder into a higher-value, reusable feedstock for downstream domestic magnet manufacturing be considered responsive, even if the performer is not proposing to manufacture finished magnets as the final deliverable? | Technical | Technical approaches should highlight advanced sintered manufacturing processes, heavy rare earth (HRE) separation capabilities (specifically isolating Dysprosium and Terbium), or the use of Grain Boundary Diffusion (GBD) technology to maximize high-temperature performance while reducing overall reliance on scarce HREs. Any technical approach addressing one or more of the above topic area would be considered. |
| 18 | Topic 2: Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing | Topic 2 references advanced sintered manufacturing processes and Grain Boundary Diffusion technology. Would a proposed prototype that conditions, stabilizes, or surface-modifies recovered NdFeB powder to improve its suitability for downstream advanced sintering or grain-boundary-engineered magnet manufacturing be considered within scope? | Technical | Any technical approach that advances the topic area would be considered. |
| 19 | Topic 2: Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing | Does the Government require the proposed solution to demonstrate finished magnet production during the initial prototype effort, or may the prototype deliverable be a validated intermediate manufacturing capability, such as a domestic powder conditioning, treatment, or feedstock upgrading module that supports a secure mine-to-magnet or recycle-to-magnet supply chain? | Technical | Technical approaches should highlight advanced sintered manufacturing processes, heavy rare earth (HRE) separation capabilities (specifically isolating Dysprosium and Terbium), or the use of Grain Boundary Diffusion (GBD) technology to maximize high-temperature performance while reducing overall reliance on scarce HREs. Any technical approach addressing one or more of the above topic area would be considered. |
| 20 | Topic 2: Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing | For Topic 2, if a proposed advanced manufacturing process for recovered rare earth magnet materials has not yet been demonstrated by the performer, but is supported by relevant published research, analogous process experience, existing platform capabilities, and a clear prototype test plan, would that be acceptable for an initial RDT&E prototype effort, provided the Solution Paper clearly identifies current TRU/MRL, technical risks, success metrics, and decision-point milestones? | Technical | A project with early TRU/MRL levels may be considered acceptable if the proposed idea ends with prototype TRU/MRLs. Documenting the additional challenges of taking a process not previously demonstrated by the offeror and how the offeror will overcome those challenges will enhance the response. |
| 21 | Topic 2: Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing | For recycled rare earth magnet materials, what level of downstream validation is expected for an intermediate feedstock-focused prototype? For example, would powder characterization, phase/composition analysis, contamination reduction, flowability, oxygen/moisture control, and compatibility with downstream sintering processes be sufficient, or is finished magnet performance testing expected? | Technical | For an intermediate feedstock, the offeror would need to show how their proposed product would meet the requirements of their product's downstream customers. This would include meeting the end user's specifications, testing and qualification requirements which should be discussed accordingly. |
| 22 | Topic 2: Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing | Topic 2 emphasizes bypassing foreign entities of concern. For a recycled-materials approach, should offerors focus primarily on the domestic sourcing and processing of recovered magnet feedstocks, or must the proposal also address downstream magnet manufacturing partners and end-use qualification pathways? | Technical | A project should avoid foreign entities of concern. Offerors should show how they will acquire incoming materials from non-entities of concern and how there products will flow to the downstream marketplace and endstream qualification. |
| 23 | Topic 2: Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing | Would a controlled-atmosphere thermal processing prototype for recovered NdFeB powder be considered an "advanced manufacturing process" under Topic 2 if the effort demonstrates improved feedstock quality, reduced waste, and a pathway to domestic reuse in rare earth magnet manufacturing? | Technical | Technical approaches should highlight advanced sintered manufacturing processes, heavy rare earth (HRE) separation capabilities (specifically isolating Dysprosium and Terbium), or the use of Grain Boundary Diffusion (GBD) technology to maximize high-temperature performance while reducing overall reliance on scarce HREs. Any technical approach addressing one or more of the above topic area would be considered. The topic preparation team are not including or excluding potential processes at this phase. |

| | | | | |
|----|--|--|----------------|---|
| 24 | Topic 2: Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing | If a performer proposes an initial prototype phase focused on recovered powder upgrading, is it acceptable to include later ROM phases for downstream sintering validation, magnet qualification, and integration with domestic magnet manufacturers? | Technical | Funding Limitation: Up to \$2,500,000 (RD&E). The Government intends to make a single award no greater than the funding limitation. If the offeror's proposed project has future post prototype development phases, future phase ROMs can be included as unfunded options for future planning purposes. However there is no intention to add funding to this award. |
| 25 | N/A | For data rights, if the proposed effort uses a privately developed processing platform and background know-how, should the Solution Paper distinguish between background IP developed at private expense and technical data or process improvements developed under the prototype agreement? | Administrative | Yes, The paper with accompanying data assertions should specify applicable rights. |
| 27 | N/A | Regarding the recent DIBC-RFS-26-01 solicitation, can you provide the period of performance that should be proposed for the given funding limitations? Are they the same for each topic area? | Administrative | No greater than 36 months. 24 months is ideal. If more time is required, suggest using pre priced options/phases. |
| 28 | N/A | Can DIBC please clarify the formatting requirements applicable to the Solution Paper submission, including: 1. Required or preferred font type and minimum font size; 2. Margin requirements; 3. Whether tables, figures, graphics, and embedded images count toward any applicable page limitation; and Whether page limits, if applicable, are based on physical pages or equivalent electronic pages/PDF pages. | Administrative | No required format. No page limitation. |
| 29 | N/A | Regarding Attachment 3 (Solution Paper Template), the Technical Data Rights Appendix states that it is "NOT INCLUDED IN PAGE COUNT." However, we were unable to identify an overall Solution Paper page limitation within the provided solicitation materials. Can DIBC please confirm: 1. The maximum allowable page count for the Solution Paper submission; 2. Whether the page count applies only to Section 1 (Technical) or to all narrative sections; 3. Which attachments or appendices, if any, are excluded from the page count (e.g., IMS, Cost Volume, Technical Data Rights Appendix). | Administrative | There is no page limit at this time |
| 30 | N/A | Is firm fixed pricing required with Solution Papers submitted under the subject RFS, or is (Rough Order Magnitude) ROM pricing acceptable? Past submittals under DIBC Unsolicited Project Pathways (UPP) opportunities requested ROM pricing with initial white paper and quad chart proposals. | Administrative | Please include an overview of the cost in the technical volume and a complete cost proposal in accordance with section 3.2 and Attachment 6. FFP awards are anticipated. |
| 31 | N/A | Is cost share or participation of a non-traditional defense contractor REQUIRED as part of proposed solutions? Or, is that typical OTA requirement not applicable for this RFS? | Administrative | Yes. The agreement will be awarded under the authority and IAW 10 USC 4022. |
| 32 | Topic 1: Secure Processor Development | We have licensed an AI agentic tool from a company that is formed by US citizens, but based in India, which uses US based AI models. They have proven their tool using Skywater's 130 nm process node. We have modified the tool for our purposes and will use Skywater's 90 nm FDSOI process. So the tool and flow is custom, the company has no access to it and we own the modified version. Will this effect our bid for the project and is this okay | Technical | The offeror should refer to the DIBC RFS documents for guidance on this question. |