

University Leadership Initiative (ULI)
(Solicitation: NNH18ZEA001N-ULI)
Questions and Answers

Updated: 4 March 2019

Q51. When will NASA announce the ULI selections?

A51: The plan is for NASA to announce the selection decision sometime this month (March).

Q50. In the ROA-2018 the instruction is to not include “Totalbudget.pdf” in the overall proposal pdf but to attach it separately. The NSPIRES portal only offers one attachment option for the ULI Step-B proposal as a whole. How should I submit the “Totalbudget.pdf” for the ULI Step-B proposal?

A50: Please submit the Total Budget and Budget Justification along with the Step-B proposal in one pdf file.

Q49. Is a budget justification required for the Step-B proposal?

A49: Yes, a budget justification is required for the Step-B proposal.

Q48. Do you have a template for conflict of interest information needed for the Step-B proposal?

A48: A conflict of interest information is only required from proposal reviewers (see ROA, page 21). It is not required from ULI proposers.

Q47. Can we submit a Step-B proposal with a different budget than the budget we submitted with our Step-A proposal?

A47: Yes, see solicitation page 13. “Step-A proposals do not need to submit a Detailed Budget, but proposers are requested to provide an estimated yearly and total budget in the Cover Page Elements of the proposal. This estimate will not be considered in the Step-A evaluation process. NASA will use this estimate to anticipate funding needs across the ULI portfolio. The estimate is not binding and proposers may request a different amount on Step-B proposals.”

Q46. Is it possible to submit letters of support from other organizations who are not involved as PI or co-I, but are partners or collaborators?

A46: Yes, you can submit letters of support from partners and collaborators.

Q45. Does the list of cited references count against the 25-page limit?

A45: If you keep the references separate, they will not count against the page limit.

Q44. Can you tell us the number of Step-A proposals that were submitted for this (NNH18ZEA001N-ULI) solicitation?

A44: At the completion of the ULI solicitation, i.e., awards are announced, NASA will be happy to provide this information.

Q43. Should we include a HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) in our Step-B proposal?

A43: All Step-B proposals will be evaluated with respect to the criteria specified in the solicitation. NASA cannot provide any additional information beyond what is in the solicitation.

Q42. I am concerned about presenting our unique ideas in the ULI Industry Networking Opportunity since that would be available to other competitors in the Step-B stage. Do you have plans to prevent this from occurring?

A42: We understand the issue and our Telecom/Videocon people assure us that we can separate our presenters so that only the team presenting will be connected at that time. There is also a transition time between presentations to ensure this separation between teams.

Q41. Can we propose a three-year Step-B effort with an option for a fourth year?

A41: Your proposal will be evaluated by a NASA review panel based on the evaluation criteria. Please keep in mind how the reviewers will respond to such a proposal. See also A40.

Q40. Can you provide any guidance as to whether we should propose as a 3- or 4-year effort in Step-B?

A40: The solicitation states NASA will nominally have one 4-year and two 3-year awards. The actual number, value, duration, and topic of the awards will depend on the quality of the proposals received, the scope of the proposed work, funding availability, and program needs. NASA cannot provide any additional information beyond what is in the solicitation.

Q39. When will the selection announcement from Step-A to Step-B occur?

A39: NASA announced Step-A selections and non-selections on July 19th.

Q38: It seems the Budget element automatically shows "not required" and does not allow entering any information. Exactly in which Cover Page element, can we enter the estimated yearly and total budget?

A38: Since the Step-A budget form is not available for NSPIRES entry, please add an extra page with the yearly and total budgets in your submission. This page will not count against the 5-page limit for the Scientific/Technical/Management section and the budget estimates will not be considered in the Step-A evaluation process.

Q37: Many of the items requested in the 5-page Scientific/Technical/Management section of the Step-A proposal are consistent with a typical cover page (e.g., title of proposal, PI, list of co-I's). To be clear, this content should be provided in the S/T/M section (i.e., part of the 5-page limit) as indicated in the solicitation and not as a separate title page, which would not count towards the page limit?

A37: The bulleted list of items requested in the solicitation under "Step-A Proposal Format and Contents" should be included in the 5-page Scientific/Technical/Management section. This includes the title of proposed task, name and organization of the Principal Investigator, and list of partners known to date.

Q36: Can other than NASA collaborators be mentioned by name in the proposal?

A36: Yes, you can mention non-NASA collaborators by name in the proposal.

Q35: What is the distinction between a partner and a collaborator?

A35: A collaborator cannot receive NASA funds while a partner can receive NASA funds.

Q34: For Topic 7, is there any more information available similar to the near-term, mid-term and far-term outcomes documented in the Strategic Implementation Plan?

A34: The information in the ULI solicitation and in the Strategic Implementation Plan is all the available outcome information for Topic 7.

Q33: The answer to Q25 makes it clear that non-NASA government agencies cannot participate in ULI as a team member. Are there any other limitations on collaborating with other government agencies? At which stage of the proposal process or performance period can such collaborations be initiated? Can ULI preproposals and proposals outline potential plans for collaborations with other agencies if they state that the agencies would not be team members?

A33: A government agency is ineligible to participate in ULI as a team member, and as a result, a government agency partner may not receive funds from the NASA award. As per D.4.3.2, collaboration with other U.S. government agencies is encouraged. However, any proposed collaboration with a government agency must conform to the solicitation's instructions. Focused but unfunded collaboration under ULI may take many different forms. Some examples may include, but are not limited to: technology convergence, where an idea previously developed for a different government agency is utilized for NASA aeronautics in a novel way; a partnership where the government agency that will eventually utilize the proposed concept works with the ULI team to ensure this possibility; and use of a government agency partner's facilities, equipment, or research capabilities.

The solicitation does not require that collaborations be initiated at a specific stage. Proposers may describe potential plans for

collaboration with government agencies in their Step-A or Step-B ULI proposals. See the NASA's 2018 NRA or Cooperative Agreement Notice Proposer's Guidebook for further information at <https://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/nraguidebook/>.

Q32: Topic 7 specified two outcomes. Do we have to address both outcomes or can we just address one of them?

A32: There is no requirement to address both outcomes. Please feel free to address either outcome in Topic 7 and not necessarily both.

Q31: We are proposing [a specific concept]. Has this research area already been taken care of by NASA?

A31: Please refer to the List of ARMD Technical Challenges in Section D.4.3.6 of the ULI solicitation to determine whether your proposed technical challenge and research is sufficiently different from the listed NASA work. The ULI Technical POC is available to clarify the solicitation material (i.e. provide answers to clarification questions), but does not provide feedback on any ideas.

Q30: Can you please provide an example of a "new product line"?

A30: UAS Traffic Management or UTM is an example of a new product line. Previously, there was no established infrastructure to enable and safely manage the widespread use of low-altitude airspace and UAS operations. NASA started working on a UTM system concept and operations, which is now accepted broadly both in the USA and in other parts of the world.

Q29: When does the blackout period begin?

A29: The blackout period began with the release of the solicitation on March 21, 2018.

Q28: Are you allowed to have conversations with NASA lab people or is there a blackout period?

A28: The blackout period began with the release of the solicitation on March 21, 2018. Communications with NASA facility POCs are permitted during the solicitation blackout period solely for the purpose

of obtaining information concerning facility capability, availability, and costs for the proposed tests.

Q27: Can you give some clarification on how proposed projects should relate to, but be different from technical challenge presently of interest to NASA?

A27: There is no requirement that proposed ULI projects be related to current NASA projects. In ULI, NASA is looking to introduce independent research paths toward achieving the NASA Aeronautics strategic outcomes. To support this goal, as well as avoid duplication of effort, proposers are encouraged to develop different technical challenges than those currently pursued by NASA Aeronautics and its research partners. The technical challenges may correspond to the research themes provided in the Strategic Plan or may address different themes the proposer deems necessary to accomplish the outcome. Please refer to the List of ARMD Technical Challenges in Section D.4.3.6 to determine whether your proposed technical challenge and research is sufficiently different from the listed NASA work.

Q26: While not one of ARMD's focus areas, is research in Hypersonics also of interest to this NRA?

A26: Yes, proposals in hypersonic systems are eligible for this NRA.

Q25: Can we have team members from non-NASA agencies, e.g. Department of the Interior or one of the bureaus?

A25: Other government agencies are not eligible to participate as team members. However, collaboration with other U.S. government agencies that adds value towards the research and development of the innovative concepts, while preserving the university leadership aspect of this initiative, is encouraged.

Q24: What was the success rate of previous ULI? Among the proposals that are invited to the second stage.... what is the % of the awarded ones?

A24: Approximately 25% of the proposers in Step-A were invited to submit a Step-B proposal. Ultimately, five awards were made, which represented approximately 6% of the total proposals received, and

these were based on budget decisions as NASA had received many good proposals.

Q23: What is the anticipated start date of these new projects?

A23: NASA anticipates that January 2019 will be the start of Period of Performance for the ULI awards.

Q22: How important is the educational aspect?

A22: Promoting education of the next generation of engineers is part of the Innovative Teaming and Education evaluation criterion. Innovative Teaming and Education is weighted at 20% in both Step-A and Step-B proposal reviews.

Q21: Will you start a new list of interested persons on the ULI website?

A21: NASA made a decision to continue the list of interested partners from 2016. We are considering adding a column to indicate interested partners signing up in 2018 (or showing interest once again in 2018).

Q20: Are there any expectations on the number of institutions participating, i.e. increasing this number is considered a positive?

A20: There is no requirement or expectation for a specific number of participating institutions, and the number of participating institutions is not part of the evaluation criteria. However, each contributor should have a meaningful role. Diverse partnerships are expected to bring a wealth of talent and different perspectives that can contribute to novel, innovative approaches. These benefits notwithstanding, proposers should not add members solely for the purpose of lengthening their partnership list.

Q19: Can we include a list of references? Does the 5-page limit include the list of references?

A19: You may include a list of references and it does not count against the 5-page Scientific/Technical/Management section limit in Step-A proposals.

Q18: Is it possible to include NASA personnel on peer review panel (as well as non-NASA folks)?

A18: Proposers do have broad leeway to select external reviewers they believe will add value to their research efforts. However, to promote independence from NASA research activities and minimize NASA's role in technical oversight, proposers are discouraged from using current NASA employees on their review panels.

Q17: I got the impression that the proposal can only be in one Thrust area, so NASA is not looking for a proposal that covers two to three thrust areas? A proposal that covers multiple thrusts may be at a disadvantage during the evaluation.

A17: The technical challenge and research product may be able to meet outcomes in more than one strategic thrust and proposals may note compatibility with multiple thrusts. However, proposers must explicitly connect their research products to specific outcomes in a single thrust. The evaluation criteria are in section D.4.3.5 of the NRA.

Q16: Are letters of support appropriate for the Step-A proposals?

A16: NASA does not require letters of support for Step-A proposals. However, the NSPIRES system will accept Letters of Commitment for Step-A proposals.

Q15: Can we accept "in kind" use of NASA facilities?

A15: The NRA allows you to propose the use of NASA facilities. If you are referring to the use of "in kind" facilities as an example of providing cost sharing, use of NASA facilities will not count towards cost sharing.

Q14: Are projects including work subject to ITAR/EAR permissible under this NRA?

A14: Yes, work subject to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) are permitted. Please indicate in your proposal the information that is subject to the provisions of ITAR/EAR.

Q13: What kind of TRL level is expected here? Could you elaborate further on the TRL research you expect to be developed?

A13: The solicitation does not specify a Technology Readiness Level (TRL). Feel free to be guided by the NASA Aeronautics Strategic Implementation Plan and the ULI NRA solicited research requirements.

Q12: What is the full content of Step-A proposal? Is it the same as full proposal except 5 pages instead of 25 for S/T/M section?

A12: The full content of Step-A and Step-B proposals are described in section D.4.3.4 of the ULI NRA. The specific requirements for Step-A proposals are a subset of the requirements for a Step-B proposal. Please note that the Scientific/Technical/Management section of a Step-B proposal may not exceed 25-pages.

Q11: I am currently serving as a co-PI (Principal Investigator) in a ULI project. Can I serve as a PI or a co-PI in a new ULI proposal?

A11: Yes, an existing ULI investigator can propose as a Principal Investigator or be a team member in a proposal to this ULI (NNH18ZEA001N-ULI).

Q10: For domestic small businesses on a ULI team, will NASA be willing to allow the small business to retain rights to subject inventions?

A10: As per the ROA-2018 section II (d), domestic small businesses and nonprofits (including educational institutions) may elect to retain title to their subject inventions.

Q9. When will Step A proposal results be announced?

A9: It will be based on the number and quality of proposals received. Tentatively, NASA anticipates that Step-A results may be available in June.

Q8: Will you release a recording and/or transcript of the Applicants Workshop briefing on a web page?

A8: The workshop charts and video recording are available at ULI site: <https://nari.arc.nasa.gov/uli>. These are also available via links from the NNH18ZEA001N-ULI webpage in NSPIRES.

Q7: We are building a team for the NASA ULI program and have a company that is interested in joining. However, they are concerned that the cooperative agreement will not allow profit. Can a team member receive a subcontract from the leading institution with profit?

A7: As noted in the solicitation, NASA anticipates using cooperative agreements as the funding vehicle. Cooperative agreements do not restrict lead organizations from including a subcontractor on a for-profit basis. This is at the discretion of the lead organization.

Q6: Can a foreign company be used as vendor? We have a special product that only the foreign company can make. If they have an office in US but its headquarters is in Europe, is that company still considered a foreign entity?

A6: As per section D.4.3.2, foreign collaboration is not permitted for this solicitation. However, the direct purchase of supplies and/or services, which do not constitute research, from non-U.S. sources with NASA-awarded funds is permitted. The fact-specific circumstance presented may involve a legal question for which we are unable to provide advice.

Q5: If a principal researcher on a team changes institutions between the Step A and Step B proposal stages, are they allowed to remain as part of the team, or is it rigidly connected to the affiliated university?

A5: Yes, a principal researcher who changes institutions between the Step A and Step B proposal stages may remain as part of the team. Any changes in roles or institutions must be updated in the proposal. Please list the institution that is current at the time the proposal is submitted.

Q4: Can a non-US citizen, studying/working at a university, be included on the team?

A4: Generally yes, the eligibility requirements of the NRA apply to the proposing organization and not the individual. However, it is possible that U.S. export control requirements must be taken into account for members of a proposing organization who are not U.S. citizens or do not have permanent resident status.

Q3: Does NASA ULI program allow a FFRDC to participate as a team member?

A3: Yes, ROA-2018 allows Federally-Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDC) to participate as team members.

Q2: Are researchers allowed to be members of multiple teams with different lead institutions?

A2: Yes. The researchers must be identified as team members in each proposal they participate in.

Q1: Can the same institution be the lead institution for separate proposals responding to different ULI topics?

A1: Yes.