

DE-FOA-0001635: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON POTENTIAL TECHNICAL FOCUS AREAS FOR ADVANCED MANUFACTURING- RELATED TRAINEESHIPS

DATE: August 17th, 2016
CLOSING DATE: November 10, 2016 (5PM ET)
SUBJECT: Request for Information (RFI)

Description

The Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE), on behalf of its Advanced Manufacturing Office (AMO) seeks feedback from public and private sector stakeholders on technical focus areas for graduate-level traineeship programs.

Background

The Department of Energy (DOE) funds university-led traineeship programs that strategically address workforce training needs in key technical focus areas.^{1,2} The following objectives guide DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) Advanced Manufacturing Office's (AMO) traineeship efforts:

- Advance the DOE mission relative to advanced manufacturing – DOE funded Traineeship Programs are designed and implemented to advance specific Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) workforce competencies required for the DOE's unique mission to ensure America's security and prosperity by addressing its science, energy, and environmental challenges.^{3,4}
- Address priority STEM workforce needs and identified gaps – DOE funded Traineeship Programs focus on advancing those critical STEM disciplines and competencies specifically relevant to the EERE and AMO missions where other U.S. Government or academic workforce development programs either do not exist or where DOE-relevant applications are not being leveraged to support specific DOE mission responsibilities.

¹ <https://eere-exchange.energy.gov/FileContent.aspx?FileID=8a05240f-7319-4633-9893-7684c606df43>

² https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/PCAST/amp20_report_final.pdf

³ http://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/04/f14/2014_dept_energy_strategic_plan.pdf

⁴ http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2015/12/f27/EERE_Strategic_Plan_12.16.15.pdf

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only. EERE will not pay for information provided under this RFI and no project will be supported as a result of this RFI. This RFI is not accepting applications for financial assistance or financial incentives. EERE may or may not issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) based on consideration of the input received from this RFI.

In July 2015, EERE released a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) to address emerging needs in graduate training enabling preparedness for the field of advanced Power Electronics Engineering careers beyond those in academia.⁵ As a result, EERE made two competitively-selected awards supporting five-year graduate-level programs in Power Electronics Engineering⁶, leveraging existing DOE assets including the wide band gap National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI) Institute, PowerAmerica.

Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to solicit feedback from industry, academia, research laboratories, government agencies, and other stakeholders on issues related to future EERE-funded and AMO-funded graduate-level Traineeships. EERE is specifically interested in information on potential technical focus areas for Traineeships (e.g. similar to the previously funded focus area of Power Electronics Engineering) where there are identified needs and/or gaps in the expected knowledge workforce relative to advanced manufacturing technical topics. Example types of information categories and questions are described below in this RFI. This is solely a request for information and not a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA). EERE is not accepting applications.

Request for Information Categories and Questions

1. Technical Focus Areas for EERE-funded Traineeships

EERE is seeking input on potential technical focus areas for EERE-funded graduate-level (masters and PhD) Traineeships. Per Department guidance, Traineeships must adhere to the following principles:

1. Traineeships must be university-led, targeted training opportunities.
2. Traineeships must not duplicate the efforts of other Federal agencies and should, to the extent possible, leverage DOE assets and capabilities where beneficial and practicable.
3. Traineeships must be graduate-level (masters or PhD) programs.
4. The STEM training areas to be addressed must be derived from an evidence-based assessment of the DOE and private sector workforce needs (In this specific case, technical focus areas should also relate to Advanced Manufacturing in the Department of Energy).

⁵ See footnote 1.

⁶ <http://energy.gov/eere/articles/energy-department-awards-6-million-universities-tennessee-and-virginia-advance-masters>

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5. The relevant Sponsoring DOE Program Office (the Advanced Manufacturing Office) must follow best practices for open, competitive solicitation processes, including rigorous external peer review using established merit review criteria.
6. The relevant Sponsoring DOE Program Offices (the Advanced Manufacturing Office) must develop rigorous evaluation plans for Traineeship programs that will include clear program goals.

In crafting responses, submitters should observe the following guidelines:

- Suggested technical focus areas must be supported by identified and documented analyses, examinations, studies, etc., of critical workforce gaps in the focus area. Responses to the RFI should include direct links to the cited references.
- Recommendations should broadly relate to DOE framing documents, including the 2015 Quadrennial Technology Review,⁷ and DOE and EERE Strategic Plans.⁸ Technical focus areas do not have to be explicitly documented in Departmental guidance but should align with EERE strategic priorities.

Disclaimer and Important Notes

This RFI is not a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA); therefore, EERE is not accepting applications at this time. EERE may issue a FOA in the future based on or related to the content and responses to this RFI; however, EERE may also elect not to issue a FOA. There is no guarantee that a FOA will be issued as a result of this RFI. Responding to this RFI does not provide any advantage or disadvantage to potential applicants if EERE chooses to issue a FOA regarding the subject matter. Final details, including the anticipated award size, quantity, and timing of EERE funded awards, will be subject to Congressional appropriations and direction.

Any information obtained as a result of this RFI is intended to be used by the Government on a non-attribution basis for planning and strategy development; this RFI does not constitute a formal solicitation for proposals or abstracts. Your response to this notice will be treated as information only. EERE will review and consider all responses in its formulation of program strategies for the identified materials of interest that are the subject of this request. EERE will not provide reimbursement for costs incurred in responding to this RFI. Respondents are advised that EERE is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information received or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted under this RFI. Responses to this RFI do not bind EERE to any further actions related to this topic.

⁷ <http://energy.gov/quadrennial-technology-review-2015>

⁸ See footnotes 3,4.

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Proprietary Information

Because information received in response to this RFI may be used to structure future programs and FOAs and/or otherwise be made available to the public, **respondents are strongly advised to NOT include any information in their responses that might be considered business sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential.** If, however, a respondent chooses to submit business sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential information, it must be clearly and conspicuously marked as such in the response.

Responses containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be conspicuously marked as described below. Failure to comply with these marking requirements may result in the disclosure of the unmarked information under the Freedom of Information Act or otherwise. The U.S. Federal Government is not liable for the disclosure or use of unmarked information, and may use or disclose such information for any purpose.

If your response contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information, you must include a cover sheet marked as follows identifying the specific pages containing confidential, proprietary, or privileged information:

Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

Pages [List Applicable Pages] of this response may contain confidential, proprietary, or privileged information that is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for the purposes described in this RFI DE-FOA-0001635. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source.

In addition, (1) the header and footer of every page that contains confidential, proprietary, or privileged information must be marked as follows: “Contains Confidential, Proprietary, or Privileged Information Exempt from Public Disclosure” and (2) every line and paragraph containing proprietary, privileged, or trade secret information must be clearly marked with double brackets or highlighting.

Evaluation and Administration by Federal and Non-Federal Personnel

Federal employees are subject to the non-disclosure requirements of a criminal statute, the Trade Secrets Act, 18 USC 1905. The Government may seek the advice of qualified non-Federal personnel. The Government may also use non-Federal personnel to conduct routine, nondiscretionary administrative activities. The respondents, by submitting their response, consent to EERE providing their response to non-Federal parties. Non-Federal parties given

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access to responses must be subject to an appropriate obligation of confidentiality prior to being given the access. Submissions may be reviewed by support contractors and private consultants.

Request for Information Response Guidelines

Responses to this RFI must be submitted electronically to AMOTraineeship@ee.doe.gov no later than 5:00pm (ET) on **November 10th, 2016**. Responses must be provided as attachments to an email. It is recommended that attachments with file sizes exceeding 25MB be compressed (i.e., zipped) to ensure message delivery. Responses must be provided as a Microsoft Word (.docx) attachment to the email, and no more than 10 pages in length, 12 point font, 1 inch margins. Only electronic responses will be accepted.

Please identify your answers by responding to a specific question or topic if applicable. Respondents may answer as many or as few questions as they wish.

EERE will not respond to individual submissions or publish publicly a compendium of responses. A response to this RFI will not be viewed as a binding commitment to develop or pursue the project or ideas discussed.

Respondents may wish to provide the following information at the start of their response to this RFI:

- Company / institution name;
- Company / institution contact;
- Contact's address, phone number, and e-mail address.

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