



**National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230**

NSF 11-027

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Opportunities for Currently NSF Supported and Self-Sustaining, Graduated Engineering Research Centers to Partner with Small Business Solicitation [NSF 10-617](#)

1. [Do the normal SBIR phase I budget allocations between the not-for-profit and small company apply to this program?](#)
2. [In FY 2010, the SECO opportunity \(NSF 10-023\), the Option 1 PI had to be an ERC director. There is no mention of the same requirement in this solicitation, is that still the case or can the PI be any member of the ERC team?](#)
3. [Is the NSF 10-617 solicitation intended to be a standard SBIR Phase I that includes the opportunity to apply for a follow-on Phase II pending satisfactory completion of the Phase I?](#)
4. [For option 1, ERC Initiated Collaborations, does the lead institution in an ERC need to actually submit the proposal, or can one of the partner institutions team with a small business and submit their proposal directly to NSF?](#)
5. [How many proposals can a single faculty member participate in?](#)
6. [Does an ERC-launched start-up firm qualify as an already-established small R & D firm that meets the "small business" eligibility requirements as defined by the SBIR program?](#)
7. [As a supplemental awardee to an ERC, the start-up companies have to have had an audited overhead rate. However, because they are start-ups, nothing has been audited yet. How is this to be handled?](#)
8. [Does the technology/IP have to be from an originally NSF funded project, or could it be from funds that came into the ERC from other sources \(e.g. NIH\)?](#)
9. [Must letters of intent be submitted through my university, or can/should they be submitted through a partner university if the P.I. is at the partner university?](#)

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1. **Do the normal SBIR phase I budget allocations between the not-for-profit and small company apply to this program?**

Active SBIR/STTR initiated collaborations: "The sub-award to the ERC must be a minimum of 30% and a maximum of 60% of the total supplemental amount that is not to exceed \$200,000."

ERC initiated collaborations: "The sub-awardee budget to the small R & D firm must be a minimum of 30% or a maximum of 60% of the total supplemental amount that is not to exceed \$200,000."

2. **In FY 2010, the SECO opportunity ([NSF 10-023](#)), the Option 1 PI had to be an ERC director. There is no mention of the same requirement in this solicitation, is that still the case or can the PI be any member of the ERC team?**

Because SECO awards were supplements to the ERC base award, the PI had to be the Center Director. For this solicitation, the PI submitting the Option 1 can be any of the ERC faculty.

3. **Is the [NSF 10-617](#) solicitation intended to be a standard SBIR Phase I that includes the opportunity to apply for a follow-on Phase II pending satisfactory completion of the Phase I?**

Awards for the [NSF 617-10](#) solicitation are not Phase I SBIR awards; instead they are considered pre-Phase I. As a result, an award does not make one eligible for the Phase II SBIR competition.

4. **For option 1, ERC Initiated Collaborations, does the lead institution in an ERC need to actually submit the proposal, or can one of the partner institutions team with a small business and submit their proposal directly to NSF?**

The partner institution can submit directly to NSF as long as it has a letter of support from the ERC Director. Note, however, that there is a limit of three (3) on the number of proposals for which an ERC Center Director (i.e. the ERC) can submit letters of support (see section titled "Eligibility Information").

5. **How many proposals can a single faculty member participate in?**

There is a limit of two (2) on the number of proposals that a single faculty member can submit as PI or Co-PI (see section titled "Eligibility Information").

6. **Does an ERC-launched start-up firm qualify as an already-established small R & D firm that meets the "small business" eligibility requirements as defined by the SBIR program?**

The small business must be a legal entity, so an ERC start-up would qualify once it is incorporated.

7. **As a supplemental awardee to an ERC, the start-up companies have to have had an audited overhead rate. However, because they are start-ups, nothing has been audited yet. How is this to be handled?**

If the company is a sub-awardee to an ERC, then the ERC is responsible for the sub-award. Furthermore, the indirect cost associated with the sub-award must be verifiable.

8. **Does the technology/IP have to be from an originally NSF funded project, or could it be from funds that came into the ERC from other sources (e.g. NIH)?**

Since the purpose of the solicitation is either to speed the translation of ERC research results into commercial products or to help small businesses benefit from the innovative and leading-edge research performed at ERCs, the technology/IP being translated must be a by-product of the ERC's research mission, regardless of the source of support.

9. **Must letters of intent be submitted through my university, or can/should they be submitted through a partner university if the P.I. is at the partner university?**

The PI on the proposal may be any faculty member of the ERC and the letter of intent should be submitted through the university where the PI resides. The proposal is linked to the ERC through a letter of support from the ERC Center Director that should be submitted as supplementary documentation when the full proposal is submitted. The solicitation was updated in December 2010 to clarify the letter of support requirements.