



2025 Blue Skies Competition Q&A Session #2 Summary Document January 23, 2025; 3:30 – 4:30 PM ET

Questions Received on the Call

1. Is there any way we can submit our proposal first to see if we're within the scope of the competition?

You can't submit a proposal first to be reviewed for scope, but we looked at the NOIs and if it was not within the scope of the competition, we sent out notifications to people to let them know they might want to consider other concept options

2. For the proposal, can you elaborate more on what you consider "decisive and scoped"?

When teams are coming up with their concept, we want them to actually decide on the technology and its specific purpose. Teams should tell us what their concept is "going to be" instead of what it "could be."

3. How should we weigh background information on agricultural techniques and the specific problem we're solving as opposed to describing the aviation system?

It's always a challenge for teams to decide how much to write about what. We suggest focusing on making sure we understand what the problem area is and how you plan to solve it. There's not enough room in a 5-to-7-page paper to write everything you want to write, so pick the information that is going to best support your concept and include enough background information so that we know where you're coming from.

4. How in depth do you want our illustrations or graphics to be? Do you want us just to label things and include a simple sketch, or do you want CAD work?

Some teams have submitted CAD work in the past, but we don't **expect** CAD work, and we don't have a specific requirement on what your pictures should look like. We want you to add images or graphs, etc., that will add value to your proposal. That space is valuable, so make sure that whatever you add tells a story. We would suggest taking a look at what teams have submitted in the past. You can find previous finalist teams' technical paper [here](#) for examples.

5. Can you explain more about what the W9 vendor form and ACH request form are about and what their use is?

These are forms that are necessary for the NIA. If your team is selected as a finalist, these are the forms we use to get the stipends to the teams. Having these forms filled out in advance from someone within your university's accounting or finance department allows us to get the funding to the teams as quickly as possible. Right about now is when you should be contacting your university about getting the forms signed, so that they are ready to submit by the proposal deadline.

6. The rubric for the proposal and video state that we need the university name, our name, team members, advisor name, etc. Do we need them on both the video and proposal, or can it just be on the proposal?

Per the [Competition Guidelines](#), the university name and project title should appear in text at the beginning of the video and all team members should *appear* in the video, if possible (still images are ok). On the proposal, the university name, project title, team photo and/or individual photo labeled with the full names of all team members, including faculty advisors, along with major course of study and academic level of each story should appear on the cover page.

7. How much of a new concept is expected from us in the competition? Can we propose what scientists are researching right now?

If you Google and find someone doing the exact same thing, then you're not really proposing anything new, and it's not really your idea. We do ask teams to come up with something novel, some sort of change from something that exists or come up with something that doesn't exist.

8. If we have multiple directions the design could take, can we explain each of those in the proposal or should the design be more finalized?

The design should be more focused. If there are multiple directions for what your concept could be, you should pick one of those directions so that we know what your concept is.

9. Are we able to look at examples of proposals from previous finalist teams?

We consider the proposals proprietary to each school, so we do not share any of the proposals with existing teams. Even if a team from your school submitted a proposal for the previous year's competition, we still consider it proprietary. However, if you have a team from your university who has been a finalist before, you can see the faculty and team lead names listed on their final papers, and you're welcome to reach out to them and ask them if they'd like to share it with you, but NASA and the NIA cannot.

10. I was wondering how in depth you were wanting us to go into some of the physical principles and the technical background behind our concept? Are you looking for equations or calculations that show the physical principles we're

using to run our system are valid and accurate, or are those things we should put as a citation and include in the appendix?

It depends on what it is. Every year we see some calculations that people might put in their appendix to show, let's say, an estimate of how much the proposed system would cost. But you don't have to prove physics to us. If you have a physics principle or engineering principle that supports your idea, you will want to mention it in reference or supporting documentation. We don't expect you to take up valuable page space with a bunch of equations. We do expect you to cite your research.

11. Could you elaborate on not needing detailed aircraft design studies?

We don't expect or need people to CAD things. People might use CAD to draw, but we don't need to know all the details, such as the sizes of each piece of aircraft or a very detailed weight, if you give us a weight at all, as an example. This is a systems-level competition.

12. What kind of content would you prefer to see in the appendix versus the body of the proposal? Are you wanting all visual aids and graphics in the appendix as opposed to in the actual body of the proposal so that five-to-seven pages is entirely text?

We don't want anything in the appendix really except for resources cited or references. Anything that you want the judges to look at needs to be in the body of the paper, because the judges aren't required to review the appendices. They're only going to judge you on what's in the five-to-seven pages.

13. What defining features have set winning teams apart from others?

Winning teams tend to have solid deliverables across the board (proposals, videos, infographics, presentations, etc.). They not only complete all requirements of the competition, but they are also often innovating with today's technologies or pushing the boundaries of what could be done by the target date listed in the [Competition Guidelines](#).

14. Is the scope of the proposal limited to the U.S.?

As far as teams go, they must be from U.S. institutions, but the potential application area of your concept does not have to be necessarily within the U.S.

15. Is increasing accessibility and lowering cost for farmers with our technology a valid approach or valid improvement?

It depends. We want people to make these improvements via airborne platforms, using aviation and new technology. So, if you can make an improvement that might save people in agriculture time, money, etc, that would be worth the investment in this aviation system, then that seems like a valid idea there. What we don't want is for people to make things on an airborne platform just for the sake of it. If there's no real business case or rhyme or reason that it should be on an airborne platform, we'll probably notice that in your proposal.

16. Do we need a separate form when submitting the proposal and video, or is it all submitted at once?

The video and proposal are submitted via this [form](#).

17. What should we consider when including anecdotes from farmers and AG tech business representatives in our proposals?

We don't expect you to necessarily write a paragraph that is just verbatim telling what they said, but we want you to use the information you gain from them and whatever resources you've read to inform your decision making.

18. Do we need to put estimated prices of the technology in our proposal?

The estimate price of a system or concept is something we want teams to think about, because part of your justification for your proposed technology is making a business case for it, and if it's too expensive and no one will use it, then the feasibility comes down.