**Q1. What is the Lab Impact Initiative?**

A1. The Lab Impact Initiative within the DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) is a coordinated strategy with the goal of significantly increasing the industrial impact of DOE National Laboratories on the U.S. clean energy sector. As a part of that strategy, EERE recently launched a new $2.3 million pilot called Lab-Corps using FY14 funds that aims to better train and empower DOE National Laboratory researchers to successfully transition their discoveries into high-impact, real world technologies that support EERE’s mission and the American economy. This year, EERE has focused on developing two additional pilots to enable the DOE National Laboratories to provide technical assistance and opportunities for small businesses (Small Business Vouchers pilot), and the Technologist-in-Residence pilot, which aims to pair up technologists within DOE national labs and larger industry partners to build the foundation for long-term collaborations in advanced manufacturing.

**Q2. What is the Small Business Vouchers (SBV) pilot and the selected pilot laboratories?**

A2. The Small Business vouchers pilot is a new mechanism to fund DOE National Laboratories to provide technical assistance and collaborative R&D opportunities for small businesses. Its main objective is to make the DOE National Laboratories more accessible to small businesses by improving awareness and making available unique laboratory capabilities to solve technical and commercialization challenges. DOE funding will be sent to 5 DOE National Laboratories: Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories who were chosen to participate in the pilot to make vouchers available to competitively selected small businesses working to develop clean energy technologies.

**Q3. How much funding is available for the SBV pilot, and how many vouchers will be made available?**

A3. Approximately $20 million will be available for the SBV pilot. Each voucher will range from $50-$300K, depending on the type of work the selected small business requests the DOE National Laboratories to do. At an average of $175K per voucher, approximately 100 vouchers will be made during the pilot.

**Q4. Will cost share be required?**

A4. Yes, a minimum 20% cost share (cash or in-kind) will be required from all participating small businesses.

**Q5. How is SBV different from SBIR?**

A5. Several key differences distinguish SBV from SBIR and other programs related to small business R&D. Under the SBV pilot, selected participating small businesses will not receive any direct funding from DOE, which is different from the SBIR program. Rather, participating small businesses will be able to redeem awarded vouchers for access to unique capabilities provided by DOE national labs, which will be funded by EERE through SBV to work with participating small businesses. A central component of the SBV pilot is to facilitate small businesses access to DOE national lab resources and capabilities. The majority of SBIR recipients do not work directly with national labs. See below for additional information about the differences between the SBV pilot and SBIR.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **DOE SBIR/STTR Program** | **Small Business Voucher Pilot** |
| **Purpose** | Advance small business technologies | Solve critical small business technical barriers through lab partnerships |
| **Selection and Project Management**  | DOE (Chicago Site Office) | National labs for selection and DOE for project management |
| **Topics** | Research area are pre-determined by DOE | Subprogram areas are pre-determined based on funding availability for pilot |
| **Timing of Announcement** | Q4 and Q1 for Phase I every fiscal year | Three cycles for pilot anticipated: FY15 Q4, FY16 Q1, and FY16 Q2 |
| **Total Funding Available** | $189M (Fiscal Year 14; 370 awards) | $20M (Fiscal Years 15 and 16; ~ 100 vouchers) |
| **Size of Award** | Phase I: $150K per award and Phase II: $1000K per award | Up to $300K per voucher |
| **Engagement** | DOE Funding Opportunity Announcements | Lab actively conducting outreach about their capabilities throughout pilot  |

**Q6. What funds are you using?**

A6. The Small Business Vouchers pilot will draw upon fiscal year 2015 appropriations for EERE programs, with anticipation that the fiscal year 2016 activities can be covered with the fiscal year 2015 funds.

**Q7. Why haven't we heard about this before?**

A7. The Small Business Vouchers pilot utilizes existing laboratory M&O contract with the Department, and the Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) to fund laboratories to work with small businesses. The Energy Department has always support individual laboratories working with small businesses using the regular Annual Operating Plan mechanism where the joint work typically takes form as a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (or CRADA). The Small Business Vouchers pilot organizes and coordinates these existing efforts within EERE using the same AOP and CRADA relationships. Thus, EERE does not consider this pilot a “new start”. The main benefits of the pilot framework are the ability for the labs and DOE-EERE to realize process improvements (e.g. interlab partnerships, improvement in the business transaction timelines) that enhance these lab-small business partnerships, and the coordinated dissemination of information on laboratory capabilities that will encourage new lab-small business partnerships to form.