

ORDE "KNOW YOUR AGENCY" SERIES: ARMY RESEARCH OFFICE (ARO)

ARO Site:

<http://www.arl.army.mil/www/default.cfm?page=29>

OVERVIEW

Created in 1958, the Army Research Office (ARO) was charged to "plan and direct the research program of the Army" (Source: The Genealogy of ARL, May 1997, p. 8). Originally housed in the Office of the Chief of Research and Development, ARO was transferred to the Army Research Laboratory (ARL) as that organization's basic research component in 1998.

Specific Interests

ARO funds basic research of relevance to the Army in the physical, engineering, life, and information sciences. Directorates and associated research programs are:

Physical Sciences Directorate

- Chemical Sciences
- Physics
- Life Sciences (includes Social/Behavioral)

Engineering Sciences Directorate

- Mechanical Sciences
- Electronics
- Materials Sciences
- Earth Sciences

Information Sciences Directorate

- Mathematical Sciences
- Computing Sciences
- Network Science (to include Social/Cognitive Networks)

Approach

ARO's mission is to fund basic research in the above disciplines as they relate to long-range Army technology planning and Army personnel. The vast majority of ARO's budget is dedicated to single investigator research projects. Researchers in educational institutions, non-profits, and industry are supported.

AGENCY ORGANIZATION

ARO is a science directorate within the ARL, and the ARO Director reports to the ARL Director. The ARO Chief

Scientist oversees the three major ARO directorates: Physical, Engineering, and Informational Sciences. Each directorate has specific research programs headed by Program Managers who are expert scientists and engineers within their own fields.

GRANTS PROCESS

ARO, like most Department of Defense agencies, frames its research mission within a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA). This BAA is generally open for several years and provides an overview of the agency's research interests, proposal and funding processes, program manager contact information, and grant mechanisms offered by the agency. For Fiscal Year 2015, ARO budgeted \$78.5 million for core research program funding. (Source: 2015 ARO in Review, p. 3)

ARO uses a two-step proposal submission process:

White paper submission: The first step for a researcher interested in submitting a proposal to ARO, after their discussion with a Program Manager, is submission of a white paper detailing the proposed project. White papers are limited to a 5-page technical description. The Program Manager and other ARO personnel review the white paper and then invite the proposer to submit a full proposal.

Full proposal submission: The researcher develops and submits a full proposal via Grants.gov in response to the ARO BAA and the feedback received from ARO. This full proposal consists of both a technical and cost proposal.

Additional Funding Mechanisms

Programs beyond the typical single investigator research project offered by ARO include:

Short-Term Innovative Research (STIR) Program – Funds short-term, innovative basic research projects, providing up to \$60,000 over a 9-month award period; no deadlines

Young Investigator Program (YIP) – Open to new university faculty members (eligible applicants are US citizens, nationals or permanent residents holding tenure-track positions in US universities and colleges who have

held terminal degrees for less than 5 years at time of application); provides \$120,000 per year for 3 years; no deadlines

Research Instrumentation (RI) Program – Provides funds for researchers to purchase equipment that will increase their research capabilities or enhance the quality of DOD research, either at the proposal stage or for current projects; no deadlines

ARO also participates in DOD-wide funding opportunities such as the Defense University Research Instrumentation Program (DURIP) and the DOD Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI).

Contact with ARO Program Staff:

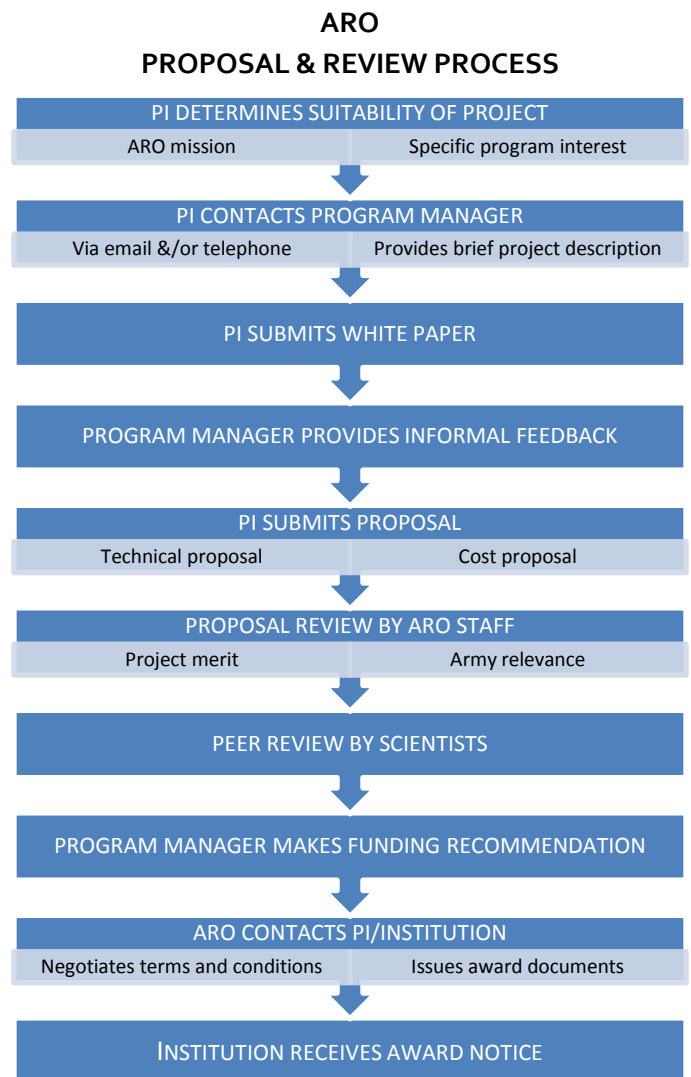
Investigators should plan to consult with a Program Manager to ascertain appropriateness of a proposed research topic to the overall ARO mission, Army relevance, and the needs of Army personnel in the field. Preliminary inquiries can result in an invitation to submit a more detailed white paper and then a full proposal. Program Managers provide feedback after receipt and review of a white paper.

Typical ARO Proposal Process:

- 1) PI determines suitability of proposed project to ARO/Army mission, programs, and topic areas
- 2) PI contacts Program Manager for assistance and questions about applying for funding
- 3) Program Manager requests white paper
- 4) White paper is reviewed and feedback is provided to PI, either encouraging or discouraging a full proposal
- 5) PI submits proposal via Grants.gov
- 6) Initial proposal review is completed by ARL/ARO staff on basis of scientific merit, relevance to Army mission, and whether funding is available
- 7) Second stage peer review is conducted by scientists within and outside the government
- 8) Program Manager makes funding recommendation
- 9) ARO contacts successful PI and institution for additional information needed before an award can be made including revised budgets
- 10) PI's institution receives award notice

Proposal Review Process:

Proposals are evaluated on the basis of scientific/technical merit, potential contributions to the overall Army mission, proposer's capabilities/experience, and past performance record of the proposer. ARO uses a two-stage review process: Initial review is conducted by ARL/ARO personnel in terms of scientific merit and Army relevance; the second stage involves peer review by discipline experts within and outside the government. Program managers then make final funding recommendations.



What Happens Next?

ARO uses grant, contract, and cooperative agreement award mechanisms. A negotiation process between the receiving institution and ARO precedes award. Those who are turned down are encouraged to consult with the Program Manager to determine next steps including resubmission.