

Equipment Funding Opportunities and Strategies for Success (Part 4)

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Editor's Note: This series of edited transcripts is from Symposium A-14 at the Nashville M&M meeting August 10, 2011, organized on behalf of the Facility Operation and Management Focused Interest Group, co-chaired by Owen Mills and Christopher Gilpin. This is the fourth of six talks on this topic; the remaining articles will be published in future issues.

I am here to talk about the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and our funding opportunities. I will start with introductory slides because I'm not sure how familiar this audience is with our organization. ONR supports science and technology for the Navy, and you might think "How do I fit into this?" We have a two-billion-dollar portfolio for research. Some of this is sort of off-the-shelf, early stuff, the quick reaction. Then we have acquisition enablers. These two categories are short-term technologies. I'm going to talk about discovery and invention, which is the long-term basic research we support. It's about 40% of our portfolio or \$900 million. The timeframe is basic research, and it covers our national naval responsibilities, and education and outreach, which is about 40% of our research, \$900,000. In discovery and invention, we do research in naval-relevant areas. So our mission is very different from NSF and NIH, which are more broadly scientific-based.

Our scientific and research interests are those that support the Navy. We encourage risk taking to seek scientific breakthroughs. We are looking for breakthrough technologies that might occur in the next 20–25 years. We are interested in some in transitional research, but we do mostly basic science, and then of course there are people—education for our next professionals.

Within discovery and invention, we have three areas we fund, including extra-mural, which is where your interests may be. We have a different set-up where we have department cores. We fund university research initiatives, but I will come back to this at the very end and talk about what these mean to you. This is because most of you are probably looking at this and saying, they don't do any work related to my research. There are three large areas we fund. We fund universities to do research relevant to our interests; in-house laboratory research, where we do our own intramural research; and then defense research science, where we fund different organizations to do research for us. I'm going to talk about our university research initiatives and then briefly about the defense research science. The Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI) is where we take teams of researchers at different labs and have them do research that is relevant to our mission. For the MURI, we fund high-priority research at multiple institutions; we want it to be very innovative. We want collaborations among organizations. The YIP (Young Investigators Program) is for young professionals who are starting their careers.

What I am going to focus on is the Defense University Research Instrumentation Program, the DURIP, where we fund awards of half a million to a million dollars for major equipment.

For the DURIP program we are interested in proposals for any instrumentation that are related to Department of Defense (DOD) or naval-relevant research. All three military branches fund the DURIP; various parts are relevant to the Army, Air Force, and Navy. You can look at their websites and see how the DURIP program fits into their research needs. Proposals are accepted for \$50,000 to a million dollars, and we will consider over a million dollars, but that is less likely without strong naval relevance. For fiscal year 2011, the average award was \$230,000. We funded about 60 out of 270 submitted proposals, totaling \$15.5 million. The award deadline is the end of the summer or early fall. The notification of awards are in March, and the funding is in place by the following June. It is about a 9-month process from start to finish. At the DURIP website you can view the criteria for the application process. It is open to accredited research institutions, and we do electronic submissions. The proposal is 25 pages, and the evaluation criteria are listed at the website. The three main evaluation criteria are: (a) If you have DOD funding already, we are interested in continuing that process. (b) If you have research related to a DOD mission, explain that to us in the proposal. (c) We are very interested in how your research contributes to training future scientists and engineers, so an explanation of your education and training program is useful. These are weighed equally, and you need to address them in your proposal.

You might ask, what research areas are we really interested in? Our main funding program, the Defense Research Science, is available to everybody. These are areas that we have funded in the past. We fund the young investigators program up to \$2.5 million a year for three years. Our research areas at ONR are shown at the website www.onr.navy.mil. This is where you can start to think about how your research will fit in to our portfolio. We do a lot of materials science. We are very interested in materials science and bio-inspired sciences. We want to learn from biology how we can translate structures and processes into technologies that are relevant to the future. Examples could be cognitive neural training technologies and counter-IED sciences. This might be in acoustics or how different materials work with neurons. Then we want to translate these concepts into basic science. We love cognitive training sciences as well. You may think you don't do any intelligence-related research, but work on devices related to acoustics, optics, or other applied sciences have a root in basic research. If you come to our website and see these words, don't get turned off because most of our funding is in the basic science research.

We have a two-step funding process for most of our funding opportunity announcements. The first step is a white paper solicitation. We ask everyone submit to a short 4–5 page white paper to give us an outline of what you are funding and how it is relevant to what we are doing. Each white paper is read by a program manager who has technical expertise in your area.

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The program managers at ONR have different roles than you are familiar with from NSF and NIH. They make the decisions about who will be funded. There is no review panel. The managers have a research portfolio they manage, and they make the individual decisions. Anyone can submit a proposal, but if they invite you to submit a proposal, you are more likely to get funding. That will be the same manager who will review and select the proposals to fund. I can't stress how important it is to know your program manager at ONR. We have their names on the websites. If you email me, I can send you to the right person. You can have a 5-minute phone conversation with the program manager about your research interests and say, this is the instrumentation I'm interested in buying. You can find out if your research is relevant to ONR funding priorities this year. They can tell you, yes, or how to slant it, or this is not what we are looking for or will fund right now. This will give you a sense of whether or not you want to submit. We understand your time is valuable and we don't want you to write a 25-page proposal if we will not fund it. Our program managers will often stay in the same position for their whole careers. Program managers at ONR are not rotational like at NSF and NIH. The managers will often follow young investigators later into their career—ONR might be funding them 20 years later. These same managers will handle the instrumentation proposals and will spread them out to all the technical people. If they have a history with you, if they know you, if they remember your phone call, they might be able to look at your proposal and see it in the context of the history they have with you. At ONR, the most

important thing you can do to be competitive for funding is to get to know your funding manager and develop a relationship with him. Every time you visit Washington, DC, be sure to meet with the program manager in your area—this will make the process much easier.

Question to ONR: I saw in the proposal it said AFOSR. That's the Air Force Office of Science Research. How is ONR connected to the Air Force?

Answer: The DURIP program is actually shared by all the services, and that's why if you look up the FOA, it's very broadly written. Each separate group funds their own set of DURIP grants and so, in this case, it's named with the AFOSR grant, but we actually have our own ONR funding and mission and part of it, but it's a tri-service opportunity.

Question to ONR: Do you fund STEM?

Answer: Yes.

Question to ONR: Do you fund some from the DOE lab?

Answer: I think this year. Last year our funding opportunity announcement wasn't open to other government agencies, but this year we are going to open the door, so there will be a possibility of that. We will have the FOA 10-023, and the new announcement will be out by October 1st.

Question ONR: What is the due date of this year's application?

Answer ONR: The due date September 20, 2013 is for DURIP and is reissued every year, due in September. For STEM it is on a rolling basis, so it is continually reviewed and funded.

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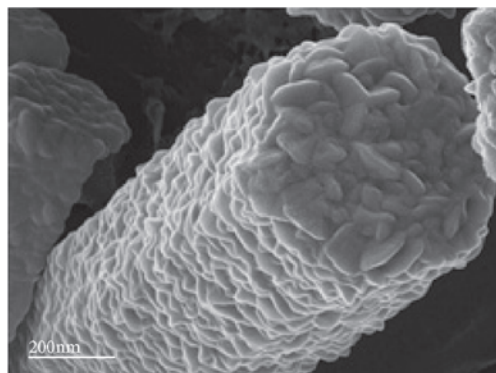
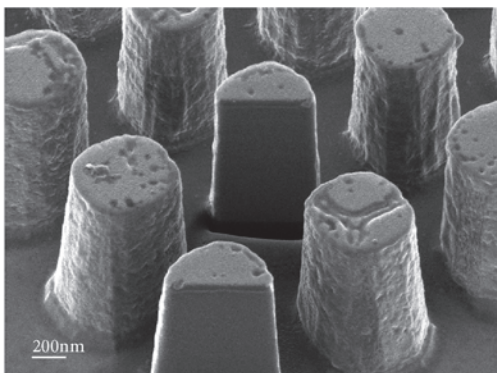
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