

Written Response

Q1. What is bilateral sharing?

A1. Driven by our nation's ever changing and growing military operational mission requirements, DoD sees an inevitable need for flexible bi-directional (BD) spectrum access on a shared basis that encompasses Federal access to non-Federal bands and vice versa. Not only does DoD face increasing bandwidth needs for warfighting capabilities (e.g., higher resolution radar, agile datalinks and radios), but Electronic Warfare threats have become increasingly complex, cheap, easily attainable (e.g., commercial off the shelf equipment or COTS), and impact a wide range of Federal and non-Federal spectrum bands. Warfighters must be agile, adaptable, flexible, and operate across wider bandwidths – and more spectrum bands – to continue to defeat the threats and effectively test, train, exercise when and where needed.

There is not a one-size fits all approach to bi-directional sharing. A balanced bi-directional sharing approach must be based on sound principles that promote a combination of innovative spectrum policy, technology, testing, partnerships, collaboration, and regulatory solutions that improve trust among and benefit all Federal and non-Federal stakeholders. It is vital to lay out a broad bi-directional sharing framework that enables various options of spectrum access that provide the necessary flexibility to address a range of short- to longer-term mission requirements. The approach must not be narrowly defined or limited by factors such as temporary, emergency or intermittent uses or remote locations in this increasingly contested and congested operational environment. Policy signals from national regulators laying out this broad perspective is necessary and timely.

The Department has seen the need for flexible bi-directional sharing for quite a while, consistent with the vision laid out in its 2013 Electromagnetic Spectrum Strategy for “spectrum access when and where needed to meet mission success.” Consequently, DoD has already been putting in place foundational mechanisms to support balanced solutions for bi-directional sharing, based on trusted engineering and evolving policy frameworks, including the National Spectrum Consortium (NSC), Spectrum Access Research and Development Program (SAR&DP), and National Advanced Spectrum Communications Test Network (NASCTN). DoD is committed to a “trust but verify approach” to bi-directional sharing based on technology, modeling and simulation/engineering analysis, testing and coordination.