Operational Need and Improvement: To manufacture conformal optical windows to protect aircraft electro-optical sensors. OptiPro developed three different ultrasonic machining technology, UltraForm Finishing (UFF) sub-aperture polishing process and UltraSmooth Finishing (USF) mid-to-large aperture polishing process. Refining these existing processes will allow Defense companies and prime contractors to manufacture optically precise conformal windows cost effectively.

Specifications Required: The objective for this project is to create methods to grind and polish freeform conformal sensor windows with dimensions up to 24 x 24 inches with a sag height of approximately 8 inches and an optical precision of 0.5% or better. It is expected that methods will be developed with glass or fused silica and that a full sized window will be made from glass or fused silica. It is also possible that a full sized spinel blank may be available from the government during this project.

Technology Developed: With a Phase II effort, OptiPro proposes to develop a cost-effective manufacturing process to produce large optical windows and corrector optical elements. We demonstrated this capability by making a 12 x 12 fused silica conformal window. The development effort will focus on taking advantage of OptiPro’s ultrasonic grinding technology (OptiSonic), UltraForm Finishing (UFF), and UltraSmooth Finishing (USF). We will also take advantage of OptiPro’s SXL 500 and Triumph XL grinding and polishing platforms to perform this work. Both of these machines can perform the tasks required to complete a Phase II effort. We plan to push the limits of the machine’s working envelope to evaluate the likelihood of their use to complete the Phase II requirements. The overall goal of this project would be to develop a manufacturing system in Phase II that would ultimately be available as a product for OptiPro to sell.

Warfighter Value: UFF is capable of polishing the surface of conformal windows to precision levels with high removal rates while USF tools proved to be effective in rapidly polishing conformal windows with minimal grain decoration; the UFF and USF processes have been integrated into our newly developed freeform optics manufacturing software, PROSurf. These technologies, along with OptiPro’s OptiSonic ultrasonic machining centers, which involves adding ultrasonic vibration to the grinding tool to achieve efficient material removal, will allow companies to efficiently produce conformal windows.

Projected Business Model: OptiPro Systems has more than 35 years of experience developing and manufacturing precision optical fabrication machines. We are a global leader in designing and building computer controlled grinding, polishing, and measuring equipment for the precision optics and advanced ceramics industries. Our Advanced Process Development (APD) department focuses on fabrication solutions for precision optics. These solutions are designed to yield parts that can be manufactured from a variety of commercially available materials including optical glasses, ceramics, crystals, and alloys.

OptiPro will be manufacturing and selling OptiSonic, UFF, and USF platforms at our facility in Ontario, NY. Because of the investment required to manufacture each unit, we will begin building each system immediately after the purchase order is received. Typical time to build the SX, UFF and USF platforms is 16-20 weeks, while UltraSurf is currently 24-32 weeks.

Company Objectives: OptiPro will be looking to provide insight on the latest developments with OptiSonic, UFF, and USF technologies, as well as other technology advancements being driven by the SBIR program. By continuously advancing our technology, OptiPro will be the leader in providing solutions for Defense companies and prime contractors that will enable cost-effective production of components with defense applications.

Potential Commercial Applications: Companies in the precision optics and advanced hard ceramics industries can benefit from OptiPro’s manufacturing and metrology equipment. Components that are able to be produced with OptiPro technology serve a variety of applications, including aerospace, automotive, medical, and consumer electronics; processes developed for conformal window manufacturing have potential to reduce the cost and widen the scope of manufacturing precision aspheric optics.

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