

# DEFENSE SBIR/STTR PROGRAM QUARTERLY REVIEW

#### Q4 VOLUME 2 ISSUE 4

### Message from the Defense SBIR/STTR Program Acting Director

As the Defense SBIR/STTR Program Office closed out Fiscal Year 2023 and I reflected on some of our highlights over the year, I am proud of what was accomplished to meet Congressional requirements while continuing to support and encourage U.S. small businesses to do business with the DoD. I also appreciate the dedicated hard work of the DoD SBIR/STTR community – a stalwart team of colleagues who cannot be thanked enough for ensuring that SBIR/STTR funding is going to small businesses that provide innovative technological advancements to build our economy and enhance the capacity of our military.

Some of the highlights of the year include the implementation of the new due diligence requirements in the SBIR/STTR Extension Act of 2022 within the 270-day deadline established by Congress and our work with Components and Services to ensure that small businesses were informed and in compliance with the requirements. We also engaged in Congressional briefings to provide updates on progress. In FY2024, we are continuing to improve the due diligence process to ensure minimal disruption to small businesses and the proposal process.



Matthew Williams Acting Director, Defense SBIR/STTR Program Office, Director, OSD Transitions SBIR/STTR Technology (OTST) Program, OSD (R&E) Technology Portfolio Manager

To that end, as programmatic changes were made, it was imperative to also make enhancements to the Defense SBIR/STTR Innovation Portal (DSIP), the proposal submission hub. In FY2023, DSIP processed over 18,000 proposals from the solicitations that were issued and in addition to providing information on mandatory requirements, is making improvements to operations and engineering, as well as enhancing evaluations and the process for non-compliant submissions.

Engaging with small businesses remains one of our priorities and the Defense SBIR/STTR Program Office has participated in major conferences and webinars. From events such as CES®, SXSW, SOF WEEK 2023, Mentor Protégé, TechConnect, Space & Missile Defense Symposium and others, to virtual panels with the Defense Acquisition University, we had the opportunity to reach, teach and inform our key audiences how we leverage the ingenuity of the small business industry and research institutions to develop innovative technologies and solutions. We encourage you to keep an eye out for upcoming opportunities to engage with the DoD SBIR/STTR community as we move into the new year.

As we progress into FY2024, thank you for supporting the DoD SBIR/STTR Programs and we look forward to another successful year.

Sincerely,

Matthew Williams



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### DoD SBIR/STTR News

The Defense SBIR/STTR Program Office is pleased to announce the launch of an official, new LinkedIn page!! Be sure to follow us for the latest news, program updates, upcoming solicitations, outreach events and resources. Check us out and be sure to follow DoD SBIR/STTR Program Office!!



We're on LinkedIn! Follow us!

### The Hill

The primary focus of the Defense SBIR/STTR Program Office during the fourth quarter has been monitoring efficiency and compliance with the DoD SBIR/STTR Due Diligence Program and process being implemented on all Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs) starting with 23.2 and 23.B. Through regular briefings and reporting, we have and will continue to keep Congress abreast on adjustments and improvements to the Department's foreign risk management process. Additionally, our office continues to engage with Congress on proposed improvements to the SBIR/STTR programs as the House and Senate reconcile and finalize the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and Consolidated Appropriations Act.

### DoD SBIR/STTR Program Statistics

The following data provides a snapshot of program statistics as of October 18, 2023.



#### SBIR/STTR Contract Awards by State



### **Funding Opportunities**

In the fourth quarter, the Defense SBIR/STTR Program Office released approximately 113 SBIR topics and 13 STTR topics across four Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs) and three Commercial Solutions Opening (CSO). This included topics under the DoD-wide Annual SBIR & STTR BAAs, as well as topics under the DoD 23.3 SBIR & 23.C STTR and the Air Force X23.7, X23.8 and X23.E CSOs. During this timeframe, approximately 3,846 proposals were submitted across all topics and solicitations.

For a full list of current and upcoming funding opportunities, please visit <u>https://www.defensesbirsttr.mil/SBIR-STTR/</u> <u>Opportunities/</u>.

DOD STTR 23.D Annua DOD SBIR 24.4 Annua DOD STTR 24.D Annua Air Force SBIR X24.4 CSC Supporting Documents and Attach Search LAST MODIFIED CLOSE DATE COMPONENT IN STRUCTIONS / TOPIC: COMPONEN PRE-RELEASE DATE OPEN DATE SBIR 23 4 Am ber 28, 2023 11/15/2022 12/31/2023 DMEA SBIR 23.4 - Release DMEA 10/12/2023 11/14/2023 October 12, 2023 9/27/2023 CBD SBIR 23.4 - Release 1 CBD 9/28/2023 10/12/2023 11/14/2023 October 12, 2023 Army SBIR 23.4 - Release 20 October 24, 2023 Army 9/28/2023 10/24/2023 11/14/2023 Army SBIR 23.4 - Release 10 1/2/2024 November 6, 2023 Army 4/25/2023 2/1/2024 Page 1 of 1 1

CURRENT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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PORTANT NOTE: In addition to following the instructions in the SBIR or STTR Program Broad Agency Announcement, proposers must als

To be notified of new funding opportunities and to receive

e-mail updates on the DoD SBIR/STTR Programs, subscribe to our listserv by visiting <u>https://www.dodsbirsttr.mil/submis-</u> <u>sions/login</u> and clicking "DSIP Listserv" located under Quick Links.

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### Meet the PM



#### 🕻 Kristi De Priest

Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer Programs, Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR)

Ms. Kristi DePriest became the Program Manager of NAVAIR's SBIR/STTR programs in February 2022. Ms. DePriest is responsible for the management and implementation of DoD, Navy, and Command policy aimed at stimulating innovation, technical development, and the successful transition of SBIR/STTR Science and Technology (S&T) research and products into the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE). Over 300 companies participate in the NAVAIR SBIR/STTR programs through multiple Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs) each year.

Ms. DePriest has over 20 years of experience serving NAVAIR, originally beginning her career as a Program Analyst supporting the NAVAIR SBIR/STTR programs. Before returning to the SBIR/STTR programs, she spent nine years managing the NAVAIR Naval Innovation Science & Engineering (NISE), Independent Laboratory Innovative

Research (ILIR), and Innovative Applied Research (IAR) programs. She also spent three years as an Intelligence Analyst for the NAVAIR S&T Intelligence Liaison Office (STILO). Ms. DePriest has a bachelor's degree in Global Business and Public Policy from the University of Maryland and graduated from the United States Naval War College Joint Professional Military Education program (JPME).

### **Components Connection**

## Army launches xTechSearch 8 with \$800,000 in cash prizes and a chance to earn follow-on awards

Widening the innovation funnel to harness new and disruptive technologies is paramount to xTechSearch 8 — the U.S. Army xTech Program's flagship prize competition focused on enhancing Soldier readiness and modernizing the Joint Force. Sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, and in collaboration with the Army SBIR Program, the competition aims to bolster the Army's operational capabilities via an open-topic solicitation model.



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As a result, xTechSearch 8 will accept proposals for a variety of solutions, prioritizing Army modernization challenges such as artificial intelligence and machine learning; autonomy; climate and clean tech; contested logistics and sustainment; immersive and wearables; and sensors. Businesses that propose solutions will participate in a series of rounds to earn a portion of the \$800,000 prize pool, culminating in a fourth round where firms can also receive a potential follow-on Phase I Army SBIR contract award worth up to \$250,000.

https://www.xtech.army.mil/announcement/coming-soon-xtechsearch-8-competition/

#### Army offers HBCU students \$100,000 in cash prizes

Building an enduring and fruitful relationship between the U.S. Army and Historically Black Colleges and Universities is a pivotal component of the xTechHBCU Student competition, which provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to pitch novel technologies capable of supporting U.S. Soldiers. Led by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition,

Logistics and Technology, the competition seeks to increase student interest and embolden their success within the DoD.

The competition also aims to address Army challenges in technology areas such as autonomy, chemical and biological sciences, and health. As part of the competition, selected students that submitted pentachart slides by Nov. 1, 2023, will participate in two rounds. During the final round, students can earn cash prizes up to \$10,500 for first place, \$8,500 for second place, \$6,500 for third place and \$4,500 for fourth place. In addition to these cash prizes, participants can also engage with Army and DoD stakeholders during an Accelerator Program and potentially have an opportunity to develop a prototype for their designed solutions as final winners of the competition. The Army will hold competition finals at or around the 2024 Black Engineer of the Year Awards STEM Conference from Feb. 15-17, 2024.



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#### Department of the Navy SBIR/STTR Programs Release 2022 SBIR/STTR Year in Review

The Department of the Navy SBIR/STTR Programs released its FY22 SBIR/STTR Year in Review report highlighting the program's achievements for FY22. Among many accomplishments, the report illustrates a 17% increase in the Phase III portfolio compared to FY21, resulting in more than \$1.1 billion in Phase III funding. This result accounted for 50% of all DoD Phase III funding in FY22. For more about Navy SBIR/STTR achievements in FY22, download the report at <a href="https://navysbir.com/docs/DON-FY-22-SBIR-Year\_in\_Review.pdf">https://navysbir.com/docs/DON-FY-22-SBIR-Year\_in\_Review.pdf</a>.



#### DoN SBIR Experimentation Cell Helps Engage Innovators with Experimentation Community

The Department of the Navy Small Business Innovation Research Experimentation Cell (DoN-SEC) connects small businesses with the DoN experimentation community to deliver innovative solutions for the warfighter. Using facilitation, mentoring, and training from outreach to execution, DoN-SEC highlights the benefits of using Naval experimentation to explore and advance emerging SBIR capabilities. Since establishment in 2020, DoN-SEC has supported SBIR small business concerns in over 30 unique experimentation events, from lab-based testing to major Fleet exercises.

DoN-SEC connects SBIR performers with experimentation opportunities. As a continuous process improvement team, it also documents, codifies, and promulgates experimentation information through living guidebooks. These continuously updated guidebooks demystify the complex processes and subprocesses needed to experiment on Naval ships and aircraft and at Naval installations. DoN-SEC utilizes the team's subject matter expertise and wide-ranging industry partnerships to provide top-tier experiment support. For more information, visit https://www.navysbir.com/sec/.



#### Navy STP VTM Connects Navy Customers with Groundbreaking Technologies

The Navy STP Virtual Transition Marketplace (Navy STP VTM) is the Navy's premier small business technology marketplace. Over 140 new Navy SBIR/STTR-funded technologies from the current Navy STP cohort to help solve technical problems and address warfighter needs are being added as materials are approved by the Navy for public release. To explore these innovative Phase II technologies, go to the Navy STP VTM website at <a href="https://vtm.navyfst.com/">https://vtm.navyfst.com/</a>. Each small business entry contains a technology abstract, quad chart, company capability brochure, and contact information. Several entries also include a recording of the small business's 10-minute Tech Talk presentation. Currently over 1000 mature and transition-ready technologies are showcased in the Navy STP VTM.

The Navy STP VTM shows technologies in which the Navy and Marine Corps have invested significant capital. Each participant is a qualified government contractor who has met the competition clause of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and is able to engage for future development using a sole source contract and other contracting vehicles to speed up the development timeline. Since sole source SBIR/STTR Phase III contracts

#### Search and Filter Navy SBIR/STTRs at the Navy STP Virtual Transition Marketplace



are easy to implement, utilizing SBIRs and STTRs reduces the time needed to get technology out to the warfighter.

### **Success Stories**

#### Platform Aerospace Develops Vanilla UAS, a Multi-sensor, Multi-mission, Ultra-long Endurance Unmanned Aerial System

Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) play vital roles in modern military operations. They swiftly identify time-sensitive targets, relay enemy positions and movements to battlefield commanders and neutralize tactical objectives. Maintaining uninterrupted surveillance over a specific area is crucial in these operations. An SBIR solicitation was released to develop a cost-effective unmanned air vehicle (UAV) with an exceptional endurance of seven days, which can be used for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions. This challenge led to the development of the Vanilla UAS, a Group III UAS capable of multi-day flights by Platform Aerospace.

The Vanilla UAS features a minimum sailplane design with a 36-foot wingspan and a modular airframe. It can accommodate various multi-intelligence sensors and communications payloads up to 150 pounds. Vanilla has an open architecture and agnostic payload, making it suitable to be used in multi-domain operations. It is designed to achieve more than eight days of continuous flight at altitudes up to 15,000 feet, with a range up to 15,000 nautical miles (NM).

The Vanilla UAS program has won a series of SBIR contracts through Office of Naval Research (ONR), Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), AFWERX (a technology directorate of the Air Force Research Laboratory), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on topics ranging from antisubmarine warfare (ASW) to predictive maintenance modeling. In May 2022, Platform Aerospace was awarded a minimum five-year Phase III SBIR contract, N68335-22-G0030, for the Vanilla UAS program through ONR. The Phase III award provides a sole-source contract pathway with an unlimited ceiling for Vanilla UAS procurements, operational service, and ongoing technical enhancement by any government end user.

Vanilla UAS significantly improves situational awareness by conducting multi-day sorties, effectively increasing ISR capabilities. This extended operational range allows for longer-range surveillance at a comparable cost, thereby increasing the distance and duration for which adversaries can be effectively monitored and engaged. Additionally, Vanilla improves safety. Because Vanilla is an ultra-endurance UAS, it allows personnel to be based at low risk established sites. Launch and recovery operations can be performed from 1,000 miles away. The UAS' launch mechanism supports a range of truck models, allowing it to be launched from almost anywhere. Vanilla is cost effective, as fewer overall flight hours and launch/recovery events reduce wear and tear on assets, therefore lowering lifetime costs. The technology is flexible and versatile, as payloads can be rapidly swapped and include full motion video, radar, wide area motion imagery, signals intelligence (SIGINT), magnetic anomaly detection, and secure communications.

Due to the versatility of Vanilla, the UAS is being developed for different functions. Platform Aerospace was awarded a Phase II SBIR by NAVAIR to develop an ASW configuration with ongoing flight testing and system refinement. Vanilla's endurance and payload capacity enhances its ASW capacity, enabling it to expand search areas beyond the reach of current manned assets through manned-unmanned teaming (MUM-T). This allows for extended on-target persistence and optimizes the allocation of costly manned flight hours to highest priority missions. Platform Aerospace is actively working on an air-launch swarm capability for Vanilla, allowing it to deploy about 40 micro-UAS from wing-mounted stores. Each deployed microUAS is an individually guided disposable unit designed for remote meteorological sensing while airborne or as functioning as unattended ground systems. Moreover, this technology has the potential for broader applications and aligns with the Navy's efforts to develop advanced swarming systems.



Vanilla unmanned aerial system (UAS), a multi-sensor, multi-mission, ultra-long endurance UAS. Photo credit: Platform Aerospace

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#### Phase Value MPT's Phased-Array Technology Gives Radar Systems an Extra Edge

In A Radar History of World War II, considered one of the most comprehensive books on radar, physicist Louis Brown describes radar's emergence as "a completely new way to see." It was, according to Brown, an invention that altered warfare more profoundly than any other during that era.

Radar was first developed for the militaries in several different countries, but its wide range of applications now makes it a profound technology across the board. In its modern form, it guides planes and missiles, detects spacecraft and motor vehicles, identifies terrain, and helps predict the weather. Radar systems have evolved over time to meet the needs of the military as well agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Among the multitude of improved radar technologies MPT's phased-array technology gives radar systems an extra edge is the phased-array system, which is often used by warships to track and detect missiles. Key to the technology is an electronically scanned array of antennae that allow the beam to rapidly redirect, track multiple targets, and maintain big-picture surveillance. Given its importance, continued improvement of phased-array radar has been an imperative for both military and commercial applications.

Enter California-based Microwave Packaging Technology, Inc. (MPT), a company which has risen to the challenge of expanding phased-array radar capabilities by providing components, subsystems, and R&D services to the U.S. government. "Our adversaries have developed technology that is able to counter some of our country's phased array capability," said Dr. Rick Sturdivant, founder and CTO of MPT, Inc. "Our research has helped the U.S. maintain a technology and military capability edge over our adversaries."

MPT's affordable, increased-detection range system uses Ka-band phased-array radar, which is a higher frequency band than K-band, where water vapor in the atmosphere absorbs the signal and greatly reduces range. With this higher frequency and correspondingly shorter wavelength, Ka-band radar can carry more information at a faster rate and detect objects with higher resolution than lower frequency radars, such as Ku-band and L-band. According to NASA's website, the difference between Ka-band and other radar is "like the difference between the television antennas perched on houses decades ago...and the satellite antenna dishes used today that use a much higher frequency."

The development of MPT's detection system was made possible through a series of Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) awards that helped fund necessary steps in the technology's development. A Rapid Innovation Fund (RIF) award allowed the company to swiftly get the technology into the hands of the U.S. Army.

MPT develops antennas and subsystems that extend the sensitivity of the phased-array radar. The subsequent Ka-band radar waves coming from the array of antennas operate at a frequency 10 times higher than cell phones and WiFi, which means they are able to detect small details. It allows U.S. warfighters to see the enemy before the enemy sees them, and it gives missiles the ability to automatically guide themselves to their targets. Dr. Sturdivant said that most of the military's use of the technology is classified, but that there are plenty of obvious scenarios in which the phased-array radar would give the U.S. warfighter an upper hand.

"One hypothetical situation might be a dogfight between two fighter planes," Dr. Sturdivant said. "For instance, our radar will allow the U.S. pilot to fire a missile that will see an adversary's aircraft before it sees the U.S. pilot. And the phased-array will automatically track to the other fighter plane and protect our pilot from being shot down. That's a very realistic scenario."

An SBIR Phase I in 2012 allowed MPT to increase radar range. An SBIR Phase II in 2013 allowed the company to improve other aspects of the system including radar thermal cooling, output power, and in-flight calibration. With the 2014 Army RIF award, MPT was able to rapidly develop the technology using innovative electronic packaging. Dr. Sturdivant said, "What RIF did is it allowed us to jump start and kick into high gear our development of technology to counter those types of threats." The success of the Army RIF contract has also allowed MPT to leverage the phased array technology for several commercial contracts they wouldn't have otherwise received, including projects with Raytheon, the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), Lockheed Martin, and several other non-DoD customers. For instance, MPT's phased-array and digital receiver products have been developed for MDA systems such as the TPY-2 radar systems.

In large part thanks to the RIF contract, MPT is now working with the U.S. Air Force to develop a satellite communication system similar to the one being constructed for Elon Musk's private space flight company, SpaceX. The system will improve the data rate for internet access from space.

"These satellites are going to be used to provide high-speed internet access around the world," Dr. Sturdivant said. "It's technology that a lot of people will be able to access." Access to high-speed internet could be especially transformative for remote communities that don't have much infrastructure, including rural areas and third world countries. Dr. Sturdivant co-authored a 2017 paper for the peer-reviewed journal IEEE Access in which he cited statistics from the national nonprofit, Next Century Cities, stating that 39 percent of individuals living in rural areas and 41 percent of people living on tribal lands lack high-speed internet. For Dr. Sturdivant, as a member of the Lumbee Indian Tribe of North Carolina, that issue is personal. He knows how access can affect Native communities.

"One of the more underserved groups for internet access in the United States are American Indians," he said. "And it affects their ability to have access to education. It affects the businesses they start. It puts them at a disadvantage. But our technology will allow them to make contact through these satellites for high-speed internet."

Based on its long experience researching and developing technology in the field, MPT is uniquely positioned for success with its phased-array technology. One of the company's engineers holds 75 patents related to the technology, and Dr. Sturdivant has written several books and papers on phased-array systems. But the SBIR and RIF programs gave MPT the boost the company needed in order to fulfill its potential. Dr. Sturdivant said that MPT is now projected to grow somewhere between \$20 to \$40 million in the next couple of years, and that boost translates to innovative technologies the DoD may harness in future crises.

"The success of the SBIR program and the RIF award has propelled and accelerated the growth of MPT," Sturdivant said. "Because of the SBIR and RIF awards, we are able to provide additional value to our customers and help them meet their goals on phased-array programs.

The content in these articles do not constitute or imply endorsement by the Department of Defense or the Military Service(s) of the provider or producer of the technology, product, process, or services mentioned.

### **Outreach Events**

#### The Navy SBIR/STTR Innovation Center at Navy Gold Coast Conference

The Navy SBIR/STTR Program participated in the 2023 Navy Gold Coast conference held in San Diego, CA, on July 26-28, featuring the Navy SBIR/STTR Innovation Center in the Exhibit Hall—which included over 200 government agencies and industry organizations booths.

The Navy SBIR/STTR Innovation Center is a unique platform for twenty SBIR/STTR Phase II awardees invited by the Navy to showcase their technologies. In addition, the Navy SBIR/STTR Innovation Center provides onsite assistance to ensure all participating small businesses could make connections that support their technology transition needs.

The Navy Gold Coast Conference provides a forum to educate, guide, and assist businesses, large and small, in support of the warfighter mission within the Department of the Navy and throughout the DoD and included three days of sessions, insightful panels, and workshops

delivered by government and industry experts. Small business representatives also had opportunities to meet key government and industry contracting personnel through one-on-one matchmaking sessions.

A highlight of the Conference was the Honorable Erik K. Raven, Under Secretary of the Navy, visiting the Navy SBIR/ STTR Innovation Center and meeting with representatives from the participating small businesses. Summaries of the Phase II technologies featured in 2023 and 2022 are available at https://navysbir.com/ngc23.htm.



TESTIMONIALS FROM

PARTICIPANTS

"The exposure and interaction

with Navy SBIR and other Small Business representatives

was extremely valuable. ."

"It was very nice to meet other

small businesses and have

conversations about future collaboration."

"Just an outstanding experience."

The Honorable Erik K. Raven, Under Secretary of the Navy, at the Navy SBIR/STTR Innovation Center, Navy Gold Coast Conference. Photo credit: Antonio Rodríguez

## Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering and DoD SBIR/STTR Program Office Participates in the 26th Annual Space and Missile Defense Symposium

The Honorable Ms. Heidi Shyu, Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, with support from the DoD SBIR/ STTR team, including Mr. Matthew Williams, Acting Director, DoD SBIR/STTR Program Office, hosted her ninth Small Business Roundtable at the Space & Missile Defense Symposium (SMD) held at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville, AL on August 9. Ms. Shyu also spoke that evening at a dinner engagement for the Symposium.

DoD SBIR/STTR staffers hosted a booth in the exhibit hall where they met with conference attendees to discuss the SBIR/STTR programs, innovation and success stories as well as disseminate materials.



SBIR/STTR Fall Conference November 28-29, 2023 Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center National Harbor, MD 20745 https://events.techconnect.org/DTCFall/program.html



Defense Manufacturing Conference December 11-14, 2023 Music City Center, Nashville, Tennessee <u>https://www.dmcmeeting.com</u>



Defense TechConnect Innovation Summit & Expo November 28-30, 2023 Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center National Harbor, MD 20745 https://events.techconnect.org/DTCFall/program.html



CES® January 8-12, 2024 Las Vegas Convention Center Las Vegas, Nevada https://www.ces.tech



### Let's Connect

DoD SBIR/STTR https://www.defensesbirsttr.mil







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