

National Geospatial Advisory Committee

Public-Private Partnership Use Case:

NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



Partnership Intermediary Agreement

Background

The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency's (NGA) Research Directorate engages with industry and academia to accelerate delivery and deployment of capability solutions. Research aims to accelerate delivery of solutions that fulfill the agency's core mission and highest priorities, and to make innovation and acquisition faster and easier. Research uses many available resources to accomplish these goals by developing NGA entrepreneurs, partnering with academia, and teaming with industry in traditional and non-traditional ways to rapidly and easily deliver geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) solutions to our customers in the form and on the timelines they need it.

NGA and Technology Transfer

Use of Federal Technology Transfer (T2) agreements date back to the early 1980s as a Defense Department effort to derive greater value from technologies developed through government research. Federal labs use tools like Partnership Intermediary Agreements (PIAs) to execute the T2 mission. PIAs help industry and academia leverage government developed data and technology. Partnership Intermediaries are state/local agencies or state/local owned and operated non-profit entities, including state universities. PIAs number in the hundreds and exist in every state. Federal labs are not limited in how many PIAs they have or where they are located, and many have multiple intermediary partners in multiple states. Some notable PIAs include The Doolittle Institute and TechLink.

A PIA is a specific type of Public-Private Partnership (P3) defined by 15 U.S. Code § 3715 (Use of partnership intermediaries). PIAs aim to cooperate with small businesses and educational institutions "that need or can make demonstrably productive use of technology-related assistance from a Federal laboratory." All work accomplished through a PIA must support the transfer of technology between the Federal government and the partnered small businesses and educational institutions. A PIA typically involves smaller efforts with shorter duration and a greater focus on innovation and technology development than most P3s.

In October 2018, NGA established a T2 mission that includes the use of PIAs as a tool to engage in technology transfer with industry and academia. PIAs can enhance innovation and increase the speed of acquiring mission-critical solutions. Through engagement with a multitude of local small businesses and educational institutions, a PIA can also stimulate growth in the local economy. A partnership intermediary performs services that increase the likelihood of success in the conduct of cooperative or joint activities with small businesses and educational institutions. PIAs facilitate a wide range of licensing and other technology transfer initiatives.

The Missouri Technology Corporation PIA

In January 2019, NGA entered into a PIA with the Missouri Technology Corporation (MTC). MTC bridges NGA and the local St. Louis industry to match NGA developed technologies and data with viable industry partners who can, in turn, leverage it for commercial purposes. The primary purpose of the MTC PIA was to enhance a geospatial ecosystem in St. Louis. This will help the State of Missouri grow and strengthen its economy and workforce through NGA sponsored

opportunities for businesses and academia that grow and mature emerging geospatial capabilities and solutions. This aligns with MTC's primary purpose:

“To contribute to the strengthening of the economy of the State of Missouri through the development of science and technology, to promote the modernization of Missouri businesses by supporting the transfer of science, technology and quality improvement methods to the workplace, and to enhance the productivity and modernization of Missouri businesses by providing leadership and the establishment of methods of technology application, technology commercialization and technology development.”

How It Works

In 2020, NGA modified the PIA with MTC to permit the use of funding to support technology transfer efforts. Using a Collaborative Project Order, NGA funded MTC to deliver two technology accelerator cohorts. Both cohorts aim to provide opportunities for local emerging companies to gain experience and guidance for growing their products in line with the NGA Technology Focus Areas. Participants will gain valuable knowledge and insight on working with the Federal government and become better prepared to support NGA's technology requirements.

Why It Works

Reducing product development time and accelerating capabilities to market while reducing redundant investment make this program successful. Through a PIA, new markets and strategies emerge to provide additional space for innovation that does not exist in the Federal government today. The government can create the foundation and opportunity for American companies, but the government cannot do this alone. Private partners are key to the evolution of this data exchange.

Value in This Effort

NGA is building a new campus in the St. Louis area. Establishing a foundation of commercial and academic entities readily available to collaborate with NGA as they pursue their mission is critical to the success of the NGA mission. The value of the PIA for NGA is the ability to nurture the development and growth of small and emerging businesses into a geospatially knowledgeable force capable of assisting in the work we do. With this effort, NGA provides the opportunity for small, emerging companies to develop the skills they need to become lean, innovative, and agile enterprises.

How Can I Use It?

NGA will advance its technology transfer efforts for the commercialization of federally developed technology. Through MTC, NGA will engage with partners in the greater St. Louis region to drive innovation in geospatial technology through collaboration and a transfer of technology and subject matter expertise. In 2021, NGA will sponsor two accelerators that will be open to small or early stage companies. Accelerator activities will develop participating companies and prepare them to support the NGA mission.