

# ***Panel Discussion***

## ***GAO Presentation on SBIR/STTR & Space Community Concerns***

- **Contact Information**
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- **Provider of:**
  - System-HW-SW-IT Solutions
  - Pattern Recognition Enabled Solutions (PRES)
  - Innovative R&D
  - Engineering Services
- **Active in SBIR programs at DOD, DOE, & DHS**

# GAO Presentation Overview

- **Invited to present our SBIR/STTR and Space-Community experiences to GAO personnel 26-FEB-2010** (~2.5 hours)
  - *Very impressed that GAO is investigating SBIR/STTR problems*
  - *GAO reps were very knowledgeable of small-biz concerns*
  - *GAO reps will likely advise Congress; part of SBIR re-authorization process*
- **Discussed our efforts over the last 7 years developing 80+**
  - *SBIR/STTR proposals, BAA proposals, white papers, RFIs, open RFPs, ...*
- **Discussed SBIR/STTR program features and presented opinions regarding:**
  - *What works*
  - *What doesn't*
  - *"Participation value"*
  - *Specifically focused on FFRDC issues (tech transfer and collaboration)*
- **GAO very interested in small business problems participating in Space-Community programs** (government & big primes)
  - *Discussed the problems we have encountered over the last 7 years*

# SBIR Concerns

- **Have submitted ~44 SBIR proposals to DOD, DOE, & DHS in the last 7 years**
- **Have explored 100s of other topics in depth**
- **Have seen evidence of SBIR Program abuse**
  - *Topic POCs who are unavailable for contact/questions*
  - *Topics that obviously favor the incumbent vendor community*
  - *Publishing of topics obviously written by an incumbent vendor*
  - *Debriefings leading us to believe our proposals were not even read*
  - *Bias against submitters that were “too small”*
  - *Topics that reference documents we cannot access (despite our efforts)*
- **Suggested ideas to improve the DOD SBIR Program**
  - *Longer pre-solicitation period (>2 months)*
  - *More smaller solicitations during the year (eliminate 500+ page solicitations)*
  - *More BAA-like (DOE like) topics in each solicitation (DARPA also does this sometimes)*
  - *Make all ref-docs available on DTIC.MIL or DODSBIR.NET*
  - *Teaming support web site (like some DARPA BAAs)*
  - *Setup a “micro-biz” submitter class with quotas*
- **See value in the SBIR Program whether we submit proposals or not**
  - *However, we would like to do so more often ...*

# STTR Concerns

- Have submitted only 1 STTR proposal to DOD in the last 7 years
- Have explored >100 other topics in depth
- Have largely abandoned the STTR program because of problems
  - *Team-member identification (FFRDC, NPRDI, Universities)*
  - *Extra work at 50% funding isn't worth the trouble (more work than writing proposal)*
- Suggested that the DOD STTR program “go away” (fold topics into SBIR)
  - *Perhaps modify DOD program to be more like DOE (for STTR only)*
- Discussed our max-effort to team on DOD-STTR a few years ago
  - *Got full FFRDC list from NSF*
  - *Contacted every (relevant) FFRDC, followed up, got nowhere*
- Discussed general FFRDC STTR teaming
  - *Problems:*
    - **Misinformed:** they say they cannot team with small-biz (i.e.: AERO))
    - **Clueless:** they don't know how to connect-the-dots between topic & programs/people
    - **Not worth it:** \$\$\$
  - *Successes: In 2004 JPL was our only success*
    - They admitted the \$\$\$ were not worth it but did it because of good-will
  - *Conclusion: It's not worth it for us or the FFRDCs (effort or \$\$\$)*

# Space Community Concerns

- **Have been exploring Space Community (SC) business for 7+ years**
- **Have been largely shut-out; excuses include**
  - *Clearance issues (doesn't fly with us)*
  - *Gov won't allow small-biz community to access to programs/people*
  - *Gov methods to describe needs presented to a "closed community"*
  - *Gov will not describe needs clearly (only the big primes seem to know)*
- **In Q1-2009 we put forth a "max effort" to penetrate SMC, AERO, & others**
  - *Presented 70+ SC-relevant slides to SMC Chief Scientist; no response*
  - *Presented slides 2 SMC WINGS; no response*
  - *Tried to team with AERO on SC BAA topic; won't team*
- **However, as of APR-2010 we are encouraged**
  - *Things are changing ...*