



The Rapid Innovation Fund Program

The Rapid Innovation Fund (RIF), created by the Defense Authorization Act of 2011, is a competitive, merit based series of annual announcements designed to accelerate fielding of innovative small business technologies into military systems. The goals for use of the funds were designed to reflect the DoD's emphasis on rapid, responsive acquisition of promising technologies that meet specific defense needs, and the engagement of small innovative businesses across the country in solving defense problems.

Specifically, NDAA language requires the DOD to target and utilize SBIR Phase II technologies for this program **“to the greatest extent practicable”**. This language was included in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012 that contains the SBIR/STTR reauthorization provisions [Appendix I] and includes major new language that indicates strong Congressional intent to improve the process of rapidly transitioning SBIR/STTR (hereafter SBIR) innovative technologies for insertion into DOD fielded systems and platforms. The law specifically states:

“Sec. 5108: To the **greatest extent practicable**, Federal agencies and Federal prime contractors **shall** issue Phase III awards relating to technology, including sole source awards, to the SBIR and STTR award recipients that developed the technology.”¹ [Emphasis added.] [Phase III is further defined as, see Sec. 5125 – “for work that derives from, extends, or completes efforts made under prior funding agreements under the SBIR program.”]

The law now requires that the Secretary of Defense shall:

- (A) set a goal to increase the number of Phase II SBIR contracts and the number of Phase II STTR contracts awarded by the Secretary that lead to technology transition into programs of record or fielded systems;
- (B) insert incentive language from paper
- (C) insert report language.

Past Congressional and DOD Phase III efforts

The RIF program is just the latest in a long series of efforts by Congress and the DOD to better utilize technologies that have been produced by R&D expenditures, and help transition those technologies to the warfighter. Since 1996, there has been a multitude of hearings, proposals and programs before Congress concerning transitioning technology at DOD, especially SBIR technology. DOD, on the other hand, has launched a number of Congressionally-sanctioned technology transition programs not focusing on SBIR such as Defense Acquisition Challenge, Technology Transition Initiative, Quick Reaction Fund and Rapid Technology Transition. DOD has almost 50 external funding programs with 20 of those programs designed to rapidly transition technology. Unfortunately, none of these programs have been as successful

¹ 15 USC 638(e)(4)(C)