

# REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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## DESCRIPTION

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) – This RFI is issued for information and planning purposes only. It does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or presumes an RFP will subsequently be released. Since this is an RFI and not an RFP, solicitation requests will not receive a response. This notice does not constitute a commitment by the United States Government to contract for any supply or service or reimbursement for responses nor provide feedback on submissions. All information submitted in response to this announcement is voluntary; the United States Government will not pay for information requested or costs incurred in developing information provided to the United States Government. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation should any RFPs be released, which will be via SAM.GOV and GRANTS.GOV; it is the responsibility of potential offerors to monitor these sites for additional information pertaining to this requirement.

The US Army Contracting Command-Aberdeen Proving Ground-Research Triangle Park (ACC-APG-RTP) Division, 800 Park Offices Drive, Suite 4229, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 is exploring options for support to the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Army Research Laboratory (ARL).

The purpose of this notice is to elicit insights and gauge interest. Responses will be assessed to identify potential offerors who have the capabilities, relationships, and interest to support the requirement posed in this RFI.

## BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

In an era marked by disruptive and unpredictable technological change, the pace of the move-countermove cycle before and especially during war will be blistering, punishing those that cannot adapt rapidly enough, requiring defense and military institutions to be as adaptable and agile as their warfighters and strategists. History demonstrates that the side that develops and integrates advanced technology and concept faster wins. However, the ability for the U.S. warfighting organization to be the faster adapter faces two broad challenges. First, the center of mass for technological innovation rests outside the federal government, decreasing its awareness of and ability to anticipate or drive technological innovation, from budding ideas to first production. Second, the Army, as an organization, cannot adapt programs and requirements at a speed that keeps pace with market- and innovation-driven technological change, potentially preventing the Army from integrating and fielding disruptive technology at scale.

In response to these challenges, the Army is exploring a new program supporting collaborative, multidisciplinary, fundamental research on innovation ecosystems. Under this program, the Army would establish collaborative partnerships with world-class U.S. universities that bring in the co-located technological sector to form mutually beneficial interdisciplinary innovation ecosystems. The multidisciplinary research executed will explore the fundamental concepts of innovation ecosystems, that in addition to advancing science for the benefit of society, will produce pragmatic, evidence-based recommendations on how to anticipate, manage, influence, and lead innovation to support the Army's concept-required capabilities.

This RFI seeks to elicit insights from universities, research institutions, and other organizations on the science and practice to establish mutually beneficial partnerships in the form of innovation ecosystems with co-located technological sector that supports fundamental research at the intersection of science and technology, national security policy, innovation, and entrepreneurship as well as the relationships between partners. Responses to this RFI should answer **any or all the following questions**:

1. What is a key theory or framework to guide – policy, processes, structures, etc. – forming an innovation ecosystem comprised of the Army, an academic research institution, and a co-located tech to collaboratively drive science and innovation in high priority research areas leading to new capabilities? What are critical scientific gaps, and thus opportunities, that this program could pursue via collaborative basic research?
2. What are potential scientific concepts within the broader innovation ecosystem field to be explored through collaborative fundamental research to “anticipate, manage, influence, and lead innovation” across the Army, academia, and industry that could inform short-, mid-, and/or long-term strategy to include scientific and/or other investments; changes in organizational policy, processes, and/or structures; other?
3. How is the optimal composition of an innovation tech sector identified, assessed, and adapted based on strategic needs, policy, and scientific and technological innovations?
4. How could we scientifically explore the dynamic interactions and interdependences – cooperative and competitive – across the Army, academic research institution, and co-located tech sector over time?
5. How do we understand the relationship of the market to an innovation ecosystem and how does that relationship change as the market changes, particularly as it pertains to dual-use research and technology? What other environmental information may factor into this relationship, potentially enhancing or suppressing the market's influence?
6. How do we rapidly integrate scientific and technological innovations, both those that originate from within the innovation ecosystem and those originating externally, into research, development, and concepts, ensuring products, processes, and plans reflect state-of-the-art?
7. What would a successful innovation ecosystem look like, as a whole and individually for the Army, the academic research institution, and the co-located

tech sector? What existing valid markers/indicators could be used to assess success? What other valid indicators/markers should be developed to obtain better assessment of success?

8. What are best practices for an academic research institution to support full-time current Army personnel on the ground and collaboratively engaged in fundamental research, information exchange to include infusion of Army needs and priorities, and engagement with co-located tech sector?
9. What organizational characteristics (policy, processes, and structures), personnel, activities, existing relationships, current/past collaborations, etc. that may indicate an academic research institution's capability to successfully engage in use-inspired research within the National Defense space and be better positioned to be a collaborative partner with ARL?

For the purpose of this RFI, ARL is interested in a multidisciplinary approach that includes theoretical, experimental, modeling approaches drawing on literature from, but not limited to, the organizational sciences, business, social sciences, and/or systems theory.

### **SUBMISSIONS DETAILS**

ARL requests that submittals briefly, clearly, and directly address all information requested within the RFI. ARL welcomes responses from all capable and qualified sources from within the United States. This announcement contains all the information required to submit a response. No additional forms, kits, or other materials are needed.

Responses have the following formatting requirements:

1. A one-page cover sheet that identifies the title, organization(s), respondent's technical point of contact - including names, address, phone number, and email addresses of all co-authors, and clearly indicating its association with **RFI-HC-26-01-MBMIE**.
2. Responses to above questions along with additional information for other capabilities demonstrating potential to be a successful collaborative partner limited to 5 pages in minimum 12-point Arial font, color graphics if relevant, appropriate for single-spaced 8.5 by 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins);
3. A list of citations (any significant claims or reports of success must be accompanied by citations), not longer than 2 pages; and
4. An appendix of critical reference papers or white papers (no more than 3) associated with answers.

The deadline for responses to this request is due no later than 5:00 PM ET, **15 February 2026 17 March 2026**. All responses must be submitted via e-mail to MBMIS-RFI@army.mil. All data received in response to this notice that is marked or designated as corporate or proprietary will be fully protected from any release outside the Government.

## REFERENCE

Rainey, J. E. (2024). Continuous transformation. *Military Review*, 104(5), 10-26.  
<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Online-Exclusive/2024-OLE/Deliberate-Transformation/>