



SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Supply Chain Gaps and Entrepreneur Assistance

AGENCY: U.S. Small Business Administration.

ACTION: Request for Information.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) seeks public comment on questions related to supply chain gaps in critical industries and how entrepreneur technical assistance could be aligned to increase business growth and technology development in needed industries. Information received in response to this request will inform SBA's efforts to build innovation networks in critical industries.

DATES: Submit comments on or before [INSERT DATE 15 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Submission Instructions: SBA will collect comments via technology@sba.gov, comments are strictly voluntary and **MUST not** exceed 5 pages. Please include the subject line, "RFI Response: Innovation Networks and Supply Chains". Your response should include a cover sheet (does not count towards 5-page limit) with the following:

- Individual or Organization Name
- (If applicable) Organization/ Individual Point of Contact
- (If applicable) Organization UEI

Disclaimer: No reimbursement will be made for any costs associated with providing information in response to this RFI or any follow-up information requests.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Alison Evans, Program Analyst, Office of Investment and Innovation, U.S. Small Business Administration, technology@sba.gov, (202) 856-7386. This phone number may also be reached by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, or

who have speech disabilities, through the Federal Communications Commission's TTY-Based Telecommunications Relay Service Teletype service at 711.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Since its inception in 1953, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has served to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small businesses. While SBA is best known for its financial support of small businesses through its many lending programs, the Agency also plays a critical role in building and strengthening support and resource networks critical to small businesses and nascent entrepreneurs.

The role of innovation and deep tech entrepreneurs in spurring economic growth, strengthening industry supply chains, and maintaining U.S. competitiveness and security is well-documented. The U.S. is facing growing competition internationally and these entrepreneurs and small businesses are critical to continued U.S. success - but they face unique, and often, expensive challenges.

The Office of Investment and Innovation (OII) oversees SBA's Innovation Network Programs which are dedicated to building local and regional support and resource networks needed by small businesses and technology entrepreneurs developing critical and emerging technologies. In FY26, SBA anticipates funding new awards across the country through its Innovation Network Programs:

- Growth Accelerator Fund Competition (GAFC): The purpose of GAFC is to support organizations that help entrepreneurs start and scale their businesses. The program targets accelerators serving technology entrepreneurs in sectors which face larger challenges to accessing capital.
- Federal and State Technology Partnership Program (FAST): The primary mission of the FAST program is to strengthen the technological competitiveness of small businesses in the United States by raising awareness of and supporting the development of proposals to the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)/ Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.

- Regional Innovation Cluster (RIC) Program: The primary mission of the RIC program is to strengthen industry through regional collaboration and support networks connecting small businesses with end customers.

SBA's Innovation Network Programs are focused on building coordination across industries and geographies to catalyze critical technology development. SBA encourages organizations interested in applying to future solicitations for any of the Innovation Network Programs to consider:

- The current and/or historic industries driving the economic activity of your community and specific actions needed to strengthen those industries.
- The strengths and weaknesses of your innovation network with relevant qualitative and quantitative data.
- The small business programs or assistance needed to support technology entrepreneurs.
- The coordination, assets, or knowledge that is needed in your innovation network to enhance technology development and small business success.
- Partnerships, formal or informal, that are needed within your innovation network.
- The anticipated outcomes of strengthened innovation networks and impacts to small business success, including obtaining capital and job creation.

Information Requested: As SBA designs the future of its Innovation Network Programs, it is interested in feedback from entrepreneurs, small and large businesses, entrepreneur support organizations, investors, and other industry representatives on the following:

1. What existing or projected supply chain gaps may limit economic growth and be detrimental to national competitiveness and security?
 - a. Describe what technology(ies) are needed and the challenges to integrating into the supply chain.

- b. Describe the anticipated timeframe of identifying and implementing the needed solution. The solution could be developing a new technology, adapting an existing technology, scaling production capacity, better industry coordination, etc.
 - c. Describe specific gaps small businesses are uniquely positioned to fill.
 - d. Describe workforce challenges, and/or models that may work to address those challenges in these supply chain gaps.
2. What businesses exist currently to fill supply chain gaps? Could certain types of businesses readily pivot to fill those gaps?
3. What challenges do highly specialized suppliers face and if solved what supply chain gaps could they fill? Do any highly specialized suppliers support multiple industry or technology areas?
4. Challenges entrepreneurs and small businesses experience in commercializing technologies relevant to national security and international competitiveness, and proven curricula or other resource models to overcome challenges.
5. Quantitative and qualitative data sources and tools to track supply chains most relevant to national and economic security.

Joshua Carter,

Associate Administrator for the Office of Investment and Innovation.

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