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Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)

Jennifer Thabet

Program Director, DARPA Small Business Programs Office

Ms. Jennifer Thabet is an experienced program manager with an extensive background supporting DARPA and the DoD. Enhancing the ability of the small business community to create and transition revolutionary technologies that benefit the warfighter, federal government, and commercial marketplace is of paramount importance in Ms. Thabet's role of program director, DARPA Small Business Programs Office (SBPO). She is focused on creating an environment that considers small business concerns a primary source of innovative solutions and advancing small business relationships and training opportunities within the DoD and other federal agencies.

Prior to joining SBPO, Ms. Thabet spent more than 13 years with Booz Allen Hamilton supporting DARPA and the DoD by providing program and project management for complex government contracts with a focus on project and financial management. She has specialized expertise in contract negotiations, business process improvements, and small business relations and risk management. Her experience includes work in multiple DARPA Technical Offices where she supported all aspects of the DARPA programmatic lifecycle from program concept to transition. Her background also includes work in DARPA support offices, including the Director's Office (DIRO) and the Mission Services Office (MSO), where she served as the contract program manager for DARPA's largest and most complex support contract. Prior to her time at DARPA, Ms. Thabet spent time as an attorney, specializing in contract law and general litigation.

Ms. Thabet holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Washington University in St. Louis, a Juris Doctorate degree from The George Washington University School of Law, and a Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification from the Project Management Institute.



Defense Health Agency (DHA)

Colleen Gibney
SBIR Deputy Project Manager

Colleen Gibney is the SBIR Deputy Project Manager at the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC), serving both Army and Defense Health Agency SBIR and STTR Programs for over three years. Prior to her Army Civilian role, Colleen provided SBIR and STTR technology transition and commercialization assistance to small business performers as a Technical Assistance Advocate support contractor at USAMRDC for four years. She previously served as the SBIR Program Director for ITAC, the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership co-funded center for New York City, under NYMEP's SBA-awarded FAST Program, and as the Project Manager for an NSF Partnerships for Innovation-funded program at the City University of New York's Institute for Software Design and Development. Colleen has been working with SBIR/STTR, America's Seed Fund, from multiple vantage points, since 2004.



Defense Health Agency (DHA)

Andrea Renner

U.S. Army Medical Research Support

Andrea Renner has been supporting the mission of U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC) for eight years. She started her career in the Malaria Vaccine Development program at Naval Medical Research Center and then transitioned to provide project management support to Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs. Andrea is currently the Technical Assistance Advocate (TAA) at the MRDC Small Business Innovation Research Office, providing technology transition and commercialization support to small businesses that receive contract awards through the Army and Defense Health Agency SBIR and STTR programs.



Federal Laboratory Consortium (FLC)

Corin Hindenach
Regional Support Manager

As a Regional Support Manager, Corin works with the Regional Coordinators in the Federal Laboratory Consortium to assist in developing partnerships, lead educational seminars, and build collaboration between regional efforts. Corin came to the FLC from the University of Louisville's commercialization center. She has been in technology transfer for the last five years working in IP administration and Federal Compliance.

Corin is in the final semester of her Master of Public Administration Courses from the University of Louisville and graduated from Spalding University with a bachelor's degree in natural sciences. Her diverse background includes law, data systems management, customer service and science. She enjoys working with stakeholders, communicating with federal agencies, streamlining processes and seeing innovations become products that improve the lives of others. In her free time, you can likely find her traveling or appreciating the natural world through camping, kayaking, backpacking and other outdoor activities.



Federal Laboratory Consortium (FLC)

David Kistin

Program Leader, Small Business Vouchers Pilot at
Sandia National Laboratories

David Kistin, of Sandia National Laboratories, is the program lead for the Center for Collaboration and Commercialization (C3), a “front door” to Sandia created to strengthen partnerships, technology transfer and ties to the community. This work focuses on several services created to boost Sandia’s interaction with industry, academia and government entities.

David also serves as the lead for Sandia’s Entrepreneur Exploration (EEx) program, which connects principal investigators with entrepreneurial opportunities and resources provided by a multitude of partners. This program is designed to invigorate an entrepreneurial culture and inspire researchers to either go into the business world or develop that innovative mindset while at the Labs.

David has worked in the entrepreneurial ecosystem his entire career. He joined Sandia from UpSpring Associates, a management consulting firm focused on the design, growth, and measurement of mission-driven ventures across New Mexico, throughout the U.S. and around the world. He began his career as the founder of a bioenergy startup based in New Mexico with operations in Mexico and western Canada.

David completed his MBA and his BA at the University of New Mexico, where he focused on Latin American Studies and Political Economy.



Federal Laboratory Consortium (FLC)

Beth Thomas

Regional Support Manager

As a Regional Support Manager, Beth works with the Regional Coordinators in the Federal Laboratory Consortium to assist in developing partnerships, lead educational seminars, and build collaboration between regional efforts. Beth came to the FLC from the National Institute of Standards and Technology. She has over 35 years of government operations and financial management expertise. Beth holds a Master of Business Administration from Hood College and a Bachelor of Arts from Shepherd College.



Missile Defense Agency (MDA)

Christina "Tina" Barnhill
Acting SBIR/STTR Operations Manager

Christina "Tina" Barnhill is the Acting SBIR/STTR Operations Manager at the Missile Defense Agency (MDA). She has 25 years of experience delivering prime results and best practices, and is an experienced, multi-disciplined, Department of Defense (DoD) civilian with extensive focus on small business efforts, Industry, and DoD major weapons systems acquisition for small businesses. Tina develops and executes SBIR/STTR program strategies, best practices for small business resources, and assists small businesses with ways to best market their capabilities to the Missile Defense Agency. In 2013, she established a Commercialization and Transition Office within the MDA SBIR/STTR Program Office, and has extensive experience with the DoD Mentor Protégé Program.

Tina earned her Master of Science degree in Project Management from the Florida Institute of Technology in 2009.

In June of 2015, after having been nominated by a small business, Tina won the 2015 "Champion of Small Business Technology Commercialization" award presented by the DoD National Small Business Association.



Missile Defense Agency (MDA)

Richard Jackson
SBIR/STTR Phase III Commercialization and
Transition Lead

Richard Jackson is the SBIR/STTR Phase III Commercialization and Transition lead at the Missile Defense Agency (MDA). Mr. Jackson has worked with MDA as an acquisition professional within several major weapon system program offices for over 8 years managing cost, schedule, and performance. In his current role he develops and executes SBIR program strategies, utilizes acquisition best practices, and assists small businesses with marketing their capabilities to fit within the Agency's top priorities.

Prior to working within the defense industry Mr. Jackson worked as the lead marketer for a small healthcare business.

He has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management with a concentration in Marketing for Athens State University.



National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Stephanie Fertig, MBA

HHS Small Business Program Lead
SEED (Small business Education and Entrepreneurial Development)
Office of Extramural Research (OER)

Ms. Stephanie J. Fertig is the new HHS Small Business Program Lead in SEED (Small business Education and Entrepreneurial Development) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). She currently oversees the Health and Human Services (HHS) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, which includes the NIH SBIR and STTR programs. NIH's SBIR and STTR programs invest over 1 billion dollars into health and life science companies that are creating innovative technologies that align with NIH's mission to improve health and save lives. A key objective is to translate promising technologies to the private sector and enable life-saving innovations to reach consumer markets.

Prior to joining SEED, she managed the SBIR and STTR Programs at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). During her over 15 years at NIH she has led the development and implementation of multiple programs focused on small businesses and translational research, including programs part of the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) and Helping to End Addiction Long-term (HEAL) Initiatives. Ms. Fertig has a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry with a major in Physics from the University of Virginia and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business.



National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Robert Vinson
Program Manager, SBIR

Mr. Vinson serves as a Program Manager for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) SBIR/STTR Program in the Office of Extramural Programs, Office of Extramural Research (OER). In this role he is responsible for providing resources to Federal staffers and access to critical information for the small business community seeking early-stage Federal funding. His duties include serving as the Contracting Officer's Representative for the NIH Niche Assessment Program and the Commercialization Accelerator Program. These programs provide technical assistance, market analysis, and commercialization guidance for NIH SBIR/STTR Phase I and Phase II awardees. Rob is also the OER Task Manager for the NIH Performance Outcomes Data System.

Before joining the SBIR/STTR Program Office, he was a Senior Grants Policy Analyst at the National Heart, Lung, & Blood Institute (NHLBI). In that role, he managed initiatives and special projects on a variety of grants and administrative policy issues. Rob had been with NHLBI since 1993 where his career began as a Grants Management Specialist and rose to the positions of Team Leader, Grants Management Officer, and Branch Chief. Prior to joining NIH Rob was a commercial loan officer, with an emphasis on small business development and community revitalization.



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Tiffany House
Commercialization Specialist

Tiffany House is a Commercialization Specialist who works with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program. Tiffany's job is to communicate with small business owners and provide them with the resources they need to develop their innovative technologies for the commercial sector.

Tiffany is originally from Washington, DC where she developed a love for money and business at an early age. Tiffany obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Economics (2007) from Central State University in Wilberforce, OH. A few years later she received her MBA from Trinity University.

Throughout her career, Tiffany planned diversity-related events for employees as the lead of NOAA National Geodetic Survey's People Committee, received the National Ocean Service Team Member of the Year Award in 2010, and served as the Vice President for NOAA's Seas & Skies Chapter of Federally Employed Women from 2012-2014. Tiffany currently represents the NOAA Technology Partnerships Office on the EEO Advisory Committee.

Driven by her passion for helping people, Tiffany is highly motivated with an enthusiastic can-do attitude. She has been an advocate for her four-year-old son with Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS) for the last two years. Last year, she raised almost \$2,000 to increase awareness of CAS and enable families to have access to educational resources about Apraxia and receive direct support for communication tools. Tiffany has also been recognized by her sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., for her extraordinary commitment to raising awareness of HIV and AIDS.

Tiffany is a firm believer that in order to be successful, you have to do more than what is expected of you...doing enough is not enough. Thomas Jefferson said, "I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have." This has been true for Tiffany throughout her career and personal life.



National Science Foundation (NSF)

Anna Brady-Estevez, Ph.D.
SBIR/SBIR Program Director

Anna Brady-Estevez joined the National Science Foundation as a SBIR/STTR Program Director in 2016. In this role she brings breadth of background across entrepreneurship and venture capital, innovative research, and direction of corporate strategy and investments. Anna has served as a collaborator with numerous startups having worked as an inventor for an early stage venture-backed start-up providing low-cost, low-energy portable water treatment, and a Principal Investor for an early stage venture firm. Anna's contributions were recognized in 2009 when she was selected as one of about 30 Kauffman Fellows from around the globe, for leadership in innovation and venture capital. She served as Director of Corporate Strategy for leading multinationals including The AES Corporation and Cummins Inc., and advised numerous clients while serving as a management consultant for The Boston Consulting Group.

Anna's work in these roles resulted in over \$6B of infrastructure investments with enhanced returns, identification of \$B+ cost reduction opportunities, contributing to a core transformation team of a \$T+ entity in oil & gas, and the implementation of several new technologies spanning nanotechnology, advanced manufacturing, Big Data and Internet of Things, along with new equipment that enabled transforming energy economics. Earlier in her career, she performed research at the intersection of innovation and international relations with the Office of Naval Research at the U.S. Embassy in Chile. Anna holds a PhD from Yale University in Chemical and Environmental Engineering, where she held a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship; and a B.S. in Chemical Engineering and B.A. in Spanish from The Johns Hopkins University.



National Science Foundation (NSF)

Erik Pierstorff
Program Director

Erik Pierstorff joined the NSF as Program Director in November 2019. Prior to NSF, he was Chief of Operations and led Research and Development at O-Ray Pharma, where he focused on integrating biology and biomedical engineering for the goal of drug development and sustained drug delivery for the treatment of hearing loss and other ear disorders. During his time working at early stage companies, he helped secure both Angel investment and non-dilutive funding in the form of licensing and co-development deals. Additionally, he served as Principal Investigator on several Phase I, II and IIB SBIR grants from the National Institutes of Health and NSF. His research interests have focused on the intersection of the biotic and abiotic, spanning molecular and cell biology, materials science, gene therapy, nanomaterials and drug delivery. Erik has a Ph.D. in Molecular and Cell Biology from the University of California, Berkeley, and a B.S. in Biology from Emory University.



National Science Foundation (NSF)

Ben Schrag

Senior Program Director for SBIR/STTR

Ben Schrag is a Program Director and Policy Liaison in the SBIR/STTR programs at the National Science Foundation. He joined the NSF in 2009, and during his tenure has led a variety of portfolio areas including advanced materials, nanotechnology, instrumentation and internet-of-things. Prior to joining NSF, he was the Director of Research and Development at Micro Magnetics, a startup company developing high-performance magnetic microsensor products for demanding consumer and military applications. Ben received his Ph.D. in Physics from Brown University.



National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

Doug Goodman

Engineering Integration and Science Directorate Support

Doug Goodman supports the Engineering Integration and Science Directorate at JSC as part of the SBIR Office. He actively travels and meets with the public to disseminate program information and NASA technology needs and develops the team's success opportunity tech sheets. Mr. Goodman has worked for NASA as a contractor since 1999 and has worked for Jacobs since 2008. He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1997 with Bachelor of Arts degrees in English and Psychology and obtained his Master of Arts degree in Technical Writing from Northern Illinois University in 1999. He was awarded a Silver Snoopy in 2012 from NASA for work in archiving Engineering Directorate records for the Shuttle Program and is the recipient of a NASA Silver Achievement Medal in 2018.



National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

Carol Lewis

SBIR/STTR Technology Transition Lead

Dr. Carol R. Lewis is the SBIR/STTR Technology Transition Lead at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL). Her primary responsibility is to manage the transition of SBIR/STTR-developed technologies into programs and projects, and through industry for commercialization support. This includes participating in the planning, development, and implementation of activities to assure that the program produces technologies that support JPL and NASA missions, and collaborates toward their commercialization. She coordinates JPL's SBIR/STTR activities with those of the Program Management Office and the Mission Directorate Representatives and Liaisons.

Prior to joining the SBIR/STTR Program, Dr. Lewis served as a technical line manager for spacecraft power systems and technologies, and optical and chemical sensors. Her organizations supported numerous planetary and earth orbiting flight projects with hardware design, development and testing of spacecraft power subsystems and lasers/optical metrology subsystems. They also conducted cutting edge technology development on photovoltaic arrays, thermal to electric power conversion, solid state electrochemistry, advanced bulk and thin film batteries, direct methanol fuel cells, optical metrology sources, and array-based chemical sensing. As Instrument Manager for JPL's Electronic Nose (ENose), she led the delivery of this array-based sensing technology demonstration, bridging the TRL 4-to-6 transition; a year later, ENose completed its successful six-month flight experiment onboard the International Space Station. Before joining JPL, Dr. Lewis supervised the materials research and development group at the Varian Research Center (Palo Alto, CA) that was responsible for numerous record-breaking efficiencies for single-junction and multijunction single-crystal semiconductor solar cells.

Dr. Lewis received a Ph.D. degree in Inorganic Chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a B. S. degree in Chemistry from Yale University.



National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

Gynelle Steele

Deputy Program Executive for NASA SBIR and STTR Programs

Gynelle previously managed the Glenn Research Center SBIR/STTR Program Office and was the Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate Liaison. Prior to serving as Glenn's SBIR/STTR Program Manager, Gynelle was an engineer in the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) serving as the Center Software Release Authority where she led the design and implementation of the Agency's software repository and designed and managed the Glenn Garrett Morgan Commercialization Initiative (GMCI) which was the Agency's only program focusing exclusively on transferring technology to small disadvantaged businesses.

Gynelle has received multiple awards including the ARMD Associate Administrator's Program and Mission Support Award, the Office of Small Business Programs Technical Person of the Year award, the NASA Medal for Exceptional Service, and the National Women of Color award.

She holds a BS degree in Electrical Engineering from Ohio University and a MBA from Cleveland State University.



Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD SBIR)

Jason Talley

Education, Outreach, and Technology Transition Specialist

Jason Talley currently serves as the Education, Outreach, and Technology Transition Specialist for Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer, Small Business and Technology Partnerships, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering. Mr. Talley's primary duties are to bring awareness, advocacy, and increase participation in the SBIR/ STTR programs, providing small businesses with research and development opportunities to produce innovative technologies for the DoD. He leads initiatives to increase understanding of the SBIR/STTR program and executes a new technology transition program known as OUSD Transitions SBIR Technologies (OTST). This program provides critical funding to SBIR/STTR Phase II projects through a Phase II Enhancement (PE) or Technology Transfer Agreement (TA). Prior to his current role, Mr. Talley was responsible for the leadership, development, and implementation of the commercialization training and support program commonly referred to as the DoD Velociter Pilot Program. In three years, the Velociter program mentored over 400 companies, nationwide, representing over \$600 million in DoD investments.

He holds a master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Maryland. Before supporting the DoD, through small business support contracts, Mr. Talley served as a program manager for the Department of State, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Energy.



Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD SBIR)

Anne Neumann

SBIR/STTR Support Contract Program Manager

Anne Neumann is the support contract Program Manager for the Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer, Small Business and Technology Partnerships, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering. She has been supporting DoD and SBIR programs for over 15 years and prior to coming to OUSD she supported DARPA's Small Business Program's Office working on Policy and Outreach for the DARPA SBIR/STTR programs involving all major technical offices within the agency. During her time at OSD and DARPA she has upheld and reinforced the offices' focus on creating environments that consider small business concerns as a primary source of innovative solutions; expanding small business relationships and training opportunities within DoD and other Federal agencies; and enabling the small business community to create and transition radical, game-changing technologies. She has worked in DARPA's Small Business Programs Office, Information Processing Technology Office, Strategic Technology Office where she was a Business Financial Manager before returning to the SBIR/STTR programs in 2015. Ms. Neumann has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Economics from Elon University.



Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD SBIR)

Leah Noonan
Transition Specialist

Leah Noonan supports the OUSD, (R&E) Small Business and Technology Partnerships as a Transition Specialist. Leah assists the OSD Transitions SBIR Technology (OTST) Pilot Program. Leah collaborates with agencies and departments across the federal landscape to provide additional Phase II funding for SBIR/STTR projects. Additionally, Ms. Noonan supports the DAPRA Small Business Program Office (SBPO) Transition and Commercialization Support Program as a Transition Analyst. Leah assists with a portfolio of around 180 SBIR/STTR Phase II projects with business strategy, opportunities, and channel development. In the early stages of her career, Leah was a Sr. Policy Advisor to the Hastings Group managing nationwide campaigns and lobbying efforts. Leah also has extensive experience with proposal writing, corporate strategy, and market development.



U.S. Air Force (USAF)

Ciska Bloemhard

Senior Marketing and Communications Specialist

Ciska Bloemhard has a background in branding, marketing, and large outreach events. She joined the SBIR/STTR's Outreach and Communication Team earlier this year as a Senior Marketing and Communication's specialist. One of the aspects that drew her to the program, was the opportunity to aid both small businesses and the warfighter!



U.S. Air Force (USAF)

James A. Sweeney III

Manager, SBIR/STTR Commercialization Readiness Program (CRP)

James A. Sweeney III currently serves as the Chief, Strategic Communications Officer for the Air Force SBIR/STTR Program.

His background consists of both U.S. Air Force (USAF) and Industry experience. He has held multiple positions at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH to include, Program Manager for: Air Force SBIR Commercialization Readiness Program (CRP), F119 engine Flight Test for the F-22, F-22 Pilot Training, International Flight Simulator Programs for the Turkish, Israeli and Egyptian Air Forces, and began his government career as a Contract Negotiator for the F-16 program. His industry experience includes Program Manager for: the Royal Saudi Air Force Airborne Rangeless Training System, Nellis Air Combat Training System, B-52 Airborne Infrared Camera – Fleet Retrofit, Rangeless Airborne Instrumentation & Debriefing System (RAIDS) – British/French joint Development / Production / International deployment program, and for miniature antennae development and manufacturing a couple surveillance organizations in Washington DC.

He has earned a Bachelor's Degree in International Marketing/Business from San Diego State University, and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Central Michigan University.

His background includes growing up in a Small Business family and readily understands and appreciates the full spectrum of challenges and rewards the Small Business community undergoes. He successfully constructed and flies an FAA approved, RV-6A, Experimental airplane.



U.S. Air Force (USAF)

Kelley Wright

Senior Marketing and Communications Outreach Specialist

Kelley Wright is the Senior Marketing and Communications Outreach Specialist for the Air Force SBIR/STTR program. She has over 10 years of experience working with small businesses, fostering connection and collaboration. Her work with the Air Force SBIR/STTR program has built on this experience, allowing her to help bridge the gap between industry and the Air Force.



U.S. Army (Army)

Nicole Fox

SBIR/STTR Program Coordinator

Nicole Fox is the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program coordinator at the US Army Research Office, managing more than \$35 million in program activity per year aimed at developing solutions in response to critical Army needs.

Ms. Fox has more than 14 years of experience in all aspects of Army SBIR/STTR program operations, policy and contracting. She manages over 100 contracts each year by supporting numerous activities through these programs to help small businesses move their technology fully developed, tested, and commercialized in products and services to be used for the benefit of Army warfighters.

During her years of service, she initiated and led major program reforms within ARO that increased the efficiency and effectiveness of the program, including topic selection, proposal evaluation, and contract award and execution. She also manages topic development processes, coordinates all aspects of program administration with other DoD SBIR/STTR program managers, oversees the proposal evaluation process, and conducts debriefings. Ms. Fox currently serves with several ARO scientific program managers as a contracting officer representative overseeing SBIR/STTR contractual agreements across several R&D areas.

Ms. Fox received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service from the Department of the Army as the Army Materiel Command employee of the Quarter for the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2018. She also received the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service.

Ms. Fox earned a Bachelor of Arts in Business degree from Bay Path University.

ARO is an element of the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command's Army Research Laboratory, the Army's corporate research laboratory also known as ARL.



U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Melinda Coffman

USDA SBIR Program Coordinator

After earning her B.S. in Agriculture from Northwest Missouri State University, Melinda was planning a career in Sustainable Agricultural when she was side-tracked. While serving as an advocate for a family member with a severe and persistent mental illness, she became interested in the field and accepted a position in a community mental health center. Her work received recognition from the University of Kansas Center for Mental Health Research and Innovation (CMHRI), where she was recruited for a position.

Melinda gained a plethora of experience at the University of Kansas, from training and consulting to research and program evaluation. She felt an affinity for research and was able to learn and develop her research skills with both quantitative and qualitative data. She also expanded her program evaluation knowledge and became the primary evaluator for the evidence-based and emerging practices that were promoted by CMHRI. She served as the lead research associate for a national study organized by Dartmouth University. She and her colleagues completed the analysis of that data ahead of schedule. Through her research and evaluation projects she became proficient in multiple evidence-based and emerging practices. She co-authored multiple fidelity instruments and academic publications.

Melinda earned an M.B.A. from Benedictine College to further her interest in applying business principles to social problems. She is a strong proponent of data driven decision making, project management tools and techniques, and results-based management. She also acquired an interest in entrepreneurship through her M.B.A. program in addition to some individual entrepreneurs she has known.

In addition to research, Melinda has also served as a consultant during her work at KU and later as an independent contractor. She possesses the ability to work with a wide variety of individuals as an effective influencer and enjoys the challenge of building and maintaining positive and productive professional relationships. Melinda is excited about her new position as the USDA SBIR Program Coordinator which she began in late August of 2020. On a personal note, among her favorite things are laughter and dogs.



U.S. Department Agriculture (USDA)

Robert Smith
National Program Leader

Dr. Bob Smith serves as the National Program Leader for Animal Health for USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in Kansas City, MO. He received his DVM from the University of Illinois and his PhD (Animal Nutrition) from Pennsylvania State University. His professional background includes private veterinary practice (NJ, MD, PA IL), academia (University of Illinois and Penn State), the Animal Feed industry and the Federal government (USDA) for the past 18 years. He also served as an officer in the U.S. Army (Veterinary Corps), active and reserve, for 28 years and is retired. Currently, Dr. Smith manages the national Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database (FARAD) program, the Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP), the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP), the Animal Health and Disease Research sec.1433 capacity program and the Animal Production and Health Protection program for USDA's SBIR program.



U.S. Department of Education (DoED)

Edward Metz

ED/IES SBIR Program Manager

Edward Metz is a developmental psychologist and education researcher. Since 2004, Ed has worked as a research scientist at the US Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, where he directs ED/IES SBIR, a seed funding program for the R&D and evaluation of innovative and commercially viable forms of education technology. Metz leads initiatives across government in the area of education technology, including the "ED Games Expo," an annual event since 2013 that convenes 30+ other Federal programs that support innovation in edtech and showcases more than 150 learning games and technologies.



U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

Christopher O'Gwin
Outreach and Assistance Program Manager

The mission of the DOE SBIR/STTR Programs Office is to manage the administration and evaluation of about 2,000 Phase I and Phase II grant applications each year. The annual budget of the DOE SBIR/STTR programs is \$205M and enables the DOE to award approximately 400 Phase I and II grants every year.

Chris is principally responsible for managing the DOE SBIR/STTR Outreach and Assistance program. In this capacity, he facilitates a nationwide effort to develop and increase its underrepresented small business research and development base in search of SBIR/STTR grant opportunities.

Chris has worked for the DOE since November 1987, holding positions of leadership in both administrative and technical organizations. He received a BS in Business Education from Longwood University and an MS in Government from the Johns Hopkins University.



U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Dusty Lang

DHS SBIR Program Manager

Dusty Lang assumed the role of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program Director in 2019. She has worked extensively with the DHS SBIR program, administered by the DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T), having joined the program team in 2016. In 2018, Ms. Lang served as the Program Manager for the S&T Broad Agency Announcement and Prize Competition programs before coming back to the DHS SBIR program as Director in 2019.

Prior to joining DHS S&T, Ms. Lang began her career working at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station at the Hazardous Materials Warehouse. After subsequent positions in the Information Resource Management Office and PMA-207, in 2006 she moved to the Naval Air Systems Command SBIR office. During her time in the NAVAIR SBIR office, she served as the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Lead, with a brief intermission, from 2015-2016, as the Department of the Navy STTR/STP Program Manager.



U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Jolie Stepnowski
SBIR Program Analyst

Jolie Stepnowski joined Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR), administered by the Science and Technology Directorate (S&T), team as a Program Analyst in 2019 after a number of years supporting the Department of Defense (DoD) SBIR program.

Jolie provided program support to the Navy's Strategic Systems Program (SSP) and Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) from 2016 to 2019. Prior to that she supported the Director for the DoD Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) SBIR Program which provides oversight and direction to the DoD SBIR Program, encompassing thirteen components including Army, Navy and Air Force. While at DoD, she was a contributor to the Commercialization working group. Jolie's first introduction into the SBIR program was supporting the Department of the Army SBIR office, where she spent 5 years as the solicitation and source selection lead.



U.S. Department of the Navy (DON)

Antonio Rodríguez

Department of Navy SBIR/STTR Programs

Antonio Rodríguez, a Senior-level professional with more than 20 years of specialized expertise and experience in communications, strategic planning, survey design, data collection, and analysis, supports the outreach efforts for the Navy SBIR/STTR Program Management Office. His responsibilities include pre- and post-conference planning, visual identity, branding, promotional materials, content development, and on-site event logistics. As main point of contact and logistics coordinator for Navy SBIR/STTR participation in national conference and events, he develops and maintains efficient outreach planners and calendar templates to track the program's participation in state, regional, and national events. He creates web-based surveys to obtain feedback from conference and training workshop attendees; and authors reports based on survey results to identify successes and areas for improvements.

Mr. Rodriguez holds degrees from Georgetown University (Master of Arts in Communication, Culture, and Technology) and Universidad Central de Venezuela (B.A. in Art History); and has completed several graduate studies programs.



U.S. Department of the Navy - Naval Sea Systems Command
(NAVSEA)

Drew McDougall
Sr. Program Analyst

Mr. Drew McDougall was born in Detroit, MI. He graduated from the University of Michigan with an AB in History. He then moved to Washington, DC, to attend the George Washington University where he graduated with an MA in Security Policy Studies from the Elliott School of International Affairs. Mr. McDougall has twenty-five years of experience supporting United States Navy Surface, Undersea, and Electronic Warfare programs, working closely with US and international senior military officers, government executives, analysts, engineers, scientists, and industry representatives.

Mr. McDougall began his career supporting the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) in managing 20 Data Exchange Agreements/Information Exchange Agreements (DEAs/IEAs) between the US Navy and the Navies of 16 countries for Naval Surface Warfare and Electronic Warfare Systems Technology. Program support included assisting the senior US military or civilian official for each of the 20 agreements in drafting annual technical information obtainment objectives and disclosure guidance, identifying specific information for disclosure, managing the response process to international data requests for warfare systems technology with US Navy engineers and scientists, and working closely with Navy engineers and scientists to ensure information releases complied with US security requirements.

Mr. McDougall most recently supported the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) Division, Keyport, providing budget data, project status updates, and quote information to government clients making financial and program/project related decisions. Collateral duties also included supporting the NUWC Keyport Chief Technology Officer (CTO) on projects involving the Innovative Support for Naval Shipyards Team Charter and the CTO Core Science & Technology (S&T) Team.

Mr. McDougall recently rejoined DELTA Resources (now VTG) to support NAVSEA 05 as an Outreach Coordinator for the Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) programs.

Mr. McDougall is married, has one son at the United States Naval Academy, two daughters in

high school, a Siamese named Winnie, and a Lab named Sherlock.



U.S. Department of the Navy - Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA)

Richard McNamara
SBIR/STTR Transition Coordinator

Mr. McNamara had a distinguished forty year career with the Department of Navy culminating in eight years as a member of the Senior Executive Service (SES) -- four years as the Deputy Program Manager for the Virginia Class Submarine and four as Executive Director PEO Submarines. In 2008 he retired and established RRM & Associates, LLC.

He has more than 22 years in senior program and executive management positions in acquisition and procurement and is a recognized leader in the Navy acquisition community. He is Level III certified in two Acquisition Professional competencies – Program Management, and Research and Systems Engineering. He has been awarded the DOD Small Business Program Manager of the Year in 2002 and holds the distinction of having managed over \$1 Billion in successful Small Business Innovative Research [SBIR] transitions to the fleet. As a Legislative Fellow, he worked on Capitol Hill in the United States Senate.

Throughout his career he has been in the forefront of innovation and introducing new capabilities to the submarine fleet including the Tomahawk cruise missile, Open Architecture Rapid COTS processing for all submarine combat system elements and overseeing successful execution of the SSGN conversion program. More recently he has been invited to participate on a variety of special study teams here and abroad.

A graduate of Northeastern University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, he has been recognized by both public and private sectors, being awarded a Presidential Rank Award, Distinguished Civilian Service and Medal, the Naval Submarine League Distinguished Civilian, the SBIR Career Achievement Award and industry's NDIA VADM Weakly Award among others.



U.S. Department of the Navy - Naval Sea Systems Command
(NAVSEA)

James Torretti
Sr. Program Analyst

Mr. James Torretti was born in Phoenix, AZ. He joined the Army fresh out of High School where he served in the Veterinary Service as a Food Inspector. He served in Yokosuka, Japan, with the Navy, Frankfurt, Germany, where he graded beef in Northern Germany for the Armed Forces, and Supreme Headquarters Allied Forces Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. He retired after 18 years in 1995.

Mr. Torretti continued as a Real-estate agent for a couple of years before joining Petco as a Store Manager. He continued working retail by joining Giant Foods where he eventually rose to Store Manager. Mr. Torretti was given the opportunity to rejoin support to the military as a contractor in support of the Combat Related Special Compensation/Traumatic Servicemembers Group Life Insurance programs that provided additional compensation for disabled veterans and injured military servicemen. When this program moved to Ft. Knox, KY, Mr. Torretti joined DELTA Resources (now VT Group) to support SEA 05 and NAVSEA.

Mr. Torretti has supported NAVSEA as a contractor for over eleven years, first developing Standard Operating Procedures for SEA 05 and then in support of NAVSEA Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer Programs. He executes the SBIR Program in support of NAVSEA and Program Executive Office (PEO) Research and Development (R&D) programs that seek to meet critical technology needs. Mr. Torretti assists the NAVSEA SBIR Program Manager to establish SBIR investment strategies that support Congress, DoD, and Navy objectives. He develops policy and direction to foster Program goals and objectives to encourage small business technological innovation in NAVSEA and PEO supported R&D programs, with the goal of transitioning promising small business technologies to SBIR Phase III and into the Navy acquisition process. He reviews and revises new topics, processes public affairs requests, and develops templates for the smooth execution of the program. He was recently promoted from lackey to minion.

Mr. Torretti is married to Enid Torretti, is the father of 2 children, and grandfather to 3 grandchildren.



U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

Rachael Barolsky Sack
Division Chief

Rachael Barolsky Sack is the chief of the U.S. DOT Volpe Center's Innovative Research Program Office, and she serves as the director of the U.S. DOT Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. Sack's work focuses on innovative approaches to program design and communication strategies for sharing information on emerging technologies, best practices, and related policies.

Since joining the Volpe Center in 2002, Sack's work has supported a variety of transportation areas including environmental streamlining for highway projects, technology transfer initiatives, highway safety countermeasures, and most recently the Inclusive Design Challenge, a prize competition seeking inclusive design solutions to both create and enable accessible automated vehicles (AVs) for people with disabilities. Sack also facilitates interagency working groups and issue-specific meetings with the goals of sharing information across agencies, reaching consensus on key issues, and agreeing to action-oriented solutions.

Sack has served as Federal Women's Program manager for the Volpe Center and is past president of the Women's Transportation Seminar-Boston Chapter. In 2009, she received the FHWA Administrator's Team Award for her work on the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Pilot Program and the FRA Administrator's Team Award for her work on the development of FRA's new Risk Reduction Program. In 2011, she received Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood's EEO/Affirmative Action Award for her contributions to support women in transportation. She holds a master's degree in energy and environmental analysis and a bachelor of arts degree in energy and environmental policy, both from Boston University.



U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

Clare Masucci

Operations Research Analyst

Clare Masucci is an Operations Research Analyst at the U.S. DOT Volpe National Transportation Systems Center in Cambridge, MA, which administers the DOT's SBIR program. Clare has been with the DOT SBIR program for two years, assisting with program management, contracts, and outreach. In addition to her SBIR work, Clare is a part of a variety of transportation research projects for U.S. DOT operating administrations, including the Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, on topics ranging from data exchanges to law enforcement as well as procurement support.



U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

Melissa Wong
Program Manager

Melissa Wong has been the Program Manager for USDOT's SBIR program since joining the Volpe Center in 2013. In addition to her work on the SBIR program, she also supports the USDOT's program for Connected and Automated Vehicles. Prior to working at the Volpe Center, Melissa worked for the US Census Bureau, the City of New York, a startup research and consulting firm, and owned her own flower shop. She holds a Master's of Public Administration from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts from Macalester College.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

April Richards
Program Manager

April Richards is the Program Manager of the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA's SBIR program focuses on supporting small businesses to develop and commercialize novel environmental technologies which address EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment in areas such as clean and safe water, air quality, land revitalization, homeland security, sustainable materials management and safer chemicals. She has worked at EPA for over 15 years. April has worked as a fellow on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee where she provided technical expertise on environmental issues. She previously worked for an environmental engineering consulting firm in Florida primarily in drinking water treatment. She has a M.S. in civil/environmental engineering from the University of Miami and a B.S. in mathematics from Tufts University. She is also a professional engineer.



U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Jacob Y. Choi

Assistant Director of the U.S. Patent & Trademark Texas Regional Office

Jacob Y. Choi is a Regional Assistant Director of the U.S. Patent & Trademark Texas Regional Office. He joined the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office in 2001 and has examined patent application related to means and processes for casting visible radiant energy (Illumination). In 2010, he became a Supervisory Patent Examiner (SPE) over seeing a group of patent examiner in communications: radio wave antennas and antenna and electric lamp and discharge devices: systems. During his tenure in the Office as a manager, he has been involved in detail assignment to Office of Commissioner of Patents – Mobile Apps, APIs, e-Publications for handheld devices, has worked for the Office of Patent Training (OPT), and has involved in projects – Patent Interview Best Practice, Docket Management (DM), and Patents Data. He is permanent to the Texas Regional Office and recently completed a yearlong detail assignment in Rocky Mountain Regional Office and Texas Regional Office as the Resource Supervisory Patent Examiner (RSPE) and played vital role in opening and running the day to day operation. As a Regional Assistant Director, he is responsible for assisting the Regional Director in building management/facility operations, outreach coordination and implementation, and organization leadership and cross-coordination across all regional offices and the HQ.



U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Peter Choi

Resource Supervisory Patent Examiner

Peter H. Choi is a Resource Supervisory Patent Examiner (SPE) at the Texas Regional Office of the USPTO. Peter graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering. He joined the USPTO in 2004 where he examined in the Business Methods area of Technology Center 3600, received full Signatory Authority in 2011 and became a Supervisor in Business Methods in 2012, receiving a Department of Commerce Bronze Medal award in 2013 and a Leadership in Action Award in 2014.

Peter has been involved in a detail assignment to the Office of Patent Training and has been involved in several projects, including collaborating with the European Patent Office (EPO) in moving to the Cooperative Patent Classification system (CPC). Peter has hosted EPO representatives, serving as a Lead Quality Nominee in his area (G06Q) and was involved in providing training to USPTO and EPO examiners during the transition period to CPC.

Peter also serves as a member of the Patents Hiring team, involved in recruitment of engineers, scientists and physicists at the USPTO. Peter is currently serving as the lead SPE of the Texas Regional Office, responsible for oversight of Patent Operations issues.



U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Megan Hoyt

Regional Outreach Officer - Texas Regional United States Patent and Trademark Office

As Regional Outreach Officer, Megan is responsible for stakeholder engagement and outreach initiatives in the eight states that comprise the Texas Region: Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

Before joining the USPTO, Megan worked as trademark attorney and civil litigator in private practice in Dallas.

Megan is actively involved in the legal community, having served and chaired a number of different committees within the International Trademark Association (INTA), Dallas Bar Association's Intellectual Property Section, and DFW Women in IP.

Megan graduated with a B.A. in Political Science from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas and a J.D. from Washington University School of Law in St. Louis, Missouri. Megan also served as a law clerk for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, a Legislative Intern for the U.S. Senate, and is a U.S. Presidential Scholar.



U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Hector Leal
Patent Examiner

After only two years as a patent examiner, Hector has his sights set on someday advancing into a director role or even jumping to the USPTO's Patent Trial and Appeal Board to practice law as an Administrative Patent Judge.

Hector's career path and experiences have prepared him well to succeed. Following military service in the Air Force, he used his G.I. Bill funding to obtain a bachelor's degree from Texas State University. While pursuing an engineering degree, he landed a job with the top semiconductor company in the world working on, among other things, patent applications and filings. Hector always wanted to experience patent work from the "other side," so his plan was to learn the process of searching for existing inventions, called "prior art," before returning to work in the corporate world.

He set out to make that plan a reality through two stints in the USPTO's student volunteer, or extern programs. With his first summer opportunity in 2016, Hector researched statutes and case law and wrote legal documents for administrative patent judges in the Dallas Regional Office. And in the fall of that same year he returned for a second opportunity but this time as a participant in the Patent Experience Extern Program reviewing patent applications and searching for prior art. But spring-boarding back to the private industry never happened. As Hector explains, "the plan somewhat backfired because now, due to the great benefits and work-life balance, I don't have any intention of ever going anywhere else."

Hector transitioned into full-time work as a patent examiner in 2017, demonstrating the success of USPTO student programs that leverage students' hands-on work in examining into a steady pipeline of candidates ready for full-time employment. Hector considers his education and those student program experiences as the cornerstones of his success. He says "attending law school and passing the patent bar were both very beneficial since it translated directly with the tasks and duties performed daily in this position. Moreover, my prior experience as an extern at the USPTO certainly helps as well because I was very knowledgeable in the USPTO

programs that are used to search for prior art and write office actions (application status alerts to inventors).”



U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Essama Omgba

Supervisory Patent Examiner (SPE)

Essama Omgba is a Supervisory Patent Examiner (SPE) at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) at the Texas Regional Office in Dallas.

Essama joined the United States Patent and Trademark Office in January 1999 in Technology Center 3700 and became a Primary Examiner in 2005. He served on a career development detail as a Trainer at the Patent Training Academy, and became an SPE in January 2017.

Essama graduated from the University of the District of Columbia in Washington DC with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. After Graduating Essama worked for Dwyer Engineering out of Leesburg Virginia as an HVAC Design engineer for commercial buildings and later as a consulting engineer for ANSER, a consulting engineering firm contracted with the US Department of Defense before joining the USPTO in 1999.

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Franco Salvoza
Primary Examiner

M. Franco Salvoza is a Primary Examiner with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) in Technology Center 1600. He examines patents in the areas of biotechnology, vaccines and viral immunology and is currently on detail with the Texas Regional Office's (TXRO) outreach team.

Franco earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees (Biochemistry) at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and his J.D. at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law. He is a member of the patent bar and the bars of Maryland and the District of Columbia, and practiced intellectual property law at a large law firm in Washington, D.C. before joining the USPTO in 2012.



U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Hope Shimabuku

Director of the Texas Regional United States Patent and Trademark Office

As the Director of the Texas Regional United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Hope Shimabuku carries out the strategic direction of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO, and is responsible for leading the Texas regional office. Focusing on the region and actively engaging with the community, Ms. Shimabuku ensures the USPTO's initiatives and programs are tailored to the region's unique ecosystem of industries and stakeholders.

Ms. Shimabuku brings to the USPTO nearly two decades of experience as an engineer and intellectual property attorney. Most recently, Ms. Shimabuku was part of the Office of General Counsel at Xerox Corporation serving as Vice President and Corporate Counsel responsible for all intellectual property matters for Xerox Business Services, LLC. She also worked for BlackBerry Corporation advising on United States and Chinese standards setting, cyber security, technology transfer, and intellectual property laws and legislation. As an engineer, she worked for Procter & Gamble and Dell Computer Corporation.

Ms. Shimabuku is a leader in the Texas region. She currently sits on the Board of Visitors for the University of North Texas Law School and is an Honorary Member and Inaugural Member of the Barbara M.G. Lynn IP Inn of Court. She is a past chair for the State Bar of Texas – Intellectual Property Section, served as past president of the Dallas Asian American Bar Association, chaired the Dallas Diversity Task Force, served as a facilitator for the DFW Women in Intellectual Property group and served on the board of the Dallas Bar Association and as a member of the Grievance Committee for the State Bar of Texas – District 6.

Throughout her career, Ms. Shimabuku has championed diversity efforts, including service as the first Asian American Chair of the State Bar of Texas Intellectual Property Section and was honored with the Champion of Diversity Award by the Association of Corporate Counsel and separately by the State Bar of Texas – Asian Pacific Interest Section. She has received numerous

professional honors, including being honored as a Hero of Innovation by the Center for American and International Law, being selected as a Dallas Business Journal “Top 40 Under Forty,” named Dallas Business Journal’s Corporate Counsel Rookie of the Year, and selected as one of DCEO’s “500 Most Powerful Business Leaders.”

Ms. Shimabuku received a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin, and graduated cum laude with a J.D. from the Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law. She is a native Texan, born and raised in Houston, Texas. She currently lives in Flower Mound, Texas, with her husband and two daughters.



U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

Elden Hawkes

Partnership and Innovation Specialist, SBIR/STTR

Mr. Elden Hawkes uses his expertise to support the Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/ STTR) programs as a program analyst. He currently works to foster new innovation and outreach initiatives to increase understanding of SBIR/STTR opportunities amongst stakeholder networks that include local and state governments, federal agencies, colleges and universities, and small business owners. These duties also extend to the management of the agency's Federal and State Technology (FAST) Partnership Program which provides funding to state/regional organizations to execute programs designed to increase SBIR/STTR awareness and proposal submissions within their respective state/region.

Prior to joining the SBA, served as the program specialist and then program coordinator for the USDA's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. For nearly eight years he served as a lead in the budgeting, administration, and outreach for the department's SBIR efforts. These efforts included conducting stakeholder workshops, pre/post award guidance for applicants and awardees, beginning to end award processing, and outreach efforts targeting minority and women small business including speaking to 1890 universities and Native American organizations.

Elden's professional expertise include coastal ecosystems, natural resource management, fisheries, and public policy. He was a master's NOAA Living Marine Cooperative Science Center fellow, completing a Master's in Food and Agriculture with a concentration in Natural Resource Management from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. He also holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Marine Science also from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.



U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

Erick Page-Littleford
Senior Technology Policy Advisor

Erick Page-Littleford serves as Technology Policy Analyst for the SBA's Office of Investment and Innovation. This role leverages his significant experience supporting the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, including serving in principal roles executing innovator engagements, program evaluations, and implementing congressional and administrative policy.

Prior to joining SBA, Erick served as a program manager, with a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business, leading a team supporting the Department of the Navy's SBIR and STTR programs. Erick earned his B.S. in Public Policy and his M.S. in Science, Technology & Public Policy from Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). He is also certified by the Project Management Institute as a Project Management Professional and by the Scrum Alliance as a Certified Scrum Master.



U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

Jennifer Shieh

Chief Scientist and Program Manager

Dr. Jennifer Shieh advances technology commercialization through the Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) programs, building partnerships and coordinating policy across the 11 participating Federal agencies. Previously, she managed the Small Business Program for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and served as a Program Director at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) SBIR Development Center, having joined NCI as a AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow. She was involved in product and customer development at Syapse, a precision medicine-focused startup, and mobile games startup Subversus Interactive. Dr. Shieh studied brain and cognitive sciences at MIT, then earned her PhD in neurosciences at Stanford University. She is co-author of the textbook *Guide to Research Techniques in Neuroscience*.

Jennifer Shieh is currently on a one-year detail to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), working on improving the transfer of federally-funded technologies from lab-to-market - a Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goal that is part of the President's Management Agenda.



U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

Brittany Sickler

Senior Innovation Policy Advisor, SBIR/STTR

Brittany Sickler serves as outreach, training, and partnership strategist for the SBA's Office of Investment and Innovation. Her primary duties support the advancement of the Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/ STTR) programs, which enable small businesses to explore their technological potential and profit from its commercialization. She oversees initiatives to increase understanding of SBIR/STTR opportunities with SBA offices and partner networks across the country, as well as manages the agency's Federal and State Technology (FAST) Partnership Program. Brittany spent almost four years in SBA's North Dakota District Office as an Economic Development Specialist, building and strengthening connections throughout the state, particularly with regional startup networks and rural communities. She also served as Special Advisor in SBA's Office of Entrepreneurial Development, advancing strategic initiatives, and coordinating SBA's first Virtual Conference.

Prior to SBA, Brittany served in Guatemala as a Peace Corps Volunteer and Volunteer Leader in the Sustainable Community Tourism program, a combination of economic development and environmental conservation. She was a Masters International Fellow, completing a Master's in International Community Economic Development from Southern New Hampshire University. She also holds degrees in Business Administration and Spanish from Indiana Wesleyan University. Her career in economic development started in Southern Florida with microlender ACCION USA, providing small business loans to individuals who could not access traditional credit.



U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
Office of Investment and Innovation

John Williams
Director of Innovation and Technology

Mr. John Williams is the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Director of Innovation and Technology. His primary responsibility is for Federal policy implementation and oversight, of the \$2.5 B per year Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs across all participating agencies. He also manages the Growth Accelerator program, Federal and State Technology Partnership (FAST) program.

Prior to joining the SBA in December of 2014, Mr. Williams served as the Director of the Navy SBIR and STTR programs. Through his leadership the Navy led the way in supporting the acquisition and transition of SBIR/STTR technologies, awarding more Phase III contracts than the rest of the DOD combined. His career with the Navy spanned 27 years.

Mr. Williams is a member of the Senior Executive Service (SES), has a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Maryland College Park, and a Masters in Engineering Management from George Washington University.