MEMORANDUM FOR INDUSTRY PARTNERS

FROM: AFMC/AFTC/PZIA (Arnold)
100 Kindel Drive
Arnold AFB, TN 37389-1332

SUBJECT: AEDC Velocity Alliance – Request for Whitepaper: Question & Answers

1. Would you all have any interest in a company to run the AEDC Velocity Alliance OTA Consortium?
    a. The Government will manage the consortium internally.

2. I didn't see that asphalt paving was included in this project. My question is will there be any paving included.
    a. A standalone paving project could be competed within the AEDC Velocity Alliance by leveraging the existing "General Construction" category.

3. I am writing to clarify the partnership requirements for the RFWP. Specifically, does the Alliance Membership require us to identify a Non-Traditional Defense Contractor (NDC) or a small business as a partner? Over the last five years, our projects for the Air Force and DOE have involved partnerships with five universities and two national laboratories.
    a. The answer is yes, the Alliance Membership requires you to identify a partner that meets a specific statutory definition, and your university partners are highly likely to satisfy this requirement.

    Here is a more detailed explanation to guide your whitepaper submission:

    1. The "Why" Behind the Requirement
    As detailed in "Part 4: Innovation and Partnership Capability" of the RFWP, the purpose of this requirement is to satisfy the legal conditions for using this type of Other Transaction authority (specifically 10 U.S.C. § 4022(d)(1)(A) or (B)). This means that to join the Alliance, each prospective member must demonstrate an established relationship with a partner that falls into one of the following categories:
    - A Non-Traditional Defense Contractor (NDC)
    - A Small Business
    - A Nonprofit Research Institution

    2. How Your University and National Laboratory Partners Fit
    This is where your specific experience is highly relevant.
    - University Partners (Excellent Candidates): Your extensive partnerships with universities are a perfect fit. Universities typically qualify as "nonprofit research institutions" under the statute. Your whitepaper should identify one of your university partners by name and CAGE code and, as noted in the RFWP (Note 2), be prepared to confirm their 501(c)(3) or equivalent nonprofit status. By doing this, you would be demonstrating your capability to satisfy condition (A) of the requirement.

- National Laboratories (Potential Candidates): Partnerships with National Laboratories are also highly valued. Depending on the specific lab and its managing entity, it could potentially qualify as a nonprofit research institution. However, the most direct and clearly defined path, based on the notes in the RFWP, is to leverage your strong relationships with your university partners.

3. Your Path Forward

For your whitepaper submission, your strongest approach is to:

1. Select one of your university partners to feature in your "Part 4" response.
2. Provide the university's or laboratory's name and CAGE code and provide justification on how the university or laboratory meets 10 U.S.C. § 4022(d)(1)(A) or (B)
3. Describe your existing relationship and their unique capabilities.
    b. Crucially, link their capabilities directly to the technical project you described in your "Part 2" response, explaining how they could participate to a "significant extent" in a similar future project.

4. We are interested in responding to the AEDC Velocity Consortium Call for White Papers but have a question about the partnership requirements. The company that I work for already qualifies as a small business. Because we qualify as a small business do we still need to partner with another small business, university, or National Laboratory to meet this requirement?

a. Thank you for your question. This is an excellent point of clarification as it highlights a unique scenario for a prime contractor that is already a small business.

The direct answer is: Yes, even as a small business, your company is still required to identify at least one partner company in your whitepaper response to satisfy the "Part 4: Innovation and Partnership Capability" requirement.

Here is the detailed rationale to guide your submission:

1. The Purpose of the Requirement: Demonstrating Partnership Capability

The primary purpose of the Part 4 requirement is not just to verify a company's status; it is to evaluate a prospective member's capability to form innovative partnerships. The Government needs to see that every member of the Alliance, regardless of their own size or status, has the ability to "reach back" and build effective teams with other specialized companies. This ensures a dynamic and collaborative industrial base for all future projects.

Therefore, simply stating that your own company is a small business, while valuable, does not demonstrate this crucial partnership capability.

2. How to Meet the Requirement as a Small Business

Your status as a small business gives you two clear and powerful paths to satisfy this requirement in your whitepaper. You must show how you would form a team that satisfies one of the following conditions:

Option A: Partner with a Non-Traditional Defense Contractor (NDC) or Nonprofit Research Institution.

- In your whitepaper, you would identify an NDC or a Nonprofit Research Institution.
- You would then explain how this partnership would satisfy condition (A) of the statute ("at least one nontraditional defense contractor...participating to a significant extent").
- This is a very strong approach as it demonstrates your ability to bring in partners with a different status than your own.

Option B: Partner with another Small Business.

- In your whitepaper, you would identify another small business as your partner.
- You would then explain how this partnership would satisfy condition (B) of the statute ("All significant participants...are small businesses").
- This is also a perfectly valid approach that demonstrates your ability to build teams within the small business community.

3. Your Path Forward

For your whitepaper submission, you should:

- Choose one of the two options above.
- Select a specific partner company (an NDC, a university, or another small business) that you have an existing relationship with.
- In your "Part 4" response, provide the partner's name and CAGE code.
- Crucially, link that partner's capabilities to the technical project you described in your "Part 2" response, explaining how you would work together and how their participation would be "significant."

In summary, the requirement is less about *what your company is* and more about *what your company can do* in terms of building strong, compliant teams. We look forward to seeing your submission.

5. Is it the Government's intent to issue future Velocity Alliance solicitations to all consortium members regardless of SOO type? In other words, does the Government intend to in any way filter or limit solicitations consortium members will see based on our demonstrated competencies during the onboarding phase?

a. The direct answer is: Yes, it is absolutely the Government's intent to issue all Project Opportunity Announcements (POAs) to all consortium members, regardless of the project's SOO type.

Here is a more detailed explanation of the process and rationale:

1. Fair and Open Opportunity for All Members

The fundamental principle of the Alliance is to create a fair, competitive ecosystem among a pre-qualified pool of vendors. The Government will not filter or limit the distribution of POAs based on the competencies you demonstrated during the onboarding phase.

When you are accepted into the Alliance, you are accepted into the entire enterprise. You will have full visibility on every single project opportunity, from "General Construction" to "Utilities," and everything in between.

2. The Onboarding Phase vs. the Project Competition Phase
It is helpful to think of this as a two-stage process:

- Onboarding Phase (The "Entry Gate"): The purpose of your whitepaper, including your response to the technical questions, is to prove you have the minimum required technical competence and partnership capability to be a member of the Alliance. It is your ticket to get in the door.

- Project Competition Phase (The "Performance Arena"): Once you are a member, it is then your business decision to determine which specific Project Opportunity Announcements (POAs) you wish to pursue. You are responsible for assessing your company's strengths, capabilities, and capacity to decide whether to submit a proposal for a given project.

3. The Vendor's Responsibility
The Government's responsibility is to ensure every member sees every opportunity. The member's responsibility is to "know your company"—to analyze each POA and make a smart business decision about whether their team has the right qualifications to submit a competitive proposal for that specific scope of work.

In summary, we will not be creating sub-pools or specialized lists. All members will see all opportunities, ensuring a level playing field for every project competed under the AEDC Velocity Alliance.

6. Once the consortium is established, does the Government intend to use white papers or similar means to down-select qualified performers for a given requirement/solicitation?

a. The Government's primary goal is to use the most efficient and effective means to select a performer for each project. While a single-step proposal process is often the most streamlined approach, the specific competitive procedure will be tailored to the unique needs of each requirement.

   Project Opportunity Announcements (POAs) could be down-selected utilizing a variety of methods. These may include, but are not limited to:

   - Whitepapers
   - Full-blown Prototype Proposals
   - Oral Presentations
   - Or any other means the Government determines to fit that particular POA.

   The specific competitive procedure, including the format of the required response and the evaluation criteria, will be clearly defined within the POA for each project.

   This approach provides the Government with the necessary flexibility to structure each competition in a way that best ensures a successful outcome, while also providing a clear and fair opportunity for all Alliance members to participate.

7. In the “Request for White Papers for Membership in the AEDC Velocity Alliance” Document: Under the section “Part 2: Technical Competency” it states that the response should not exceed 10 pages. Later in “Section 7.0 Submission and Key Information” the document says the total submission must not exceed 10 page limit. Please clarify requirements for submission length. Is the entire White Paper limited to 10 pages or only “Part 2 Technical Competency”? If entire White Paper is limited to 10 pages, does that include the cover page?

a. To clarify: The ten (10) page limit applies to the entire Whitepaper submission.

Here is a detailed breakdown to guide you:

Total Submission Limit: The entire document you submit—from the beginning of Part 1 to the end of Part 4—must not exceed ten pages. The statement in Section 7.0 ("the total submission must not exceed the ten page limit") is the governing requirement.

Cover Page: A separate cover page is not required and not recommended. To maximize your space, the RFWP requires you to begin your Part 2 response with your company name and CAGE code, effectively making the first page of your technical response your cover page. If you choose to include a separate cover page, it will count towards the ten-page limit.

How to Structure Your Submission: Your submission should be a single, continuous document that addresses all four parts of the requirement within the ten-page total. This includes:

Part 1: Your statements of CMMC and JCP compliance (and CMMC roadmap, if applicable).

Part 2: Your company name/CAGE code and your response(s) to the technical questions.

Part 3: Your verbatim IP acknowledgement statement.

Part 4: Your response detailing your partnership capability.

We recommend being as concise as possible across all four parts to ensure you can provide a thorough technical response in Part 2 while staying within the mandatory ten-page limit for the entire document.

8. Can Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) be included in the Technical Competency rationale? If so, can the DOD SAFE application be used to email White Paper submission?

a. Yes, you may include CUI in your whitepaper submission. Given that much of the work relevant to the Program Objectives may be sensitive in nature, we understand that your project descriptions may contain information that is appropriately marked as CUI.

However, please be advised that submissions must not, under any circumstances, contain classified information. Any submission containing classified material will be rejected and handled as a security incident.

b. No, the DoD SAFE application should not be used for your submission.

As detailed in the Request for Whitepaper, all submissions are to be sent directly via standard email to the address provided. Your company's compliance with the mandatory security requirements (either a validated CMMC Level 2 certification or a current NIST SP 800-171 Assessment in SPRS) serves as the basis for this requirement. This compliance demonstrates that your own systems are capable of protecting CUI, and therefore, you are expected to handle the electronic transmission accordingly.

Please adhere to the submission instructions outlined in Section 7.0 of the RFWP.

9. We understand that this path requires a current NIST SP 800-171 DoD Assessment posted in SPRS together with a CMMC Level 2 compliance roadmap. We also understand the Statement of Understanding language regarding the November 2026 CMMC Level 2 deadline.

Our question is whether a vendor would be considered responsive for consortium onboarding if the whitepaper includes a current SPRS-posted NIST SP 800-171 assessment and a detailed phased roadmap, but the roadmap reflects achievement of full CMMC Level 2 certification after November 2026 due to assessor availability and implementation lead time.

If not, please confirm that full CMMC Level 2 certification by November 2026 is a hard prerequisite for any vendor relying on the alternative compliance path.
(Answer Revised 21 Apr 26)

a. We understand that C3PAO availability and implementation lead times present challenges across the industrial base; however, the security requirements for the AEDC Velocity Alliance are firm.

   Direct Answer:
   No, a whitepaper would not be considered responsive if the submitted roadmap explicitly reflects the achievement of full CMMC Level 2 C3PAO Certification *after* the November 2026 deadline.

   Rationale:
   As stated in the revised Section 4.0, Part 1 (B) Alternative Compliance Path of the Request for Whitepapers, the submission requirement explicitly mandates that the roadmap must:
   "detail the vendor's plan and timeline to achieve full CMMC Level 2 C3PAO Certification by the November 2026 deadline, and must specifically address... The vendor's planned timeline and evidence of engagement with a C3PAO to conduct the final certification assessment prior to the November 2026 deadline."

   Submitting a roadmap that targets a completion date beyond November 2026 fails to meet this explicit submission requirement. Furthermore, by submitting a whitepaper, a vendor must agree to Section 6.0, Statement of Understanding,

which states the vendor agrees they must achieve and provide proof of full CMMC Level 2 C3PAO Certification by that specific deadline to maintain an active agreement. The Government cannot evaluate a submission as a "Pass" if the vendor's own documentation states upfront that they plan to miss this mandatory agreement deadline.

Confirmation:
We confirm that presenting a viable, detailed roadmap to achieve full CMMC Level 2 C3PAO Certification by November 2026—including timelines for POA&M closure and C3PAO engagement—is a hard prerequisite for any vendor relying on the alternative compliance path to successfully pass the Part 1 evaluation gate.

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