



SPACEWERX

SHAPING OUR FUTURE IN SPACE

Maj Whitney Hessler & Maj Lauren Rogers

Spark Branch Chief, SpaceWERX

# OVERVIEW

---



Headquartered at the Los Angeles SpaceWERX Hub, SpaceWERX inspires and empowers collaboration with innovators to accelerate capabilities and shape our future in space.

SpaceWERX is a Division of AFWERX and partnered with Space System Command's Commercial Space Office (COMSO) to drive innovation and commercialization within the Space Force.

## MISSION

Accelerate agile and affordable capability transitions by teaming leaders in innovative technology with Airman and Guardian talent.

## VISION

Forge an innovation ecosystem that delivers disruptive Air and Space capabilities.

# AFRL



# HOW

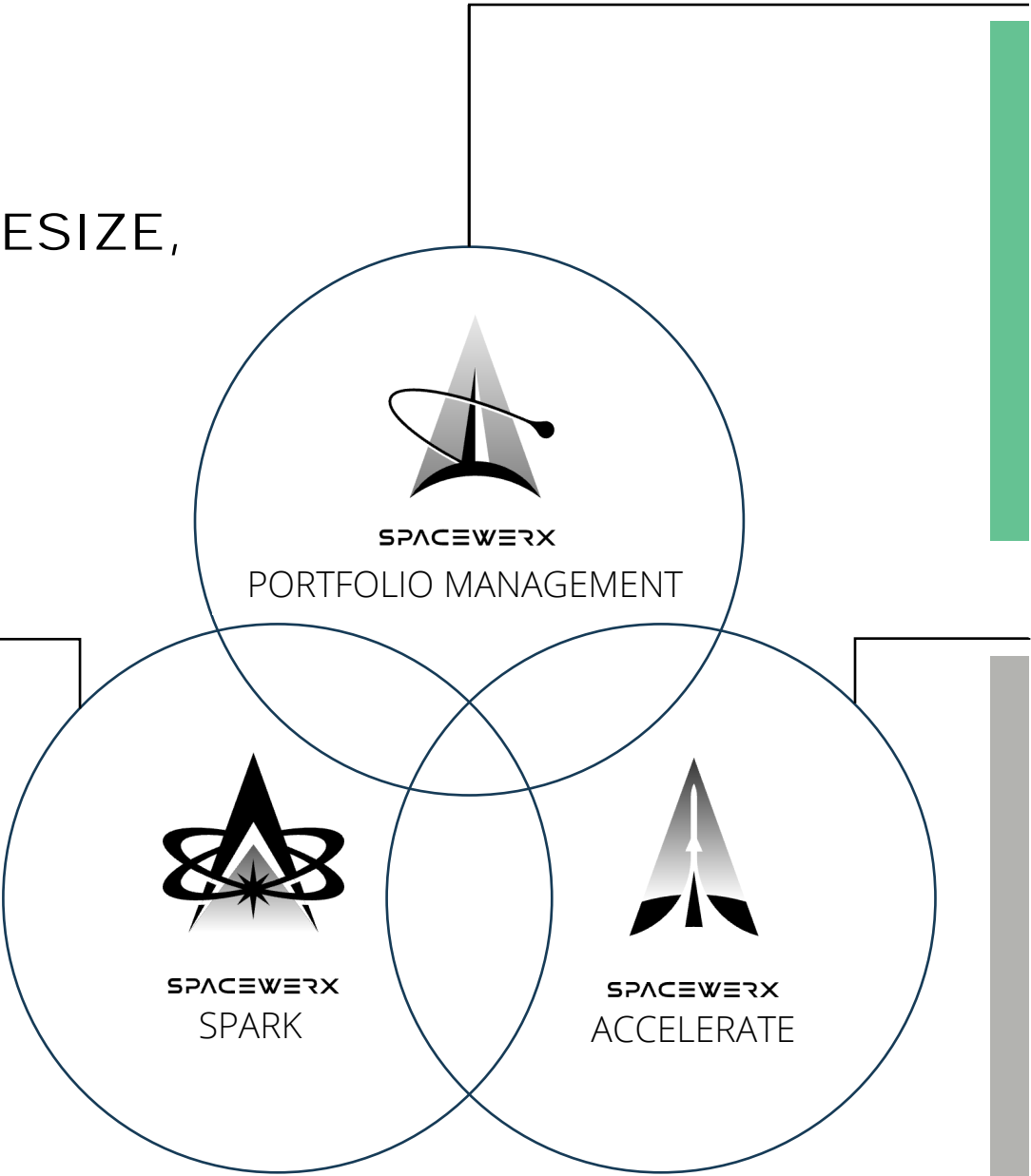
SpaceWERX achieves its mission

## PRIORITIZE, SYNTHESIZE, MATURE, ACCESS, AND MEASURE

The 3 focus areas of SpaceWERX each play a role in creating substantial impact.

### SPACEWERX SPARK *Expand Collaboration*

Focuses on generating and capturing requirements for solving Space Force problems and building new and better capabilities.



### SPACEWERX Portfolio Management *Expand Technology*

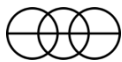
Invests in emerging technologies and incentivizes private, for-profit investment to solve defense problem sets.

### SPACEWERX Accelerate *Expand Transition*

Provide tools for companies and stakeholders to continue development and transition technology.

# OVERVIEW

SpaceWERX Ventures invests in emerging technologies and incentivizes private, for-profit investment to solve defense problem sets. We do this through three core innovation opportunities offered through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. These programs enable small businesses to work with government, including the DOD, to commercialize collaborative R&D projects. They award small businesses money and resources to define their technology potential and build a pathway towards profiting from that commercial potential.



## OPEN TOPIC

- Technology-agnostic solicitation
- Encourages commercial industry to submit dual-use technology solutions without having a known end-user
- Captures the best capabilities and emerging technologies that can advance our Airmen and Guardian capabilities



## SPECIFIC TOPIC

- Seeks innovative solutions for a particular problem set defined by a DAF end user or customer, such as the SECAF's Operational Imperatives
- Often not a dual-use capability and is specific to the DoD
- These topics have clearly defined requirements and a known DAF customer built into the topic solicitation



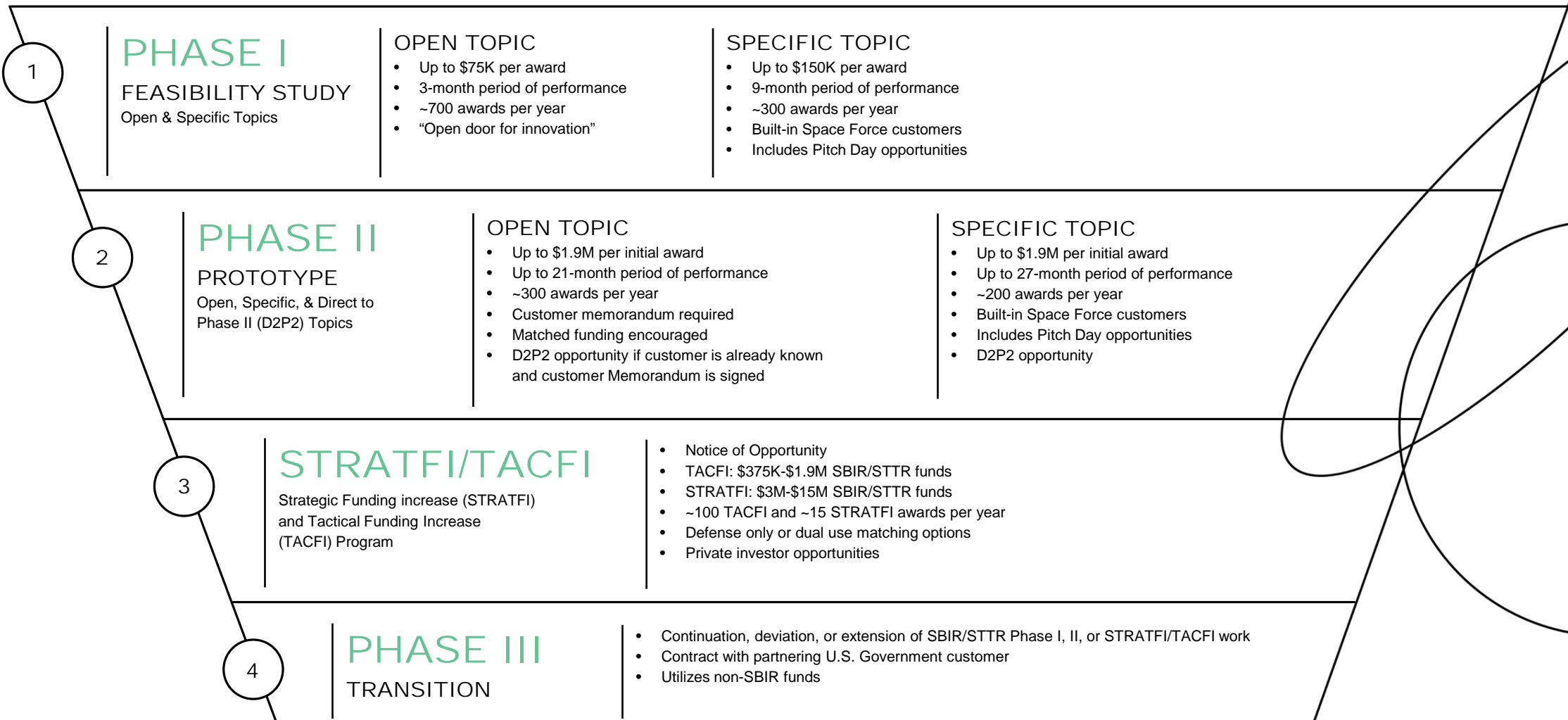
## STRATFI/TACFI

- STRATFI (Strategic Funding Increase) Program
- TACFI (Tactical Funding Increase) Program
- Awards help scale SBIR and STTR-funded efforts to the level needed to achieve better technology transitions
- De-risks development through syndication with multiple transition-focused partners and leveraging outside investment



# OVERVIEW

The SBIR/STTR program works as a funnel



FUNNELING INNOVATORS INTO GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS

# STRATFI/TACFI

## Achieving transition

---

Strategic & Tactical Funding Increase (STRATFI/TACFI) is a pilot program unique to the DAF. STRATFI/TACFI awards supplement existing DAF SBIR/STTR Phase IIs that have matching government and/or private funds.

### TO THE INNOVATOR

STRATFI/TACFI awards help de-risk and scale Phase II solution development efforts.

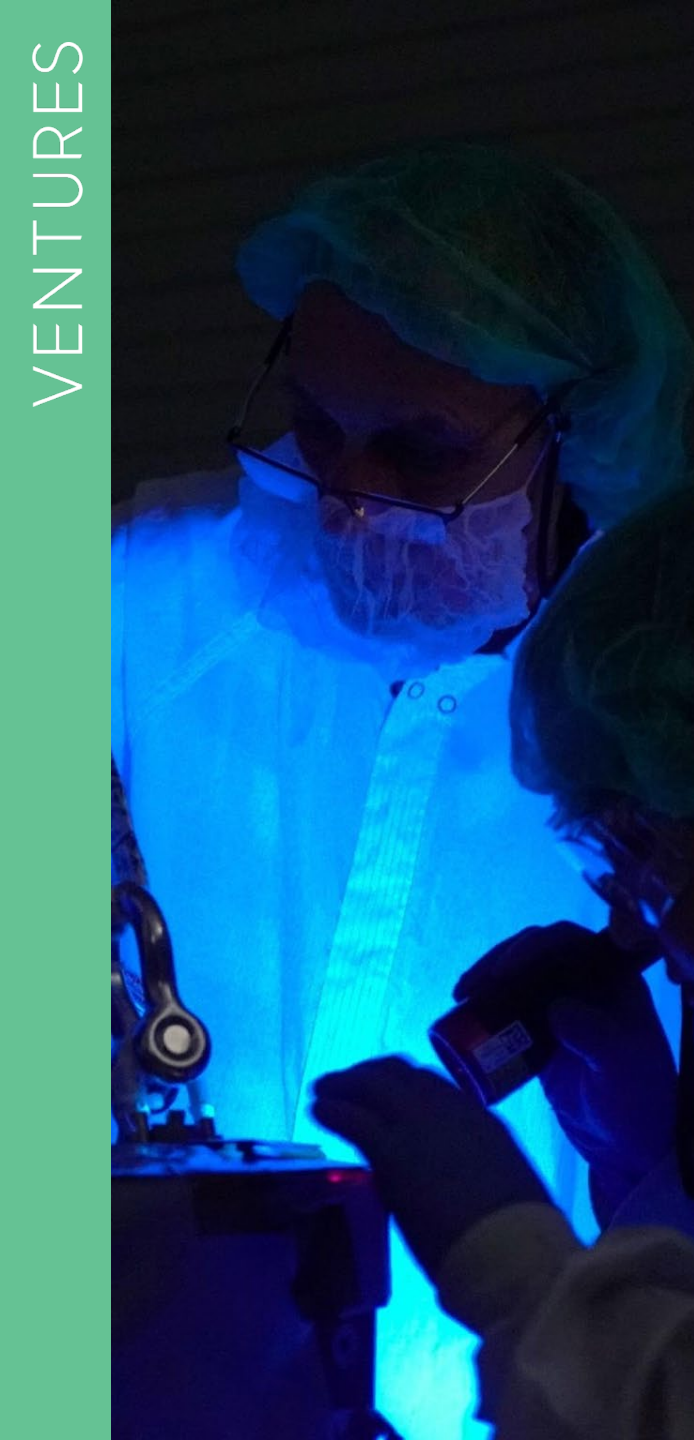
### TO THE PEO

STRATFI/TACFI awards help accelerate the development of effective solutions to their problems.



## STRATFI/TACFI

- STRATFI: Strategic Funding Increase Program
- TACFI: Tactical Funding Increase Program
- Awards help scale SBIR and STTR-funded efforts to the level needed to achieve better technology transitions
- De-risks development through syndication with multiple transition-focused partners and leveraging outside investment

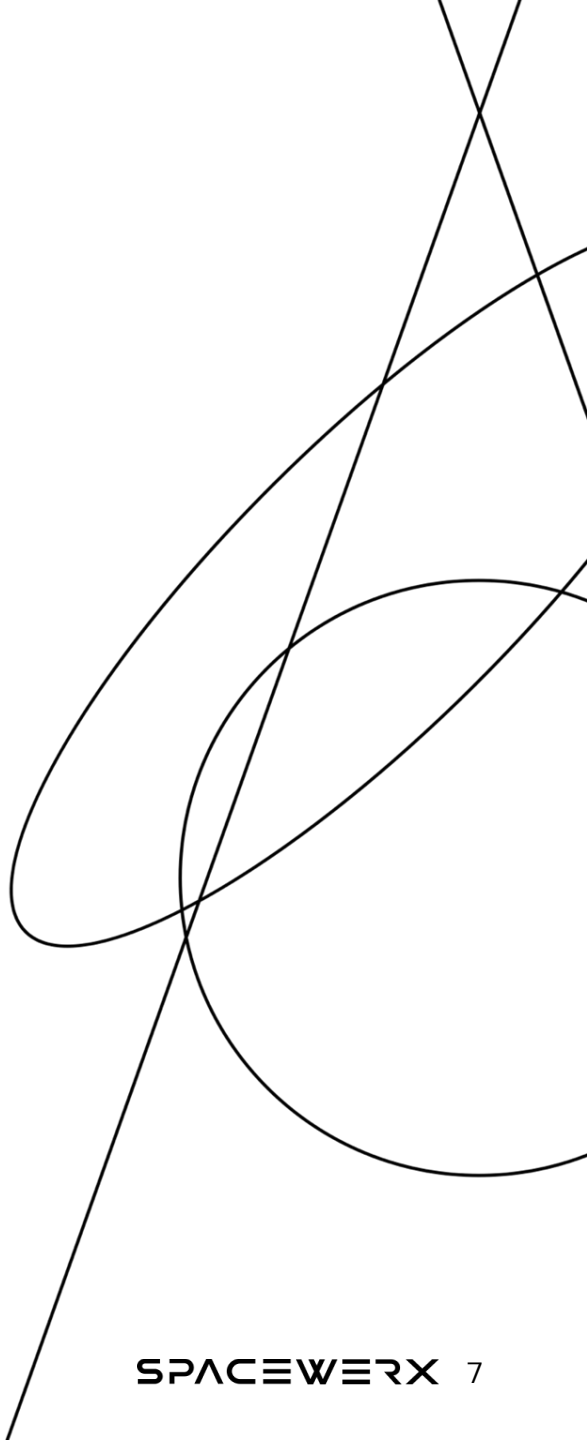


# STRATFI/TACFI

Program details

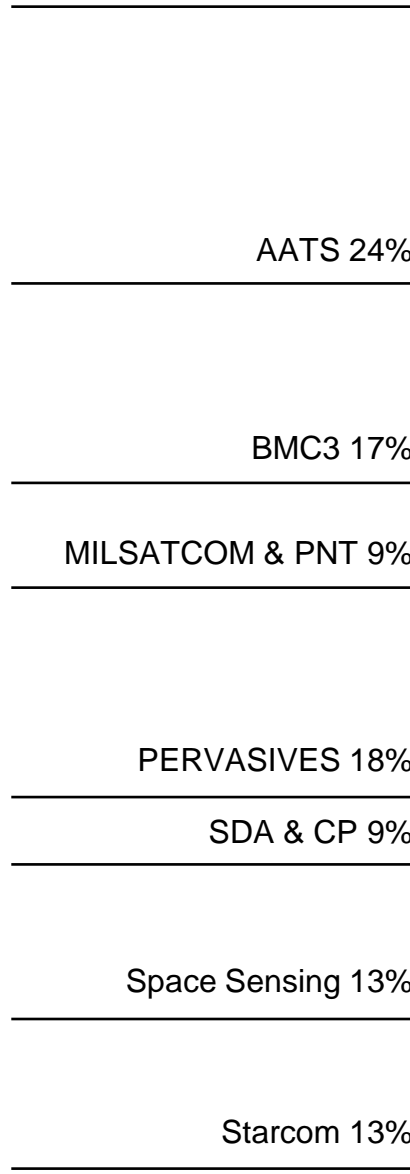
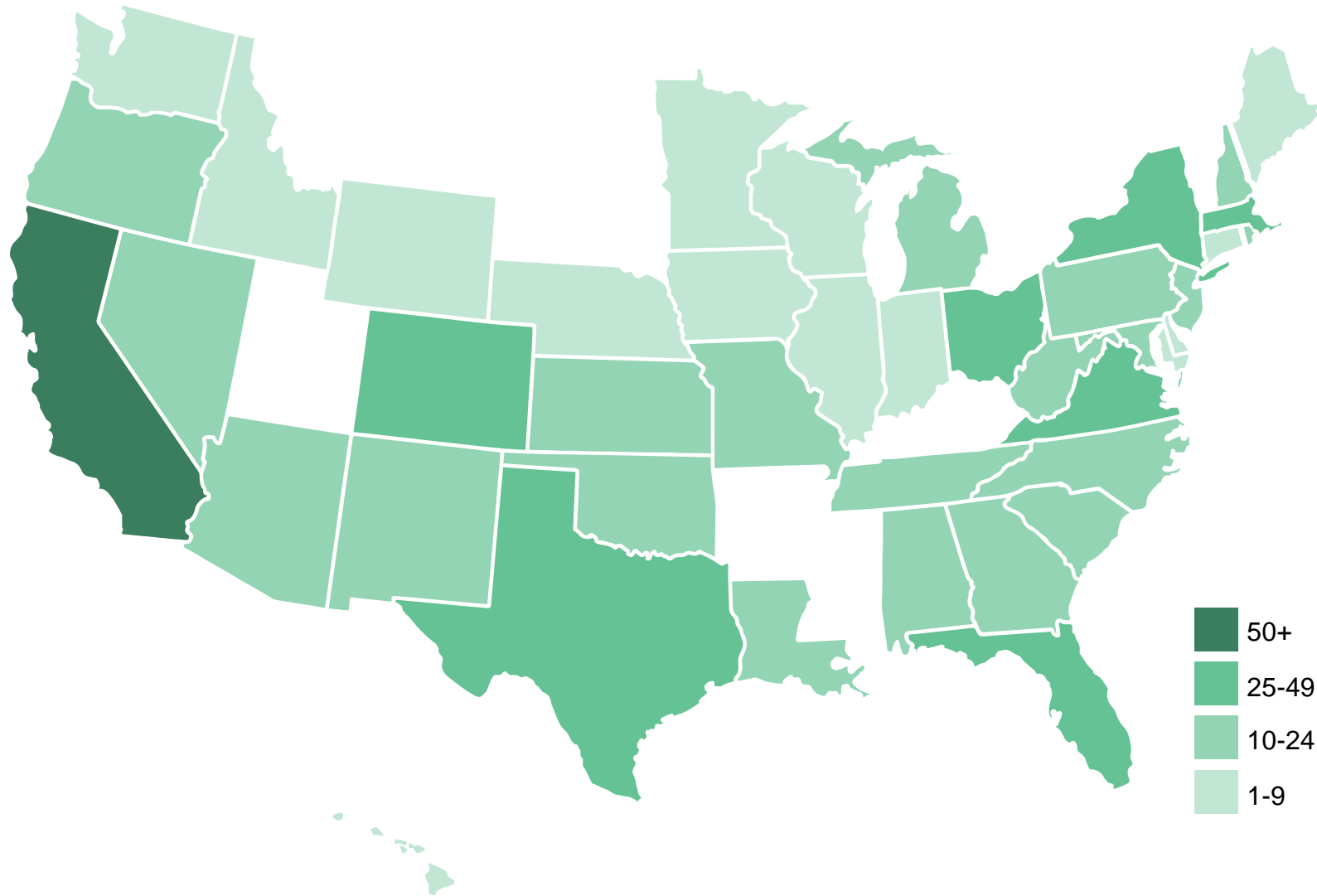
## MAKING BIG BETS ON GREAT IDEAS

	DEFENSE-ONLY	OR DUAL-USE
TACFI	1:1 SBIR/STTR: Government	1:1 SBIR/STTR: Private
STRATFI	1:2 SBIR/STTR: Government	1:1:2 SBIR/STTR: Government Private
	MINIMUM	UP TO MAXIMUM
TACFI	\$374K SBIR/STTR: Funds	\$1.9M SBIR/STTR: Funds
STRATFI	\$3M SBIR/STTR: Funds	\$15M SBIR/STTR: Funds



# IMPACT

Number of awards per state and breakdown



MISSION AREA BREAKDOWN



# CHALLENGE

## Process phases

### 1. MARKET RESEARCH

Each Challenge begins with a government-only Scoping Workshop where the Challenge Topic is articulated and key elements of the Challenge Definition Workshop and Challenge Campaign are defined.

### 2. CHALLENGE DEFINITION WORKSHOP

A gathering of industry, academia, and key government Subject Matter Experts is conducted across two days to define the core problems to solve, develop an understanding of key solution components that are desired, identify enabling technologies that should be considered, and craft the specific details of the Challenge Campaign.

### 3. CHALLENGE CAMPAIGN

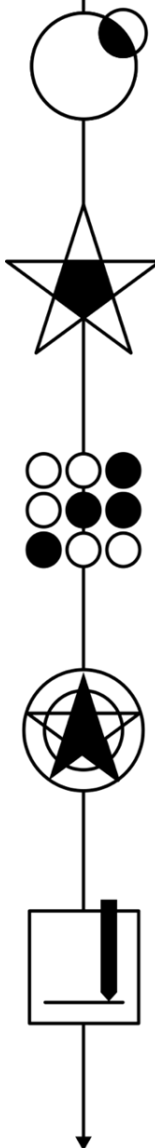
An open innovation campaign is announced on [Sam.Gov](https://www.sam.gov) (or SBIR) and [afwerxchallenge.com](https://afwerxchallenge.com) with a defined submission period that enables solutions across a desired spectrum of solution readiness to be transparently submitted by providers and evaluated by a government team.

### 4. SOLUTION SHOWCASE

Selected solution providers are invited to participate in private pitches and an open solution showcase to enable potential buyers across the DOD to interact, learn more, and make contracting decisions.

### 5. CONTRACTING

Depending on the solution readiness of the chosen solutions, solution providers move into a demonstration period or are directly put under contract to begin working with the government to generate the desired impact.



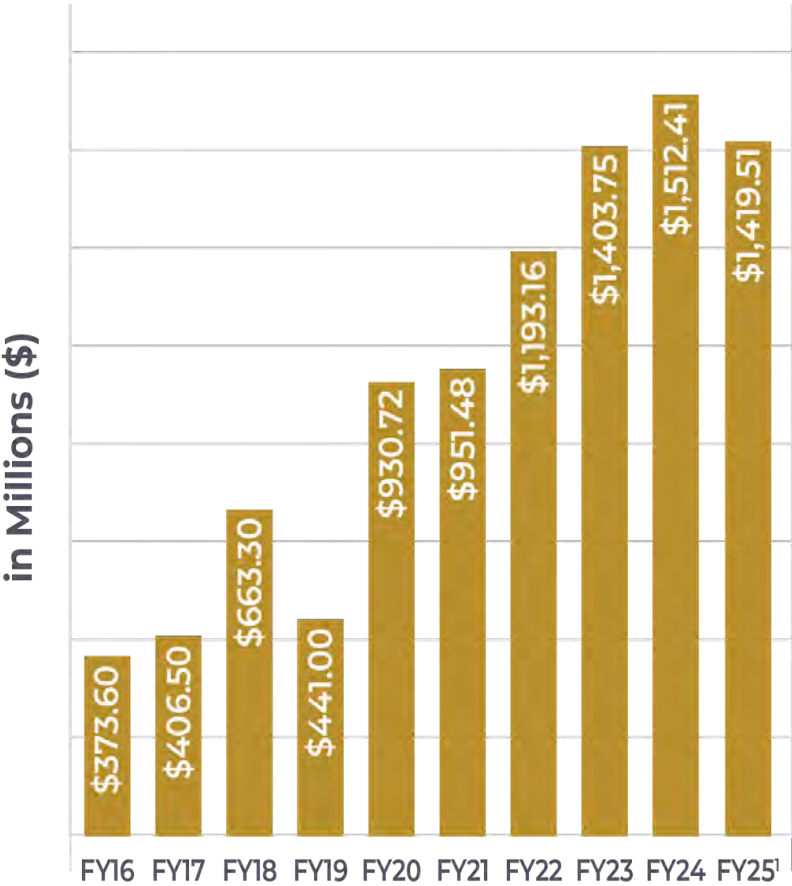
# CHALLENGES

SpaceWERX Challenges

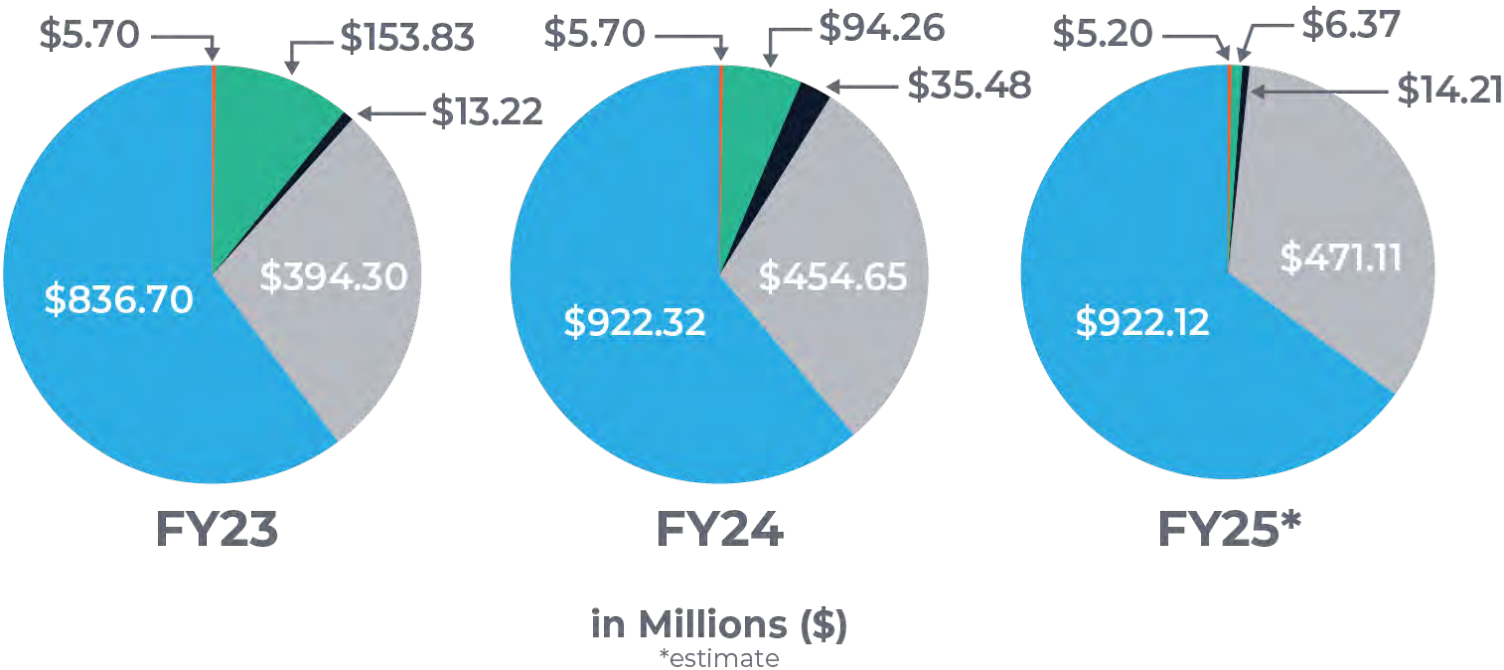
CHALLENGE TOPIC	STATUS	TARGET LAUNCH
Tactically Responsive Space (TacRS)	I2A Graduated	Complete
Digital Spaceport of the Future (DSTF)	I2A Graduated	Complete
Alternative Positioning, Navigation, & Timing (Alt PNT)	TRL Bootcamp	Complete
Sustained Space Maneuver (SSM)	Showcase	Complete
Resilient MILCOM	Solicitation	In Evaluations
Manufacturing Challenge (Open Topic)	Solicitation	FY '26
Futures Series: Adaptive and Intelligent Space (STTR)	Challenge Definition Workshop	September 2025
AI/ML for Warfighter Applications	Ideation	October 2025

# FUNDING THE FUTURE

## AFWERX Funding Profile



<sup>1</sup>SBIR/STTR Budget Estimated, based on FY25 DAF RDT&E extramural budget



# Two Pivots: Deliver as much as possible by 2026

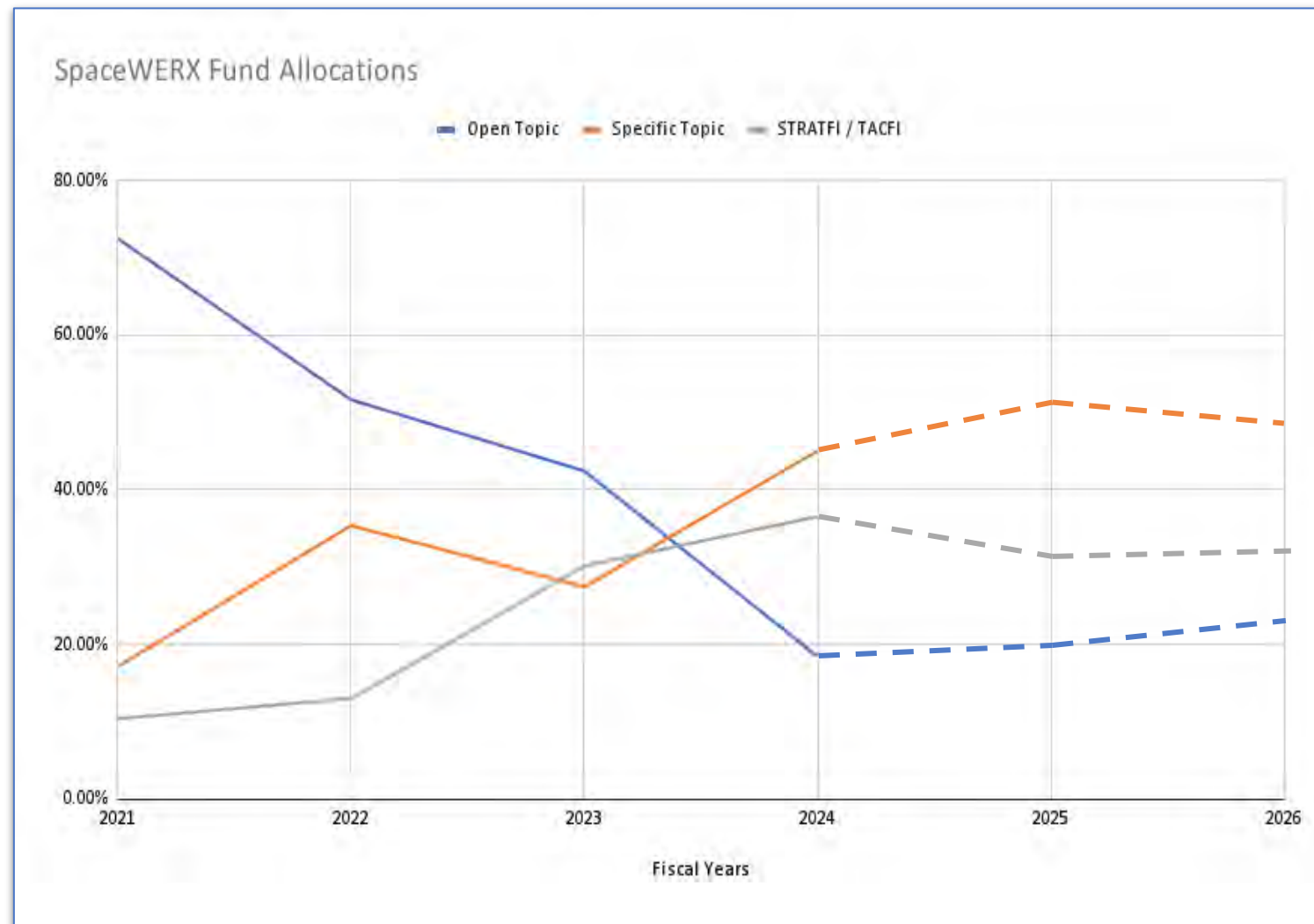
## Customer Focus and Funding Alignment

### Customer Pivot

- Growing user-base beyond heavy AFRL user community
- Delivering to
  - PEOs
  - Combatant and Component Commands

### Funding Pivot

- ~\$460M annual budget
- Prioritizing operational prototypes and operational capability in the near-term
- Re-calibrating broader industry investments after FY25 (more sustainable Open Topic investment allocation)
- Operating within funding guidelines set by Congress and Small Business Administration







SPACEWERX

SHAPING OUR FUTURE IN SPACE

QUESTIONS?