

OAKLAND COUNTY · DETROIT REGIONAL DEFENSE COALITION

DEFENSE: INNOVATE & INTEGRATE (Di2)

November 5, 2026 | San Marino Club | Troy, Michigan

From Capability to Contract: Connecting American Industry to the Defense Mission

Register & Sponsor → thedrdc.org/di2summit

Di2 connects small and mid-sized businesses, nontraditional suppliers, manufacturers and technology companies with defense mission requirements and practical pathways into the **Department of War marketplace**.

MORNING SESSIONS

8:00–8:30 Registration, Breakfast & Networking

8:30–8:37 Welcome: Growing the Defense Innovation Ecosystem in Southeast Michigan

DRDC Leadership and Elected Officials

8:40–9:00 WHERE DEFENSE IS GOING

The Next Defense Technology Frontier



Barbara McQuiston | Principal, **BKM Tech, Inc.** | Former Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering | Former Chair, **NATO DIANA**

A current view of emerging technologies, changing mission requirements and where defense attention and investment are headed.

9:05–9:50

PATHWAY ONE

The Future of Defense Production: AI, Innovation & Advanced Manufacturing is in Detroit



Panel: Bryan Wisk | Founder & CEO, **Autonomous Resource Corporation (ARC)**

In 2026, ARC announced a strategic partnership with **Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL)** to establish the **Exascale Foundry**, an initiative designed to accelerate the discovery, qualification and production of mission-critical defense components.

Explore how AI-enabled manufacturing, advanced materials, high-performance computing and new production models can accelerate defense production, strengthen domestic supply chains and create opportunities for manufacturers and technology companies. **How your business can benefit. And, it's all here in Metro Detroit.**

Morning Sessions continued

9:50–10:10 **Networking Break**

10:10–10:30 **PATHWAY TWO**
From Commercial Innovation to Defense Solution



Brian Liesveld | Chief Executive Officer, **DEFENSEWERX**

A practical look at how companies can enter the defense innovation ecosystem, engage government problem owners and move promising capabilities toward evaluation, prototyping and opportunity.

10:35–11:45 **Inside the DEFENSEWERX Innovation Hubs: Where Industry Meets the Mission**



Moderator: **Brian Liesveld**

Four federal innovation pathways — and a direct look at what their mission partners are seeking and how industry can engage.

Janice Karcher | Deputy Director, ERDCWERX (Engineering, R&D Center)

Craig Zamy | Director, HSWERX (Homeland Security)

Morgan Bower | Director, FLEETWERX (Navy/Marines)

Leslie Babich | Director, SOFWERX (Special Operations)

11:50–12:20 **Michigan Central & Newlab: Innovation to Commercialization**

Michigan Central and Newlab bring together startups, industry and government to develop, test and scale emerging technologies, providing access to advanced prototyping, real-world testing, commercialization support and industry partnerships. Newlab Detroit at Michigan Central will also serve as the anchor of Michigan's newly announced **Space Innovation Hub**, connecting Michigan companies with resources and opportunities in the rapidly growing space and dual-use technology economy.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

12:20–1:15 **Lunch**

Afternoon Sessions continued

1:15–1:45

PATHWAY THREE

From Innovation to Army Capability



Evan Batts | Business Analyst | **Army FUZE**

Army FUZE is the Army's innovation engine, connecting startups, small businesses and nontraditional companies with Army technology needs and pathways to funding, development and transition. FUZE brings together programs including xTech, SBIR/STTR, the Technology Maturation Initiative (TMI) and ManTech as part of the Army's broader Pathway for Innovation & Technology (PIT).

Batts will explain how companies can enter the Army innovation ecosystem, where FUZE fits among the Army's other innovation organizations, and how FUZE, JIOP and G-TEAD work together to move promising commercial and dual-use technologies from discovery and prototype toward Soldier evaluation, operational capability and scale.

1:50–2:30

PATHWAY FOUR

Doing Business with the Primes: From Capability to Subcontract



Keith Miao
President and CEO,
Birdstop



Jeff Simek
General Manager,
**RCO Aerospace
Products**



Matthew Giacona
Director Supply
Chain, **American
Rheinmetall
Vehicles**

Moderator: **Vicki Selva**

How do small and non-traditional companies become suppliers to major defense contractors? Prime contractors will provide an inside look at how they identify and select subcontractors, evaluate new technologies and capabilities, and qualify companies for their supply chains. The discussion will cover **how to get in the door, who to approach, supplier requirements and certifications**, how technologies and services are evaluated, and what separates companies that win opportunities from those that don't.

2:30–3:30

Di2 SMALL-GROUP CONNECTION SESSIONS

Meet the Mission. Understand the Opportunity.

Two focused small-group rotations give attendees **direct access to speakers and pathway leaders** for deeper discussion of requirements, innovation entry points, acquisition, manufacturing and supplier opportunities.

Afternoon Sessions continued

Concurrent Programming

3:30-4:00 | TRACK A

Curated 1:1 Meetings – Capability to Opportunity

Pre-selected companies meet individually with participating organizations while a concurrent closing program explores the role of small and mid-sized manufacturers, commercial technology companies and nontraditional suppliers in strengthening the defense industrial base.

SEND Capability Statements with your registration!

3:45-4:15 | TRACK B

Closing Featured Program

TBA

4:15

Di2 Closing & Transition to Reception

4:15-6:00

Cocktail Reception & Networking

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