

Di2 Agenda:

November 5, 2026
San Marino Club,
1685 E Big Beaver Rd, Troy, MI 48083



- 8:00 Registration, Breakfast, Networking
- 8:30 Welcome Panel
- 9:00 Growing the Defense Innovation Ecosystem in SE Michgian
Elected Officials and Economic Development Directors from Oakland,
Macomb, Wayne Counties
- 9:00 Barbara McQuiston, Principal BKM Tech, Inc.
- 9:30 ***Former Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Research &
Engineering and Former Chair, NATO DIANA***

***Where is defense technology headed—and where will the
Department of Defense focus its attention and investment next?***

Barbara McQuiston brings a rare insider's perspective on the technologies shaping the future of national security. A former Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering and Director of Defense Research and Engineering for Research and Technology, she also served as Chair of NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA), helping build a transatlantic ecosystem to accelerate emerging and dual-use technologies.

Drawing on decades of experience spanning government, industry, venture investment and technology commercialization, McQuiston will explore the emerging technologies poised to reshape defense—including artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, robotics and autonomy, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing and other disruptive capabilities—and what shifting priorities mean for companies seeking to participate in the defense marketplace.

Her session will give attendees a forward-looking view of ***where defense technology is going, what capabilities are gaining attention, and where industry should be preparing for the opportunities ahead.***

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9:45 Pathway One; Innovation/Department of War Integration

10:30 TBD

***How to get your technology into the hands of Tech
Primes/Disrupters? The NEW procurement system***

10:45 - Pathway Two; Defensewerx. Integrating your innovation through
non-traditional programs

***For companies that have innovative solutions but aren't sure how to
break into the defense market, this session will provide a practical
look at where to enter, how to engage and how innovation moves
from a commercial capability toward a defense solution.***

Brian Liesveld | Chief Executive Officer, DEFENSEWERX

How does an innovative company—particularly one that has never worked with the Department of Defense—get its technology in front of the right people and turn a great idea into a real defense opportunity?

Brian Liesveld is CEO of DEFENSEWERX, the organization behind a growing network of innovation hubs that connects defense organizations with businesses, entrepreneurs, universities and other nontraditional problem-solvers. Through these innovation ecosystems, DEFENSEWERX helps government customers identify and rapidly evaluate technologies and solutions addressing real-world mission needs.

Liesveld brings extensive experience at the intersection of defense requirements, research, technology development and commercialization. His career has included leadership of rapid prototyping and innovation programs, management of major defense research initiatives, and work connecting government technology requirements with universities, industry and emerging innovators.

At Di2, Liesveld will ***demystify the defense innovation ecosystem***—explaining how DEFENSEWERX and its innovation hubs

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work, how companies can engage, and how challenge-based opportunities can provide a pathway for nontraditional businesses to bring their technologies and capabilities to the Department of Defense.

11:30 **Inside the DEFENSEWERX Innovation Hubs: Where Industry Meets the Mission**

How can your company get its technology in front of the federal agencies that need it?

Meet the leaders helping make those connections. This panel brings together representatives from four DEFENSEWERX innovation hubs, each providing industry, entrepreneurs and researchers a pathway to engage with distinct federal mission partners:

Janice Karcher, Deputy Director, ERDCWERX —Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) connects innovative existing/experienced government contractors and those interested in becoming contractors with the infrastructure, environmental technologies, information technology and other federal government research priorities. Opportunities span military engineering, advanced materials, infrastructure, environmental technologies, information technology and other Army research priorities.

Morgan Bower, Director, FLEETWERX — Connecting industry and innovators with the Naval Postgraduate School and the broader naval innovation ecosystem, with opportunities in areas including maritime technology, autonomy, commercialization and technologies addressing Navy and fleet challenges.

Craig Zmary, Director, HSWERX — Connecting innovative companies and technologies with the Department of Homeland Security and its mission components to address homeland-security challenges, including emerging technology, AI and other capabilities that can be rapidly applied to operational needs.

Leslie Babich, Director, SOFWERX — Connecting innovators with U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), helping identify, assess,

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prototype and accelerate technologies addressing some of the most demanding challenges facing Special Operations Forces.

Together, these leaders will explain ***how the WERX model works, what their government partners are looking for, how companies can engage, and how innovative commercial technologies can move from an introduction or challenge to evaluation, prototyping and potential government opportunities.***

For companies that have technology with potential defense or federal applications—but don't know where to start—this is an opportunity to hear directly from the people who can ***open those doors and connect solutions with mission needs.***

12:15 **Lunch and programming**

Sponsor, elected official remarks

13:15 **TBD**

14:15 **Breakout Sessions: Meet the Speakers One:One and in Small Group Discussions**

16:30 - 18:00 Cocktail Reception and Networking