

## **Bridging Innovation**

### **Connects MITRE Researchers with Startup Collaboration Opportunities**

One way that MITRE Bridging Innovation pursues its mission is through its partnership with the MITRE's independent research and development program. Both entities strive for similar outcomes - putting new technologies into the hands of government agencies and their stakeholders to address some of our nation's toughest challenges. By working together, they can achieve this goal more efficiently and create greater impact.

MITRE conducts a wide variety of applied research throughout the corporation, pursuing near-, mid-, and far-term solutions to government agency problems. To accelerate discoveries, researchers work with partners from industry, academia, and other R&D organizations that have complementary expertise or ideas. This is where the Bridging Innovation teams comes in. Although collaborative research is far from new to MITRE's practices, the intimate access to the innovation ecosystem that stems from MITRE's Bridging Innovation partnerships can uncover even more opportunities.

Sometimes these opportunities present themselves in unexpected ways. MITRE leases office space within some of our innovation partner locations to be embedded in the innovation ecosystem. At our office at MassChallenge, a Boston accelerator program, an orthodontics startup using additive manufacturing technology for a new form of braces worked right next to us for many months. "After a casual discussion with the startup CEO, I realized that the same 3D printing technology might be useful to my MITRE colleagues exploring new sonar transducer designs," said Jamie Hill, a member of the Bridging Innovation team that frequents the office. With permission from the startup, MITRE tagged along for the next in-person meeting with their European 3D printer manufacturer. This meeting kicked off a research partnership, currently in its third year, developing a novel sonar transducer to advance underwater communication and sensing technology for both defense and scientific research applications. Bridging Innovation creates a physical, trusted presence within the innovation community to identify opportunities like this for MITRE and our sponsors.

In addition to ad hoc matchmaking, Bridging Innovation captures information about the startups they have engaged within the innovation programs and shares it through an internal website with the entire MITRE community. Researchers can conveniently sort by technology area, find a brief description, and email the MITRE point of contact for more information. That information may include current engagement status, product and technology evaluations, and startup contact information which researchers can use to explore collaborative projects. "By partnering with the MITRE research and development program, Bridging Innovation accelerates the application of external sources of innovation to our sponsors' national security and public sector challenges. By leveraging our mission perspective, and adding our own technical creativity, we can rapidly adapt technologies that are not readily accessible to our government sponsors." says Ariel Schlamm, a portfolio leader in MITRE's research program. The Bridging Innovation team is also available to assist as researchers navigate the collaborative research process.

When evaluating early stage startups, additional incubation is often necessary before the technology is ready to address a sponsor's need. "We've found that startups with emerging tech, really know their tech, but don't understand how it can be applied to solving our sponsors needs. And that's where we come in," says Russ Graves, director of Bridging Innovation. This incubation can take the form of a collaborative research project when MITRE brings something unique to this equation, such as our IP or an approach for applying commercial oriented tech to a sponsor problem, and when a partnership is deemed mutually beneficial to the startup and MITRE. Other times, the needed risk reduction can be achieved through mentorship and observation as the startups progress through partner accelerators and incubators.

Working with MITRE's independent research and development program is just one way that Bridging Innovation supports the MITRE community. We aim to build a variety of pathways for MITRE and our sponsor to access non-traditional innovators to solve national problems.