

# CHARLESTON REGIONAL BUSINESS JOURNAL



March 5 - 18, 2018 • [www.charlestonbusiness.com](http://www.charlestonbusiness.com)

Volume 24, No. 6 • \$2.25

## SPAWAR hopes effort lures in nontraditional companies

By Patrick Hoff  
[phoff@scbiznews.com](mailto:phoff@scbiznews.com)

Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Atlantic is launching a project that aims to help SPAWAR do research more efficiently.

The Information Warfare Research Project is meant to encourage nontraditional compa-

nies and academia to participate in Department of Defense contracting. The project, a partnership between SSC Atlantic and SSC Pacific, is being led by Bill Deligne, deputy executive director for SPAWAR.

"The Information Warfare Research Project is a structure that we're trying to put in place with industry that's going to allow us to do research in a more rapid manner," Deligne

said.

Under this process, a third-party company will be contracted to manage a consortium of traditional and nontraditional contractors who will conduct research for SPAWAR all the time instead of waiting for a particular request for proposals.

See SPAWAR, Page 13 ►



### Berkeley County Growth Report

Special section on one of  
S.C.'s fast-growing counties.

Page 23

**SPAWAR, from Page 1 ►**

The consortium, which Deligne said could include hundreds of member companies, will be able to explore specific topics that the government wants to research. Companies will also be able to submit their own suggestions for research topics directly to the Department of Defense through the consortium.

"So we're going to put this structure in place, and it really speeds up the process because after we award the initial contract with this management company, then all of the other interaction contractually is industry-to-industry," he said. "And that makes things go a lot faster."

The consortium will focus on specified technology areas, including cybersecurity, data science and "anywhere where you're moving data, voice, video, moving it around the fleets, among ships, ship-to-shore, for the purposes of warfighting," Deligne said.

The project "will enable research with industry in the information warfare domain and allow us to take research ideas rapidly through prototype and production," he said. "This mechanism is faster and more attuned to getting something quickly that we want today, as opposed to the traditional Federal Acquisition Regulations."

**'A huge upside'**

Josh Hatter, president of the Charleston Defense Contractors Association, said the trade group has been talking to SPAWAR for several years about a program like this, and he's generally heard positive things from member companies.

"There's kind of a level of excitement to seeing how SPAWAR plans to use this contract," Hatter said.

The Information Warfare Research Project operates through the Other Transaction Authority, a provision in the Defense Department authorization bill that allows for research and development of technologies related to weapons systems, outside of the traditional contracts, grants and cooperative agreements that fall under Federal Acquisition Regulations.

"The Other Transaction Authority is much more flexible than traditional FAR-based contracting approaches," Deligne said.

Prior to joining SPAWAR, Deligne worked at Naval Sea Systems Command, which oversees the National Shipbuilding Research Program. That program is run through the Other Transaction Authority, "so I had quite a bit of experience coming in on doing something like this," he said.

A major part of the OTA, Deligne said, is to encourage nontraditional companies to get involved with the Department of Defense.

"Some of these companies, the non-

traditional, don't like doing business directly with DoD, either because of the way we pay or just the requirements that we levy on them for their business," Deligne said. "So this should help with that."

Hatter said he doesn't see the Information Warfare Research Project as a threat to traditional defense contractors. Instead, he said, the IWRP is a complement that will help improve the contracting system for everyone.

"When you're looking at acquisition reform, anything that streamlines that process is a huge upside," Hatter said. "So the fact that the command is exploring something that hasn't been the norm here, there's nothing wrong with streamlining the complicated and complex acquisition process."

He added that SPAWAR also "used other OTAs kind of as a pilot process, going through to learn the process a little bit more themselves before putting the IWRP agreement together ... just to test the concept."

**Next steps**


SPAWAR plans to initially spend approximately \$100 million on the project. Deligne said SPAWAR intends to release the formal program announcement in the next two months, with the intention of announcing a contract with a management company in May or June. The rest of the fiscal year will be used to set up the consortium, with research beginning by the first quarter of the next fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

"We're on track to make that happen," he said. "I don't see any real obstacles. We haven't uncovered anything that would suggest that that's not a doable timeline."

SPAWAR approached companies in December with a request for information to explore the notion of using the Other Transaction Authority and to solicit suggestions from industry leaders. At the beginning of February, SPAWAR held its Industry Day, during which more than 100 companies were given the chance to weigh in on a draft program announcement.

"Our intent is to take what we learned from the Industry Day," Deligne said. "We're dispositioning that right now, and we're intent on a formal program announcement sometime in the late March or early April time frame."

SPAWAR Executive Director Chris Miller told companies at Industry Day that he anticipates working with them to improve the project as it gets off the ground.

"We are truly doing something different and unique here," he said at the time. "We've learned a lot about setting up an OTA from other organizations, but we will need your input." 

Reach staff writer Patrick Hoff at 843-849-3144 or @PatHoffCRBJ on Twitter.