Navy Establishes 6 More Tech Bridge Collaborations

James F. Geurts (center), assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition (ASN RDA), shown here in 2019 announcing the Department of Navy's plan to rapidly expand its collaboration capabilities through the creation of Tech Bridges. U.S. NAVY / Bobby Cummings

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy secretariat has doubled the number of Naval-X "Tech Bridge" sites on its network of collaborative alliances, the Navy's top acquisition and research official announced.

James F. Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, said in a May 12 video conference with reporters that the six tech bridge sites established last year have been beneficial to the Navy and Marine Corps, and he is doubling the number of tech bridges that will foster the collaboration of the Navy Department with industry, academia, scientific laboratories, and other organizations and individuals in developing technical solutions.

"There are a lot of great activities going across the Navy and Marine Corps team, but we wanted an easy way to connect everybody up so we could accelerate our learning, better connect folks with ideas to solutions and folks with solutions to the folks that could put those into use," Geurts said. "Our focus continues to be how do we support Sailors and Marines down-range, how do we increase our speed, how do we learn from each other and [reach] network-type speed as opposed to individual speed."

Geurts said the Navy Department did its best year ever in fiscal 2019 of "putting dollars on contract," including the largest total small business awards, $16 billion, or 18% of the awards, and is engaging with small businesses to get five

times the speed and 10 times the number of performers.

“Think of this Naval-X Tech Bridge as this underlying network, which facilitates all that,” he said. “It’s not an activity unto itself as much as connecting everybody together so that we can speed discovery all the way through deployment and focus on all phases of support, not just early R&D [research and development] but all the way through sustainment.”

“What we have seen in the last nine months is $45 million obligated through programs that were identified through the tech bridges through existing programs, largely through SBIR [Small Business Innovation Research program] as well as a lot of rapid prototyping authorities used through ONR [Office of Naval Research],” said Cmdr. Sam Gray, Tech Bridge director, also speaking at the teleconference.

“Additionally, we were able to leverage the tech bridge network [in the current pandemic] in just a month focused on COVID efforts,” Gray said. “Tech Bridge has met on a daily and then weekly basis to connect all the teams together to find out how people were using their manufacturing capability, how were they able to get things on contract, how they were able to work with FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] representatives to get things approved for medical use.”

The six new tech bridges are:

- Central Coast, centered at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), Monterey, California. Its focus is to connect faculty and students to provide a variety of potential partners across all applied warfighting domains, with particular focus on cyber, space and oceanographic capabilities. The NPS has cleared airspace for unmanned aerial systems testing.
- Inland Empire, centered on Naval Surface Warfare Center Corona, California. Its focus is on data analytics and

visualization; networks and data environments, including live virtual constructive training environment; and measurement technology.

- Ventura, with the Naval Surface Warfare Center Port Hueneme Division, Naval Air Station Point Mugu, and San Nicholas Island, all in Ventura County, California. It focuses on unmanned system development, additive manufacturing, advanced material characterization and testing, and soon to include a mixed-reality environment.
- Southern Maryland, centered on Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, along with the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Indianhead, Maryland. It focuses on unmanned aviation, autonomous systems, modeling and simulation, and live virtual constructive environments.
- Mid-Atlantic, centered on commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, in Norfolk, Virginia, with the Naval Information Warfare Center Hampton Roads and two Naval Surface Warfare Center detachments. Its focus is on tying the fleet to the larger Tech Bridge network, with emphasis on cyber, unmanned systems, robotics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, advanced communications and command and control, additive manufacturing.
- National Capital Region, centered on Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock Division, Maryland, teamed with Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren, Virginia and Indian EOD Technology Division, and the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, Quantico, Virginia. Their focus is on data-driven decision making.