

Build the future of defense. Become a Defense Ventures Fellow.

Partner with top VC, AI, and Cyber companies on the cutting edge of technology. Participate in an immersive 8-week fellowship to bring technology and innovation back to the DoD.

What is the Defense Ventures Fellowship?

An Industry Immersion Program that identifies emerging innovators from across the US Military and places them into short-term work environments within tech startups and venture capital firms to bring innovation back to the Department of Defense.

Is there a cost to participate?

This is a free and immersive program, delivered by Shift in partnership with AFWERX. The only cost is the time required to participate.

Who can become a Defense Ventures Fellow?

Open to employees of the DoD (active, guard, reserve, & civilian) with a minimum of three years professional work experience. Past Fellows have come from diverse backgrounds spanning:

- Intelligence
- Combat Operations
- Special Operations
- Technology Development
- Leadership Positions
- Acquisitions
- Software Development
- Medical Fields & More!

Where does it take place?

Fellowships may be a virtual, hybrid, or in-person experience.

What does success look like?

Each Fellow completes a capstone project and a personal innovation manifesto, many of which have been presented at conferences or published in journals and company websites.

Meet Our Partners



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Defense Ventures Fellowship: Details

Why was the Defense Ventures Fellowship created?

“To succeed, we must properly identify problems, empower decentralized solutions by individuals and teams, and infuse an ethos of innovation at all levels.”

— General Charles Brown, USAF Chief of Staff

In order to meet this goal, the DoD needs to build strong relationships with the investors and founders developing emerging technologies in the private sector.

How does this fellowship contribute to DoD innovation?

Fellows are placed with venture capital firms, accelerator & incubators, tech startups, and companies that are excited about contributing to American Dynamism and providing career experiences to emerging innovators from the nation's military.

Who can become a Defense Ventures Fellow?

- Must be employees of the DoD: active, reserve, guard, or civilian
- Must have 3+ years of professional work experience
- Must be available for a full-time commitment during the program (commander approval required upon selection)

How are Fellows matched to hosting Partners?

Fellows are matched and placed with companies using Shift's proprietary Talent Matching technology, developed to remove bias and promote a diverse and inclusive program that advances innovation.

What value does the participation provide?

At a high-level, expected outcomes for participants are:

- Potential for a service-specific special designation
- Exposure to cutting-edge technology and industry leadership practices
- Access to a DoD-wide network of Defense Innovators
- Certificate that can be added to your professional profiles

Participation

Timeline

8-weeks total

Weeks 1 - 2

Part-time

Learn & Grow

Weeks 3 - 8

Full-time

Embed in Host

Post Fellowship

Back to Unit

Drive Innovation

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Defense Ventures Fellowship: **Commander Insights**

What is the benefit for Commanders/Units to let someone participate in a Defense Ventures Fellowship?

By allowing participation in the Defense Ventures Fellowship, Commanders bolster their capabilities across innovation, professional education, retention, and partnership enablement. Participants develop an advanced set of technical proficiencies and cross-military network, which drives retention for promising early and mid-career service members.

Following the 8-week program, Fellows return to their unit with best-in-class industry knowledge that can be applied across a variety of functional areas and teams. Commanders can leverage these individuals to solve a variety of problems and offer outside-the-box thinking.

How does it work?

Defense Ventures offers a tailored curriculum designed to get Fellows up to speed quickly and contribute in valuable ways to the industry hosts participating in the program. The outcomes of the program are to:

- **> Gain Industry Experience** Participants can better specialize in emerging methodologies and technologies.
- **> Develop Industry Relationships** DoD is viewed as an organization willing to learn from the private sector.
- **> Bring Innovation Back to the DoD** Learnings from the program enable the DoD to have more agile and efficient capability development.
- **> Identify Future Innovators** Shift's proprietary assessment and matching technology compounds through time and provides the DoD with a platform for identifying high-potential talent.

What is the approval process for participation?

Upon selection, Fellows are required to receive commander endorsement for participation.

The first 2 weeks of the program are part-time and are designed to give the participant room to offboard any existing work to prepare for the full-time, 6-week immersion.

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Defense Ventures Fellowship: FAQ

What is the Defense Ventures Fellowship?

The Defense Ventures Program is an 8-week fellowship where DoD personnel embed with venture capital firms, tech accelerators, and tech startups to better understand how the private sector develops and integrates new business practices and technologies to enhance the technical capability of the United States.

For service members, it is an opportunity to understand how innovation is happening in the private sector, connect with other like-minded innovators in the DoD, and bring new knowledge and relationships back to their units. This is not a transition program, it is an upskilling and professional development opportunity for DoD personnel.

Does this program help me get a job?

This is not a transition program, it is an upskilling opportunity for mid-career DoD personnel. All accepted participants are expected to return to the DoD to share knowledge and bolster partnerships with the private sector. All applicants must have a minimum of 18 months from separation to be considered.

How much does the program cost?

The program is funded by AFWERX and free to all participants. If participants desire an in-person experience with their host organization, the home unit is responsible for TDY costs.

Is there any additional military obligation if I participate in the program?

No, there is no additional obligation for participating in our program.

What are the location preferences to participate in the program?

Shift partners with 100+ cross-sector industry hosts with varying office presences. Fellows can participate virtually at a number of remote-first organizations, or they can participate in-person in cities like Atlanta, DC, San Francisco, San Diego, and many more.

What is the expectation of engagement from a Fellow and their host company?

We expect each fellow to engage with their host company lightly during the first 2 weeks, and then immerse full-time for the following 6 weeks.