

**MONDAY MORNING GROUP OF WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY
ANNUAL ADVOCACY TRIP – WASHINGTON, DC
APRIL 9 – 11, 2024**

**FUNDING INLAND EMPIRE TECH BRIDGE TO
EXPAND NATIONAL SECURITY INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS**

ISSUE: Congress authorized the United States Department of Defense (DoD) to establish innovation facilities in the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Navy designated Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC), Corona Division as the anchor command of the Inland Empire Tech Bridge to better connect Sailors, Marines, and Navy civilians with the private sector and academia to collaborate and solve warfighting challenges. Riverside Community College District (RCCD) and County of Riverside partnered to acquire an off-base Tech Bridge innovation center to facilitate greater connections and networking with traditional and non-traditional partners, such as small businesses, startups, and venture capitalists to pursue dual-use technology that benefits both the military and private sector. RCCD/County of Riverside need additional funding to improve the current Inland Empire Tech Bridge facility and its Crucible Innovation Accelerator pilot program.

ACTION: The Monday Morning Group urges Congress to appropriate \$10 million for Inland Empire Tech Bridge facility improvements and expand its innovation accelerator programming to support more dual-use, non-traditional startups delivering increased national security innovation capability as directed in Sec. 219 of the FY21 NDAA.

BACKGROUND: The National Defense Strategy underscores that our military's technological advantage depends on a robust and secure national security innovation base that includes both traditional and non-traditional defense partners. Partnerships with the Navy through Tech Bridges will help expand the national security innovation base. Based in the local community, Tech Bridge is a streamlined model for new entrants and small-scale vendors to provide cutting-edge technologies Sailors and Marines need.

Prior to receiving funding, Inland Empire Tech Bridge partnered with the California State University, San Bernardino School of Entrepreneurship, and other DoD innovation programs to create two new startups using NSWC Corona patents: Torr Water and AxoTech. Torr uses temperature differences to distill drinking water from seawater and would be useful for Navy water treatment applications. AxoTech is developing a handheld Fentanyl detector for DoD and law enforcement counter-narcotic missions and won the \$25,000 first place prize in the California State University Startup Challenge in May 2023.

With Congressional funding, Inland Empire Tech Bridge launched its Crucible Innovation Accelerator pilot program in February 2024. The inaugural cohort included 8 newly forming companies around NSWC Corona and research university patents, and 8 existing tech startups with technology application for the military. All 16 teams, approximately 50 people, are pursuing dual-use technology for both the military and commercial sector, which will accelerate capability delivery, increase market size, attract venture capital, and ultimately lower procurement costs from economies of scale. This will be showcased at the inaugural Inland Empire Innovation Summit in Riverside in April 2024, which will bring together for the first time, tech companies, entrepreneurs, small business programs, venture capital, prime contractors, economic development agencies, and Defense and government leaders to showcase the effectiveness of NavalX Tech Bridges.