

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Air Force Regional Hub Mid Atlantic Network hosts inaugural meeting; awards \$450,000 to explore cutting-edge technologies

Led by Cornell University, the meeting engaged members in critical planning sessions for future needs and announced funded partnerships submitted in response to the Hub's first solicitation launched in September 2022

ITHACA, NY – November 29, 2022 - The [Air Force Research Laboratory's](#) (AFRL) newest regional hub network, led by Cornell University for the Mid-Atlantic, held its inaugural meeting Oct. 27-28, 2022, in Ithaca, New York. The meeting featured presentations on technical needs in forecasting material and component performance in extreme environments, and utilization of complex, heterogenous, and dynamic networks, along with breakout sessions to discuss the Hub Network's structure and community. An independent expert panel also reviewed proposal presentations and awarded \$450,000 to four projects with government-academic-industrial teams that are poised to accelerate the translation of high-risk innovations to the market that are crucial for U.S. defense and new commercial applications.

Winning proposals include: "Machine learning-driven optimal design of self-healing vitrimer composites for multifunctional coatings," "Photopolymerization-based ceramic additive manufacturing for extreme environments," "Light lace for quantifying performance in extreme environments" and "Microfluidic-accelerated directed evolution for sustainable rare earth separation."

Throughout the meeting, attendees networked with potential collaborators and discussed upcoming priorities with key personnel from AFRL and the U.S. Space Force, namely Dr. Richard Vaia, chief scientist of AFRL's Materials and Manufacturing Directorate; James "Sass" Bieryla, deputy director of AFWERX; and Nick Kamin, manager of the U.S. Space Force's Science, Technology and Research Directorate.

Technical presentations and ample time for social interactions aligned squarely with this year's theme of "building community." Similarly, almost all attendees across industry, government and academia agreed on the need to emphasize the Hub as a facilitator of connections that may not otherwise exist in the Hub Network's absence.

"I'm pleased our inaugural meeting was productive for all," said Patrick Govang, co-director of the Mid-Atlantic Hub Network. "The feedback we received over the meeting's two days provided much-needed guidance for the Hub Network's work and how we'll continue to provide value to current and future members. Most notably is the need for us to grow the Hub Network into a place where new and fruitful collaborations form through a streamlined gateway to the Air Force and Space Force. We look forward to facilitating these relationships and broadening the region's members."

Vaia, the Chief Scientist of AFRL's Materials and Manufacturing Directorate, also lauded the meeting and the Hub Network as a place for connections and collaborations.

"The Mid-Atlantic Hub Network's first meeting was an outstanding success that set a positive tone for the year ahead," Vaia said. "Most importantly, it allowed everyone to provide their impressions of the Hub and how to best frame it as a network rather than a standalone institution. With this in mind, the Hub Network will provide value to all members by facilitating key connections across domains, and we've now gained the insight needed to make sure that happens."

The Mid-Atlantic Hub Network plans to issue three project solicitations in spring, summer and fall focused on key areas of importance to AFRL, the United States Air Force, and the United States Space Force. Those interested in becoming a member of the Mid-Atlantic Hub Network or joining the Hub's notification list should visit <https://midatlantichub.afresearchlab.com/>.

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ABOUT THE AFRL MID-ATLANTIC HUB NETWORK

The Mid-Atlantic Hub Network is a pilot supported by the Air Force Research Laboratory and led by Cornell University. Founding member institutions include Binghamton University, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Columbia University, Griffiss Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Princeton University, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, and the SUNY Research Foundation. The Mid-Atlantic Hub Network aims to provide key connections between industry, academia, and the government to foster innovation of critical technologies. For more information about the Hub or inquire about becoming a member, visit <https://midatlantichub.afresearchlab.com/>.

ABOUT AFRL

The Air Force Research Laboratory, or AFRL, is the primary scientific research and development center for the Department of the Air Force. AFRL plays an integral role in leading the discovery, development, and integration of affordable warfighting technologies for our air, space and cyberspace force. With a workforce of more than 11,500 across nine technology areas and 40 other operations across the globe, AFRL provides a diverse portfolio of science and technology ranging from fundamental to advanced research and technology development. For more information, visit www.afresearchlab.com.