



INNOVATION NETWORK

# Legal & Contracting Officers' Frequently Asked Questions

## A Guide to Your Frequently Asked Questions About the EDGE Innovation Network

### What is the EDGE?

[EDGE Information Paper](#)

[EDGE Standard Briefing](#)

*The Mythbusters memo says you can meet one-on-one with potential offerors as long as there is no preferential treatment. Unless I agree to meet with anyone else that asks, isn't meeting with EDGE members giving them preferential treatment?*

There is significant value to government in meeting with a wide range of capabilities providers. Government discussion with industry should occur before development of specific requirements and/or proposed acquisition documents (Requests For Proposals [RFP]); "Left of RFP" to showcase the art of the possible for those that draft requirements and RFPs. The goal of these "Left of RFP" interactions is to better understand the current state of technology and the breadth of solutions that can be drawn on to meet government end user needs; the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) encourages these types of dialog. Without open communication and engagement with industry and academia, government runs the risk of not providing the best solution to the end users. An example from Henry Ford, "If I gave the customer what he wanted I would have given him a faster horse," illustrates why it is imperative that government talk openly with industry. The context for engagement with potential capability providers is to explore the art of the possible. Ideally learning that capabilities like the "Car" might meet their needs better than a "faster horse" solution. Dialog between solution providers through to solution users and their intermediaries (government acquisition) is critical to achieving this goal.

The EDGE purposefully achieves the goal of enhancing

communication and awareness yet ensures no preferential treatment to any one member of industry. The EDGE is a representative forum of industry, academia and non-profit technology providers.

- The EDGE is comprised of 400 plus individual member organizations representing industry, non-profit and academia. Your dialog with the EDGE Enterprise team is information sharing to a very broad audience not just one company or organization. [Read more about EDGE members](#)
- With prior approval of the government organization the EDGE Enterprise shares all inputs (from members and government sources) with every EDGE member through our Calls for Innovation (CFI) process. [CFIs](#) are posted on our public webpage; our website is available to anyone.

### Why share with the EDGE?

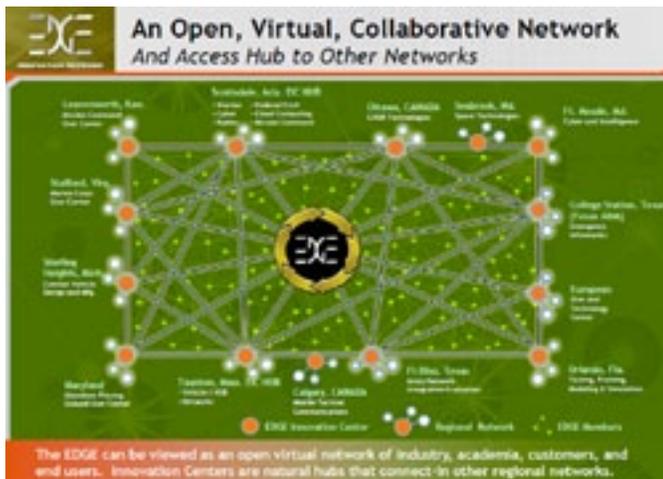
*The EDGE Innovation Network is a revolutionary model where industry and academia collaborate to deliver new technologies and innovative capabilities to end users.*

*Let us help you technology forage with the reach of our 400 plus member network of technology providers.*

- We encourage government to share any information that might be given to the EDGE to the general public, such as through FedBizOps for example.
- Lastly, for your specific organization's interests and restrictions the EDGE is also very open to adjusting its processes and efforts to meet your communication guidelines. You can help us to create engagement criteria that will enhance our ability to communicate with you; ultimately, providing you with a better understanding of the art of the possible.

### My attorneys say if I meet with one vendor I have to meet with all that request a meeting. Can the EDGE accommodate that level of open engagement?

As you know the FAR encourages the exchange of information with industry in a period prior to an RFP (FAR 15.201). Only when there is specific information about a proposed acquisition (RFP) is there the requirement to share with all of industry. The EDGE Innovation Network routinely





# Legal & Contracting Officers' Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

facilitates sharing information with as broad of audience as possible. The EDGE has established systems and processes for information dissemination. When you meet with the EDGE Innovation Network you are meeting with an organization that is designed to facilitate open information sharing and collaboration with hundreds of industries, non-profits and universities. Our processes and systems, like our Knowledge Management System (KMS) and our Calls for Innovation (CFI) processes, are specifically designed to share with the entire EDGE membership. *Our CFIs* are also released on our public network and are available to anyone accessing our public website. By meeting with the EDGE your government agency has the ability to communicate with many organizations ; a single meeting with the EDGE ensures your message will reach our 400 plus members, eliminating the need to have 400 individual meetings and not burdening your schedule.

Communicating with industry has significant value to the government. Therefore, the EDGE Innovation Network is very open to adjusting its processes and efforts to meet your communication guidelines.

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## **How can I be sure that the EDGE information won't cross the line beyond general information in FAR 15.201 and FAR 10 and potentially create an Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI)?**

The "left of RFP" communications envisioned create no business advantage for EDGE members to be placed into an Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI) position. The value of market research is to see what technology/capabilities exist that could solve a government problem or need. Open dialogue with a large pool of industry/academia (EDGE Innovation Network) is critical to ensuring government is aware of the potential technology and capability solutions. The EDGE encourages communication and collaboration with hundreds of industry/non-profit and university members; our systems and processes are not designed to develop specific requirements for proposed acquisitions but only inform on the art of the possible from a large group of participants. Furthermore, the government creates no contract nor pays any money to participate with the EDGE Innovation Network.

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## **What are the EDGE's membership rules? Can anyone join? Are there reduced dues for small businesses so cost isn't prohibitive?**

We have multiple membership types which are described

below. Any organization (not individuals) can join the EDGE at no cost. The EDGE Innovation Network will share any government input concerning 'needs and capabilities' with all EDGE members regardless of their membership level.

The EDGE does have different membership levels and they are structured based on the type and kind of participation and collaboration that member conducts with the EDGE Innovation Network and its members.

*The different **EDGE memberships** are described below with basic membership differences.*

**Executive**- Nominated by General Dynamics business leader for significant collaboration efforts with General Dynamics C4 Systems, other General Dynamics companies or EDGE members participating in the EDGE Innovation Network. Host an EDGE Innovation Center. Approved by the president of General Dynamics C4 Systems, the EDGE's lead technology provider.

**Technology** -Nominated by General Dynamics business leader based on member being a valued General Dynamics supplier, a participant and/or a technology/capability provider on a General Dynamics or EDGE project, or a formal mentor-protégé participant with General Dynamics.

**Academic & Non-Profit** - Universities and other academic institutions, research laboratories, and not-for-profit organizations. R&D activity and budget with interest in performing collaborative projects and knowledge sharing with other members of the network.

**Contributing & Business Services** - Provider of relatively specialized technology or service. Usually the technology, service, or organization is: 1) straightforward for integration or use by other members, or 2) organizationally limited in R&D activity and/or budget. Willingness to participate in the EDGE open collaborative environment.

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## **If I send a request for information to the EDGE, will it be sent to all members?**

Yes, with your permission, we share your requests for information with all EDGE members. We have three primary means of sharing information with our network members:

- ***Calls for Innovation (CFI) process*** – This is similar to government Requests For Information (RFI) but can be initiated by EDGE members, government or anyone interested in a potential technology solution. CFIs are also released not only to EDGE members but also to anyone interested on our open internet website (provide link). Additionally, although



# Legal & Contracting Officers' Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

hosted by the EDGE Enterprise responses to the CFIs go directly to the requestor. This is key because many EDGE members are competitors and as such don't want others to see their responses including the EDGE Enterprise (or General Dynamics C4 Systems.)

- EDGE Knowledge Management System (KMS) - This is a virtual system available to EDGE members and government to conduct market research kind of efforts. It is not just a search engine but rather a matching system to link those with needs to those with capabilities. This system is available to only EDGE members (although anyone can join the EDGE and get access). We normally post government releasable information like "gap lists" to EDGE members. This is especially useful for our small company members who don't have the business development personnel to find this information on their own. If desired, we allow government direct access to feed information to the network using this forum.
- Weekly EDGE Email – we also publish a weekly email to our membership that highlights EDGE member successes, efforts and potential opportunities.

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## What is the relationship between the EDGE and General Dynamics?

The EDGE Innovation Network branding and Enterprise organization is owned and financially sponsored by General Dynamics C4 Systems. The EDGE Innovation Network Enterprise manages the EDGE membership and collaboration environment. The EDGE Innovation is not a separate legal entity and therefore EDGE memberships are legally with General Dynamics C4 Systems. For interface with government agencies the EDGE Enterprise treats all General Dynamics companies with the same benefits and access to information as other EDGE members. Unless specifically requested by the government agencies no information is "restricted" to just General Dynamics.

The majority of [EDGE Innovation Centers](#) are owned and operated by General Dynamics' business units. The Center for Emergency Informatics is owned and operated by Texas A&M University and supported by the EDGE Enterprise. We are actively discussing potential not for profit organizations owning and running an EDGE Innovation Center under the EDGE Innovation Network brand and EDGE standard operating guidelines. In general, all EDGE members have access to and use of EDGE centers based on availability. Since many of the EDGE members do compete with each other there are periods during competition where they will not

be able to access a particular center. Additionally, the EDGE operating construct does not require General Dynamics business unit participation to do our networking efforts. Our task is to link all those EDGE members including competitors to General Dynamics, with potential solutions to those who have a specific need. Actually, the large majority of our network efforts don't involve General Dynamics business units because most EDGE Members are focused on Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and smaller Broad Area Announcements (BAA) efforts which are much better suited to our smaller industry and academia solutions.

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## Does the EDGE pass on all information and inquiries to all members directly, or does it go through General Dynamics?

When members or government participants access EDGE KMS 2.0 tool they can contact EDGE members directly without any General Dynamics involvement. However, in most cases members leverage the EDGE Enterprise staff's access and knowledge and do rely on the EDGE teams' process resulting in information flow through General Dynamics C4 Systems by virtue of the EDGE team's employment status with General Dynamics C4 Systems.

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## What is the process to effectively engage EDGE members for market research?

The EDGE provides several ways to engage EDGE members for market research. Except for EDGE Enterprise staff collaboration support there is no requirement for other General Dynamics involvement other than as an EDGE member:

- EDGE Knowledge Management System (KMS) - This is web based tool available to EDGE members and government to conduct market research kind of efforts. The tool is a matching system to link those with technology needs to those with capabilities, much more than a mere search engine. More importantly government and EDGE members can conduct research and information sharing without General Dynamics involvement. KMS is specifically designed to provide information provided by EDGE members and most importantly contact information so they can be contacted directly, again without General Dynamics involvement. This is a password protected system; we can provide government with an account to access all information on the system. We

# Legal & Contracting Officers' Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

currently have government participants using the tool to get insights on available technology and conduct informal market research. International members have access to this system and therefore International Traffic in Arms Regulation (ITAR) controlled material is not authorized on the system. All government documents posted on this system must be for public release.

- **Calls for Innovation** – These are similar to government RFIs but can be initiated by EDGE members, government or anyone interested in a potential technology solution. CFIs are also released not only to EDGE members but also to anyone interested via our public [website](#). Additionally, although hosted by the EDGE Enterprise, responses to the CFIs go directly to the requestor. This is key because many EDGE members are competitors and don't want others to see their responses including the EDGE Enterprise (or General Dynamics C4 Systems).

- **Visioneering** – This EDGE process can be conducted virtually, in person at your location, at a specific EDGE member location or in an EDGE Innovation Centers. Our larger EDGE Innovation Centers actually have specially designed rooms called "Kivas" to facilitate this process – example follows. The goal of the EDGE visioneering process is to examine needs and problems and what capabilities exist or need to be developed to address the need or problem. Visioneering is an open dialogue process that helps all involved to better understand needs and capabilities in simple clear language.

- **Mentor Protégé Support for Members** – The majority of EDGE members are small business and in many cases do not have experience in working with government and government processes. To assist in the communication process the EDGE Enterprise offers our members a mentor protégé environment. For example, many members have never used a "Quad" chart to respond to request. More importantly they don't normally understand government terminology to properly communicate their capabilities. When requested, the EDGE Enterprise assists them in their communication and submission efforts.

- **EDGE Staff Introductions** – Based on the information being discussed EDGE Enterprise staff can also recommend EDGE members that they believe most closely address the government's specific area of interest. This is not meant to limit government access but rather focus government research on their specific areas of interest. As noted above there are processes to search the entire EDGE Member Network (EDGE KMS.)

- **EDGE Centers Meetings and Demonstrations** – Most of our EDGE innovation centers are designed to facilitate meetings and demonstrations of capabilities. These centers were specifically developed to enable open and collaborative efforts by all EDGE members. Based on availability, EDGE members can request use of these centers to meet with other



*Kiva*

industry or government representatives. Other than the center coordinator (an EDGE Enterprise team member) these engagements do not need to involve a General Dynamics business unit.

## Can EDGE members perform market research with the EDGE?

EDGE members can leverage the same steps above for market research. Actually, most of the processes are focused on EDGE member to EDGE member teaming efforts. Many of our EDGE members, especially the smaller entities do not have robust (if any) dedicated business development capabilities. Therefore, the EDGE Enterprise collects and distributes releasable government information and opportunities in EDGE KMS system, as Calls for Innovation, weekly EDGE emails and direct EDGE communication. We also encourage a social technology network information sharing environment where all EDGE members contribute known government and industry opportunities via the different forms of communication provided by the network. Essentially the network feeds itself.

## How can I use the EDGE for market research?

There are multiple ways the government can use the EDGE to conduct market research. Below are some of the protocols we currently use but we are always open to exploring new approaches that meet the limitations and concerns of your organization:



# Legal & Contracting Officers' Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

- **EDGE KMS** – We can provide any government agency access to our EDGE KMS system so they can do their own independent research.
- **Calls For Innovations** Process – Any government agency can develop and submit for publication a Call for Innovation. You can provide the information you would like communicated and the EDGE Enterprise will issue the CFI. Key component to the CFI is a government POC. This is to allow EDGE members to contact you directly and not go through the EDGE Enterprise Staff. [Read more](#)
- EDGE hosted **Visioneering** (Market Research) Session (in person or virtually) – The EDGE Staff either virtually, at your location or at one of our centers can host a visioneering session. This session and process developed is designed to provide all involved a better understanding of the needs/problems and potential solutions. [Read more](#)
- Support of Government hosted Market Research Session (in person or virtually)

## Does the EDGE do testing and/or demonstrations?

One of the key capabilities of the EDGE is the establishment of EDGE Innovation Centers (EICs). These centers are specifically designed to facilitate EDGE member participation to rapidly develop and integrate new capabilities. There are basically five different types of centers. All centers are designed to facilitate a collaborative environment with most having a demonstration area as well. However, not all can perform rapid prototyping which requires lab equipped facilities. See image for locations and technology focus of each center.

1. **EIC Hubs** (Scottsdale, Ariz.; Taunton, Mass.) – These centers comprise a grouping of labs and technologies where EDGE members can collaborate on technology projects. There is lab space specifically allocated for EDGE members to use as required. These centers also have Kivas for visioneering and collaboration, conference and demonstration rooms.

2. **EIC Labs** (Fort Bliss, Texas; Orlando, Fla.; Sterling Heights, Mich.; Annapolis Junction, Md.; Ottawa, Canada; Calgary, Canada; and South Wales, United Kingdom) – These centers have lab space for EDGE members and projects, collaboration and demonstration rooms. Orlando has a Kivas for visioneering efforts.

3. **EIC User Centers** (Leavenworth, Kan.; Aberdeen, Md.; Seabrook, Md.; and Quantico, Virg.) – These centers have both demonstration and collaboration rooms. They are located next to users/customers to better facilitate collaboration and visioneering.

4. **Virtual Centers** (Health & Medical and Human Dimension) – These centers are communities of interest focused on collaboration in the virtual domain. However, for collaborative events they can draw on all 14 Centers as required.

5. **Specialized Center** (Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas): -This center is hosted by Texas A&M University and provides facilities primarily for collaboration. Although it does coordinate access to university labs and centers. In particular it is linked to the Texas Engineering Experiment (TEEX) "Disaster City" Center that trains 50-80K first responders a year. Through it's Institute (Summer and Winter) programs, industry can gain access to this center to evaluate and gain feedback in an operational scenario.





# Legal & Contracting Officers' Frequently Asked Questions *continued*

## How is the EDGE different from other consortia like AFCEA, NDIA, etc.?

Organizations like AFCEA, NDIA and other non-profit and for-profit organizations do a very good job of providing forums for information sharing. However, the EDGE model is different in several ways:

- Most of these organizations charge for membership and to attend their forums. Anyone can join the EDGE at no cost. EDGE events normally have no associated costs for attending.
- The EDGE is purposefully designed as a technology social network model vice the traditional conference model for information sharing.
- Besides information sharing, the EDGE has additional processes and capabilities like Calls for Innovation (CFIs), Visioneering, Knowledge Management systems and EDGE Innovation Centers. All which are needed to actually develop technology solutions.
- The EDGE is designed to do rapid technology development projects, taking ideas of "what is possible" and turning those ideas into tangible prototypes.

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Multimedia information can be found at [www.edge-innovation.com](http://www.edge-innovation.com)

## The EDGE Difference - Summary Problems & Solutions

