



**TESTIMONY OF
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**“HARNESSING SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION: NAVIGATING THE
EVALUATION PROCESS FOR GULF COAST OIL CLEANUP PROPOSALS”**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

JUNE 17, 2010

Good morning Madam Chair and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on the process for submitting Gulf Coast cleanup proposals to the federal government.

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90) and applicable federal legislation and regulations provide the United States Coast Guard with broad responsibilities and authorities regarding oil spill response oversight on U.S. navigable waters. These responsibilities and authorities include conducting, in coordination with other federal agencies, research on innovative oil spill-related technology. In order to best leverage the numerous offers of innovative technology assistance to the Deepwater Horizon spill response, the Coast Guard, at the request of the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) and the National Incident Commander (NIC), established the Interagency Alternative Technology Assessment Program (IATAP).

The IATAP is a documented, systematic, government-managed process to solicit, screen and evaluate alternative or new technologies in support of ongoing Deepwater Horizon spill response activities. This government interagency process provides for fair and consistent evaluation of each and every idea. The system is designed to provide submitters with timely acknowledgement notifications upon receipt of their proposal, as well as determination notifications as their proposal progresses through the evaluation process.

The IATAP workgroup is comprised of subject matter experts from the Coast Guard, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Minerals Management Service (MMS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Fish and Wildlife Service, Maritime Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Other agencies or entities may be added to the workgroup as required depending upon the technology under evaluation. The IATAP objectively evaluates proposals with technical rigor, and provides potentially effective solutions to frontline responders.

On May 21, 2010, the Coast Guard R&D Center initiated an interim system prior to the formal standup of the IATAP to handle ad hoc submissions received via phone and e-mail. To date, 620 ad hoc technology-related response submissions have been received for initial screening and evaluation through this system.

On June 4, 2010, a more formal IATAP process began with the issuance of a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) on the Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) website soliciting requests for oil spill response technology. The BAA calls for the submission of white papers describing proposed technology solutions with applicability in five distinct problem areas:

- Oil sensing improvements to response and detection;
- Oil wellhead control and submerged oil response;
- Traditional oil spill response technologies;
- Alternative oil spill response technologies; and
- Oil spill damage assessment and restoration.

This BAA is open to all sources and is available from the front page of FedBizOpps. Through this process, the Coast Guard recognizes the potential for novel, highly innovative solutions from small businesses, individuals and non-traditional sources. Submissions may include those from single or team entities such as academia, private sector organizations, government laboratories and federally funded research and development centers. The government also encourages non-profit organizations, educational/academic institutions, small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, historically black colleges and universities/minority institutions, women-owned businesses, service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses and historically underutilized business zone enterprises to submit concepts for consideration and/or to join others in a submission.

BAA PROCESS

The BAA white paper submissions are screened based upon overall scientific and technical merit, feasibility, the availability of proposed solution and submitted cost information.

The IATAP workgroup, as managed by the USCG R&D Program, and in consultation with other interagency partners, is screening and sorting submissions based on technical feasibility, efficacy and deployability. The initial screening of the BAA responses will result in a determination that either the concept:

- Has a discernible benefit to the spill response effort;
- Needs more detailed investigation or evaluation and will be forwarded to the appropriate government agency overseeing that portion of the Deepwater Horizon response (EPA, MMS, NOAA, USCG, etc.); or
- Does not have immediate applicability to support this event.

All submissions will be provided with a response and tracking number identifying the initial screening determination. All submissions are managed in the order they are received regardless of origin to ensure fairness in evaluation.

If the initial screening determines that the concept has applicability and potential immediate benefit to the spill response effort, the technical portion of the proposal and the IATAP recommendation is forwarded to the Deepwater Horizon response FOSC for further action under its authority, in consultation with the responsible parties and/or other federal agencies. If the initial screening determines that a more detailed investigation or evaluation is required it will be forwarded to the appropriate government agency overseeing that portion of the Deepwater

Horizon Response (EPA, MMS, NOAA, or USCG), and that agency is responsible for further action.

To date, we have received 1,273 submissions from the BAA and 70 have completed the initial screening process. We are testing submissions that have cleared the initial screening process for potential deployment.

CONCLUSION

Through the IATAP, the Coast Guard is ensuring all applicable capabilities and resources—government, private, and commercial (to include small business) will be considered for use in developing and improving solutions to secure the environment and facilitate a rapid, robust clean-up effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.