



COMMANDER'S CALL TOPICS

NOTE: This product has embedded hyperlinks and is best viewed online.

12—16 March 2018

Priority Topic of the Week: Culture of Innovation

One of the Air Force's top five priorities is to "Drive Innovation...to Secure the Future." If we fail to innovate and adapt, America will lose the technical and tactical advantages we've enjoyed since World War II. The Air Force currently has several programs available to capture the innovative ideas inherent in our Airmen.

AFWERX

Established in 2017 by the SecAF and reporting to the VCSAF, AFWERX is a catalyst for agile Air Force engagement across industry, academia, and non-traditional contributors to create transformative opportunities and foster an Air Force culture of innovation. AFWERX has hubs in Washington, D.C. and Las Vegas.

AFWERX's mission is to improve Air Force capabilities by connecting innovators, simplifying technology transfer, and accelerating results. This is accomplished by:

- Connecting innovative members from industry, academia and government
- Creating capabilities options and prototype opportunities for the Air Force
- Facilitating streamlined acquisition processes
- Fostering a culture of innovation in Airmen

SPARK

SPARK is a base- and MAJCOM-level grassroots innovation program whose mission is to bring tomorrow's tools to the warfighter today.

SPARK creates unique opportunities for external partners to work directly with military operators on interesting problems and allows for the fielding of solutions that have a direct impact on the Air Force's mission.

The SPARK program is currently building a network of SPARK Innovation Cells on Air Force bases around the world. The SPARK program has three goals:

- Provide the warfighter with the best tools and answers today
- Inspire a culture of innovation within the Air Force
- Build symbiotic relationships between the DoD and experts from industry, academia, and other government entities

The SPARK program pursues its goals through three different types of activities:

- Widgets for the Warfighter: Identifying a problem set and developing the hardware/software solutions for fielding
- Collaborative Research: Developing hypotheses, theses, or problem statements for analysis by an academic institute or consultant group
- Knowledge Exchange: Providing academic or practical opportunities for individual or organizational learning

Spark Tank

Spark Tank is an innovation competition that asks Airmen to submit their ideas on how to change, improve, and chart the future of the Air Force.

The winner of Spark Tank receives the Spark Tank Cup trophy, and all finalists are eligible for funding to have their idea further tested, developed, and implemented.



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Squadron Innovation Funds (SIF)

At AFA Orlando, the CSAF announced squadron-level funds to support Airmen-driven innovations that increase readiness, reduce cost, return time back to Airmen, enhance lethality of the force, and build healthy squadrons.

The Air Force is in the process of distributing these funds across all total force squadrons to reduce resource barriers that are preventing ingenuity.

The goal is for squadrons to think and act like start-ups. The infusion of funds will serve as “seed money” for squadron-level innovation initiatives that deliver bottom-up solutions.

API

Airmen Powered by Innovation (API), launched in February 2014, is a SecAF and VCSAF initiative for Airmen to share their innovative ideas through the AF API Portal in finding cost, time and resource savings.

- The API program maintains a list of potential innovative ideas to select from — Airmen whose ideas are selected by any MAJCOM or senior leader for implementation receive \$2,500.

Emphasis is focused on ideas that are implementable and provide benefits towards mission efficiency, effectiveness, or cost/man hour savings.

Airmen may submit their ideas through the [API website](#) on the AF Portal.

Additional Information

Click the links below to access additional information on each program:

- [AFWERX](#)
- [SPARK](#)
- [SPARK TANK](#)
- [API](#)

Squadron Innovation Fund (Airmen should contact their local unit commander or FM representative for additional details)

Personnel Topics of Interest

- AF announces creation of info ops tech school ([AF.MIL](#))
- Two-cycle officer assignment system means more time for Airmen, families to make career decisions ([AFPC](#))
- AF releases senior master sergeant promotion cycle statistics ([AF.MIL](#))

Monthly Observances

Brain Injury Awareness Month ([click link for additional information](#))
Women's History month ([click link for additional information](#))

Commander's Call Topic Archive: <http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/CommandersCallTopics.aspx>

Commander's Call Topics is published weekly by SAF/PA to ensure leaders at all levels remain current on issues concerning Airmen and families. Requests for information to be included in future editions should be sent to SAF/PAX via [email](#).

Submissions should include:

- 1) 1-2 sentence synopsis of the issue
- 2) hyperlink to further details
- 3) a POC name and contact information.

*Only submissions that pertaining to the majority of Airmen or specifically to command leadership teams will be considered.