Decision Assistance Tool Saves Money and Enhances the U.S. Army's Service to the Nation

Fiscal Years: FY 2019 – FY 2024

Location: Denver, Colorado

Company: Valid Evaluation, Inc. (a.k.a. Valid Eval)

Value: $10 million

Office: U.S. Army, Army Research Laboratory (ARL)

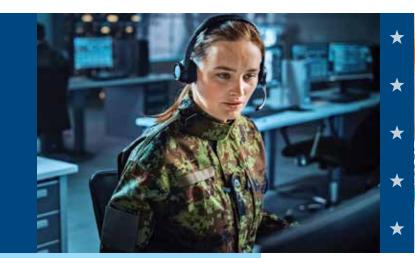**Project:** Valid Eval Decision Assistance Tool

The Challenge:

In June 2018, the Army launched the Expeditionary Technology Search (xTechSearch) as a catalyst to engage with the non-defense, traditional business sector in search of novel solutions to problems faced by top Army modernization priorities. xTechSearch allows selected small businesses access to pitch novel technology solutions directly to Army leadership with open calls for white papers. ARL faced the challenge of collecting evaluations and feedback from a disparate group of evaluators in a meaningful way that's compliant with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

The Solution:

In coordination between ARL and the Federal Systems Integration and Management Center (FEDSIM) Innovation group, Valid Eval was awarded a Phase III contract to develop a decision assistance tool. This structured, efficient, and robust evaluation and feedback tool is leveraged by ARL for proposals received under Army xTechSearch competitions and Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) topics in support of ARL. The Valid Eval tool is an online evaluation system for organizations to make and defend complicated decisions. Prior to an evaluation, Valid Eval works with ARL to take an evaluation methodology and convert it into an easy-to-use rubric in the online tool. During the evaluation, the tool captures evaluators' selections against the rubric, as well as narrative comments. In the consensus discussions, the tool provides complete transparency, adjusts for evaluator bias, and aids decision making through visual representations of rating trends. After decisions have been made, the tool creates reports representing the consensus decision, which become the Technical Evaluation Board consensus report.

The vendor's solution provides multiple benefits to small businesses and the government while saving money.

The Impact:

Valid Eval's decision assistance tool saves individual evaluators immense amounts of time. Valid Eval's solution requires only a one-time 15-minute training session to effectively use. Given that a typical training session lasts two hours and involves 20 evaluators at an average fully burdened rate of $300 per hour, the government saves approximately $11,000 per evaluation because of the shortened training time.

In addition to the monetary savings, Valid Eval's solution provides multiple qualitative benefits to the government and small businesses. The solution makes it easy for evaluators to participate, both in person and remotely, and provides an easy way to write and deliver feedback to small businesses. Because of its ease of use, ARL gets the best qualified evaluators because the process is less labor-intensive than a typical source selection. The solution also captures robust feedback that is shared with the small-business participants. This provides value to participants even if they do not ultimately receive the award. ARL's xTechSearch program has rapidly grown since 2018, and the client attributes a portion of their success to the Valid Eval tool.