Getting Started in Defense Technology Transition

If you want to win federal defense dollars, you must build a compliance and business foundation before you touch a single proposal. Do not waste time writing beautiful pitches for tech that the Government cannot legally buy. To clear the noise, here is your definitive, sequence-of-execution Getting Started Checklist to position your North Carolina innovation for federal acquisition.

Phase 1: Institutional Setup

Before any agency will look at your tech, your corporate identity must exist in the federal system.

- Secure a UEI & SAM.gov Registration: Register your business at SAM.gov. You will be issued a Unique Entity ID (UEI) and a CAGE Code.
    - Cost: Free. Avoid third-party scams charging for this.
- Establish SBA Small Business Status: https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs
- If you are pursuing SBIR/STTR grants, register at https://www.sbir.gov/ and https://www.DoWsbirsttr.mil/topics-app/

Phase 2: Security & Cybersecurity Baseline

You do not need a Facility Security Clearance (FSC) or personnel clearances to *apply* for early-stage funding. However, you must prove you can protect basic data.

- Adopt NIST SP 800-171 Protocols: You cannot win a DoW contract today without self-attesting to this data-protection standard. Download the framework and score your current IT setup.
- Prepare for CMMC 2.0 Level 1: The Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) is a mandatory requirement. Early-stage R&D firms dealing with Federal Contract Information (FCI) must achieve Level 1 (Self-Assessment). Do not overpay for Level 2 (Third-Party Assessment) until you are handling Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI).

Phase 3: The Mandatory Transition Assets

Federal program managers have thousands of entries to screen. They will not read a 30-page business plan. You must distill your technology into two precise, universally recognized document types:

1. The Government Quad Chart: A single-page PowerPoint landscape slide divided into four strict quadrants: *Technical Approach, Operational Capability, Cost/Schedule, and Company Capabilities*.
    - It is your ultimate "first-gate" tool.
2. The Technical White Paper: A highly structured 3-to-5-page document answering the *Heilmeier Catechism* (What are you trying to do? How is it done today? What are the limitations? What is the risk?).

Phase 4: Active Scouting & Engagement (Ongoing)

Once your assets are polished, put them to work using North Carolina’s dedicated state infrastructure.