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From: Dr. Victor Pinks II [vicp@tbc.net]
Sent: Sunday, October 05, 2003 12:48 PM
To: Holland, Michael J.
Subject: Fast Track request for DHS (your referral)

Hi Mike,

I sent the e-mail below to DHS on 9-30-03 per your referral. I have not heard anything, even in the form of an e-mail receipt of delivery. I am wondering if I sent it to the proper place or if it fell through the cracks?

In a way I feel that I should apologize for requesting a fast track. I usually work within the system, however, 'the system' seems to be a work in progress at this time. That is, my request for a 'fast track' evaluation is not a usual request for processing SBIR paperwork more rapidly. My request is for a rapid concept evaluation. You should not interpret this to mean that our particular software technology is just a concept. We are beyond that. We have plenty of finished code and 30 years of expertise. I am proposing an evaluation step for SBIR assessments.

As I mentioned in a previous e-mail, I am not concerned about the procurement of funds. I can get VC money very easily. I want to do this through the federal government because of the broad impact of the software technology we are developing. I don't want it tied up as a trade secret. I believe that tying it up as a military secret would be fine at first. Many federally funded projects eventually end up in the commercial market. I would just feel a lot better if I knew how the government wanted to handle it. Since there is no apparent mechanism for fast track concept evaluation of unsolicited research, that is why I need to maintain my contact with you, until I make a good connection. If it were solicited research, it wouldn't be as innovative as it is and would probably fit into an existing solicitation like a glove. I think innovation is the goal.

I expect that the very idea that I have breakthrough research requiring a fast track concept evaluation might warrant some skepticism but I assure you it is fundamental, broad impact and very significant. It won't be a waste of anyone's time. Anyway, I would certainly be glad to offer suggestions to the process of 'fast track concept evaluations' if such a mechanism is not yet developed. Though not an expert, I have been on the OSTP and many federal mailing lists and information groups for quite a while. I try to keep well informed about the current state of affairs with respect to SBIR funding policy. I have done the seminars, met with tech transfer offices, and the like. I think I offer a unique perspective, i.e. from the bottom.

Before I close this e-mail, I would like to make a few observations that I hope might be helpful. I come to you as an individual scientist without a fiscal budget to maintain. I am too small to have an agenda that is driven by my financial needs. I come to you from a pool of scientists that can offer an independent perspective. I don't think that an independent perspective is as common as we all would like to believe. Especially in light of the financial needs of many federal programs and 'big science' projects who depend upon a steady flow of funding. Maybe this kind of perspective can see (or admit to seeing) important issues that need to be addressed. Anyway, my desire is to be helpful.

My observation is that the face of research is changing. Especially in computational and grand challenge areas due in part to the dramatic reduction in cost for computer clustering. I have a 9-node Beowulf supercomputer that cost me $10K that would have cost $100K 10 years ago for the same performance. Technological advances such as low cost clustering, open source coding and the internet (to name just a few) have empowered the individual. In areas of computer science, IT IS possible to compete scientifically with federal labs and universities right out of your home. The face of scientific research is changing - first and foremost, it is changing in areas touched by grand challenge computations.

To pre-qualify an SBIR grant solely on the existence of business infrastructure is not prudent. A fast track concept evaluation, possibly handled by the military, should be ready to look at the

accomplishments of individual researchers where business infrastructure is not necessary. Again, that is probably in the areas of computer based research first. It is also naive to think that a Ph.D. without an institution is not productive in areas of computation. Again, technology has changed that. You know that no one gets a Ph.D. without a certain drive. They are independent thinkers and are empowered by technology to stay that way. More and more we see that the institution is not the sole source of credibility for a scientist or even a good idea.

I would refer you to an article this week in The Scientist; 'The Conscience Clause: Keeping the Independent Scientist Extant' (http://www.the-scientist.com/yr2003/oct/opinion_031006.html). In this article the authors talk about this very independence in a struggle with employer and public policy. In addition to that, they express a belief that "Only other scientists can assess the intellectual findings of their limited group of peers who are capable of understanding a given issue." This echoes my concern that the good willed individuals at NASA-Illinois and TRECC are not capable of properly evaluating our project.

A final observation is again echoed in this article. The authors state "professors who serve private interests are being appointed to public committees, and it is not unusual to see political pressure being brought to bear on scientific institutions. Differences in opinion among scientists about the ethics and values at stake in evaluating various technological risks fuel scientific controversies despite the fact that few scientists are prepared to deal with these issues and thus offer an independent perspective." - Frankly, our technology can be wrongly interpreted as bad news for federally funded grand challenge molecular dynamics projects. Especially the big computer installations looking to continually upgrade their hardware because they believe that they will solve their most fundamental problem with computer speed. These are big projects with big budgets. If it became common knowledge that the fundamental problem with simulation accuracy cannot be solved with a universe of computer speed, funding policies might start changing. If such a software technology were available, a lot of jobs could be lost. On the other hand, isn't it in the national interest to know about such technology?

I have completed a quad chart with NASA-Illinois and TRECC that overviews the project and might serve to assist in a fast track evaluation. I can also arrange legal representation in Washington D.C. if necessary. My attorneys have an office there.

I hope that I can establish a contact to discuss a fast track concept evaluation. Also, I consider myself more patriotic than most and feel obligated to reject venture capital offers until a federal representative has been briefed in some way. I am willing to suffer the normal skepticism and delays. If, after proper evaluation, it gets passed over, I will continue with commercial development and a clear conscience.

Thanks for listening.

Vic Pinks

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-----Original Message-----
From: Dr. Victor Pinks II [mailto:vicp@tbc.net]
Sent: Tuesday, September 30, 2003 7:09 AM
To: science.technology@dhs.gov
Subject: OSTP referral

Dear DHS Science & Technology,

Please note the e-mail below my signature from Mike Holland at OSTP. Could you route this to the appropriate contact at DHS so that I might be able to explain the details of my 'fast track' request? I have been discussing (in my opinion) systemic problems with the National Innovation System with Mike. This 'fast track' request is another issue, however, it is not unrelated to my discussions with him on policy. It is based upon my concern that the current system will bury some breakthrough research that addresses a very fundamental problem with grand challenge computations.

Any assistance is appreciated.

Sincere thanks,

Vic Pinks

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---------- e-mail with Mike Holland begins

Vic:

Thank you for your recent submission of comments to the Research Business Models Subcommittee. We appreciate your input.

Attached to your comments, you inquired (below) about a "fast track" for evaluating technologies and applications with Homeland Security relevance. My area of expertise is the NSF, DOE Office of Science and NASA Space Science portfolios. However, I talked to one of my colleagues here at OSTP who works on Homeland issues. He suggested there is an appropriate point of contact for your inquiry in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Please submit your information to:

science.technology@dhs.gov <mailto:science.technology@dhs.gov>

This group examines each idea submitted. Individuals with interesting ideas are asked to come in for additional discussion. I hope this helps.

Mike

Michael J. Holland, Ph.D.

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Below is a correspondence that I sent on September 17, 2003. In a follow up thought, I was wondering if a fast track exists that could, at least, take a look at the software technology I am proposing. I mean, by a credible panel of scientists with expertise in molecular dynamics who have national security in mind. I am not an alarmist. I am reacting to a sluggish federal innovation system in a manner that I hope will keep this software technology from being overlooked too long when I believe that the need for a simple quick evaluation by knowledgeable evaluators is in the nations interest. Nothing else. I think a rush to commercialization would be unwise until such an evaluation were performed.

---------- e-mail with Mike Holland ends