

PRESS RELEASE



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B3K Prosperity, Griffiss Institute, Starburst, Announce Mojave Aerospace Accelerator Fund

New program seeks proposals to accelerate commercial and dual-use technology, link innovators to military and federal test assets in East Kern and Antelope Valley

BAKERSFIELD, CALIF. – B3K Prosperity, The Griffiss Institute, and Starburst today announced their collaboration to launch the Mojave Aerospace Accelerator (MAACC, pronounced “Mach”) Fund. Through a competitive process, the MAACC Fund plans to invest up to \$400,000 to accelerate the translation of technology from research and development stages to practical applications in the aerospace and defense sector by enhancing government-academic-industry partnerships, linking innovators to US Air Force, Navy and NASA innovation assets in Kern County, California, and supporting the launch and growth of new entrepreneurial ventures.

The MAACC Fund is one programmatic element that B3K Prosperity and its key partner, Griffiss Institute are implementing to launch a defense and aerospace innovation hub in the region. In addition to the MAACC Fund other programs and services to enhance STEM talent pipelines in support of the needs of the government and defense industrial base, to promote and enable use of the region’s testing and simulation assets, and to catalyze technology transfer and commercialization are also underway.

“Our vision is to solidify East Kern County and the Antelope Valley as a globally leading aerospace and defense innovation, testing and production hub where firms can access our specialized facilities and draw from a deep talent pool to commercialize new technology, grow and create high-quality jobs,” said Georgia Petropoulos, President and CEO of B3K Prosperity, a regional economic development organization serving Kern County. “The MAACC Fund is the tip of the spear, helping innovators and startups leverage the assets in our backyard to mature technologies critical to national security and global prosperity.”

“We are thrilled to collaborate with B3K and Starburst to launch the MAACC Fund, which represents a powerful opportunity to bridge the gap between cutting-edge research and practical aerospace and defense applications,” said Matthew Mroz, Executive Vice President of Griffiss Institute. “By connecting innovators with the unique testing and development assets in East Kern and Antelope Valley, we aim to accelerate technology transitions that strengthen national security and drive economic growth. This initiative will empower startups to rapidly prototype solutions that address urgent warfighter needs, ensuring our military maintains a strategic advantage.”

“From our earliest interactions with B3K Prosperity, we were struck by the unprecedented depth of aerospace and defense research, development, test and evaluation taking place in East Kern and the Antelope Valley, and we knew we wanted to be part of efforts to elevate this innovation ecosystem” said Lukas Oberhofer, Head of US Strategy at Starburst. “We’re extremely excited to pair our expertise operating successful accelerator programs with the technology transfer capabilities of Griffiss Institute and regional relationships of B3K Prosperity to link high-growth young firms to this incredible place.”

The MAACC Fund is designed to lower the barriers for entry for commercial and dual-use technology into the Department of Defense through investments that help companies in the aerospace and defense sector achieve significant commercialization milestones.

The fund expects to make up to four investments, each ranging up to \$100,000. Projects will be funded at a level determined necessary to achieve proposed project objectives. The MAACC Fund's goal is to promote and enable the use of the regional defense test infrastructure. More information about proposal requirements, allowable expenses and targeted technologies is available online at <https://b3kprosperity.org/maacc>.

"The MAACC Fund exemplifies our mission to foster government-academic-industry partnerships that fuel innovation," said Matthew Mroz, Executive Vice President Griffiss Institute. "We are excited to empower startups and researchers to achieve commercialization milestones and bring transformative technologies to market faster. By focusing on rapid prototyping and fielding solutions for warfighters, the MAACC Fund will help deliver mission-critical capabilities to the defense community with unprecedented speed and agility."

Researchers and innovators, small and startup companies and collaborative teams are encouraged to apply. Technologies eligible for funding should align with defense priorities and fall within Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 2 to 6. Proposals will be evaluated on technical merit, alignment with defense/aerospace needs, market potential, team capacity and the proposed budget and milestones. All proposals are due on April 16 and awardees will be announced at a public event in late-May 2025. More details regarding the May event will be available at <https://b3kprosperity.org/maacc>.

In 2021, B3K Prosperity, an economic development organization serving Kern County, Calif., identified aerospace and defense as an opportunity industry, considering job quality within the sector and the region's unmatched concentration of federal and defense innovation assets, which include Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (NAWCWD) at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake (NAWS China Lake), Edwards Air Force Base, the headquarters for Air Force Test Center and home to the USAF 412th Test Wing, Air Force Research Laboratory Rocket Propulsion Division (AFRL/RQR) and the NASA Neil Armstrong Flight Research Center. Despite these assets, the region had not been able to successfully unlock the economic potential of innovation as a driver for regional dynamism and economic growth.

In 2024, B3K Prosperity and Griffiss Institute, the premier STEM talent and technology accelerator for the U.S. Department of Defense, developed a strategic collaboration to launch an Innovation Hub serving Kern County's military and federal innovation facilities. Together with Starburst, the leading global Aerospace and Defense startup accelerator and strategic advisory practice, B3K Prosperity and Griffiss Institute have announced the MAACC Fund, leveraging Starburst's track record of success operating Aerospace & Defense accelerators around the globe to link innovators and entrepreneurs to Kern County, increase technology transfer and transition and advance B3K Prosperity's vision of a regional Innovation Hub.

More information about the MAACC Fund is available at <https://b3kprosperity.org/maacc>. Questions about the program can be sent to maacc@b3kprosperity.org.

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ABOUT B3K PROSPERITY

B3K Prosperity (B3K) is a region-wide inclusive economic development organization serving Kern County and the City of Bakersfield in California. A public-private collaborative effort among business, government, industry, and civic leaders, our mission is to bring our region together to imagine, engineer, and build the next era of success, where all people prosper and businesses thrive. We're committed to growing the number of Quality Jobs in our regional by investing in traded sectors and improving our regional competitiveness. Learn more at www.b3kprosperity.org.

ABOUT GRIFFISS INSTITUTE

The Griffiss Institute (GI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit talent and technology accelerator for the United States Department of Defense and an international network of academic, government and industry partners. Since 2002, the GI has served the Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate, the Mohawk Valley region, and the United States, empowering diverse teams with talent and technology development programs that lead the nation in technical and economic impact. Learn more at www.griffissinstitute.org.

ABOUT STARBURST

Founded in 2012, Starburst is an innovation catalyst in the global Aerospace and Defense (A&D) industry. Combining three complementary activities—startup accelerators, strategy consulting, and venture investments—they help A&D stakeholders innovate, navigate and invest in the dynamic ecosystem. With offices in Los Angeles, Paris, Munich, Singapore, Seoul, Tel Aviv, Madrid, and Washington D.C., the team has built a robust community with 60+ partners and a portfolio of 140+ startups. Starburst's leading Flagship Accelerator program helps startups scale their business in aviation, space, and defense, as well as enabling technologies, with access to one of the largest groups of corporate representatives, government stakeholders, and private investors in the world to help startups win their first contracts. More information about Starburst can be found at www.starburst.aero.

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