

# THE ELEVATE EFFECT

June Jumpstart

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## Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)

Did you know the Air Force has an excellent training program to teach CPI? You can learn how to improve the processes in your own work center through the Lean Six Sigma (LSS) methodology.

There are three levels that combine web based & instructor led training: Foundational Skills (10 hours), Green Belt (25 hours), and Black Belt (40 hours) – all free to Air Force military and civilian staff. You can learn more at these sites:

<https://usaf.dps.mil/teams/cpiportal/SitePages/CI2Training.aspx>

<https://usaf.dps.mil/sites/a1/a1m/A1MI/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Additionally, the AMC Continuous Improvement & Innovation (CI2) Program Office can answer any questions you might have related to CPI – contact them at: [amc.cpi@us.af.mil](mailto:amc.cpi@us.af.mil)

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## Unlocking Creativity: How Constraints Can Fuel Innovation

When we think of creativity, we often picture endless freedom—unlimited time, resources, and possibilities. But ironically, constraints can be one of the most powerful drivers of innovation. Whether it's a tight deadline, limited budget, or strict guidelines, constraints push us to think differently, making problem-solving more dynamic and efficient.

### Why Constraints Boost Creativity

Forces Focus – With fewer options, we channel energy into making the best possible choices rather than getting lost in endless possibilities.

Encourages Ingenuity – Limited resources spark clever solutions, leading to outside-the-box thinking.

Turns Challenges into Opportunities – Constraints redirect creativity, helping us work smarter, not harder.

### Examples of Constraint-Driven Creativity

Architecture & Design – Space limitations inspire innovative layouts (think tiny homes or multifunctional furniture).

Art & Literature – Poets thrive within strict formats like haikus or sonnets, and artists use minimal palettes to create stunning visuals.

Business & Technology – Startups with tight budgets often develop disruptive innovations, proving that limitations lead to breakthroughs.

Instead of resisting constraints, embrace them—they might just be the catalyst you need to reach new creative heights!





What is AFWERX and where did it come from? AFWERX followed the DoD level creation of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) in 2015. From the DIU web site: “DIU is the only DoD organization focused exclusively on fielding and scaling commercial technology across the U.S. military at commercial speeds.”

The Air Force established the organization AFWERX in 2017 as an initiative to drive innovation and streamline the adoption of emerging technologies by engaging startups, small businesses, and academia to solve Air Force problems. AFWERX is powered by the AF Research Laboratory (AFRL) and hosts competitions, funds exploratory projects, and connects companies with venture capital to accelerate defense-related technology development. AFWERX sponsors Spark Tank, the annual Air Force competition where airmen pitch innovations to senior leaders in hopes of getting the Air Force to fund their ideas.

To identify needs within the service, AFWERX supports local Spark Cells (like Elevate) throughout the Air Force. Spark Cells find technology applications to solve wing and squadron-level problems.

You can learn more about AFWERX at this site: <https://afwerx.com/>

## **Unlocking Innovation: How SBIR/STTR Programs Support the Air Force Mission**

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs are vital initiatives designed to promote technological advancements by funding research and development (R&D) efforts by small businesses. These programs play a crucial role in supporting Air Force units, helping them access cutting-edge solutions via contracts tailored to mission needs.

### **What Are SBIR & STTR?**

SBIR funds small businesses to develop innovative technologies that address federal agency challenges, including those faced by the Air Force.

STTR requires collaboration between small businesses and research institutions, like colleges & universities, ensuring that scientific discoveries transition into practical applications.

### **How These Programs Benefit Air Force Units**

The SBIR/STTR programs provide Air Force units with mission-driven innovation, helping solve challenges in areas like cybersecurity, AI, and advanced materials. These programs accelerate prototyping and deployment, ensuring cutting-edge solutions reach operational forces more quickly. By leveraging small business expertise, the Air Force gains cost-effective technologies without the overhead of traditional defense contracts. Additionally, local units can gain the benefits without the upfront costs, with Phase I and Phase II fully funded by the Air Force – up to \$1.8M for a Phase II contract.

Many SBIR/STTR-funded innovations transition into long-term defense solutions, strengthening national security and enhancing operational capabilities.

For more details, visit the Air Force SBIR/STTR website:  
<https://www.airforcesmallbiz.af.mil/SBIR-STTR>

*Elevate offers some unique opportunities like 3-D printing classes. Check out our quick Links!*

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To request a seat for a 3D printing class: [click here](#)*