



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, DC

Professor James Poterba,

As one of the U.S. Air Force service members leading reforms of our SBIR program, which provides about \$800 million per year in R&D contracts to small firms, I am pleased to inform you that Professor Sabrina Howell's research has greatly influenced our new approach. We started AF Ventures in 2018 to break down the barriers separating the USAF and commercial technology ventures. In the past two years, we executed \$300M and achieved historically fast commercialization rates, already reaching \$5.15 of commercialization for every \$1 of tax-payer dollars spent. We attribute much of our success to our policy implementations of the lessons learned from Professor Howell's work U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) SBIR program.

In particular, her work directly impacted our decisions to provide more and smaller Phase 1 contracts and to increase our outreach to companies who had not traditionally done business with the Air Force. Furthermore, it was through her introductions that we expanded outreach to other SBIR programs in order to incorporate "best of breed" practices into the Air Force program. These efforts largely reflected her findings that DOE SBIR awards are most effective at promoting patenting, subsequent VC investment, and commercialization when quickly awarded to non-traditional "start-ups".

Given her research and the importance it played in reframing our program, we have since asked Professor Howell to become a Special Government Employee. Today, she currently advises Dr. Roper, Service Acquisition Executive of the Air Force, and the broader Air Force Ventures team. In this capacity, she is helping with our broader efforts to engage the venture capital and high-growth entrepreneurship ecosystem, with the aim of ensuring that the Air Force has access to the most innovative, frontier, and commercial technologies.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Rathje", is positioned above the printed name.

Jason M. Rathje
Captain, United States Air Force
Partner, Air Force Ventures