Technology News

From the Bureau of Mines, United States Department of the Interior

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CRADA's Provide Opportunity for Bureau of Mines and Non-Federal Parties To Work Together

Objective

To expediate the transfer of technology from Bureau laboratories into new products and processes that enhance the economic competitiveness of the U.S. mining and minerals industry in world markets.

Background

The U.S. Bureau of Mines and various members of the industry are concerned about the current technology challenge to the minerals industry in the United States. They are working together to delineate ways of enhancing the mineral industry's technology base. More emphasis is being placed on collaboration between the government, academia, and industry to formulate the innovative revolutions needed to maintain our technology edge. Through these partnerships, real issues and problems can be identified, the industry's needs as customers can be defined, and research and development activities can be tailored to meet these needs. Now is an especially exciting time in research because some special opportunities exist to encourage private industry to capitalize on Federal laboratory research and development. These opportunities are called CRADA's.

What Is A CRADA?

The Congress recently enacted a mechanism that enhances collaboration between industry and government through the Technology Transfer Act of 1986. A key feature of this Act is a provision through which Cooperative Research and Development Agreements or CRADA's can be developed to encourage industry and government to work together and stretch their research budgets. By entering into a CRADA, a private, non-Federal company can cost-effectively perform research by sharing the costs of this research with the Federal Government. The agreement involves no transfer of funds from the Government. The Government agrees to provide personnel, services, facilities, equipment or other resources (but not funds) and the non-Federal party agrees to provide funds, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, or other resources needed to conduct a specific research or development effort.

At the conclusion of the cooperative effort, the results may often be considered proprietary. This means that the private industry or non-Federal collaborator can retain patent and intellectual property rights or obtain an exclusive license. The Government laboratory has the right to use any of the information, but must respect the proprietary rights of the cooperator.

CRADA's in the Bureau of Mines

In the Bureau of Mines, the CRADA has become a standardized agreement intended to provide an appropriate legal framework for cooperative research and development projects. The CRADA framework provides collaborative opportunities for the private sector, enabling it to

form a partnership with Bureau facilities and personnel and thereby optimize joint research efforts.

To make the agreement work to the greatest advantage for all parties and to the U.S. economy, the Bureau is committed to working with the non-Federal cooperator to structure the most flexible and creative agreement possible to accomplish easy technology transfer.

CRADA's may be initiated by the Bureau, other Government agencies, industrial organizations, public and private foundations, non-profit organizations and other parties including licensees of inventions owned by the Federal agency. As of July 1992, the Bureau is working with private companies, businesses, and other non-Federal research organizations through 15 different CRADA's. Many other CRADA opportunities are also being investigated. The CRADA research projects at present range from a means of recovering high-quality graphite from steelmaking waste known as kish to a technique that enables the domestic recovery of platinum-group metals from automobile catalytic converters.

How the CRADA Works

There is a required format for each CRADA. The specifics of each agreement varies, since both the Bureau and the collaborator are free to define an arrangement best suited to their own interests, needs, and resources. In some instances, a collaborator may limit its participation to funding a certain area of research. Others may make in-kind contributions of trained researchers and their time to work with Bureau personnel on a specific problem. Some may have a new piece of equipment in a developmental stage and use CRADA assistance to prove operational feasibility.

Governing Criteria

CRADA's should fall within certain criteria. For example, the research effort that is the subject of a CRADA must be consistent with and further the Bureau's mission and areas of research interest. Preference is given to small business firms and consortia involving small business firms and to U.S. businesses that agree to substantially manufacture the bulk of any resulting technologies in the United States.

Benefits

CRADA's offer a unique means of performing both basic and applied research in an economical manner while capitalizing on human resources and encouraging the transfer and application of emerging technology. Most significantly, the CRADA opportunity is open to any non-Federal party, including a company in private industry, that is interested in taking advantage of it.

Under a CRADA, all parties agree to keep the research results confidential to the extent permitted by law until they are published in the scientific literature or presented at a public forum. In certain instances under a CRADA, an agreement may be made by the Bureau and the collaborator to transfer patent rights or exclusive patent licenses to the collaborator. This provides added incentive for transferring the technology or research development through marketing and commercialization efforts.

For More Information

There are numerous CRADA opportunities available at the U.S. Bureau of Mines right now. For additional information about this new opportunity to work with the Bureau through a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement and for a copy of a publication describing Bureau research facilities and their capabilities, please contact one of the following technology transfer principals closest to your location:

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