



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **U.S. Air Force Seeking Innovative Solutions for AFWERX Sky-High Relief Challenge to Support Female Aircrew**

**[Last Call for Entries to Sky High Relief Challenge](#)**

**LAS VEGAS (Sept. 25, 2020)** – [AFWERX](#), the U.S. Air Force’s innovation catalyst, announces the Sky-High Relief Challenge, seeking innovation solutions to help the U.S. Air Force (USAF) develop a safe, reliable and effective system to provide female aircrew with the capability of bladder relief during flight. The government reserves the right to award prize challenges up to \$1.5 million. The open call to companies, individuals, academic institutions, and researchers will accept solutions until **September 29, 2020** on the [AFWERX Challenge website](#).

The Sky-High Relief Challenge will provide solutions that allow female aviators to hydrate adequately and relieve themselves during flight without interfering with operations or compromising flight safety. In partnership with USAF, AFWERX invites individuals and businesses from public and private sectors to submit their product, service or idea to help develop an improved inflight bladder relief system.

“This is an incredible opportunity for the USAF to partner with innovative industries and academia to identify, fund and launch new solutions that can be implemented immediately,” stated Mark Rowland, Innovation Actualizer of AFWERX. “Whether you design a comprehensive solution, component, material or develop an entirely novel bladder relief system, we welcome you to the AFWERX Challenge crowdsourcing process.”

Current mission profiles and air refueling abilities up to 16 hours have led to longer flight times for aircrew who need to urinate multiple times during flight without removing restraint systems and flight equipment. As a result, many female aircrew resort to “tactical dehydration” to avoid the difficulties and potential dangers of having to relieve themselves inflight. This challenge aims to address the unmet bladder relief needs for female aircrew flying sky high. It seeks to find innovative solutions that provide comfortable, form-fitting interface options and significantly improved bodily fluid processing and disposal capabilities.

An improved bladder relief system will enhance the overall quality of life for female aviators on and off the job by leading to fewer physical and mental health issues. During flights, dehydration negatively impacts pilots by lowering their G-tolerance by up to 50%. Dehydration can result in a variety of medical problems, including reduced physical and cognitive performance, decreased situational awareness, intense headaches, altered vision and possible G-induced Loss of Consciousness (GLOC). Other physiological effects include the development of kidney stones, recurring skin irritations, long-term incontinence and urinary tract infections.

The open call for solutions for the Sky-High Relief Challenge is still accepting solutions until **September 29 at 8:59 PM Pacific Time**. Submissions will be made on [afwerxchallenge.com](#) and will need to answer all required submission fields to be accepted. Submissions will be officially reviewed by the evaluation team starting 30 September 2020 using the criteria mentioned below to select the teams that will be provided an invitation to the Sky-High Relief Challenge Showcase event. Communication to all successful and unsuccessful teams will be sent by 26 October 2020.

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## **ABOUT AFWERX**

Established in 2017, [AFWERX](#) is a product of the U.S. Air Force, directly envisioned by former Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson. Her vision of AFWERX — to solve some of the toughest challenges that the Air Force faces through innovation and collaboration amongst our nation's top subject matter experts. AFWERX serves as a catalyst to unleash new approaches for the warfighter through a growing ecosystem of innovators. AFWERX and the U.S. Air Force are committed to exploring viable solutions and partnerships to further strengthen the Air Force, which could lead to additional prototyping, R&D, and follow-on production contracts.

*Fast Company* named AFWERX [Best Workplaces for Innovators](#) on the 2020 List, honoring the top 100 businesses and organizations that demonstrate a deep commitment to encouraging innovation at all levels. AFWERX, U.S. Air Force's innovation arm and catalyst for fostering innovation within the Air Force, came in at #16 ranking in the top 20 alongside brands such as Microsoft, Google, and Amazon. [Preview the live announcement](#) with Stephanie Mehta, Editor-in-Chief of Fast Company, unveiled during the AFWERX Fusion 2020 Base of the Future Event & Showcase.

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