

In a 5G World, the More Vendors, the Better

DOD works to attract more companies and workers to the space.

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Aug 10 2022

The [Department of Defense](#) and the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) have partnered to accelerate the adoption of open interfaces, interoperable components and multivendor solutions related to 5G.

In the 2022, first-year [5G Challenge Preliminary Event](#), NTIA will award part of a \$3 million prize to contestants who submit winning hardware or software solutions for 5G network subsystems.

After evaluating white paper submissions, the 5G Challenge [selected three vendors](#) to go through interoperability testing with [CableLabs](#), the 5G Challenge host lab.

The NTIA and DOD both believe that fostering a multivendor, open 5G ecosystem is an important activity, says Amanda Toman, acting principal director of the DOD's 5G to [Future Generation Initiative](#).

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Open Architecture Provides More Vendor Opportunities

Andrew Thiessen, head of [5G/xG](#) engagement for MITRE, calls the 5G Challenge a great idea because it is doing interoperability testing of significant interfaces.

"When you look at these components, you want to think of them like Legos," Thiessen explains. "You want to be able to mix and match different colors of Legos from different vendors and actually have them fit and perform well together. The 5G Challenge is a necessary step to mature the ecosystem, and DOD is not stopping there."

In addition to being an early adopter of [5G networks](#), DOD is making long-term investments in workforce development, recognizing that 5G requires skill sets in wireless hardware, network stack software, edge and cloud computing, and connected applications.

[**DIVE DEEPER: How federal agencies are leveraging 5G to increase innovation.**](#)

"When I try to hire people in the 5G space, I am dipping into the same very shallow pool of talent that everybody else is," says Thiessen, who points out that 5G tends to blur technology and engineering disciplines.

"3G and even 4G, to some extent, were centered on your understanding of cellular technology," he says. "5G is the first cloud-native generation."

IT people who understand cloud already have a skill set required to build out 5G, Thiessen explains.

“The DOD is forward thinking in trying to build its own [5G workforce](#), and it realizes that IT is as much of an enabler for 5G as cellular engineering was for 3G.”

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