MISSION FOR AMERICA · CHAPTER 12 · AT A GLANCE

The New Manhattan Projects

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The Manhattan Projects are the Mission for America's research engine, the RFC Advanced Research Division. Its job is narrow and hard. It works only on the handful of breakthroughs the rest of the Mission genuinely cannot succeed without. Every program has to answer one question before it starts. Which mission fails if this is not solved? If the answer is none, the work belongs somewhere else.

The Division will run its programs the way the Manhattan Project, Bell Labs, and DARPA ran theirs, with brilliant people, real authority, multiple teams racing each problem in parallel, and a tolerance for the failures that come with taking real risks. What is different is that the public will own what it creates. When a Division-funded breakthrough reaches commercial scale, the taxpayer will get a share of the upside through equity and royalties. The gains from the transistor and the internet went to private shareholders.

The core portfolio is the short list of problems where a whole sector's plan stalls until the science lands:

- **Carbon-free cement**, the chemistry that makes concrete one of the largest sources of emissions on earth.
- **A fossil-free feedstock for the chemical industry**, and a clean source of the aromatic molecules behind plastics, fibers, and fully clean aviation fuel.
- **Clean ways to make the materials carbon still makes**, like silicon and the ferroalloys, plus clean industrial heat above 1,800 degrees.
- **Storage that holds more and lasts longer**, to run a clean grid around the clock and carry electric transport past short hops.
- **Zero-carbon fuel for long-haul aviation**, the flights that do not decarbonize at all without a breakthrough.
- **Clean power for the hardest freight**, the heaviest long-haul trucking and the ships that batteries cannot yet move.

Across all of it, the goal is to make the clean version work and to drive it down to the cost of the dirty version it replaces.

A second, smaller set of programs are honest hedges, funded because the payoff would be enormous but the Mission does not depend on them. Fusion is the clearest example. It would remake the energy system, but it will almost certainly arrive too late for the Mission's targets, so it is funded openly as a long-horizon bet.

The Division will be built to last and to stay honest, with competitive selection, conflict-of-interest rules, clawbacks, and a public dashboard of every award and outcome, so a permanent research institution stays focused on serving the country.