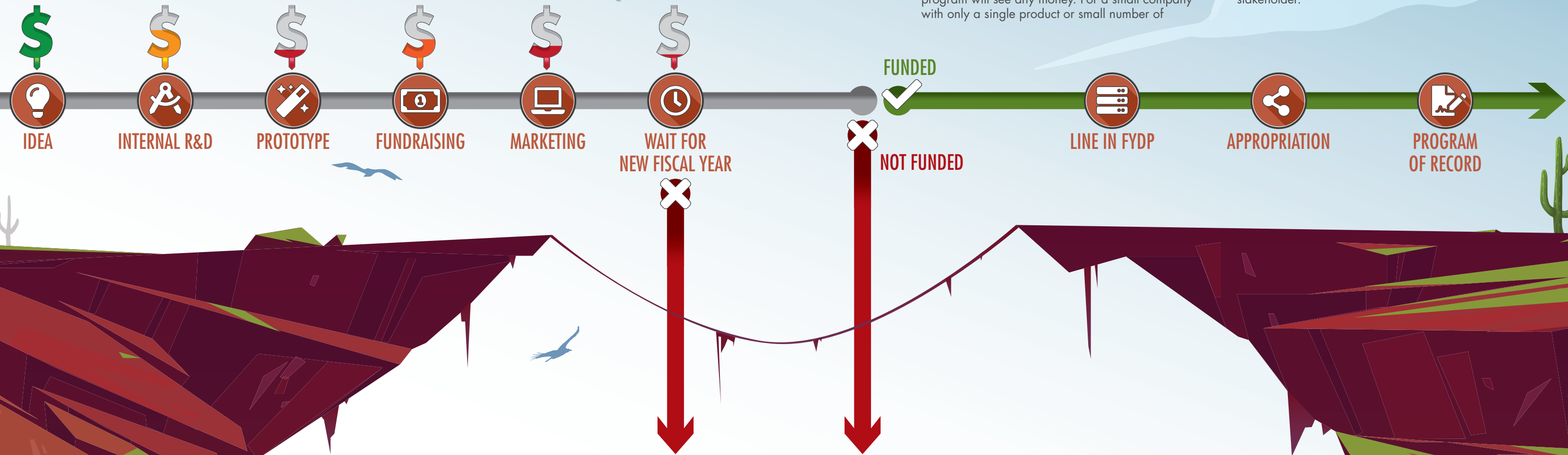


UNDERSTANDING ACQUISITION: THE VALLEY OF DEATH



Assuming that a militarily relevant technology can be matured to work as intended, that is no guarantee that it will get a line in the FYDP and end up as a program of record or part of one. Most of the time, the Army can't spend money on new technology without a validated requirement to tell Congress what it is and why it needs it. Without being in the Army's February budget submission to DOD, there is little chance that, when the new fiscal year begins in October, the program will see any money. For a small company with only a single product or small number of

innovative products for which the Army is the only customer, that can mean the valley of death because of the length of time it could take them to get funded. There are other ways into the valley of death. Among these are when a technology fails to transition, when a change in doctrine makes a program less useful or a major strategic issue makes a technology irrelevant, or failure of a program to gain support from a key stakeholder.

RELATED CONCEPTS

TO UNDERSTAND THE VALLEY OF DEATH, IT'S HELPFUL TO UNDERSTAND SOME RELATED CONCEPTS IN ACQUISITIONESE.

VALIDATED REQUIREMENT

The Army buys virtually nothing without a validated requirement. These explain to Congress how the Army is spending its appropriations and they explain to the contractor what the Army wants, very specifically. Requirements come from needs expressed by commanders and they can also come from Army leaders looking to close capability gaps. The Army Requirements Oversight Council vets and validates them—or doesn't. The Army likes capabilities to follow doctrine. This is a cultural thing—the Navy often experiments with capabilities and builds doctrine around new ones.

FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM (FYDP)

Often pronounced FIEdip or FIDdip. FYDP is essentially a database that represents DOD's "program" and financial plan—what DOD plans to do and how it's to be funded—over the next five years and as approved by the defense secretary. That program is divided by organizations, colors of money and major defense programs. FYDP is part of the planning, programming, budgeting and execution process and gets updated twice during that cycle. FYDP connects Congress's authorizations with specific military programs.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSITION

"Technology transition" is when a technology is sufficiently mature to move from research to development. It now has the potential to be a useful capability in an operational environment. However, just because it's useful doesn't mean it will get funded. Technology transition is not to be confused with technology transfer, which is the transfer of technology among government, industry and academia.

PROGRAM OF RECORD

Programs of record are programs that appear in the FYDP and for which Congress has appropriated funding or intends to. Generally, approval of the program objective memorandum (POM) when the program is in the POM makes it a program of record. Congress funding a program means that it's a program of record. A program that has a validated requirement and a line in the FYDP is a program of record.