

Expert Support

State Initiative Provides SBIR Assistance

By Brooke Pyne

Indiana's Small Business Innovation Research initiative was created to enhance Indiana's ability to boost the amount of federal research dollars secured by small Hoosier companies.

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program is a federal grant program that provides early stage research and development capital to technology-driven small businesses. SBIR grants are generated from federal cabinet agencies, such as the U.S. Departments of Energy, Defense and Agriculture. These grants effectively drive innovations that often become new products directly used by the federal government or introduced into commercial markets.

The goal of Indiana's SBIR initiative is to help small and mid-size Hoosier businesses grow, develop new commercial technologies or products, and create new jobs by assisting those firms in attracting federal research grants.

Indiana's SBIR initiative – and the related Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) initiative – is managed by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), the state of Indiana's lead economic development agency.

"Our mission is to support statewide technological innovation through the development of focused collaborations and toolsets to build a strong Indiana SBIR/STTR community, one innovation-driven business at a time," says Bruce Kidd, IEDC's director of entrepreneurship. "As a result of our program, small Indiana businesses have an enhanced opportunity to win federal research grants, which provides them with the near-term critical financing and long-term stability they need to create the technology and high-tech jobs of tomorrow."

After more than two decades of existence, the SBIR program has established itself as one of the most effective technology programs in the federal government, now annually allocating \$2.5 billion to research and development of new products.

Indiana's SBIR/STTR initiative was created to aggressively focus on increasing both the number and quality of Indiana applicants for federal research grants, thereby increasing the number of grants awarded to Indiana companies.

"The IEDC's SBIR initiative lowered the hurdle for starting a business in Indiana," notes Eric Wandel, president of Wavepoint Research, Inc., a technology company founded in 2007 and headquartered in Newburgh. The company is engaged in research and development as well as technology application in areas related to electromagnetic systems and analysis, signal processing for digital receiver applications such as electronic warfare, and RF system design, analysis and prototyping.

"The proposal assistance and matching funds enabled my company to achieve early success with sufficient cash flow to ensure that I could focus on developing technology and growing the business for the future," Wandel reports.

As the primary provider of assistance to Indiana companies interested in pursuing SBIR and STTR funding, the Indiana initiative office provides the following services:

- **One-on-one Counseling** – Services are available to all technologically-based, Indiana small businesses interested in the SBIR/STTR program and process.
- **Proposal Assistance** – Each company is partnered with an established SBIR/STTR grant writer who will provide assistance in proposal writing and formatting, effective team building, electronic submission process and detailed process outlining.
- **Proposal Reviews** – The final draft of the proposal is assigned to and reviewed by a qualified SBIR/STTR grant writer, providing comments and suggestions on how to strengthen the submission in the areas of articulation and flow of the submission, section content and topic consistency, clarity of writing and formatting.
- **Technical Reviews** – Through this service, the proposal is assigned to a technical expert who will review and provide feedback on articulation and flow of the submission and technical merit.
- **Support Letters** – Upon the preparation of a proposal submission, each company may request an official 21st Century Research and Technology Fund Support Letter from the SBIR office.
- **Phase I Award Matching and Phase II Commercialization Enhancement Program** – In conjunction with the 21st Century Research and Technology Fund, the IEDC SBIR matching program includes a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$100,000 for qualified Phase I grant recipients. The Commercialization Enhancement Program is designed to help Phase II winners recover certain types of commercialization or technology production costs.
- **Educational Workshops/Seminars** – The IEDC's SBIR program office hosts a variety of workshops/seminars across the state throughout the year to educate participants and small businesses on the SBIR process.



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"The Indiana Economic Development Corporation's decision to leverage its own investment in small high-technology Indiana businesses by matching federal SBIR/STTR grants has been a real blessing to our company," claims Herschel Workman, CEO of PartTec, Ltd., a Bloomington-based technology company (with seven SBIR/STTR grants since 2003) focused on particle beam technologies, nanomaterials and photonics.

"Without that added support, PartTec would have had only a few options for success and those options would each have carried a heavy price in terms of who eventually owned the business – us or high-risk investors from outside the state," Workman adds.

INFORMATION LINK

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