SBA Gives SBIR/STTR Program Updates

The Small Business Administration (SBA) recently posted comments by Sean Greene, Associate Administrator for Investment and Special Advisor for Innovation at SBA, regarding implementing the newly reauthorized SBIR/STTR programs on SBIR.gov. Briefly, the SBA is in the process of formulating detailed regulations and policy directives for oversight and administration of the programs. After the SBA has drafted proposed amendments to its policy directives or a new rule, the draft will be published in the Federal Register and there will be a 60-day public comment period. The SBA will then review all the comments and may modify the rule or policy directive, and then the final rule or directive will be published, including the agency’s responses to comments and an effective date.

Mr. Greene specifically notes, “There are two governing bodies of rules for SBIR/STTR that we need to modify before the changes can take effect”. These include the SBA size and eligibility regulations, and the SBIR and STTR policy directives. Congress has given the SBA 120 days (until the end of April) to develop proposed regulations regarding eligibility related to venture capital participation, and 180 days (until the end of June) to issue drafts of the policy directives for SBIR and STTR. The SBA has also already issued specific guidance to the participating agencies regarding the amount of the set-aside for this year, which was raised by statute to 2.6% for the SBIR program and 0.35% for the STTR program.


Free Technology Valuation Webinar

The US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) will be hosting a free webinar on technology valuation on Tuesday, March 13, 2012 at 1:00 pm EST. The webinar will introduce methodologies for determining the value of a technology, depending upon the valuation objective (e.g., valuation for the purpose of licensing or for determining damages in a lawsuit).

The webinar is aimed at innovative small to medium sized businesses. More information on how to join the webinar is available here: http://www.sbir.gov/events/technology-valuation-webinar.
EPA Solicitation to be Released

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has indicated that it will open its 2012 Phase I SBIR solicitation on March 14, 2012. Funding of up to $80,000 for projects up to six months in duration will be available under this solicitation. EPA anticipates awarding approximately 26 firm fixed price contracts under this solicitation.

Research topic areas for this opportunity will include: Water, Innovation in Manufacturing, Green Building, Waste Monitoring, Air Quality, Sustainable Utilization of Biomass, and Homeland Security. Note that it is critical that applications submitted in response to this solicitation directly pertain to EPA’s environmental mission and must be responsive to the EPA program interest included in the topic descriptions identified in the solicitation. Note that there are also opportunities for funding environmental technologies through the National Science Foundation’s SBIR program.

Applications will be due on May 3, 2012. EPA does not use electronic proposal submission: hard copies must be submitted in time for receipt by the proposal deadline. Proposals will be evaluated through a technical peer review process, and proposals rated as “excellent” or “very good” will then be subjected to programmatic review within EPA for consideration of an award. For more information, see: http://www.epa.gov/ncer/sbir/.

BusinessUSA Website Launched

The beta version of BusinessUSA, an online portal designed to help small businesses and exporters of all sizes, has recently been launched.

BusinessUSA, a part of USA.gov, consolidates information and services from 10 different government agencies and streamlines telephone assistance through a single 1-800 number.

The website contains links for events, resources for starting a business, financing a business, beginning or expanding exporting, training, patents, grants, and state and local programs in addition to a blog, links to FAQs, and other news and information.

New features and content will be added in coming weeks and months, based in part on user feedback. The ultimate goal of the site is to provide a one-stop-shop for everything related to business in the USA. You can visit the site at http://business.usa.gov/.

New NIH FOAs

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently added two Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) for New Technologies for Viral Hepatitis. Under PA-12-090 and PA-12-091, NIH is seeking SBIR and STTR applications, respectively, for the development of resources, research tools, instrumentation, biomarkers, devices, drugs or new and innovative approaches to diagnosis, monitoring, management, treatment and prevention of viral hepatitis and viral hepatitis associated liver disease in response to the Department of Health and Human Services’ Viral Hepatitis Action Plan.

Some areas of research interest include, but are not limited to: development of new rapid point-of-care screening tests, development of new diagnostic tests for viral hepatitis that would aid in clinical management, development of new therapies for viral hepatitis, development of new and better therapies for hepatocellular carcinoma and development of candidate vaccines for hepatitis C, etc. Standard deadlines apply, and applications must be submitted through Grants.gov.
NCI Clinical Assay Development Program Webinar

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) will be presenting a webinar on its Clinical Assay Development Program (CADP) on Tuesday, March 13, 2012 from 2:00-3:00 pm EST. The CADP program is designed to provide resources for promising markers/signatures for predictive or prognostic molecular discoveries that need to be analytically validated.

CADP is composed of contracted CLIA-accredited laboratories (Clinical Assay Development Network), a research laboratory that will also be CLIA-accredited (Molecular Characterization and Clinical Assay Development Center) at NCI-Frederick, and contracted Tissue Resources. Eligible applicants may come from industry, academia and government.

The webinar will include features of the CADP, including eligibility and application requirements.

You can register for the webinar here.

Also note that NCI is providing an opportunity for interested small businesses and researchers to meet with its SBIR Leadership at a free session at the American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting on April 2, 2012 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. The discussion will include information on NCI’s SBIR/STTR programs, NCI’s research priorities for small businesses, new NCI initiatives to foster external partnerships and investment, tips for successful applications, and more. Note that registration is free for this SBIR session only. If you are planning on attending the rest of the AACR meeting, regular conference registration fees apply. For more information, click here.

DOE Webinar Recording Available

The recording of the first in a series of six webinars on the DOE’s SBIR/STTR is available for viewing. The webinar, which as presented by DOE SBIR/STTR Programs Director Manny Oliver, includes a discussion of DOE’s mission and strategic goals as they relate to the SBIR/STTR programs, the DOE offices and research programs participating in the SBIR/STTR programs, topic development, available funding, evaluation criteria, success rates, and commercialization assistance. The webinar also included success stories and provided contact information for those wanting to learn more about participating in the DOE’s SBIR/STTR programs.

To view the webinar recording, go to: http://science.energy.gov/sbir/.

Key Solicitation Dates

- The deadline for USDA’s FY2012 Phase II solicitation is March 1, 2012.
- The deadline for NCI’s Phase II Bridge Awards is March 27, 2012.
- The deadline for DoD’s FY2012 STTR solicitation is March 28, 2012.
- The deadline for DOE’s FY2012 SBIR/STTR Phase II solicitation is April 4, 2012.
- The deadline for non AIDS-related topics for NIH SBIR/STTR grant applications is April 5, 2012.
- The deadline for AIDS-related topics for NIH SBIR/STTR grant applications is May 7, 2012.

For more information on these solicitations, visit: www.sbir.gov.
Technology Spotlight

Spurious-Noise-Free Switching Power Converter (ISURF #3870)

Switching power converters, are extensively used in electronic devices because of their high power conversion efficiency. However, the spurious output noise they create due to periodic switching precludes their use for noise-sensitive loads—particularly analog and RF load types. Traditionally, linear regulators have been used to mitigate this problem, but can result in much lower power efficiencies and increased costs. Other techniques, such as Σ-Δ and Δ modulation, result in large increases in the noise floor, while random frequency hopping techniques reduce the spur level at the expense of generating multiple additional spurs. To overcome these drawbacks, ISU researchers have developed a new PWM control scheme for switching regulators that combines phase chopping with random frequency hopping to achieve spur-free operation, while delivering low output noise floor with no sub-harmonics due to hopping. The proposed architecture is very attractive for designing generic low-noise power supplies for spur-sensitive loads, as well as loads sensitive to the random noise floor without post linear regulation, extra passive filtering, or customization for each load. This results in much better power efficiency and reduced implementation size and cost. Moreover, since spur-elimination is based on the fundamental switching behavior of the regulator, spur-free operation is accomplished not only at the output, but at every node in the regulator including the input power and ground rails and the substrate. This significantly reduces Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) and facilitates integration of switching regulators in mixed-signal Systems-on-Chip (SoCs) without interfering with other sensitive circuits that share the same substrate or power rails. The performance achieved by this novel control scheme makes switching power converters suitable for directly powering many noise-sensitive analog and RF applications, such as RF mixers, RF Low Noise Amplifiers, and RF Power Amplifiers. Additionally, the proposed architecture is a good candidate for implementing class-D amplifiers with reduced EMI filters. The proposed scheme constitutes minimal area, power, and design effort beyond traditional single-switching-frequency PWM-controlled design, and can be easily incorporated with an already existing regulator.

For more information on this and other technologies available for licensing, go to: www.techtransfer.iastate.edu.

About OIPTT:

OIPTT was formed in 1990 to provide support services to the university community in matters related to intellectual property, to be the first contact related to new innovations, and to market the innovations and negotiate the agreements for transfer of the technology for the Iowa State University Research Foundation’s signature. OIPTT reports to the office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

OIPTT’s mission is to serve the university as the primary resource for intellectual property and related matters and facilitate the disclosure and utilization of university innovations for the benefit of society, the university and its faculty and staff, and contribute to economic development in Iowa when possible.