GAO Assesses the SBIR Program

The GAO issued a statement on its assessment of the SBIR program on June 28, 2005. This statement indicates that the SBIR program has generally met its goals, and cites specific examples of success, including high-quality research, widespread competition, effective outreach and successful commercialization. In addition, the GAO has found that the SBIR program helps to serve the participating agencies’ missions and research and development needs.

The study also highlights areas for improvement in the SBIR program over time. These include reducing duplicate funding, broadening of the geographical distribution of awards, and clarifying commercialization and other SBIR goals.

One issue that has not been clearly resolved two decades after the program’s inception is how to assess the performance of the SBIR program. While Congress has stressed the importance of commercialization potential, the GAO suggests that limited commercialization may not actually constitute failure if a company has achieved other goals that address a particular agency’s needs.

In 2000, when the SBIR program was reauthorized, Congress required the SBA to develop a database to help evaluate the effectiveness of the SBIR program. The database will include information on revenue from the sale of new products or services that result from SBIR funding, additional non-SBIR funding, and a description of any other outputs or outcomes from the awards for all Phase II awardees.

The GAO concludes that the SBIR program has been successful, but assessing its impact remains challenging. The GAO’s statement can be viewed on-line at: http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d05861thigh.pdf

Where Can A Company Go With SBIR/STTR Funding?

What do MedImmune, Chiron Corp, Genzyme Corporation, and Affymetrix have in common? They all were recipients of one or more SBIR or STTR grants. Amgen, Gilead Scientific, New England Biolabs, Invitrogen Corporation, and Promega Corp also received SBIR or STTR awards.

SBIR and STTR funding helped these companies make the leap from startup to standout.

If your small business is committed to research and development, it too can benefit from participating in the SBIR/STTR programs. For more information, go to: www.sba.gov/sbir/
SBA Modifies Small Business Size Regulations

The Small Business Administration has made changes to its Small Business Size Regulations. These changes apply specifically to What is affiliation? (13 CFR §121.103) and How does SBA define “business concern or concern”? (13 CFR §121.105).

These revisions were published in the Federal Register on August 30, and became effective immediately.

The changes affect the SBA’s HUBZone Program, and include the following:

1) Member shareholders of a small agricultural cooperative, as defined in the Agricultural Marketing Act (12 U.S.C. 1141j), are no longer considered affiliated with the cooperative by virtue of their membership in the cooperative; and

2) Small agricultural cooperatives are now treated as small business concerns.

Information on the complete revised regulations can be accessed through: www.sba.gov/size/indexwhatsnew.html

Information on the SBA HUBZone (Historically Underutilized Business Zone) Program can be found at: http://www.sba.gov/hubzone/

7th Annual NIH SBIR/STTR Conference Presentations Available

Presentations from the 7th Annual NIH SBIR/STTR Conference that was held July 28 & 29, 2005 on the NIH Bethesda Campus, are now available on-line.

The conference featured an overview of the NIH SBIR/STTR Programs by JoAnne Goodnight, as well as presentations on grant writing, eRA Commons, human subjects, compliance issues, and the submission, assignment and peer review of NIH SBIR/STTR applications.

This a useful resource for learning more about the NIH SBIR/STTR program, with grant writing tips from winning SBIR/STTR companies, as well as suggestions for how to submit proposals electronically, negotiate indirect cost rates, and managing the auditing process.

The presentations can be downloaded for viewing at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/SBIRConf2005/presentations.htm

State Science & Technology Institute’s Ninth Annual Conference

The Ninth Annual SSTI Conference will be held October 19-21, 2005 in Atlanta, GA. The theme for this year’s conference is: “Investing in a Brighter Future: Building Tech-based Economies”

Keynote speakers include Robert D. Atkinson, Vice President, Progressive Policy Institute, Director, Technology & New Economy Project, and F. Duane Ackerman, Chairman and CEO, BellSouth Corporation.

The event also includes preconference workshops on developing angel networks and the power of local technology development, among others.

Regular sessions include commercializing university technology and embedding entrepreneurship in universities.

Additional information and registration forms can be found at: www.ssti.org
Key Solicitation Dates

- Department of Energy FY2006 SBIR/STTR Solicitation opened September 21, 2005. The deadline to submit applications is December 2, 2005.
- NSF SBIR/STTR Topics in Biotechnology, Chemical-Based Technologies, and Emerging Opportunities solicitation opened August 17, 2005. Proposals will be accepted starting November 8, 2005. The application deadline is December 8, 2005.
- The Department of Health and Human Services (NIH/CDC/FDA) SBIR Grants application deadline is December 1, 2005.
- The 2006 PHS SBIR (NIH/CDC) Contracts Solicitation was released August 3, 2005. The application deadline is November 4, 2005.

Additional information on these open solicitations and special announcements can be found at: www.sbirworld.com

NIH/NINDS Issues SBIR Program Announcement

The NIH issued a program announcement (PA) on September 6, 2005 (PAR-05-159). The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) is seeking applications that address identification and pre-clinical testing of new therapeutics. This PA will use the SBIR Cooperative Agreement (U44) mechanism to provide support for Phase II and FastTrack applications.

The program will only support Aims for therapy development. Requests for Aims to support basic or mechanistic research should not be included in the research plan.

The NIH/NINDS Issues SBIR Program Announcement

There are no specific limits on the amount of funds that will be awarded under this PA, or on the number of applications funded. Deadlines for application will follow the NIH’s standard submission deadline calendar.

Additional information regarding this PA can be accessed at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-05-159.html

Did You Know?

The NIH offers a commercialization assistance program to its Phase II SBIR winners.

The Commercialization Assistance Program (CAP) is open to NIH Phase II award winners from 2000 to 2005. The program was previously available only to current Phase II awardees. STTR Phase II winners are not eligible for this program.

The CAP is designed to assist promising life sciences startup companies develop their commercial potential, and is designed to help these companies improve their strategic business planning, find investors, develop licensing strategies, seek strategic partnerships, and navigate the regulatory approvals process.

Program participants will be able to attend workshops on commercialization issues, present at the NIH Life Sciences Showcase, and create contacts within the life science industry and investment community. More information is available at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/sbir.htm
Technology Spotlight

Nanoliter-Scale High Throughput Protein Crystallization Screening (ISURF #3317)

3D structures of proteins can yield important insights into the relationship between protein sequence, structure and function. Although X-ray crystallography can be used to determine protein structures, it requires the empirical determination of the appropriate conditions for crystallization. This process is often slow and laborious due to the difficulty in obtaining adequate quantities of protein and the tedious traditional methods often employed such as vapor diffusion and microbatch crystallization. To improve the throughput of protein crystal screening, as well as to reduce the amount of protein required, ISU researchers have developed a highly efficient method for automated high-throughput screening of nanoliter-scale protein crystallization that integrates liquid dispensing, crystallization and detection. The automated liquid dispensing system delivers nanoliters of protein and various combinations of precipitants in parallel to the crystallization chamber. A novel detection system that can differentiate protein crystals from inorganic salts in a non-destructive manner is used to monitor the progress of crystallization. This complete system provides an integrated protocol encompassing all the steps required in protein crystallization screening: liquid handling, crystallization and detection.

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