



SBIR/STTR Specialist John Ujvari presenting at The Chesterfield / LaunchBio in Durham

FUNDING INNOVATION

SBTDC HELPS SMALL BUSINESSES UTILIZE SBIR FUNDING TO DEVELOP NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The higher the risk, the less funding that is available. Such is the quandary of every entrepreneurial, innovation-driven small business that is seeking R&D funding to develop a technology. Triangle Environmental Health Initiative (TE) in Durham and OpiAID in Wilmington are two companies that have faced this challenge.

Enter the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program, a highly competitive three-phase award system that rewards technological innovation of small businesses in critical needs of the federal government. Enacted in 1982, federal agencies with more than \$100 million in extramural R&D are required to set-aside 3.2% of their budget for the SBIR program.

SBIR has played a significant role in funding early-stage innovations that are deemed too risky for other entities, such as equity investors and banks. Over \$1.4 billion has been awarded to innovation-driven small businesses in North Carolina since the program was launched.

Small businesses that earn Phase I awards can obtain

a maximum of \$256,000 over six months to fund concept development and feasibility studies. Phase II awardees can receive up to \$1.5 million to work on prototype development of their technology. Eleven federal agencies currently participate in the SBIR program.

The North Carolina SBTDC is equipped to help small businesses tap into the opportunity that the SBIR program provides. Founded in 1984, the SBTDC was the first Small Business Development Center in the nation to be officially recognized as providing specialized technology commercialization services. The SBTDC is a business and technology extension program of the UNC System, administered by NC State University and operated in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The SBTDC's Technology Development and Commercialization program assists eligible small businesses with incorporating SBIR into their funding strategies, identifying appropriate agencies and topics, and providing proposal reviews. The SBTDC also regularly offers SBIR

workshops across the state and online.

"We take a holistic approach towards serving our clients," said John Ujvari, SBIR/STTR Specialist at the SBTDC. "We see businesses as a whole and provide education and counseling when specific needs arise. Thousands of innovators have attended our trainings and utilized our one-on-one counseling services."

Resources available to North Carolina small businesses through the SBIR program have grown in recent years, as funding has ballooned from \$53.3 million in 2012 to \$96.6 million in 2021. Clients of the SBTDC have been taking advantage of the opportunity, receiving 88 percent of all SBIR/STTR funding awarded to North Carolina small businesses.

Between 2012 and 2021, North Carolina's small businesses were awarded 939 Phase I and 452 Phase II awards, worth a total of \$718 million. Of the 389 unique awardees, 64 percent were SBTDC clients.

The SBTDC's expert counsel has helped startup Triangle Environmental Health Initiative (TE) leverage funding from the SBIR program to develop its technologies. TE was founded in 2016 to transform the way we think about and use our waste. TE develops water and sanitation technologies with a focus on resource recovery, including non-potable water for flushing toilets.

TE has earned three Phase I and two Phase II awards from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. As a result of this funding, TE was able to prove the technology concepts of their wastewater treatment products, pilot and commercialize the products, and establish valuable connections to commercial partners.

"As a small business with limited finances, the SBTDC was a great, free resource to strengthen our early SBIR proposals. We received key insights into reviewer approaches and why many companies struggle to receive SBIR funding," said Tate Rogers, Founder/Principal of TE.



Tate Rogers



Conducting research at Triangle Environmental Health Initiative

Founded in 2019, OpiAID is developing technology to personalize treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD) to make it safer and more effective. Their 14 team members are developing a decision support tool that collects and collates data from a patient's health record to provide timely and actionable data to support clinical decision-making. This allows for just-in-time interventions that can save a life.

OpiAID won a SBIR Phase I grant from the NIH to develop a biometric algorithm capable of detecting withdrawal and relapse with a wrist worn device. OpiAID has applied for a Phase II grant to commercialize this technology.

"SBTDC's one-on-one counseling and workshops have been great. We are excited for the opportunity to help clinicians provide even better care for our neighbors in recovery," said OpiAID founder David Reeser.

In 2021, the SBTDC's Tech Team worked with 362 clients and helped them obtain over \$50 million in funding, including SBIR/STTR, angel investment, and venture capital. Given these results, the SBTDC continues to be recognized as an important part of North Carolina's ecosystem for technology-based small businesses.

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