

COURSE 15, TUTORIAL 1

STATE AND LOCAL ASSISTANCE



You do not have to navigate the SBIR/STTR proposal process on your own. Your odds of success may improve with the involvement of outside experts and access to additional resources. Fortunately, there are a large number of state and local resources in place to help innovation-based companies achieve their growth targets. Many of these resources are funded by the SBA and other federal agencies specifically to ensure small businesses like yours have access to the most current expertise and guidance related to SBIR/STTR. Additionally, other resources are focused on customized business strategy, technical assistance and financing tailored exclusively to companies seeking success through the commercialization of science and technology.

This tutorial introduces you to the state innovation support networks in place across the country, outlines the range of SBIR/STTR services and related resources offered by these local resources, and helps you determine how best to proceed in tapping these talents most effectively to help you achieve success.

LOCAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

Each region has its own structure for providing assistance to technology- and innovation-driven small businesses, and each region will have a unique mix of programs and services available to support companies.

However, there are common entity types available in most regions, including:

- » State agencies (often a “Department of Economic Development”)
- » [Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDCs)
- » [Federal and State Technology \(FAST\) Partnership Program awardees](#) (often a state agency or SBDC)
- » Venture development organizations
- » University technology commercialization offices
- » [Procurement Technical Assistance Centers](#) (PTACs)

SBA maintains a list of some of these service providers on sbir.gov/local-assistance.



SBIR/STTR ASSISTANCE AND RESOURCES

There are a variety of programs available from state and regional providers aimed at assisting companies navigate the challenges faced throughout the entire SBIR/STTR process. For the purposes of this tutorial, the process is broken down into the following three stages:

- » Pre-proposal feasibility research and analysis;
- » Proposal preparation and submission (collectively, stages one and two are commonly referred to as Phase 0); and,
- » Project performance and post-award.

HOW DO I KNOW IF SBIR/STTR IS RIGHT FOR ME OR IF MY TECH IS FAR ENOUGH ALONG?

Pre-proposal assistance (Phase 0)

State support programs aim to spread awareness of and increase participation in the SBIR/STTR program. As such, state agencies frequently partner with local organizations that provide other innovation or small business support services to offer SBIR/STTR-specific outreach, education, training, and technical assistance.

However, the SBIR/STTR program is not always the right funding option for companies because their technologies are not developed enough, there is no tie to an agency topic, company ownership cannot meet eligibility requirements, or other reasons. State-funded programs like Venture Development Organizations, innovation hubs, small business development centers (SBDCs), and technology-centered incubators can help chart the right course for these companies, helping to direct them towards other financial assistance that makes more immediate sense in achieving long-term goals, which may eventually lead back to the SBIR/STTR path.

In general, states help fund many of these SBIR/STTR outreach, education, and training, and technical assistance activities and have a vested interest in seeing local companies succeed and grow. The organizations listed above that provide these support services should be the first places you look when considering the SBIR/STTR program as a technology R&D funding option.

I WANT TO APPLY. WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Proposal assistance (Phase 0)

The SBIR/STTR program has a long track record of helping innovators develop and commercialize their technologies, but SBIR/STTR funding is still subject to a competitive awards process — meaning that many applicants will be rejected. State support programs aim to increase the rate of meritorious applications which are more likely to result in Phase I awards, lead to Phase II and other follow-on funding, and eventually increased company and job creation.

This requires finding the potential in early-stage technologies and matching them to the right agency funding opportunities, but also helping nascent companies build highly-functioning and resilient teams; grow partnerships across industry, academia, and the public sector; conduct market research and analysis that is often outside the expertise of technology innovators; and other technical tasks that are required by federal procurement regulations.

Some activities supported by proposal assistance programs that may be available within a state include help with:

1. Starting the preparation process early enough and navigating the numerous registrations;
2. Developing a commercialization strategy;
3. Assembling a winning team with both technical and business expertise;
Finding partners to strengthen/augment the proposal;
4. Understanding how to develop the required budget; and,
5. Translating an innovative solution into a compelling work plan.

Some states have dedicated Phase 0 programs that provide grants to help companies defray the costs of developing and submitting SBIR/STTR proposals. [Click here](#) for a list of current Phase 0 programs by state.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Common non-Federal entities that provide SBIR/STTR services include:

- » State agencies
- » Federal and State Technology [\(FAST\) Partnership Program awardees](#)
- » [Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDCs)
- » Venture development organizations
- » University technology commercialization offices
- » [Procurement Technical Assistance Centers](#) (PTACs)

[Click here](#) to find service providers in your area.

COMMON SERVICES

Local organizations provide pre-proposal:

- » Informational and instructional webinars, conferences, and workshops;
- » Education on the SBIR/STTR process; and
- » Information on identifying and targeting Agency topics

I WON MY FIRST SBIR/STTR AWARD! IS THERE CONTINUING SUPPORT? WHAT HAPPENS AFTER PHASE I?

Project performance and post-award assistance

Many states offer additional support for small businesses that have received an award, such as funding to bridge costs until the company is reimbursed for costs related to the award and/or funds to match Federal SBIR/STTR awards. [Click here](#) for a list of funding match programs by state.

Note: check to see if your state program requests applications before or after the federal award is made

States and service providers named above may provide a wide variety of assistance and financial programs that can support SBIR companies, and while not all of these providers will explicitly mention SBIR, they may still be helpful. Programs to search for in your state include:

- » connections to “first” customers
- » grants or loans for commercialization costs
- » connections to angel, seed and venture investors or private lenders
- » state finance programs for new and small businesses

HOW TO ACCESS LOCAL ASSISTANCE

Because each region has its own mix of resources and assistance providers, finding the right starting point can be difficult. Here are three strategies:

- » Use [sbir.gov](#)'s index of resource providers as a starting point.
- » Every state has an SBDC, and while not every SBDC will be well-suited to providing SBIR/STTR support, they should be able to point you in the right direction for the services you need.
- » Each state has an office of economic development (under some title) and most have information on their website about how to access small business assistance.