

ELDERTIDE LLC

Growing up with herbalist parents, future scientist Edie Johnston always had an interest in the fusion of ancient herbal traditions and holistic wellness with western science and medicine. Of primary interest to her were the wild elderberries growing along the Eastern River in Dresden, Maine. Edie was curious about the antioxidant levels and anti-viral properties of elderberries and whether or not they could be harvested for medicinal purposes. After launching her company, Eldertide LLC in 2007, Edie applied for a seed grant from the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), and shortly thereafter embarked on her first experience with the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program.

DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

Nearly \$700,000 with an additional \$575,000 pending

AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH

Over 50%

AGENCIES

USDA

AWARDS

2014 SBA Tibbetts Award winner

SNAPSHOT

Main product line, developed with the help of three SBIR awards, is available for purchase at Whole Foods stores nationwide.

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Dresden Maine, 04342

www.mainemedicinals.com

Eldertide aligned with Karen West, MTI's SBIR/STTR Consultant, and received research and development assistance and support with navigating the complexities of the SBIR process through specialized services such as proposal preparation assistance. Subsequently, Eldertide was able to successfully submit a Phase I proposal to the USDA and received its first of three SBIR awards.

The company's R&D work began by looking at native species of elderberries to see which had the highest antioxidant profiles and could be successfully cultivated. This led to the development of a proprietary juice blend that contained all of the benefits and nutrients inherent in elderberries. Such benefits include strong anti-viral properties, particularly against certain strains of the flu. In addition, elderberries help guard against inflammation in the body, while neutralizing free radicals, which can lead to oxidative stress and disease. This overall immune system support soon translated into one of the company's most in-demand products, its Antholmmune™ Organic Elderberry Syrup, which combines certified organic elderberries, elderflowers, and wild Maine blueberries.

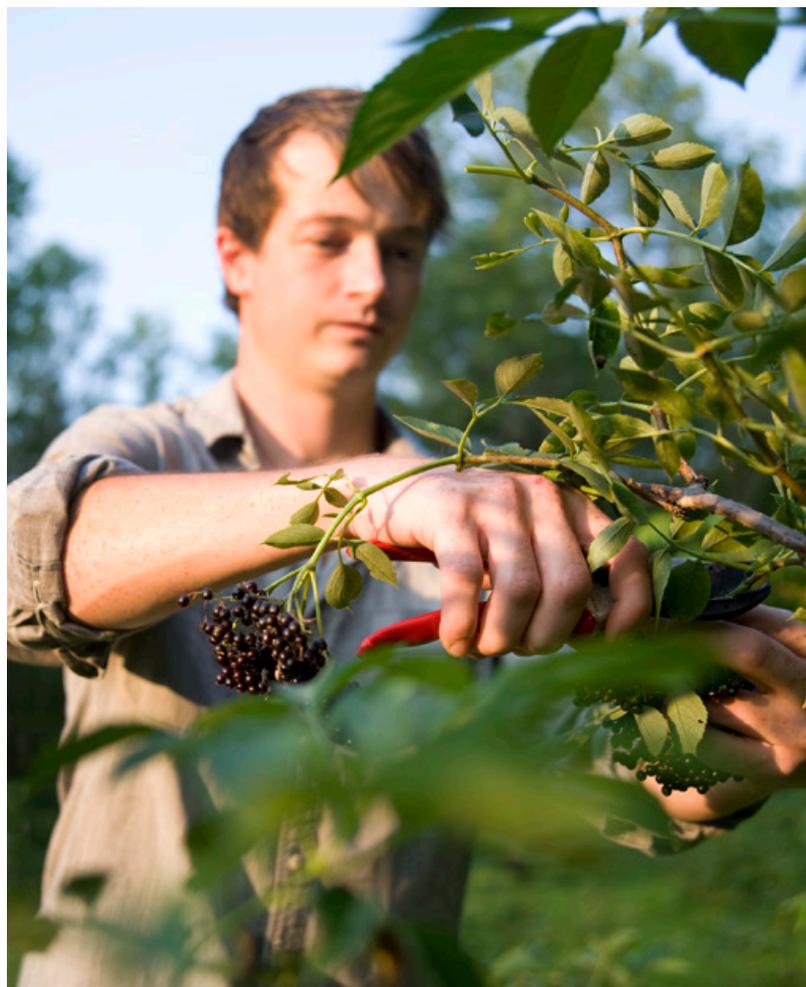
"The seed funding provided by MTI was really critical for us," explains Edie Johnston, President and CEO of Eldertide. "Without that work and the encouragement of small businesses to apply for SBIR grants, we probably wouldn't be here today."

With two Phase I SBIR awards and one Phase II project completed, commercialization doesn't seem as if it would be part of the equation this early. But when interest peaks and demand rises from the commercial sector as it did in Eldertide's case, products can hit the market in record time. While the company was in its first Phase I, they exhibited their findings at the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) Common

Ground Fair. During the three-day event, lines started growing outside of Eldertide's booth, and shortly after the Fair, stores started calling and asking if they could carry the product line. One of these stores was Whole Foods Market, which has since become one of the largest retailers to sell the products developed by Eldertide.

"Edie really serves as a great example of success because making that leap from Phase II to commercialization is not an easy transition," says MTI SBIR/STTR Consultant Karen West. "But they did what they needed to – they resolved all of the issues around packaging, and bottling, and compliance and all of the intricacies, and they made it."

To keep pace with demand in the market, Eldertide spun off its sister company, Maine Medicinals since the manufacturing of plant-based medicines requires specialized equipment and infrastructure. Maine Medicinals is currently moving to a large manufacturing facility in Richmond, Maine. The lab and R&D portion, which will remain Eldertide, is committed to continuing the research and development that spawns these in-demand nutraceuticals.



The Phase II project entailed the development of additional plant-based medicines. The company has been continually increasing its network of elderberry growers for high-value niche markets in Maine and beyond.

In 2014, U.S. Senator Angus King (I-Maine) met with Edie and her son, Geo Johnston, with whom she operates the business, to acknowledge and celebrate receiving the Small Business Administration (SBA)'s Tibbetts Award at a White House ceremony, for excellence in the commercialization of SBIR-funded technologies.

"I just think the SBIR program is one of the most important in supporting small businesses that are geared toward science and technology," adds Edie. "They provide early stage funding for the really important research, and that is instrumental in leading to success."

The company's growth has been very (fittingly) organic, with most marketing and promotion happening through word of mouth, their e-commerce website, and media support through various channels. Eldertide continues to drive new product development, with the help of the SBIR program, and is committed to spreading the benefits of its research far beyond the coast of Maine where it all started.