

# **SBIR Newsletter**

## **February 2008**

### **Spring 2008 SBIR Seminars across North Carolina**

Several 2-3 hour SBIR Seminars will be held across North Carolina this April. These workshops will provide an introduction to the SBIR/STTR programs, the services that the SBTDC provides to those looking to submit proposals, as well as sources of additional program information. They will also present insights in how to prepare a winning-proposal. Select workshops will offer a presentation from local SBIR awardees as well as service providers. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with speakers as well as counselors from the SBTDC during and after the workshop. See agendas and register online at: [www.sbtcd.org/events/sbir/workshops2008/](http://www.sbtcd.org/events/sbir/workshops2008/)

- [Charlotte](#) - April 15th, 8:00-11:00 AM
- [Greensboro](#) - April 28th, 2:00-4:00 PM
- [Research Triangle Park](#) - April 29th, 8:00-11:00 AM



### **NIH SBIR/STTR Solicitations Open**

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has released its PHS 2008-2 omnibus SBIR/STTR Grants solicitation that stays open all year and has three separate receipt days. This complex solicitation, includes opportunities from three main components of DHHS, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The NIH is the largest entity in this solicitation and is comprised of many institutes, each with their own set of interests and topics. Although the technical topics are shared between the SBIR and STTR offerings, the rules and regulations are different and the NIH issues separate announcements for their SBIR ([PA-08-050](#)) and their STTR ([PA-08-051](#)).

NIH has separate receipt dates for AIDS and Non-AIDS topics, both of which have three receipt dates that span the year. Non-AIDS receipt dates are April 5, Aug 5, and Dec 5, 2008. AIDS-related dates are May 7, September 7, 2008 and January 7, 2009.

The DHHS solicitation is grants based and requires registration and submission via the [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) web site. It is a complex process but the NIH offers help and guidance on their web site at [grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/sbir.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/sbir.htm).

The NIH topics will be included in Zyn's SBIR Gateway Topic Search Engine by January 31, 2008. Unlike most other SBIR solicitations, the NIH topics are broad based and act as a guide to their areas of interest. Many of the participating NIH Institutes will accept a proposal that addresses an area of interest within the mission of the institute. Respondents should not be timid about asking for guidance.

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## SBTDC Services Go Beyond SBIR

The **North Carolina Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC)** helps small business owners (and those interested in starting a business) meet the challenges of today's business environment, manage that ever-changing world, and plan for the future of their business. We do this by providing management counseling and educational services to small and mid-sized businesses throughout North Carolina from our [17 offices](#) across the state — each affiliated with a college or university. Our mission is to help North Carolina businesses grow and create new jobs within the state. Most of our services are free of charge, and all SBTDC services are confidential.

Our **General Business Services** are well defined and are designed to meet our clients' needs:

**[Management Counseling](#)** — We help you with financing, marketing, human resources, operations, business planning, and feasibility assessment.

**[Management Education](#)** — We also provide targeted, research-based educational products which are focused on change management, strategic performance, and leadership development for your management team, employees, and board members.

Our **Special Market Development Services** are specifically designed to aid growing companies in expanding their markets and increasing competitiveness:

**[Business Research](#)** — We provide research and marketing support services for SBTDC clients, primary research on small business needs and economic impact, and special projects such as small business incubator feasibility studies.

**[Government Procurement](#)** — We can help you secure contracts by providing comprehensive assistance in selling your products and services to federal, state, and local governments.

**[Export Financial Services](#)** — Our staff helps businesses with export financing.

**Boating Industry Services** — The SBTDC provides business and regulatory services to marinas, boatyards, boat dealers, boat builders, marine construction firms, and product/service providers.

**Technology Commercialization** and **SBIR** — SBTDC counselors assist technology businesses through management counseling and Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) outreach.

For more details, visit [www.sbtcdc.org](http://www.sbtcdc.org) .

## **SBIR Proposal Writing Basics: Who's on First, and How's in Your Work Plan**

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As we review Phase 1 and 2 SBIR/STTR proposals, we continue to see work plans (aka research plans) that lack the detail and depth that is needed to convince a reviewer that the proposer knows how to conduct the research. This can be a deadly mistake, especially for newcomers to SBIR/STTR who have not created a reputation with the agency based on prior work. Therefore, this month we will address this important part of your proposal.

A common problem in a sketchy work plan is the lack of specifics about HOW each task will be accomplished. Most proposers include WHAT is being done, but don't talk much about HOW. Let us use a simple example of what we're talking about.

You are planning a trip to Canada next month on a project. Let's talk about the preparation required:

**WHAT:** The "what" in this project is preparing for a business trip to Canada. Yep, that's about it. Not much else to say about "what"—we're going to prepare, yes siree....

Now how much confidence do you have, from that vague statement, that we have any real understanding of what it takes to prepare for that trip? Zilch, zippo, nada, none.

**HOW:** First we have to figure out how we're going to get there. After consulting the atlas and asking the advice of the client, we determine that flying through Vancouver or Calgary is the best bet. We check alternatives on Orbitz.com or Expedia.com, and decide the best flights in terms of schedule, cost, and minimum number of flight segments. And yes, we look at which airlines we have "elite status" on, so we can get preferred boarding, a chance to upgrade to first class, etc.

Next, we have to figure out what kind of paperwork is required to get into Canada. By doing some on line searching, we determine that a passport is now required for US citizens . With that knowledge, we seek out our passport, which we remember keeping on the top shelf of a particular bookcase with some other travel documents. We find the passport, and must quickly

determine whether it has expired or not. Fortunately it has not, so we do not have to worry about getting a new picture, applying for a new passport, etc.

The other relevant part of getting into Canada is researching what is allowed in terms of outsiders doing business there. Considering information from both US and Canadian sources, we determine that we need to show we have a valid current contract with a Canadian client, so we will now print and make sure to have a copy of that agreement with us.

Next, we need to consider clothing. Living in southwest Florida, Jim hasn't grown any winter fur on his legs and back, so he will have to come up with some clothing that will do the trick in the arctic weather (we should add a subtask here to check the weather forecast for the community we're traveling to). Good thing we still have winter clothing from when we lived in the Rocky Mountains, but we will want to try everything on to make sure it still fits and is appropriate for business meetings.

Okay, do you now see the difference between just saying "what" you are going to do in your SBIR/STTR work plan, and describing "how" you are going to accomplish it?

One additional suggestion: avoid using the word "we" in your work plan, since the reviewer has no idea who "we" is. In our example above, go back to every place that "we" appears and replace it with the name of the person who will be doing the task or activity.

So, in your next Phase 1 or 2 proposal work plan, make sure to expand upon each task with enough description of "how" you will accomplish the task to convince that reviewer that you are credible in terms of being able to do this work. And specify "who" is doing it, so the reviewer is clear on the role of the Principal Investigator, subcontractors, consultants, and other key players.

## **Five Ventures Taking Applications for Business Plan Competition**

Would you be interested in participating in UNC Charlotte's seventh annual Five Ventures business plan competition and conference?

SBTDC clients have won previous competitions, and there has been an SBTDC client in the top five most years. The Five Ventures Conference will take place on the campus of UNC Charlotte on April 10, 2008. Five Ventures is seeking early-stage high-growth businesses/concepts that will compete in one of five categories - Biotechnology, Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Green Technology or Service/Retail. Applications are being accepted until March 11.

For more information, visit [www.five-ventures.com](http://www.five-ventures.com) .