

## **SBTDC Interview with the National Science Foundation SBIR/STTR Programs**

**Ujvari:** Provide an overview or intro of your agency. For example: What is the agency's overall mission?

**NSF:** To promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense.

**Ujvari:** What global scientific/industry sectors are of interest to the agency right now and what are expected to be popular topics in the pipeline?

**NSF:** NSF SBIR/STTR supports market-driven topics such as Biotechnology, Electronics, Information-Based Technologies, Chemical-Based Technologies and Advanced Materials and Manufacturing. The next expected topic from NSF is a special topic in response to the President's Executive 13329 called Manufacturing Innovation. The solicitation is expected to be released around September 1, 2004 – with proposals due early December 2004.

Other interesting facts: NSF plays a key role in supporting small business research with a clear goal of innovation that can benefit society through commercialization. Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer programs at NSF are exclusively for the small business community to leverage federal funds to undertake high-risk science and engineering research that could lead to further investment from the investment community. Small Business researchers in the NSF programs have substantial ties to the academic research community.

**Ujvari:** Does your agency mainly offer grants or contracts?

**NSF:** Grants only

**Ujvari:** What is the 2004 budget for SBIR (and STTR if applicable)?

**NSF:** \$107M (combined)

**Ujvari:** How many awards were made in 2003?

**NSF:** 447\* Phase I / 77 Phase II (\*unusually high number of Phase I proposals were awarded due to a significant increase in the NSF budget – but the budget now is flat or may even decline).

**Ujvari:** What are the general win rates?

**NSF:** 1-10 for Phase I and 1-3 for Phase II

**Ujvari:** How many awards are generally made per solicitation for a Phase 1 and Phase 2?

**NSF:** We have two solicitation per year with approximately 150 per. Phase II's do not have solicitations, they are submitted based on if a company received a Phase I award. We typically award approximately 100 Phase IIs.

**Ujvari:** Who reviews your contract proposal/grant application (agency staff – outside peer reviewers – combination)?

**NSF:** Outside peer review panels make advisory recommendations to the NSF Program Managers

**Ujvari:** How are reviewers selected?

**NSF:** By expertise

**Ujvari:** Are the review criteria “weighted?”

**NSF:** Yes – NSF has two criteria and they are equally weighted.

**Ujvari:** How much “weight” is assigned to the credentials of the PI and his/her “team?”

**NSF:** See above

**Ujvari:** How much “weight” is assigned to the soundness and technical merit of the project?

**NSF:** See above

**Ujvari:** Does your agency require a “succinct Commercialization Plan” in your current Phase II solicitation?

**NSF:** Yes

**Ujvari:** Are there separate reviewers for the technical and commercialization sections of the applications for Phase I? For Phase II? If so, what are the backgrounds, generally, of the commercialization reviewers?

**NSF:** YES – Commercial Reviewers are from industry, the investment community and business schools.

**Ujvari:** How much “weight” is assigned to commercialization?

**NSF:** Technical and Commercial components are equally weighted. You must have a complete package, i.e. technical and commercial!

**Ujvari:** At what point are the reviewers of a proposal known to the applicant organization?

**NSF:** Never!

**Ujvari:** How are debriefings requested?

**NSF:** PI receives verbatim copies of reviews and panel summaries (if applicable).

**Ujvari:** If provided – are debriefings oral or written?

**NSF:** See above

**Ujvari:** What is the general period of time between proposal submission and announcement of selection or non-selection?

**NSF:** Could be 6 months.

**Ujvari:** What is the general time gap between the time an award is chosen for funding and actual distribution of funding.

**NSF:** Within weeks of notification.

**Ujvari:** Does your agency have a Fast Track or Quick Response offering? If so, please explain.

**NSF:** No

**Ujvari:** What is your agency's dollar cap on phase 1 and phase 2 funding?

**NSF:** Phase I = \$100,000, Phase II = \$500,000 with the opportunity for Phase IIB which could be supplemental funding up to an additional \$500,000 with third-party funding.

**Ujvari:** Does the agency provide any follow-on funding beyond the phase 2 or to carry on additional phase 2 work?

**NSF:** See above

**Ujvari:** How is the applicant organization informed of selection or non-selection?

**NSF:** Electronically

**Ujvari:** If not selected, may applicant organization resubmit – Phase I? - Phase 2?

**NSF:** NSF allows an applicant to resubmit Phase I proposals but does not allow Phase II resubmissions

**Ujvari:** Is a Phase 2 proposal to be submitted only by invitation?

**NSF:** A Phase II proposal can only be submitted if a company has received a Phase I award. The Phase I is the "ticket" to a Phase II.

**Ujvari:** Does a separate final report need to be submitted for Phase 1 and Phase 2?

**NSF:** YES

**Ujvari:** Is your agency typically a consumer of the final commercial product? (While we tend to think of contract agencies as looking for deliverables, it might be helpful to know if an agency is a potential customer or can provide sole-source assistance to begin a product launch).

**NSF:** No