



America's
SEED FUND
SBIR.STTR

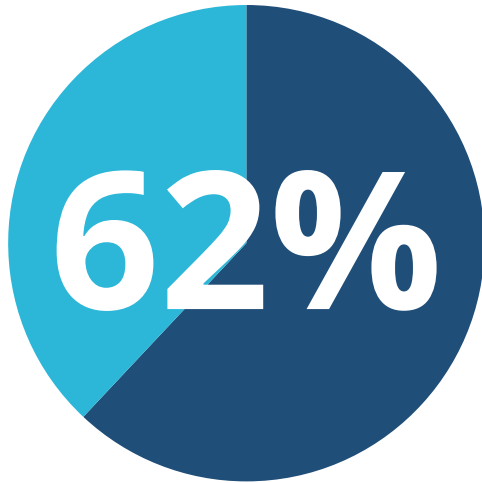
NSF SBIR/STTR Fast-Track Pilot

July 2024

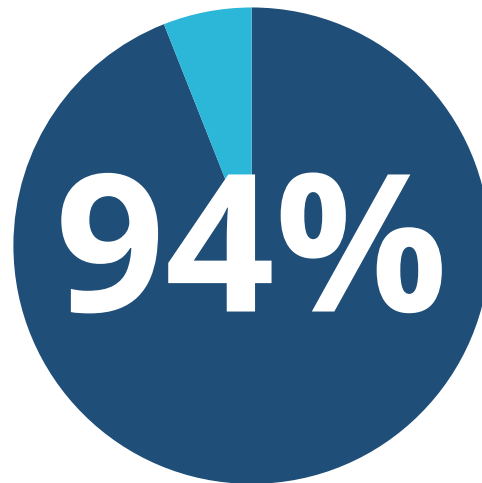
WHAT WE DO

- **\$230+** million annually.
- About **400** startups funded annually.
- Up to **\$2 million** over several years in non-dilutive funding for research and development (R&D), helping companies de-risk technology to position them for commercial success.

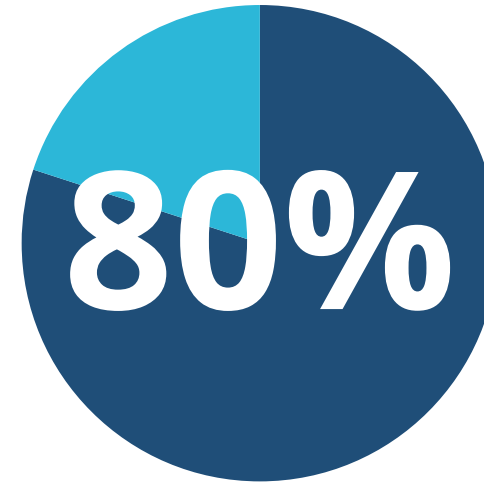
SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE STARTUPS



New To NSF



Less Than 10
Employees



Created In The
Last 5 Years

Percentages based on Phase I Awards in Fiscal Year 2023

PORTFOLIO AND OUTCOMES

4,000+ awards to startups (2014–2023).

Equity and Exits from NSF-funded companies:

- **\$28** billion in follow-on private investment in fiscal years 2014 to 2023*.
- **450** company exits (acquisitions, mergers, IPO's).

**These figures were pulled from Pitchbook from 10/01/2013 to 9/30/2023 and include data from companies that received NSF support prior to 2014.*

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING M	ADVANCED MATERIALS AM	ADVANCED SYSTEMS FOR SCALABLE ANALYTICS AA	AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES AG	ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AI	AUGMENTED AND VIRTUAL REALITY AV
BIOLOGICAL TECHNOLOGIES BT	BIOMEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES BM	CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGIES CT	CLOUD AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE COMPUTING CH	CYBERSECURITY AND AUTHENTICATION CA	DIGITAL HEALTH DH
DISTRIBUTED LEDGER DL	ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES EN	ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGIES ET	HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION HC	INSTRUMENTATION AND HARDWARE SYSTEMS IH	INTERNET OF THINGS I
LEARNING AND COGNITION TECHNOLOGIES LC	MEDICAL DEVICES MD	MOBILITY MO	NANOTECHNOLOGY N	OTHER TOPICS OT	PHARMACEUTICAL TECHNOLOGIES PT
PHOTONICS PH	POWER MANAGEMENT PM	QUANTUM INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES QT	ROBOTICS R	SEMICONDUCTORS S	SPACE SP

Topic fit is not required.

TECHNOLOGY TOPICS

All areas of technology are welcome!

- Must have significant R&D work and potential for commercial and societal impact.
- Note: Clinical trials or work on schedule 1 controlled substances will not be supported.



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THE BASICS

WHAT WE LOOK FOR:

- Impact (Commercial and Societal)
- Technological Innovation and Risk
- Market Pull
- Potential For Scale

ELIGIBILITY:

- Only open to US-based for-profit small businesses with fewer than 500 employees.
- Applicants must be majority owned and controlled by U.S. citizen or permanent residents.
- All work must be done within the United States.
- Project Principal Investigator must spend a majority of their time employed by the awardee company during the project.



OUR APPROACH TO SBIR/STTR

KEY TENETS

- Focus on high-risk, innovative and differentiating technology.
- Focus on startups and being “early catalytic capital”.
- Topic-agnostic approach.
- Commercially-focused program led by a team with deep startup, investment, and innovation experience.

FEATURES AND BENEFITS

- Very flexible funding instruments (grants or cooperative agreements) with the ability to pivot.
- Entrepreneurial support via programming and Program Director engagement.
- NSF is not a customer or user, and does not seek to influence awardee business models based on “agency needs”.

THE PROCESS

Project Pitch: to evaluate appropriateness for the program.

- Project Pitch submission portal is always open
- Submissions are reviewed continuously, with response time of up to **1 month**

Full proposal: to evaluate merit on technical, broader impact, and commercial grounds.

- Full proposal submission based on submission deadlines (per solicitation)
- Submissions generally reviewed every ~4 months with response time of about 6 months



MOTIVATION FOR FAST-TRACK

NSF SBIR/STTR PHASE I & PHASE II



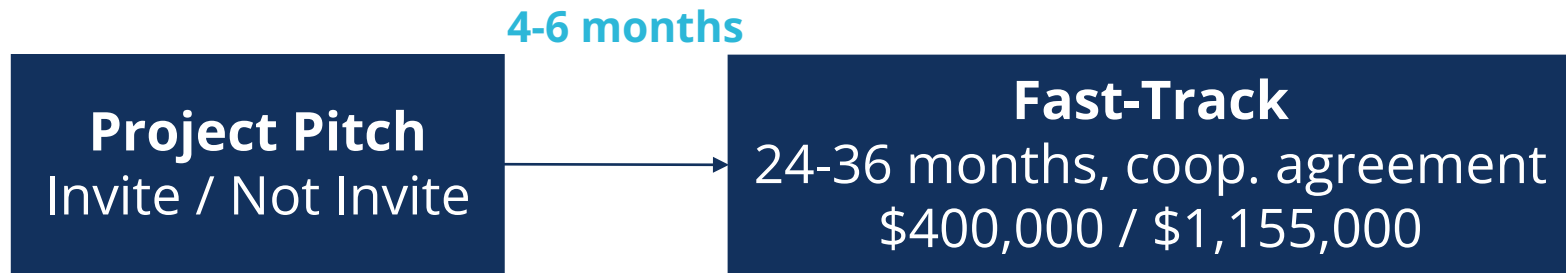
OBJECTIVES OF FAST-TRACK

- Provide Phase I and Phase II SBIR/STTR support based on a single proposal and a single external review.
- Reduce funding gap between Phase I and Phase II.
- Accelerate Phase I progress with higher funding levels.
- Improve flexibility for decision-making at Phase II.



STRUCTURE AND TIMELINE

FAST-TRACK PILOT



Eligible companies submit a single proposal that includes Phase I and Phase II components





ELIGIBILITY AND PROJECT PITCH

FAST-TRACK ELIGIBILITY

Fast-Track applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Meet all the normal SBIR/STTR rules **AND**
- Receive a Fast-Track Project Pitch invitation **AND ...**

FAST-TRACK ELIGIBILITY

1. Have NSF research lineage related to the same core technology – related NSF research award in prior 5 years (PFI counts as research award; SBIR/STTR and I-Corps do not) **AND**
2. Must have received customer discovery training related to the proposed technology in the past 2 years – I-Corps or incubator/accelerator **AND**
3. Certify to presenting a full team (no TBD roles) at time of proposal submission.



1. ELIGIBILITY: RESEARCH LINEAGE

- Requires NSF funding to some institution (not necessarily the applicant small business) that was active during the preceding five years.
- The prior funding must have a **technical** connection to the proposed Fast-Track award and ideally the results of that award directly set up to the potential Fast-Track activity.
- The prior funding must also have a **personnel** connection to the same award: one of the proposed Fast-Track senior personnel should have been an active and significant participant in the prior project.
- I-Corps and SBIR/STTR awards are not eligible as research lineage; GRFP and PFI are allowed.

2. ELIGIBILITY: CUSTOMER DISCOVERY

- The customer discovery program must have included a requirement to do some significant number of customer interviews.
- At least one of the participants in the customer discovery program must be put forth as a senior personnel in the Fast-Track proposal.
- Self-guided customer discovery (while encouraged) does not satisfy this requirement.

3. ELIGIBILITY: COMPLETE TEAM

- It is required that, at the time of the full proposal submission, the applicant small business has identified all the prospective participants for both the Phase I and Phase II components of the project.
- This requirement does not apply to activities outside of the NSF-funded R&D (for example, having a to-be-determined role in the small business' commercial team is not disqualifying.)
- For the purposes of the Fast-Track Project Pitch, a certification is all that's required (no added detail will be requested).

FAST-TRACK PROJECT PITCH

- The Fast-Track Project Pitch consists of all the “standard” Project Pitch questions plus three Fast-Track eligibility questions.
- A Fast-Track Project Pitch that is deemed not eligible for Fast-Track but which meets the normal criteria for SBIR/STTR funding may be invited to submit a standard Phase I proposal.
- Fast-Track invitations will expire after FOUR months. All other Project Pitch details (timing, process, etc.) are the same.



PROPOSAL CONTENTS

FAST-TRACK PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Roughly the same length as a standard Phase I proposal, with the following contents:

- Phase I R&D plan (4 pages); Phase II R&D plan (5 pages); Company and Team (1 page); Commercialization Plan (5 pages); Broader Impacts (1 page).
- Project Schedule (similar to regular Phase II).
- Requires letters of support (3 required, up to 5 allowed).

FAST-TRACK PROPOSAL REVIEW

- Same merit review criteria as NSF SBIR/STTR.
- Phase I and Phase II components are reviewed separately - separate ratings of E/V/G/F/P for Phase I and for Phase II, separate panel recommendations for Phase I and Phase II.
- Due diligence follows same basic process and principles.
- Outcome can be decline, Fast-Track award, or Phase I award.

FAST-TRACK AWARD MANAGEMENT

1.

Fast-Track awardees will be **required** as normal to attend Phase I workshops.

2.

Fast-Track awardees will **NOT** do I-Corps in Phase I.



PHASE I TO PHASE II TRANSITION

Stage Gate 1: Progress Evaluation (begins 3 months prior to end of the Phase I component). Reverse site visit (with 4-6 weeks for team to prep) focused on technical performance, commercial progress and traction, and team/resource availability and suitability.

- Will combine a presentation to multiple SBIR/STTR staff with a technical narrative covering Phase I results.

Stage Gate 2: Normal Financial and Administrative (CAP) review.

- A project that is not advanced to Phase II cannot request reconsideration nor apply for a "standard" Phase II award based on the Fast-Track Phase I.

TECHNICAL AND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE (TABA)

- Fast-Track TABA funding is the same as for regular SBIR/STTR Phase I and Phase II awards:
 - Phase I – up to \$6,500
 - Phase II – up to \$50,000

SUPPLEMENTS

- Recipients of a Fast-Track Phase II increment will be entitled to apply for all "regular" SBIR/STTR Phase II supplements.
- Same conditions will apply as for regular Phase II awardees



COMMON QUESTIONS

ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

- A Fast-Track Project Pitch invitation or pending Fast-Track proposal precludes submission of another Project Pitch (whether Fast-Track or standard.)
- Project Pitches or proposals already in process as of today cannot be considered for Fast-Track “on the fly”.
- Submit your Fast-Track Project Pitch - <https://nsgov.my.site.com/mywork/s/login>

THANK YOU!

Get started today

<https://seedfund.nsf.gov/how-to-submit/fast-track/>

Questions?

sbir@nsf.gov



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ELIGIBILITY: RESEARCH LINEAGE

Lineage Eligibility Requirement. The technical innovation in the Fast-Track proposal must be derived from a prior NSF research award that is either currently active or was active within the previous five years from the date of submission of the Fast-Track proposal. The Fast-Track Project Pitch and proposal must include the NSF award number and title of the research award that is relied upon to meet the lineage requirement. The Fast-Track proposal's PI or at least one Senior/Key Personnel must have been supported under the lineage award. If the Fast-Track team member relied upon to meet the lineage requirement is named on the lineage award, no further documentation will be required. If not, the Fast-Track proposal must include a letter from the PI or a Co-PI of the lineage award confirming that either the PI or a named Senior/Key Personnel on the Fast-Track team was engaged in research undertaken under the lineage award. **In addition to regular NSF research awards (e.g., CAREER, individual investigator awards, center/institute awards, etc.), Partnerships for Innovation (PFI) and NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) awards do count as NSF lineage for SBIR/STTR Fast-Track eligibility. NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps) and NSF SBIR/STTR awards do not count as NSF research lineage and do not convey SBIR/STTR Fast-Track eligibility.**

ELIGIBILITY: CUSTOMER DISCOVERY

Formal Customer Discovery Eligibility Requirement. Companies must have received formal customer discovery training, defined as follows, within the previous two years from the date of the Fast-Track proposal submission. At least one of the Senior/Key Personnel on the Fast-Track proposal must have undergone formal customer discovery training in relation to the proposed technology via a suitably qualified program, such as the [NSF I-Corps program](#) or a program at an incubator or accelerator, with a result that at the start of the Fast-Track project the proposing company has a clear understanding of the product-market fit and initial target customers for the proposed technology.

ELIGIBILITY: COMPLETE TEAM

Complete Team Eligibility Requirement. Companies must have a complete Fast-Track team in place at the time of proposal submission – i.e., there must be no “to-be-determined” company personnel in budget lines A or B; all company personnel in budget lines A and B must have confirmed their availability for the proposed Fast-Track project per the proposed Phase I and Phase II component budgets; the proposing team must possess the required expertise to perform the proposed Fast-Track project; and the team members must dedicate sufficient time to the technical tasks that must be undertaken to achieve the objectives of the Fast-Track project.

