



America's  
**SEED FUND**  
SBIR.STTR

# AMERICA'S SEED FUND

POWERED BY THE U.S. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Lindsay Portnoy | Program Director | 06.14.2024

# WHO WE ARE

---

America's Seed Fund, powered by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), funds startups transforming **high-risk technologies** into products and services with commercial and societal impact.

# 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.



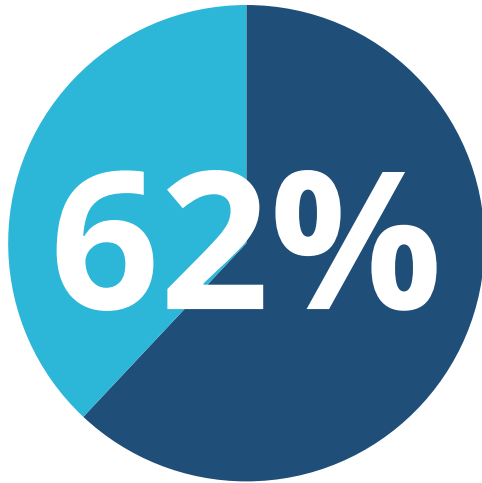
# THE DATA



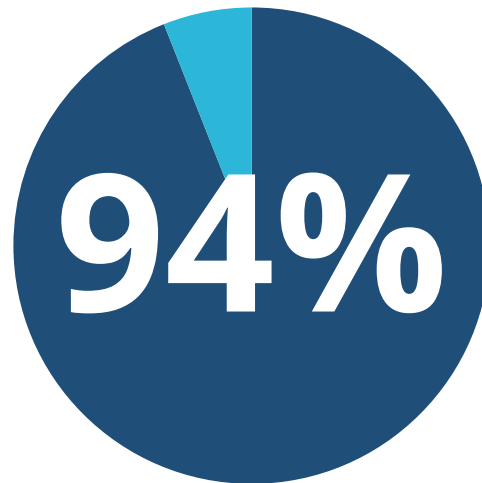
America's  
**SEED FUND**  
SBIR.STR

# SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE STARTUPS

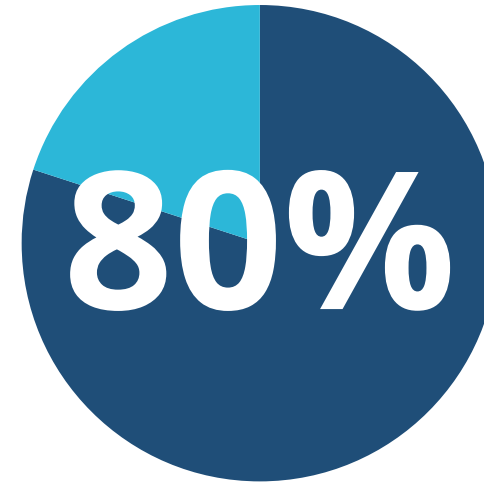
---



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.*

# TECHNOLOGY TOPICS

Advanced Analytics (AA) AA	Advanced Manufacturing (M) M	Advanced Materials (AM) AM	Artificial Intelligence (AI) AI	Augmented and Virtual Reality (AV) AV	Biological Technologies (BT) BT
Biomedical Technologies (BM) BM	Chemical Technologies (CT) CT	Cloud and High-Performance Computing (CH) CH	Cybersecurity and Authentication (CA) CA	Digital Health (DH) DH	Distributed Ledger (DL) DL
Energy Technologies (EN) EN	Environmental Technologies (ET) ET	Human-Computer Interaction (HC) HC	Instrumentation and Hardware Systems (IH) IH	Internet of Things (I) I	Learning and Cognition Technologies (LC) LC
Medical Devices (MD) MD	Mobility (MO) MO	Nanotechnology (N) N	Other Topics (OT) OT	Pharmaceutical Technologies (PT) PT	Photonics (PH) PH
Power Management (PM) PM	Quantum Information Technologies (QT) QT	Robotics (R) R	Semiconductors (S) S	Space (SP) SP	Wireless Technologies (W) W

Topic fit is not required.

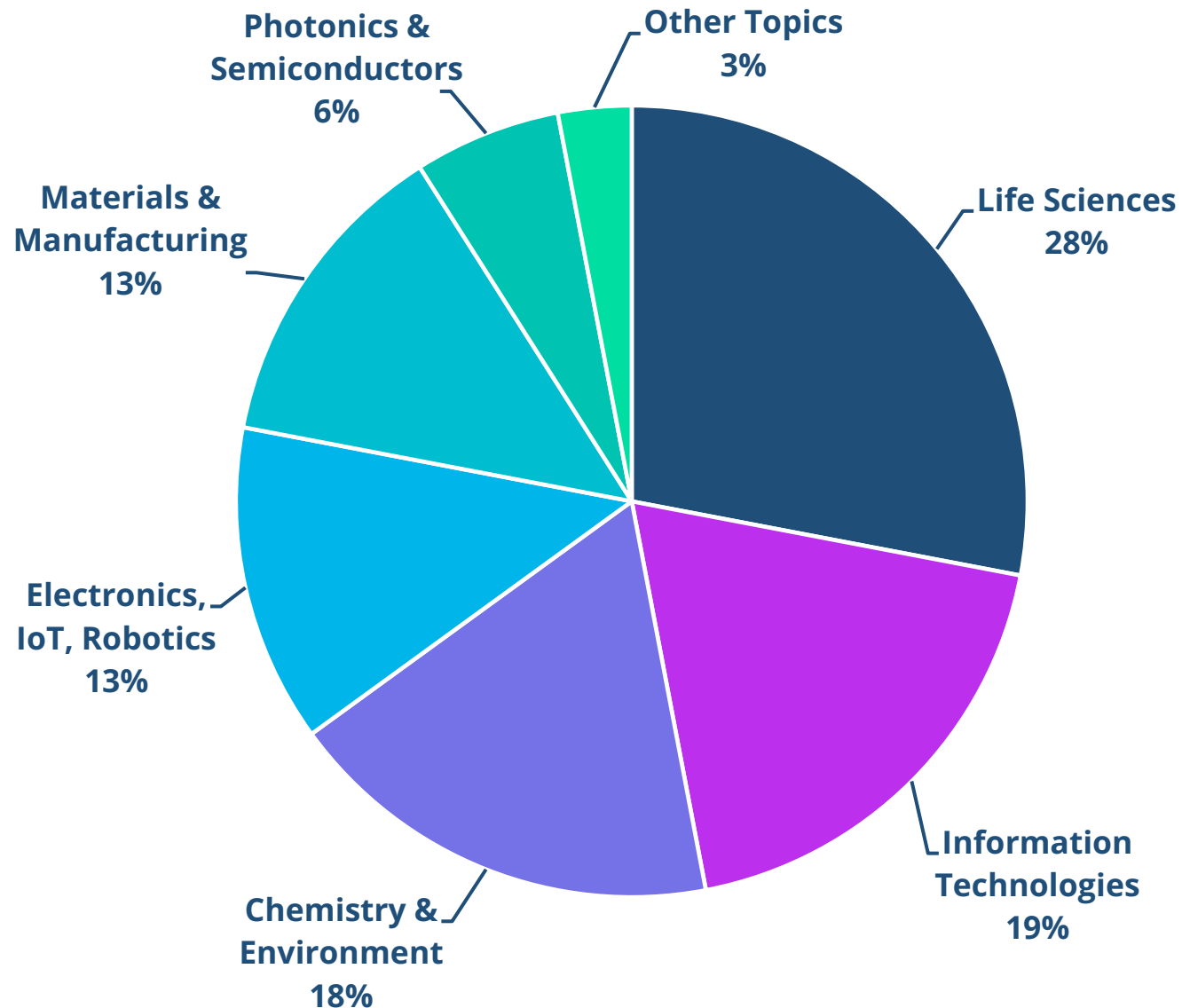
**All areas of technology are welcome!**

- 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.



America's  
**SEED FUND**  
SBIR.STTR

# AWARDS FUNDED BY TECH AREAS



FY 2020 Funding **\$221 Million**



America's  
**SEED FUND**  
SBIR.STTR





# HOW DOES IT WORK?



America's  
**SEED FUND**  
SBIR.STR

# FUNDING STAGES



## PHASE I

Proof-of-concept:  
6 – 18 Months

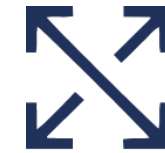
Up to  
**\$305,000**



## PHASE II

Prototype  
development:  
24 Months

Up to  
**\$1,250,000**



## PHASE IIB

NSF 1:2 Match –  
partnering for  
commercial success

Up to  
**\$500,000**

# 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



# THE PROJECT PITCH



America's  
**SEED FUND**  
SBIR.STR

# FUNDING PROCESS & TIMELINE

1.

## SUBMIT A PROJECT PITCH

Accepted anytime.

**NSF decision time:**  
1 month

2.

## SUBMIT A FULL PROPOSAL

Startups can submit a proposal for an upcoming deadline but must submit a proposal within **1 year of getting an invitation.**

3.

## PROPOSAL REVIEW & DECISION

**NSF decision time:**  
About 6 months  
after submission.



# THE PROJECT PITCH FINE PRINT

---

- Project Pitches are **accepted anytime** (365/24/7)
- Only **1 Project Pitch** can be submitted per quarter (e.g. Oct. 1-Dec. 31 or Jan. 1-March 31 or April 1-June 30 or July 1-Sept. 30)
- Only **1 Project Pitch** can be **under review at a time** (e.g. a small business cannot submit multiple Project Pitches at once)
- **No government registrations or official company formation** is required to submit a Project Pitch.



# AFTER SUBMISSION

---

## If the project is a good fit...

- NSF will send an official, email **invite** to submit a full proposal. NSF will include feedback and designate a topic area for the project.

## If the project is NOT a good fit ...

- A rationale for the decision by the managing NSF Program Director or Expert will be provided.
- Another Project Pitch may be submitted in the next quarter (typically, 3 months later.)



# SUBMIT A FULL PROPOSAL

---

## Step 2

- Review the Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) Phase I solicitation
- Register the company and key personnel in SAM.gov and Research.gov
- Submit a SBIR/STTR Phase I proposal

# PROPOSAL REVIEW & DECISION

---

## Step 3

- NSF program directors run the Merit Review process. A panel of experts review the intellectual merit, broader impacts and commercial potential of the Phase I proposal.
- NSF may ask for additional information during "Due Diligence"
- A funding decision is typically made about 6 months after proposal submission.

# HOW TO ENGAGE

---

## Join the mailing list!

Email signup link found in the website footer.

<https://seedfund.nsf.gov/>

## Review for NSF!

Seeking experts with technical and/or startup/commercialization experience.

<https://seedfund.nsf.gov/resources/review/>

### Stay in touch

Subscribe to our email list to be notified of upcoming deadlines.

→ Join our email list

# THANK YOU!

**Get started today**

<https://seedfund.nsf.gov/apply/>

**Questions?**

[sbir@nsf.gov](mailto:sbir@nsf.gov)



**America's  
SEED FUND**  
SBIR.STTR