

2020 TIBBETTS AWARD WINNER

Wisconsin Center for Technology Commercialization



U.S. Small Business
Administration



SBIR · STTR
America's Seed Fund
POWERED BY SBA

Since 2005, the CTC has assisted small businesses across Wisconsin to win over \$132 million in Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) funding, and more than \$271 million in additional capital. CTC serves 120 unique clients per quarter across Wisconsin, and the state has been recognized by the State Science and Technology Institute (STTI) as the top 2 or 3 in the U.S. for SBIR success.

LOCATION

WI
Madison

Impact & Achievement

Identifying gaps and developing solutions is a cornerstone of work carried out by the Center for Technology Commercialization (CTC), which operates as part of the Institute for Business & Entrepreneurship in the University of Wisconsin System. Members of the CTC have assisted eligible small businesses across Wisconsin to win over \$132 million in Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/ STTR) funding, and more than \$271 million in additional capital, since 2005. The CTC's contribution to the SBIR ecosystem is rooted in the organization's dynamic, client-centered programming. To execute its vision CTC has comprised an extensive team of experienced small business owners, SBIR/STTR Principal Investigators (PIs), Federal SBIR/STTR reviewers, Educators, I-Corp business mentors, and advanced-degree technologists. A pillar of CTC support is to curate SBIR consultants and provide grants to support clients through written proposal support and to develop SBIR award strategies. The CTC programming now includes mock agency reviews where reviewers offer actionable feedback to facilitate development of SBIR-savvy companies.

With 2016 Federal and State Technology (FAST) partnership program funding, the CTC team piloted novel approaches to increase participation of underrepresented groups with phenomenal results, including a 132 percent increase in rural submissions, an 84% increase in minority-led SBIR awards, and a 42 percent increase in women-led SBIR awards. Today, CTC serves 120 unique clients per quarter across Wisconsin, and the state has been recognized by The American State Science and Technology Institute (STTI) as the top two or three in the U.S. for SBIR success.

According to the CTC, not everyone self-identifies as an entrepreneur – encouraging diversity and inclusivity are key to generating new participants. In leveraging scholarly approaches to mentoring, the CTC applied FAST funding to test outreach messages and ultimately launch SBIR Ready – a program that recruits post-docs and early career scientists and engineers to address the strategic “lack-of-PI” bottleneck, and to boost diversity. Responding to the appeal of professional development, more underrepresented groups are using SBIR Ready to try their hand at SBIR writing and entrepreneurship. Through SBIR Ready, CTC has trained 31 teams over three years, with more than 72 percent of teams included FAST-targeted populations. So far, 22 percent of submissions have resulted in first-time Phase I awards.

The CTC has also partnered with the State of Wisconsin and pioneered a rigorous Lean Startup SBIR Matching program - coupling Lean Launchpad teaching and a focus on milestones for commercial progress and follow-on funding. Participants report a 40-60 percent Phase II win-rate and \$80.5 million in capital, including \$40.5 million in Phase II awards since 2015.

Looking to the future, CTC continues to focus on growing the Wisconsin innovation ecosystem by expanding its portfolio and is currently exploring beyond-Phase II programming, targeting outreach to existing businesses, and implementing readiness programs towards diverse agency participation.

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