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## **KSTC launches accelerator to prepare small business for Department of Defense contracts**

*Applications for new program now open*

**LEXINGTON, Ky. (March 16, 2021)** – A new accelerator program, now taking applications, will prepare Kentucky entrepreneurs to submit ideas to the U.S. Department of Defense for funding.

The Kentucky Science and Technology Corporation (KSTC) recently partnered with OKCatalyst, a national leader in assisting small businesses with securing Department of Defense innovation awards, to create the accelerator. Its goals include building Kentucky's innovation and high-tech business ecosystem and creating well-paying research and technology jobs that sustain families and communities.

The first-for-Kentucky accelerator program will equip participants to apply for and win contracts through the Department of Defense Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)/Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program. Through the SBIR/STTR program, known as America's Seed Fund, participating federal agencies allocate 3.2% of their external research budgets to companies with fewer than 500 employees in order to meet federal R&D needs and stimulate innovation and commercialization.

The Department of Defense, which typically awards contracts instead of grants, is the nation's largest SBIR funding source and currently allocates \$1.8 billion to the program. The department's SBIR programs not only have the largest budget, but also invest in the most diverse technology portfolio, ranging from materials to biomedical technologies. The department's SBIR/STTR programs are also fastest-paced, typically allowing only 10 weeks to prepare a competitive proposal.

"Despite impressive strides in securing non-dilutive federal funding, leveraging that funding and most importantly helping to launch innovative companies, we do not compete for or capture Department of Defense funding at the level we believe is possible," said KSTC's Maria Labreveux, who runs the Kentucky Science and Engineering Foundation. "Defense spends more than any other agency on SBIR/STTR activities, but also contracts with companies to solve a vast array of problems that go far beyond war making technologies. Kentucky has the talent and resources to be a prime location for meeting these needs. This accelerator gives Kentucky's many innovators access to a collaboration between experienced professionals with an award-winning Department of Defense SBIR/STTR strategy."

The accelerator is now accepting idea submissions at <https://www.ksef.kstc.org/dod-accelerator> for the eight-week program. The deadline to submit ideas for consideration is Friday, 23 April, 2021. The accelerator will match participants with one or more topics within their capabilities and interests, provide virtual instruction, templates and resources to help participants write proposals. Participants will also re-

ceive one-on-one counseling, and – when possible – be matched with experts in their area. The accelerator goal is to submit at least ten highly competitive proposals to the June 2021 DOD SBIR/STTR BAA release. The accelerator is free and no prior SBIR experience is required. Anyone interested can schedule a consultation to learn more about SBIR and what to expect from the accelerator.

In partnering KSTC and OKCatalyst, the accelerator brings together organizations with successful track records of helping companies win federal innovation funding. OKCatalyst, a program of the Tom Love Innovation Hub in Norman, OK, is nationally renowned for preparing companies to win DOD SBIR awards that help launch products and grow businesses. OKCatalyst won a 2020 Tibbetts award, the top honor for companies, organizations and individuals that promote the mission and goals of SBIR/STTR programs. “We are very excited to launch this transformative Accelerator, with KSTC, to scale Kentucky’s high-tech startups through DoD’s \$1.8B SBIR/STTR program.” – Tom Wavering, Executive Director Tom Love Innovation Hub at the University of Oklahoma.

Founded in 1987 to support the advancement of science, technology and innovative economic development, KSTC is a fast-paced leader with a reputation for developing and managing creative initiatives in education, economic competitiveness and scientific research. KSTC, a 2006 Tibbetts award winner, helped Kentucky SBIR/STTR advocacy programs rise from 47<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> in the number of awards between 2002 and 2012, a ranking it continues to sustain.

This initiative is supported through a collaboration with the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, KY Innovation and KYPTAC.

*For more information or to apply <https://www.ksef.kstc.org/dod-accelerator>.*