

SBIR/STTR PHASE I SUPPORT

Let's write a competitive proposal—together.

MNSBIR, Inc. provides no-cost, strategic, hands-on support to help Minnesota startups and small businesses compete for federal R&D funding. We work with companies to define their innovation, align with agency priorities, strengthen proposals, and develop credible commercialization strategies that meet SBIR/STTR review criteria. Our guidance improves proposal quality, reduces common weaknesses, and helps firms navigate the federal funding landscape more effectively. When appropriate, we engage specialized experts to strengthen technical, commercialization, and financial components. Our goal is to help companies secure non-dilutive funding, accelerate development and bring innovations to market.

Cost: Free

Eligibility: Startups and small businesses

Participant Requirement: Accepted as a MNSBIR Catalyst Program participant.

Writing a Phase I Proposal

The Phase I proposal must clearly describe the technical objectives, innovation, feasibility testing approach, and potential commercial impact of your proposed solution. Our support includes in-depth reviews and edits of core proposal documents, budget development and guidance, interpretation of federal rules and requirements, introductions to potential collaborators, and much more. Our support includes, but is not limited to:

1. Electronic Registrations

- Company UEI – Unique identifier
- [SAM.gov](#) – Federal registration required for all applicants
- [Grants.gov](#) – Submission portal for many agencies
- [Research.gov](#) – Required for NSF submissions
- [eRA Commons](#) – Required for NIH submissions
- [DSIP](#) – Required for DOW submissions
- [ProSams](#) – Required for NASA submissions
- [PAMS](#) – Required for DOE submissions
- Other – Depends on the agency
- Complete registrations 4–6 weeks before proposal deadline

2. Project Summary/Abstract

- Briefly state the problem, your innovative solution, and key technical objectives
- Describe expected outcomes and commercial potential
- Include keywords for agency reviewers

3. Introduction/Significance of the Problem

- Define the specific problem or unmet need
- Explain why this problem matters scientifically and/or commercially
- Show why current solutions are insufficient

4. Innovation

- Describe the novel aspects of your idea or approach
- Highlight technical advantages and intellectual property status (if any)
- Explain how your solution differs from and improves upon existing technologies

5. Technical Objectives

- List 2–4 measurable objectives for the Phase I effort
- Each objective should be clearly tied to your feasibility study

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- Use bullets, numbering, or subheadings for clarity

6. Research Strategy/Work Plan

For each objective:

- Describe tasks and methods (e.g., modeling, prototyping, testing)
- Determine roles of team members, subcontractors, or collaborators
- Define timeline, milestones, and decision points
- Develop a project timeline or Gantt chart

7. Expected Results / Success Criteria

- Define what constitutes technical success for each objective
- Discuss how Phase I results will inform Phase II development
- Include data types or performance benchmarks to be collected

8. Facilities, Equipment & Resources

- Describe where the work will be done
- Summarize key equipment and infrastructure (yours or partner's)
- Explain access to any university or shared resources if applicable

9. Key Personnel

- Highlight technical team qualifications (include biosketches/resumes separately)
- Clarify roles (Principal Investigator (PI), co-investigator, consultant, subcontractor)
- Emphasize experience related to R&D and commercialization

10. Budget and Budget Justification

- Total Funding Request: Aligned with agency limits for Phase I
- Personnel Costs: Salaries and fringe benefits for key personnel based on level of effort and institutional rates
- Consultants & Subawards: Costs for external expertise or partner institutions justified by scope and technical need
- Equipment: [If applicable] Specialized equipment justified as essential for proposed R&D
- Materials & Supplies: Directly related to project tasks, with itemized estimates and purpose
- Travel: Justified for project-related purposes, such as technical meetings or required conferences
- Other Direct Costs: Includes items like publication fees, prototyping costs, or testing services tied to project objectives
- Indirect Costs: Based on a federally negotiated rate or modified total direct costs. Agency allowance.
- Technical and Business Assistance (TABAs): Included to support commercialization activities
- Justification Narrative: Clearly explains how each cost supports project aims, complies with agency guidelines, and represents a reasonable, allowable, and allocable expense

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About Us

MNSBIR, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) organization funded in part through a Federal and State Technology Partnership Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, a grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and the University of Minnesota, Technology Commercialization Office and the Venture Center, and Carlson School of Management, Holmes Center for Entrepreneurship.