

Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR)

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Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) is a similar program to the SBIR program, except the STTR requires at least one Research Institute (RI) and requires an Intellectual Property (IP) agreement.

There are only five agencies supporting STTRs.

1. The Department of Defense
2. The Department of Energy
3. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
4. The National Science Foundation

There are a few differences between an SBIR and an STTR.

The first difference is an STTR project requires the small business - which is always the applicant - to be teamed with a non-profit research institution, typically a university or Federal Laboratory.

The second difference is that the STTR program is focused on the transfer of technology from the Research Institution, also referred to as the RI, to the small business and ultimately to the marketplace through a Phase 1-2-3 sequence. This second difference has been expanded over time to include situations where the innovation belongs to the small business, but the firm desires to include important resources from a nonprofit RI in the technology's development. Research institutions typically have sophisticated laboratories and personnel with needed expertise.

In addition to these two key differences, there are a number of other, more subtle differences between SBIR and STTR. One important difference is the primary employment of the project's principal investigator. In an SBIR project, the PI must be primarily employed at the proposing small business, meaning that he or she cannot work full time elsewhere during the project period. With an STTR, the PI could be primarily employed at either the RI or the small business. Another important difference between the two programs is that up to 60% of the research effort for an STTR project can be subcontracted, whereas there is a 33% limit on Phase I SBIR subcontracting. The SBIR limit increases to 50% in Phase II, but is still less than what is allowed in STTR.

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