SBIR ADVANCE GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES – Phase II only
For January 2027 Deadline

Program Overview:
The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) created the SBIR Advance SBIR/STTR Matching Grant Program to provide funding, training, and other resources to Wisconsin businesses to advance the commercialization of SBIR/STTR-funded technology and accelerate economic and job creation impact in Wisconsin. SBIR Advance funding is intended to cover company technology commercialization costs that are not allowed by federal SBIR and STTR awards and that advance business development and the commercialization of the SBIR/STTR-based products. A central focus of the SBIR Advance Phase II Program is to help companies with limited commercialization experience gain the traction needed to attract investors and strategic partners. SBIR Advance is a competitive program and applications are reviewed and scored based on the requirements outlined in this document.

Key Dates:

Intent to Apply Deadline	January 13, 2027 - Noon
Application Deadline	January 22, 2027 – Noon
Notice of Award	Week of February 8, 2027
Milestone Planning	February 8-19, 2027

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Program Details

Points of Contact: For questions about the application process or general questions about the SBIR Advance program, please contact the Program Manager:

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Program Schedule:

Awardees will be notified of acceptance into the program the week of **February 8, 2027**. This will be followed by identifying and agreeing upon key milestones by **February 19, 2027**. Companies must identify and articulate tangible milestones and deliverables that promote commercial success. All agreed upon milestones and deliverables must be completed before **June 1, 2028**.

Deliverables: SBIR Advance Awardees will be required to confirm four commercialization milestones with corresponding deliverables using the template shown in the figure below. The milestones should represent significant steps to reduce commercialization risk and increase the potential for return on investment. **These milestones must be mutually agreed upon to execute the contract.**

Milestones must be commercial/business based. Technical milestones that focus on science and research for product invention and development are **not** appropriate for this program. Applicants are encouraged to carefully deliberate and select activities and deliverables wisely that: 1. are important for the company's success AND; 2. are accomplishable in the timeframe of the program (completed by **June 1, 2028**). SBIR Advance payments are disbursed upon accomplishment and submission of agreed upon deliverables; failure to accomplish the milestones/deliverables before the **June 1, 2028** deadline will affect disbursements of funds. Download this template to assist you in determining your commercial milestones and deliverables. Milestone and deliverables template

Award Information

Type of Award. An SBIR Advance Phase II Grant provides up to 50% match of the Phase II or Phase IIB SBIR/STTR budget (capped at a maximum of $100,000), depending on the number and quality of applications and the available funding. Companies can apply for a second year SBIR Advance Phase II or Phase IIB Match if they are still eligible at the time of a future solicitation and the milestones from the first award are completed. **A company is limited to a maximum of 2 Phase II/IIB SBIR Advance awards per project. Thus, a company can have one Phase II and one Phase IIB award, or two Phase II awards, or two Phase IIB awards total for each project, but no more than two awards for the same project.**

Disbursement of Funds. Award disbursements will be released upon signing of the contract and in four additional tranches based upon completion of agreed-upon milestones and deliverables as

described in the Program Details section above.

Eligible Use of Funds. Funds must be used to accelerate commercialization of *the matching SBIR project technology* and can be used to support commercialization costs not covered by federal SBIR/STTR awards including but not limited to:

- Customer discovery and validation activities
- Investor readiness, partnering and licensing activities
- Market research
- Data subscriptions
- Intellectual property assessment and patent filing
- Feasibility assessment
- Marketing collateral, white papers, conference booth materials
- Addition of business development staff and/or consultants (tied to specific work and measurable outcomes)
- Prototype/MVP development and testing that is beyond the scope of the SBIR Phase II award and directly provides customer validation and accelerates commercialization
- Regulatory assessment and planning
- Approved travel to meet with customers, partners, licensees, etc.

Applicants must specify how the use of matching funds ***directly and measurably accelerates commercialization*** of their technology and growth of their business. The SBIR Advance program is expected to produce measurable outcomes and results, and not just activities.

Eligibility

Companies must meet the following eligibility criteria for the SBIR Advance Phase II Program:

Wisconsin-based Small Business	• Company is registered to do business in Wisconsin (https://www.wdfi.org/), and • >50% of the company employees are Wisconsin residents, and • At least one executive staff member is in Wisconsin at the time of application and throughout the award period, and • Company has both its SAM registration and its SBIR/STTR grant address listed as a Wisconsin address, and • Company maintains its Wisconsin-based small business status for five (5) years after receiving the award. **Failure to do so will constitute an event of default, and the company may be required to return 100% of the total amount of funds disbursed under the SBIR Advance Agreement.**
SBIR/STTR Phase II Award Status	• Current awardees who are actively working on their Phase II or Phase IIB project. • Awardees who have ended a Phase II or Phase IIB project within the past six months.

	• Awardees that have not completed more than three Phase II or Phase IIB awards in the last five years. • Companies that have already received one SBIR Advance matching award are eligible to apply for a consecutive matching award for the same SBIR/STTR Phase II or Phase IIB grant. In that case, the milestones from the first SBIR Advance award must be completed before applying for the second award. • Companies that are eligible for SBIR Advance Phase I **and** Phase II awards (for instance, FastTrack awardees) should apply for the SBIR Advance Phase II Program **only**.

The following companies are **not eligible** to apply for the SBIR Advance Phase II Program:

- Companies who have a current SBIR Advance award underway.
- Companies not designated as eligible Wisconsin businesses at the time of application.
- Companies that previously completed more than three Phase II/IIB SBIR/STTR awards in the last five years are not eligible for SBIR Advance matching funds. If your company has completed multiple Phase II/IIB SBIR/STTR awards five or more years ago, please contact the SBIR Advance team (p.2) to discuss your eligibility status.

NOTE: Applicants that do not have a strong commercial team will be penalized in the Review scoring. It is suggested that all applicants discuss the strength of their commercial team with the SBIR Advance program manager prior to applying. It is also suggested that applicants consider using part of the proposed matching grant award to secure business development personnel and specify the person(s) to be added to the team and their specific roles and responsibilities.

Application & Submission Information

Intent to Apply

Due Date: January 13, 2027, by noon

Grants Management Portal Link

Requirements: Companies that intend to submit a full SBIR Advance proposal must complete the following steps by the designated due date.

1. Create a new account or log-in to an existing account on the CTC **Grants Management Portal** ("the portal") using the link below.

https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=uwex

2. Complete the online **Intent to Apply Form** that appears in the portal. You will be asked for information about your SBIR/STTR Phase II/IIB award start and end date, previous SBIR awards, revenue, and investor funding. You will also be asked for verification that you are a Wisconsin-based business, as described in the Eligibility section.
3. Upload to the portal, a **PDF copy of the official grant award or contract letter** documenting the federal SBIR award. This is the award that the company is applying to match. (Note: Agency communications indicating an SBIR/STTR award is imminent or likely are not enough. An actual award letter or contract is required)

4. Following submission of the above items, the applicant may be contacted by the SBIR Advance Program Manager to review the applicant's commercial team and eligibility for the Program.

Application: Full Proposal

Due Date: January 22, 2027, by noon

Grants Management Portal Link

Confidentiality and Promotion: The SBIR Advance Program will maintain confidentiality of the full details of your application proposal and supporting documents. However, as the program is financially supported by both the State and UW System, CTC may need to release the name/business name and a short description of the business idea for compliance reporting and promotional purposes.

Application Requirements: To submit a full proposal, companies must complete the following steps by the designated due date.

1. Upload to the portal, a **copy of the SBIR/STTR Phase II or Phase IIB proposal** that is being leveraged for the SBIR Advance matching funds. Acceptable versions of this document are listed below.
    a. At a minimum, the applicant should provide a single PDF document that includes the Project Summary/Abstract, Research Proposal/Project Description, Project Team Description/Bios, Facilities Description, and Commercialization Plan.
    b. Alternatively, the applicant can provide the entire winning proposal PDF package that was submitted to the SBIR/STTR agency. However, **please do not submit the agency produced Grants Application Package,** which is the dynamic, fillable PDF that embeds your SBIR/STTR documents requiring you to "view attachments" to see specific documents.
2. Complete the online **SBIR Advance Application Form** that appears in the portal. See Table 1 below to become familiar with the information you will be asked to provide.
3. Full proposals (all items listed above) must be submitted through the portal by **noon on January 22, 2027. Applications submitted after this time will not be accepted.** For questions on the upload process, please contact Margaret Ramey (margaret.ramey@business.wisconsin.edu) or Rob Baranowski (rob.baranowski@business.wisconsin.edu).

Table 1: Information Needed for SBIR Advance Phase II Proposal Form

Section	Information Required	Tips
Cover Page (not scored)	• Project title • Company contact info • SBIR Advance team member contact info • Brief introduction to the company	**General**: Use as many of the allowed characters as you can. Reviewers prefer to have more information about your business than less.
Business Thesis	• Business thesis: What customer	The SBIR Advance Program is

Section	Information Required	Tips
and Business Model (Limit: 1500 characters including spaces)	segment will/does the company sell to, and what value does the company brings to these customers? • Business model: How does the company envision making money on the SBIR/STTR funded project? Summarize your current thoughts about revenue streams, cost structure, key partners, key business activities, and go-to-market strategy.	about the commercial opportunity, not your technology. Avoid technical jargon and acronyms. Be concise and as specific as possible For example: "Hospitals" or "Large Companies" are not specific customers. Think about who specifically in these entities will benefit from and purchase your product.
Need for Tax-Payer Funds (Limit: 2000 characters including spaces)	• Make a case for why it is appropriate and timely to use SBIR Advance grant funds for the proposed work to accelerate and commercialize the technology. • Why should the funds come in the form of this grant rather than from a company owner, investors, sales or licensing revenue or some other source?	Include any funds obtained from other sources and why those funds are insufficient to perform the required activities. If your team has prior experience raising investment or partner capital, list it and describe your specific need for additional development in this area.
Use of Funds to Accelerate Commercial Milestones (No character limit)	• Use this milestone template to propose your specific commercial milestones that will be achieved as a result of the SBIR Advance grant. • Highlight the importance of each milestone to accelerate commercialization and describe the expected results. • If the funds will be used to hire business development staff, consultants, or mentors to support your commercialization and Program efforts, please specify the milestones they will help you accomplish.	Competitive applications will stand out by including impactful milestones that strategically reduce commercialization risk and maximize confidence among the review committee in the potential for return on investment. Consider the contract milestone and deliverable template when thinking about the milestones for your application. If proposing to use the funds to hire needed people, indicate the accomplishments you need to achieve as the goal. Hiring the people are the means to accomplishing those goals.
Benefits of Funds & Wisconsin Impact (Limit: 2000	• Clearly show how tax-payer funding will accelerate the commercialization of the technology and benefit the	Think beyond increased employment. Applications that make a case for impact on a significant Wisconsin economic

Section	Information Required	Tips
characters including spaces)	company's development. • Describe the expected Wisconsin impact and improvement in an overall Wisconsin economic sector resulting from your company's success from the matching award.	sector or engage with commercial partners in Wisconsin or demonstrate strong market opportunity fare better than applications that only indicate increased company employment in the state.
Commercialization Team (Limit: 2000 characters including spaces)	• Describe team member roles and capabilities to participate in and accomplish the commercialization goals of the company. • Discuss "project environment" factors that are essential for commercial success, such as facilities, advisers, strategic partners, IP status, etc.	This is a key factor considered by the reviewers. Applicants with a weak commercial team will be penalized in the scoring and selection process. Consider using SBIR Advance funds to fill in gaps on your team.
Additional Information (optional; Limit: 1000 characters including spaces)	• Share anything else related to your project that you think reviewers should know.	Do you have an X-factor or comment that will help set you apart?

Review Process, Criteria & Scoring

Review Process:

- Applications will be evaluated by a Review Committee consisting of CTC and WEDC staff, and external reviewers who are technology entrepreneurs and investors.
- Applications will be reviewed and scored for compliance to the SBIR Advance requirements as indicated in Table 1 above.
- Scored applications will be discussed during a formal review meeting during which the merits of the competing applications will be contrasted, ranked, and selected based on the selection criteria.

Selection and Scoring Criteria:

- **Business Thesis and Business Model:** Applicant clearly identifies potential customer segments and value proposition and expresses reasonable assumptions about potential revenue streams. Applicant touches upon other advantages of its business model, which could include key partners, go-to-market strategy or other relevant factors.
- **Justification for Need for Funds and Course Programming**: Applicant clearly shows why SBIR Advance grant funds are needed to accelerate the commercialization of its technology, i.e. why company, investor funding or sales cannot be used and why it is appropriate to use State tax-payer funds to pay for these expenses. (Phase I Applicants also clearly articulate why the

company needs the SBIR Advance Lean Startup course programming and the benefits it envisions gaining from the program work.)

- **Use of Funds to Accelerate Commercial Milestones**: Applicant clearly describes the work to be performed, the expected outcome, how this proposed work accelerates commercialization, and the measurable milestones that will be achieved. How will the funds be used to accomplish (specific milestones) and what is the significance for measurably accelerating commercial milestones? (Phase I Applicants: Does the proposed use of funds confirm the team's commitment to the Lean Startup program, and specifically to conducting the required customer discovery interviews to validate business hypotheses?)
- **Benefits of Match Funding and Wisconsin Impact**: Applicant provides a credible analysis of the benefits of the match funding and the impact to the state and economy. What is the significance for Wisconsin and the expected quantified Wisconsin impact including the quantifiable benefits for the company development, growth, and/or investment and Wisconsin impact for job creation, economic and industry cluster advancement, and other impacts? Reviewers will make a judgment on the expected overall impact of funding this project including the potential impact and probability of commercial success.
- **Team and Environment**: Applicant provides a description of the commercial team that will bring the product to market, their qualifications and experience to do so, and their roles and responsibilities for the company and specifically relative to the proposed SBIR Advance program. Environment represents the factors essential for commercial success, such as facilities, advisers, strategic partners, IP status, etc. As such, this scoring criterion will reflect the Review Committee's judgment on "probability of success" based on the company's application.

Scoring System:

Each of the selection criteria will be scored from 1-10 points using the rationale shown in the table below. All applications will then be ranked by total scores.

Table 2: Scoring system

Rating Score	Rationale (applied to each criterion)
1	The proposal is not responsive.
2-3	Poor: A significant amount of additional information is needed and/or a weak case was made for this criterion.
4-6	Fair: Meets minimum proposal requirements with a moderately compelling case for this criterion.
7-8	Good: Strongly responsive and compelling case for this criterion.
9-10	Excellent: The most responsive and well-supported for this criterion

Other Requirements

Grant Agreement

Example SBIR Advance Grant Agreement. A blank template of an SBIR Advance agreement from a prior round can be found at the link below. Awardees will be asked to review and sign the grant agreement.

Sample SBIR Advance Phase II Grant Agreement Template

Investment Reporting

Business performance data is collected at the beginning of your SBIR Advance award and before the final disbursement. The *Investment Report* is then updated annually for four (4) additional years thereafter. The SBIR Advance Program will work with your team to ensure reporting compliance. **Any changes to your business contact information must be reported to the program team at ctc@lists.wisconsin.edu immediately.**

What does investment reporting look like? Check out the link below to see the template.

Investment Reporting

SBIR Advance Proposal Terms and Conditions

Only applicant(s) who meet and agree to the following criteria will be considered eligible to submit an SBIR Advance proposal:

- Applicants are SBIR/STTR awardees and eligible for the Matching grant as per the criteria set forth in this SBIR ADVANCE GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES document.
- Applicant(s) will define all key contributors in this application. Competitive applications will have a diverse team to help with key commercialization milestones.
- The project must be focused on commercial development of an SBIR/STTR funded technology.
- Project milestones and deliverables must be achievable within 10 months of the start of SBIR Advance Phase II funding. Additional time may be granted on a case-by-case basis upon review by the SBIR Advance Program Manager.

- All awardees must report their progress on an annual basis for a period of 5 years after award according to SBIR Advance guidelines.
- The applicant certifies that to the best of his/her knowledge and belief, the information being submitted on this SBIR Advance application is true and correct.
- The applicant(s) certifies that (s)he has disclosed and will continue to disclose any occurrence or event that could have an adverse material impact on the project. Adverse material impact includes but is not limited to SBIR award termination, lawsuits, criminal or civil actions, bankruptcy proceedings, cessation or pausing of operations, regulatory intervention, inadequate capital to complete the project or relocation of the company/employees outside of Wisconsin to an extent that is no longer a qualified Wisconsin company.