

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**April 3, 2003**

**Innovation Partnership will Provide Greater Access to Federal Grant Dollars for Researchers and Early Stage Technology Companies**

HARRISBURG, PA, April 3 - Pennsylvania Community and Economic Development (DCED) Secretary Dennis Yablonsky today announced the formation of the Innovation Partnership, a consortia of leading economic development agencies from across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This statewide initiative was created to help researchers and early-stage technology companies gain a greater share of federal grant dollars.



"The Innovation Partnership is an exciting opportunity for the Commonwealth and the Innovation Partnership member organizations including: Ben Franklin Technology Partners; Catalyst Connection; Innovation Philadelphia; the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers and the statewide Pennsylvania Life Science Greenhouses to promote federal funding opportunities," said Secretary Yablonsky. "This unique Pennsylvania initiative will offer technical and financial support, including outreach to companies, proposal preparation and financial assistance to Pennsylvania companies seeking federal funding programs."

The Innovation Partnership will begin fulfilling its mission immediately. In addition to a training seminar hosted today in Harrisburg and in Erie on April 4, Innovation Partnership was awarded a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration to support the Federal and State Technology Partnership (FAST) Program. The Partnership will use the funds to assist in the development and commercialization of new technology through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant programs.

The Partnership implemented an online application system for entrepreneurs to submit their proposal ideas. A panel of independent professional reviewers will give each idea submitted a comprehensive written review. Applicants that demonstrate a strong fit between their project and a specific federal funding research topic -- as well as a good potential to effectively commercialize their research -- may be eligible for financial assistance to offset the cost of proposal preparation. Grants are available directly from the Innovation Partnership for up to one-half the cost incurred in preparing the proposal to a maximum of \$4,000.

The Innovation Partnership will provide a free monthly electronic newsletter providing up-to-date information on federal research grant programs and tips on proposal preparation for federal agencies.

"Pennsylvania needs to increase the number and the quality of statewide-generated federal grant proposals," said Richard A. Bendis, president and chief executive officer of Innovation Philadelphia. "The Innovation Partnership complements the recently launched Innovation Philadelphia Research Dollars program that focuses on SBIR, STTR and the Advance Technology Program. The Innovation Partnership program will put Pennsylvania companies within reach of the federal grant dollars that could help researchers and early-stage technology companies develop and commercialize new technologies."

"This initiative enables us to combine state and regional strengths to produce a positive outcome for Pennsylvania entrepreneurs and early-stage companies," said Terry Singer, director of statewide affairs for Ben Franklin Technology Partners. "The program builds upon and extends the existing efforts of the Ben Franklin Technology Partners, including the SBIR Alliance launched by the southeast Ben Franklin Technology Partners a year ago, and will enable us to reach and serve many more Pennsylvania companies." "Catalyst Connection recently introduced SBIR consulting services, and the reception from the Southwestern Pennsylvania market has been a good one," said Steven G. Zylstra, president of the Pittsburgh based Catalyst Connection. "We expect the FAST Program to ignite further interest and participation among our clients who are seeking additional product development funding."

"The more you can disseminate the information, the greater the chances are for businesses that don't understand or aren't aware of [federal government grant programs] to find alternative sources of financing," said Greg Higgins, state director of the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers. "The SBIR and STTR programs are powerful mechanisms for funding the development of technologically-driven startup companies," said Mel Billingsley, Ph.D., president and CEO, of the Life Sciences Greenhouse of Central Pennsylvania. "Since many entrepreneurs are not fully familiar with the nuances of the application and review process for these federal grants, programs such as the one sponsored by the Innovation Partnership should be very useful for enhancing the chances of success. We will make all of our startups aware of the value added by these important SBIR coaching programs."

For more information on the Innovation Partnership, please log on to the new Innovation Partnership web site: <http://www.innovationpartnership.net>.

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