



RFP Release Date: October 18, 2013

**2014 - 2015 REQUEST FOR VERMONT EPSCOR  
SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION RESEARCH (SBIR)  
PHASE (0) PROPOSALS**

**DUE DATE BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION – May 1, 2014 by 4:00 p.m.  
WEB APPLICATION AVAILABLE – December 5, 2013**

Vermont EPSCoR (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research) has supported research at Vermont's colleges and universities with funds from the National Science Foundation and local sources since 1986. The impact of the EPSCoR program also includes the private sector – particularly small, technology-based businesses.

Vermont EPSCoR will once again provide the opportunity for Vermont small businesses to compete for grants to foster research and development projects which will lead to applications to federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programs.

**Program Overview:**

- The main goal of the Vermont EPSCoR Phase (0) solicitation is to identify proposals that show promise for success in federal SBIR competitions and that would benefit from financial support and reviewer comments. As such, each proposal should identify at least one federal SBIR program to which the work is targeted.
- Business must be registered in Vermont.
- One award will also be made in areas of interest to NASA using NASA EPSCoR funds. To show that an area is of interest to NASA, the PI should identify a new or continuing NASA research priority or technology need that is addressed by their proposed project. This can be done by reference to a URL on a NASA website or by including an email of support from a NASA contact. The project has to include a full-time faculty researcher at a Vermont college or university as a collaborator.  
**Only NASA projects carry this requirement.**
- The maximum amount of each grant is \$15,000.
- Multiple-year Vermont EPSCoR Innovation Fund (IF) or Phase (0) awardees must take a 1 year break from submission after their third consecutive successful award.
- Awards contingent upon NSF funding for Vermont EPSCoR.
- Funding may not be used to support Masters Students' salaries.

**Funding Obligations:**

- SBIR Phase (0) recipients are expected to submit an SBIR Phase (I) proposal

within 18 months of completion of the Phase (0) work. The Phase I or II proposal(s) do not have to be awarded, but they do need to be ranked (that is, not rejected for administrative reasons). A primary purpose of the Phase (0) funding is to assist with the preparation of SBIR Phase (1) and (2) proposals. We will consider very special circumstances for not fulfilling the application requirement on time, but these will be considered ad hoc and before the review process begins.

- Registration of your DUNS number into the System for Award Management (SAM) at [sam.gov](http://sam.gov) prior to submitting your application. If you do not have a DUNS number, please register for one at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. Dun & Bradstreet can create a DUNS number within one business day.
- A paper copy of your financial report will be due to the EPSCoR office by the end of funding period.
- Electronic annual reporting of progress, assessment surveys, demographic information, project updates, and follow-on funding to the EPSCoR office as requested through 8/31/2017.
- Participation in the Vermont EPSCoR Annual Conference when appropriate.
- Notification of federal SBIR Phase I & II funding submissions and outcomes to Vermont EPSCoR Office.
- Identification of in-kind funding is not required, but is encouraged. Examples of in-kind matching include percent effort, materials, supplies, or space donated by others toward your Phase (0) efforts. For more information, please contact [epscor@uvm.edu](mailto:epscor@uvm.edu).
- If awarded, UVM affiliates must comply with University Policies and Procedures <http://www.uvm.edu/policies/?Page=alphalist.php> and have a contractual agreement with UVM if UVM space is utilized for this research.

### **Period of Support:**

The period of support for this round of competition is September 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015.

### **Proposal Content:**

Vermont EPSCoR's Phase (0) program is intended to support **preliminary proof-of-concept feasibility studies in preparation for federal SBIR applications, not complete projects**. Please remember that there is a requirement to submit an SBIR application within 18 months of completion of your Phase (0) award, which means that, as you apply for the Phase (0) award, your research should generate feasibility data and not exploratory data. A number of previous Phase (0) proposals have reviewed poorly in the past due to insufficient budget explanations, a lack of clarity in describing the proposal, and failure to clearly identify a federal agency SBIR program appropriate for the project.

Thus, please pay particular attention to these components as they are described below. Non-research proposals, e.g. marketing, prototype construction, information collection from the Web, etc. are inappropriate. Proposals which focus on software development should be sure to clearly identify the research components of the project.

Proposals should include the following components:

- Include an expenditure budget and a detailed budget justification/explanation, including rationale for salary rates. Indirect costs are not allowed on Phase (0) awards. (2 page maximum)
- Prior Work (1 page maximum)
  - Briefly describe your past work. Indicate if you have previously submitted a Phase (0) proposal to Vermont EPSCoR and the year(s) submitted. If previous Phase (0) support has been obtained, evidence of a Phase I submission must be included. The outcome from this submission should also be indicated.
  - If you have previous Phase (0) grants for which you did not submit a Phase I, be sure to justify this decision.
  - If you have received prior Phase (0) funding, include the research results from relevant prior award(s) and the relevance of those results to the proposed activities.
- Identify at least one specific federal SBIR program topic to which you intend to submit a follow-up proposal. Use the most recent *Release of Topics* from each agency. Example: Department of Energy, Office of Basic Energy Sciences, Instrumentation for Electron Microscopy and Scanning Probe Microscopy, Electron Microscopy and Spectroscopy (Topic 5a as listed in FY 2014 Topic Release 1, Sept 13, 2013).
- Body of the Proposal
  - Describe the problem the proposal is addressing and the research plan in sufficient detail to allow for a thorough evaluation by the reviewers. Include evidence of your expertise in the topic addressed, what your intended outcome will be, how this is relevant to the selected SBIR topic, and how this Phase (0) grant would improve the competitiveness of the proposal for federal SBIR funding. (4 page maximum)
  - Describe data gathering methods, potential problems, equipment, and other resources needed. Resources currently available for the project should be described. (2 page maximum)
  - References / Works Cited
- Include current resumes for key personnel.
- If your project involves research on human subjects (e.g., work with human tissue, interviews or medical trials with human subjects, and collection or analysis of data and medical records, etc.), live vertebrate animals, or recombinant DNA, then your work must meet federal requirements for review and approval of these

regulated activities. Please check details about protocol submission requirements and additional information at <http://www.uvm.edu/spa/>. If you have any additional questions about regulations regarding work involving human subjects, contact the Sponsored Project Administration office at (802) 656-3360.

- List of Suggested Reviewers (Optional). Provide the first and last name of suggested reviewers who you believe are especially well qualified to review this proposal. You may also designate persons you would prefer not review this proposal and indicate why.
- If your project utilizes University of Vermont facilities or other resources, include documentation from the College Dean or Department Chair confirming that they are able to bill expenses directly to your company. UVM departments and other entities cannot directly bill Vermont EPSCoR. A faculty researcher, who has a laboratory at UVM, may not use that for Phase (0) work.
- A letter of support is required from all potential collaborators, and must be included in the application package. This includes collaborators that are providing use of facilities as well as technical expertise.

#### **Evaluation Criteria:**

A panel of local scientists and engineers representing Vermont's business, academic, and government sectors will be selected to evaluate the proposals based on the topic areas of the proposals submitted. The review will focus on **scientific and technical merit as well as potential for federal SBIR support** and will consider the following criteria:

- Completeness and accuracy relative to the proposal submission guidelines
- Clarity
- Significance
- Innovation
- Appropriateness of the methodology
- Potential for success in federal SBIR competitions
- Qualifications and experience of the proposal personnel
- Suitability of facilities
- Relevance of the budget and identification of matching funds

#### **Submission Process:**

Web-based submissions are the only acceptable form of submission. Please go to [www.uvm.edu/EPSCoR/redir/sbir](http://www.uvm.edu/EPSCoR/redir/sbir) and click on the SBIR link to access the proposal form, budget form, and cover page information. **Forms will be made available on the web on December 5, 2013.** You are encouraged to submit early to avoid any potential submission complications.

1. **Web submissions are due May 1, 2014 by 4:00 p.m.**
2. **Cover Page\* and Letters of Intent from potential collaborators are due by mail**

**only (no FAX), by May 1, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.** Send to:

Vermont EPSCoR  
University of Vermont  
Cook Physical Science Building, Room 529  
82 University Place  
Burlington, VT 05405.

\* Note that signing the cover page will indicate your willingness to publicly share the abstract.

**If you do not wish your abstract made public, do not sign the cover page. Any proprietary information will be treated with strict confidence. All results of any supported research will remain the property of the grant recipient unless there is an academic collaborator. In the case where an academic collaborator is not acting as an independent consultant paid through the company, or if the faculty member will use University/College facilities, there will need to be a Memorandum of Understanding negotiated with the appropriate institutional grants office (Office of Sponsored Program for UVM faculty). This must be done before any work on the project commences and funding is released.**

With respect to any invention developed with EPSCoR support, the grant recipient retains title (noting the exception described above). However, certain government use provisions and disclosures will apply due to the federal funding involved. Specifically, recipients will be required to disclose inventions to the University so that the University may make a disclosure to the federal sponsor. While the inventor retains full ownership of his/her intellectual property, the federal government retains the right to a non-exclusive license to practice inventions which result from federal funding. This requirement is rarely invoked and has never occurred in any disclosures from the University of Vermont.

**Neither the State of Vermont, Vermont EPSCoR, nor the University of Vermont will make any claim to any product or process developed with this funding with the possible exception of intellectual property developed by an academic collaborator.**

Based on the review of the proposals, more detailed documentation may be sought for projects which show promise.

Information, including proposal writing tips, can be found on the Vermont EPSCoR website - [www.uvm.edu/EPSCoR/redirect/sbir](http://www.uvm.edu/EPSCoR/redirect/sbir) - where Phase (0) is described. For information on federal SBIR programs, visit <http://www.zyn.com> and <http://www.thinkvermont.com>.

For more information about Vermont EPSCoR or the SBIR program, contact Lillian Gamache, Vermont EPSCoR Project Coordinator at [epscor@uvm.edu](mailto:epscor@uvm.edu).