



## POSITION STATEMENT

# Broadening Access to the Small Business Innovative Research Program

*Adopted by the IEEE-USA  
Board of Directors (3 Jan. 2020)*

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs are highly successful public-private partnerships designed to advance technology development and commercialize innovative ideas into products that benefit society and generate U.S. economic growth.

While IEEE-USA strongly supports extending and reauthorizing these proven programs, the administrative complexity of applying to SBIR/STTR programs tends to favor those with strong networks of prior participants. Further, the current application process may limit access for those in underrepresented states and groups. Unfortunately, otherwise exceptional companies may fail to apply due to unfamiliarity with the requirements or from fear of rejection due to administrative, rather than technical or business, reasons.

While maintaining the current Phase I, Phase II and Phase III structure, IEEE-USA recommends introducing an optional and preliminary “Expanded Access Training,” to help new applicants access these important programs.

The proposed “Expanded Access Training” program should include:

- 1) Assistance for eligible entities in preparing their companies for both the business and administrative requirements of applying to these programs
- 2) A series of educational courses designed to show small businesses how all the significant sections of the application process should be completed - in a simple and straightforward manner, with relevant examples for each of the funding agencies
- 3) A mentoring component, in which participating new entities may request the option to be partnered with a mentor, or mentor company, that has previously completed one or more SBIR/STTR awards

- 4) An “Expanded Access Training” Completion Value-Add. New participants who successfully complete the “Expanded Access Training” program will have more confidence that their good-faith submission would not be rejected due to an administrative or similar error. To help accomplish this, the responsible agency would provide an administrative review of such applications -- prior to the due date -- giving timely feedback and sufficient opportunity to these new participants to correct any administrative issues. This review should also extend to the “Expanded Access Training” mentor, or mentor company to encourage participation and teaming in the SBIR/STTR programs.

It is IEEE-USA’s view that implementing this “Expanded Access Training” program across federal agencies would broaden participation in the SBIR/STTR programs to currently underrepresented groups and regions; ensure that knowledge of optimum practices are disseminated from existing experienced groups; and encourage the best companies continue to promote U.S. technological and business growth.

*This statement was developed by the IEEE-USA Entrepreneurship Policy and Innovation Committee and represents the considered judgment of a group of U.S. IEEE members with expertise in the subject field. IEEE-USA advances the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of the nearly 180,000 engineering, computing and allied professionals who are U.S. members of the IEEE. The positions taken by IEEE-USA do not necessarily reflect the views of IEEE, or its other organizational units.*