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Transcript from "Improving Your SBIR Proposal – Demo"

Hosted by Nicole Toomey Davis, MBA and CEO.

Watch the Demo at <http://venturewrench.com/products/sbirreview/>

>> Nicole Toomey Davis: First of all, reaching out to the program director or in DoD parlance, the technical point of contact. And why this is so important. So, you're an entrepreneur, you have vision and you have passion. Hopefully you have some cash or your company has some cash, some runway and some experience.

You are trying to rally the resources that you need to make your vision a reality. That's your core job as an entrepreneur; that is what you do.

Reaching out to the PD in advance of submitting a proposal helps you to begin to establish a relationship., so that they can have confidence in you that you could actually be a successful awardee.

Take this away with you please: Do not surprise your program director.

The thing to do, here is the NSF, this is right off their website, \$1.5 million in seed funding, no equity. Right? This groundbreaking, high impact, high risk or what I like to say high risk, high reward technology.

Give them a clue, that you're out there doing this kind of great work. Warm them up, so that they want to give you \$1.5 million.

Because, you want them to want you to get that kind of money.

I love this quote, and I'm sure you have all seen it, but "Writing is the Universe's way of showing you how sloppy your thinking is.

No matter how great you think your proposal is, until you start to write it down, it is just sloppy and you've got to tighten it up.

The pre-proposal, executive summary/submission, there are different names for it, really helps to crisp all of that up.

For you, and for that program director, so it is win-win.

It is a chance to get the program director to start to be interested in and love what you do and be ready for you.

It's free early feedback, and it starts to help you crisp up your thinking.

And more than two weeks in advance, so NSF is clear that the last two weeks before proposals are due, they are almost impossible to get in touch with.

Now, sometimes you get really great feedback, and sometime you get a form letter. NSF Signals a lot in their communications, and sometimes the fact that you got a form letter means nothing, just that they are busy, and sometimes a form

letter means they are not interested.

So there is one program director, for example, who has said publicly in webinars, that he believes that the only good stuff in his area is coming out of universities. Now, the truth is that there is a lot of great stuff coming out of universities, and in his area there is a lot of great stuff coming out of industry as well.

So I really disagreed with his assessment in his piece of the industry, but he feels really strongly about it.

So a colleague of mine, who I have known for a long time and who is very talented, had asked for my help on an executive summary to send to this particular program director.

I do not apply to this particular program director, but she wanted to and asked for my help. We worked through the summer and crisped it up and different things and she got a form letter back. And I am worried that it is a bad sign, because she is not from a university, and that he just didn't bother to take the time.

And he is just going to convince his reviewers or that he assembles panels that resemble his viewpoint which is all academics and that, you know she won't really have a chance.

So I suggested some alternative positioning for her that maybe would appeal to a different program director.

So, sometimes getting some insight from someone who is experienced with the program director who you are talking to can be really helpful.

See those state resources or see other winners in your state, you can go to research.gov and you can look up winners in your state and talk to them, network with them and just get their feedback on program directors they have worked with. Different things like that, I highly recommend all of that.

So please, you still have a few days, send something in, even if it's not perfect. Send something in and just start to make a connection.

And if they come back with feedback, I saw one from our local center, and it said something like "You clearly don't really understand the purpose of the SBIR program."

You know, that's an important clue that you are off track, so get back on track!

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