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Transcript from "SBIR Proposal Progress"

Hosted by Nicole Toomey Davis, MBA and CEO.

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>> Nicole Toomey Davis: Hey everyone, it's great to be with you.

I wanted to record a quick video based on conversations I had with members of our VentureWrench community.

We were talking about SBIR and we were talking about the NSF deadlines that came in December, and really NSF should have told everybody who was receiving an award by now, it's been 6 months.

There are SBIR proposing teams who still say "pending" if you go to Fastlane, and I talk about this in our SBIR course.

If you go to Fastlane and lookup proposal status, you can actually see who your proposal has been assigned to, and you can see it's status, and there are proposals that are still pending.

Now, when we got our very first award a number of years ago, we actually did not get notification of our award until after the next proposal deadline.

Now, what had happened, that I didn't know the significance of at the time, was that we had started to get questions from the program director.

He was asking us clarifying questions and modifications to the proposal.

It turns out, what I now know, is that those are the questions that the reviewers asked, that had to be answered before we could get an award.

So we were in the zone, we were right at the end of the process, but I didn't know that.

And I was so scared that we were going to miss this deadline and so I would email him and go "should we apply again" and he would say "No, don't submit again."

I didn't really get it.

But very shortly thereafter, we got our first award.

So typically for Phase I, this is for NSF, but the process is not too dissimilar for other agencies, they all have their own schedules.

For NSF, reviews for Phase Is are done in February and March.

So by early April, reviews are done.

Panels have given their recommendations, and your program directors are talking to other program directors, they're talking to other agencies.

They are making sure there are no issues that they don't know about.

Then they are preparing the recommendation process, and they are emailing you.

If you are in that top one or two, maybe three, out of 10 for each panel, if you are in that top cohort, then you will be getting questions.

There is actually a team that I know of right now, submitted in December to NSF, it's May now, they haven't heard anything, but it still says "pending."

What that most likely means, is that they were either at number two or number three, and the Program Director is working with those that got a little higher score. Maybe they never had an NSF award or something like that or maybe they just had a little better proposal.

And if they don't come through, then this team might be next in line.

So they are being held as a backup if you will.

Now when I was talking to a member of our community, the VentureWrench Community, he said "Wow, that is a lot of insight from just what the date is and what it says on Fastlane."

But that is because I've been a reviewer, and I've been a recipient, an awardee so I know how all of those things fit together.

So if you are an NSF proposing team from December, be sure and check Fastlane, and be sure and be checking emails, searching for NSF.gov all through April and May.

Very important, because you really do have only three days.

If you don't know what I mean, take the SBIR Review course and you'll hear my story of the Yangtze River and really seriously three days, it almost cost us three quarters of a million dollars. So that's hopefully helpful to you, be watching for any questions, if you're getting questions, it's a good sign.

Again, this is NSF specific, but each agency has their kind of rhythm, so talk to other awardees in your region or your state, and find out what happened to them and be watching for those same behaviors.

So I hope this helps you and good luck, and if you are preparing for upcoming deadlines, NIH, DoD, and NSF.

NSF is in June this year, mid June, definitely get all the help you can get, read some of our SBIR posts, look at our Top 40 Ways to Improve your SBIR Proposal, of course we have our review course, which we always invite you to look at, because you need every ounce of help that you can get.

Good luck!

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