

Action Plan for Implementing E.O. 13329 “Encouraging Innovation in Manufacturing” in the USDA SBIR program

1. Outreach

Later this summer a link will be established on the USDA SBIR website to the document “Manufacturing in America” that was issued by the Department of Commerce:

http://www.commerce.gov/DOC_MFG_Report_Complete.pdf. This document provides a comprehensive strategy to address the challenge to U.S. manufacturers.

The USDA SBIR program will work closely with the other Federal SBIR programs and SBA to ensure that upcoming National SBIR conferences highlight the importance of manufacturing to the U.S. economy. In addition, opportunities will be emphasized to submit appropriate R&D proposals to the different SBIR programs that deal with manufacturing issues of significance to the mission of the particular Federal agency. A similar effort will be made to highlight this focus on manufacturing R&D in talks that are presented at the various State SBIR meetings.

2. Funding Opportunities

The USDA SBIR program issues a request for proposals or program solicitation each fiscal year that lists 11 broad topic areas that encompass the full range of research and development priorities for USDA. From the beginning of the USDA SBIR program, topic areas have been discipline-specific, not technology-specific. The 11 topic areas contained in the program solicitation are Forests and Related Resources; Plant Production and Protection; Animal Production and Protection; Air, Water and Soils; Food Science and Nutrition; Rural and Community Development; Aquaculture; Industrial Applications; Marketing and Trade; Wildlife; and Animal Waste Management. Technology-specific topics such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, or manufacturing technology are not listed separately but may be submitted to one of the eleven topic areas. Numerous projects in all of these technology areas have been supported and will continue to be supported.

For the past two years the USDA SBIR program solicitation has included the statement “Proposals are encouraged that focus on problems dealing with bioterrorism and homeland security, especially as these issues relate to rural communities.” There has been a significant increase in proposals dealing with both issues in direct response to including this statement in the program solicitation. In the FY 2005 Program Solicitation that was released on June 7, 2004, this statement was expanded to include agriculturally-related manufacturing technology as an area in which proposals are encouraged. It is the expectation of the USDA SBIR program that the inclusion of this statement will result in a significant increase in proposals that deal with manufacturing issues that are relevant to the USDA mission.

3. Award Selection

The review panels will be instructed to use the existence of manufacturing-related proposals as a tie breaker during the evaluation process. When two proposals are considered approximately equal in merit and one proposal has a focus on manufacturing, that proposal will be given priority in both the Phase I and Phase II selection process.

4. Reporting

Later this summer a search will be conducted of the USDA Current Research Information System (CRIS) database of all SBIR awards from FY 2001, 2002 and 2003 to establish a baseline of manufacturing-related research projects funded by the USDA SBIR program. The 35 words and phrases used by OSTP in their survey will be used to search the CRIS database. The search will encompass both Phase I and Phase II awards for these three years in order to give a more accurate average baseline number to be used for reference purposes in the future.

On March 15, 2005, the FY 2004 annual report will be delivered to SBA and it will contain information on the number of manufacturing-related awards that were made in FY 2004 and any other information requested by SBA.

5. Future Years

Results from FY 2005 will be monitored carefully and adjustments will be considered a year from now for FY 2006 and out years if they are warranted.