

## Decades of underrepresentation in federal grant awardees counteracted by partnership between EGC and the NIH

Publication in *Nature Biotechnology* documents the first programmatic intervention that has made a meaningful impact toward achieving diversity goals in the Small Business Innovation Research program since 1982

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In a [paper published today in \*Nature Biotechnology\*](#), Eva Garland Consulting (EGC) reports the first programmatic intervention documented to enhance diversity in the Small Business Innovation Research program and the associated Small Business Technology Transfer program (collectively “SBIR program”). The SBIR program is a \$3 billion/year federal initiative established in 1983 with the goals of stimulating technological innovation as well as enhancing diversity within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. However, representation of women-owned small businesses (WOSBs) and socially and economically disadvantaged small businesses (SDBs) in the SBIR program has lagged well below the broader representation of the US population for the past four decades, with WOSBs and SDBs consistently receiving less than one-fifth of total SBIR funding.

EGC was contracted by The National Cancer Institute (NCI) within The National Institutes of Health (NIH) to lead an Applicant Assistance Program (AAP) from 2019 to 2024 with the goal of counteracting the lack of representation in the SBIR program. A diverse population of participants was selected for the program based on a combination of their technological readiness for the SBIR program and their lack of access to other resources. The AAP’s integrative approach combined guidance from expert EGC coaches facilitated discussions with NIH Program Officers, and programmatic content based on EGC’s book “Winning SBIR/STTR Grants: A Ten-Week Plan for Preparing Your NIH Phase I Application (4th ed)”.

The *Nature Biotechnology* publication analyzed 738 AAP participating companies across 11 NIH Institutes over a 5-year period. The AAP achieved remarkable success in increasing awardee diversity, more than doubling the percentage of underrepresented awardees compared to the overall awardee population. Of the AAP companies that received SBIR awards, 37% were WOSBs and 34% were SDBs. In contrast, SBIR awardees who did not participate in the AAP included only 15% WOSBs and 16% SDBs.

Katharine Korunes, Ph.D., first author of the *Nature Biotechnology* paper, stated: “We are thrilled to work with the NIH to meaningfully increase the number of underrepresented entrepreneurs who receive support through the SBIR program. This program not only provides participants with initial funding to advance their innovations but also initiates a longer-term relationship with the NIH’s ecosystem that greatly increases the odds of successfully commercializing their technologies.”

“The AAP’s success marks a pivotal step toward greater diversity and inclusion within the SBIR program, setting a precedent for future policy interventions,” commented Eva Garland, Ph.D., CEO. “By

significantly increasing the representation of WOSBs and SDBs, the AAP demonstrates the effectiveness of a carefully designed program specifically tailored to provide expertise and support across the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem. EGC is very proud of our track record in empowering underrepresented groups who drive technological innovation and for enhancing equity in research funding across all federal agencies, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and dynamic landscape.”

The Nature Biotechnology paper concludes that the AAP’s meaningful impacts underscore how the program structure may serve as a model for designing effective policy interventions that promote equity in scientific funding.

### **About Eva Garland Consulting**

Founded in 2013, Eva Garland Consulting (EGC) supports scientists and entrepreneurs in advancing the development of their innovative technologies. The firm specializes in developing and implementing strategic non-dilutive funding plans, grants management, and accounting. EGC has been recognized by Inc. 5000 as one of the fastest-growing privately held companies in the United States for the past two years. For more information, visit [www.evagarland.com](http://www.evagarland.com).

**Source:** Nature Biotechnology Comment, "NIH Applicant Assistance Program counteracts decades of underrepresentation in SBIR grant awardees," Katharine L. Korunes, Ethan C. Cissell, Tiger Xie, Eva R. Garland. DOI:10.1038/s41587-024-02308-x.

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