



auger communications, inc.

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Social Entrepreneur Secures SBIR Award with NC Support

Auger Communications, Inc. uses SBDTC services and NC Matching Funds program to tap into federal funding for business development and expansion.

The federal Small Business Innovations Research (SBIR/STTR) Grant program, providing up to \$27.4 billion in funding to date, allows small business owners to compete for financial support of new ideas and different approaches to address a range of technical problems. In North Carolina, this highly competitive program is probably most well-known among researchers in bio-technology. However, thanks to the support the NC Small Business Technology Development Center (SBTDC) and the NC Matching Funds program, Susan Auger, a Durham-based social worker and business consultant, won a Phase I SBIR grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for research to improve access to quality care and education in prenatal care for Latinas. The UNC Center for Maternal & Infant Health was her research institution partner.

Auger Communications, Inc. develops culturally appropriate health education programs and bilingual educational materials for Latinos. The patient-centered prenatal education program and publications have been demonstrated to foster improved health literacy and access to quality care. To make the materials more accessible and to promote the Teach-With-Stories Method™, Auger Communications will be launching a national free publication network for Latino families, starting with a focus on gestational diabetes. Revenue will be generated through corporate sponsorships and advertising. SBIR funds supported the research and development of the network prototype. This network stands poised to provide needed resources to health professionals and lay educators who serve the growing number of low income and uninsured families. It's now estimated that the cost of low health literacy to the United States economy is upwards of \$239 billion annually. Improving health literacy, particularly among the uninsured, has been recognized as an essential component to improving health and patient safety and reducing costs.

The SBIR research and NC SBDTC are supporting the company's transition and expansion from a consultancy to an entrepreneurial business to translate this timely, cutting edge research into practice and create a sustainable business model. "This was my first experience applying for a federal grant. John Ujvari and Scott Rockafellow, SBIR specialists at SBDTC, were instrumental in linking with me the resources needed to produce a winning Phase I proposal." Participating in several of the SBDTC's workshops and conferences

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provided an efficient way to network and get an overview of the requirements and strategies for effective grant writing. Leading SBIR experts in budgeting, accounting, and legal matters, who provide pro bono one-on-one counseling through NC SBTDC, provided information and guidance specific to her business proposal.

North Carolina is one of the few states in this country to provide a financial incentive for small businesses to apply for these types of competitive grants. “My company’s revenue has come primarily from consulting services. The NC Matching Funds award program was the deciding factor in assuming the financial burden and risk of devoting unpaid time to the lengthy grant writing process. It also provided needed capital for business expenses not covered by the grant and support to pursue the larger SBIR Phase II grant.”

Auger emphasized, “The value of the SBIR and NC Matching Funds programs to early stage entrepreneurs, particularly those of us interested in building businesses to address social problems, cannot be overstated. Our access to business capital is limited. For example, at Auger Communications, we develop solutions to address needs in our systems of care and in underserved communities and we are committed to building long-term collaborative, private/public partnerships. While our business can be profitable, sustainable, and create value for individuals and society-at-large, it does not meet the profit requirements or short-term investment horizons required by venture capitalists.”

The SBTDC’s Summer MBA Intern program also proved to be a valuable resource in the effort to scale up the business. Amila Kasamovic, a MBA Student from the Jenkins Graduate School of Management at North Carolina State University, worked with the research team at Auger Communications to develop a commercialization plan. Ms. Kasamovic played a pivotal role. She analyzed distribution opportunities, benchmarked other companies to determine the economic structure of the free publication sector, and developed pro forma financial statements. Her contributions were immediately actionable and will be used in the Phase II application.

The real value of the SBDTC and the NC Matching Funds program is that they bring together the necessary business expertise and seed capital to support people who have a working knowledge and creative perspective on technical and social problems. This gives them the opportunity to build businesses that generate tangible financial results and innovative solutions. Together, these unique government programs support North Carolina small business owners in making a profit, creating jobs, and improving the human condition.

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About Auger Communications, Inc.

The company, founded in 1997 and incorporated in 2006, is a consulting and educational services firm dedicated to building community and promoting health and safety within the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Professional services include consultation, facilitation, education, and evaluation. Empowerment-based approaches for learning and providing care and customer-driven service are a specialty. Aprendo Press, the publishing division of Auger Communications, produces and distributes bilingual, easy-to-read health education materials. For more information, please visit: www.augercommunications.com

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