

Colmena66's call for proposals is back: **Acércate al Grant** ^[1]

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Acércate al grant's call for proposals is open until March 10, 2024.

Colmena66 ^[2], the program of the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust ^[3] (PRSTRT) dedicated to connecting entrepreneurs and business owners with resources to start or sustainably grow their businesses, announces the launch of the second edition of the **Acércate al Grant** call.

Acércate al Grant is a technical assistance program to bridge the gap to **federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs**, known as America's Seed Fund. These programs, which annually provide nearly \$4 billion through 12 federal agencies, are aimed at early-stage small businesses seeking to commercialize their technologies and engage in research and development efforts. *Acércate al Grant* facilitates

participants' access to experts, grant writers, and accompanying resources during the SBIR/STTR proposal development process.

The Trust is committed to supporting more entrepreneurs and researchers in Puerto Rico to obtain SBIR/STTR funds, thus contributing to positioning the Island as a globally recognized innovation hub. This initiative is designed to increase the chances for innovative *startups* and research projects to access funds from the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, representing the largest seed capital fund in the United States.

Participants will receive support and technical assistance from grant writers, specialists in federal proposal writing, as well as support resources including idea validation with I-Corps PR from Grupo Guayacan, grant writing, and compliance requirements.

One of the biggest challenges startups and research projects face is proposal development, as they lack the time, expertise, or financial resources to hire experts in the process. Therefore, this call will cover the costs of hiring a professional grant writer. Additionally, non-formalized projects will receive assistance in the incorporation process, a requirement for SBIR/STTR programs.

"In fiscal year 2023, our programs helped achieve four awarded SBIR contracts. These awards contributed a total of \$3,155,995 to Puerto Rico's economy. Through matching funds of \$600,000 provided by the Trust through its SBIR/STTR Matching Grant initiative, the total economic contribution reached \$3,755,995. This success reflects the high quality of research and proposals in Puerto Rico. At the Trust, we focus our efforts so that the talents and ideas of the country of obtaining federal funds and taking their innovations to another level," said engineer Lucy Crespo, Chief Executive Officer of the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust.

Acércate al Grant is funded by the grants awarded to Colmena66, selected as 1 of 40 winning organizations of the 2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) among more than 300 applicants in the U.S. Colmena66 received \$200,000 to support entrepreneurs and researchers developing innovations and technologies. By winning the national award, the Growth Accelerator Partnership was formed, a multi-sector alliance composed of institutions in the innovation ecosystem such as:

- Central Administration - UPR
- BioLeap - Parallel18
- Carbono3
- Community Development Venture Capital Alliance
- Center for Bioprospecting and Tropical Biodiversity - PRSTRT
- Ciencia PR
- Deca Analytics
- Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DDEC)
- Engine-4
- Fase 1 - PRSTRT
- Grupo Guayacán
- Healthcare Innovation Center
- Parallel18 - PRSTRT

- Puerto Rico Federal Contracting Center (FeCC)
- Puerto Rico TechnoEconomic Corridor (PRTEC)
- Research Grants - PRSTRT
- Research Institute - PRSTRT
- SBIR Program - PRSTRT
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Technology Transfer Office -PRSTRT
- UPR i+c - UPRRP

“With *Acércate al Grant*, we aim to increase the number of SBIR/STTR grants won annually in Puerto Rico, supporting underserved communities in STEM and Research and Development. These efforts demonstrate how our innovation ecosystem works together to facilitate access to opportunities that advance Puerto Rico’s economy,” said Denisse Rodríguez Colón, Executive Director of Colmena66.

Applications for the *Acércate al Grant* program can be submitted electronically until **March 10, 2024**. Evaluation will be based on criteria including literature review, innovation, probability of commercial use, technical expertise of the team, research objectives, and project or exploratory experiment progress.

Eligible participants include entrepreneurs, researchers, startups, independent research projects, established companies, researchers working in private and state academic institutions, and research institutions. Initiatives in sectors such as Information and Communications Technology, Biotechnology and Life Sciences, Medical Devices, Aerospace, Clean Technology/Renewable Energy, Agriculture, Environmental Sciences, and Electronics, among others aligned with the focus areas of participating federal agencies, will be considered.

Interested parties can complete their application at the following link: www.colmena66.com/acercate-al-grant [4]. For additional inquiries, they can email info@colmena66.com [5] or call 787-525-411.

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