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Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Awarded FAST Grant to Expand Innovation and Technology Commercialization Support

Massachusetts Small Business Development Center welcomes two co-directors to strengthen statewide programming, partnerships, and technical assistance for Massachusetts innovators.

AMHERST, Mass. — November 5, 2026 — The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC) is pleased to announce that the University of Massachusetts Amherst has been named a recipient of a 2026 Federal and State Technology (FAST) Partnership grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), with matching funding provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development. The grant will support MassFAST, an initiative dedicated to helping Massachusetts small businesses and entrepreneurs pursue federal research and development funding, advance innovative technologies, and bring new products and solutions to market.

The award is part of more than $8 million in FAST grants distributed by the SBA to 50 organizations nationwide. The program provides specialized training, mentoring, and technical assistance to help small businesses compete for funding through America's Seed Fund, which encompasses the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.

“Massachusetts small businesses have the ingenuity to turn breakthrough research into technologies that strengthen our economy and our nation,” said SBA Massachusetts District Director Keegan Shepardson. “FAST Grant funding through the MSBDC will help more entrepreneurs access the training, mentorship, and technical assistance they need to compete for SBIR and STTR funding through America’s Seed Fund. By connecting innovators across the Commonwealth with hands-on support, we can help them bridge the gap between a promising idea and a market-ready product—creating opportunities to grow their businesses, generate good-paying jobs, and strengthen American competitiveness.”

For Massachusetts, the investment represents an opportunity to further connect the Commonwealth's robust research and innovation community with the resources needed to translate promising ideas into commercially viable technologies.

“Massachusetts’ small businesses play an important role in bringing new technologies to market,” said Economic Development Secretary Eric Paley. “Through our support for MassFAST, we are helping more entrepreneurs across the state access the expertise they need to compete for federal funding. This support helps small businesses turn promising ideas into commercially viable products and build a foundation for long-term growth.”

The MSBDC is hosted by the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. “As an R1 research university, UMass Amherst is committed to translating innovative research and emerging technologies into real-world solutions that drive economic growth,” said Anne Massey, Dean of the Isenberg School of Management. “Through the MSBDC, we are in a unique position to connect more businesses with the expertise and support they need to compete for SBIR and STTR funding – including companies located outside of the Commonwealth’s traditional innovation hubs.”

Through MassFAST, the MSBDC will welcome two seasoned innovation economy leaders who will deliver programming, strengthen partnerships, and help connect entrepreneurs with the resources, expertise, and guidance needed to pursue federal research and development opportunities:

- Micaelah Morrill, MassFAST Co-Director for Programs & Partnerships, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC)
- Peter Russo, MassFAST Co-Director for Operations & Services, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC)

Morrill and Russo will build upon the success of the MSBDC’s Technology Commercialization and Innovation practice, headed by Dan Lilly, that helps innovative small businesses identify funding opportunities, develop competitive proposals, and advance technologies toward commercialization.

“Under Dan Lilly’s leadership, the MSBDC has helped several hundred Massachusetts businesses to successfully compete for SBIR and STTR funding,” said Paula Murphy, State Director for the MSBDC. “Between FY2023 and FY2026, the MSBDC helped clients to raise over $225 Million in SBIR awards and related financing, while creating and retaining 363 jobs. Micaelah and Peter will build upon this proven foundation by expanding outreach, increasing the number of first-time SBIR and STTR applicants, strengthening partnerships across the innovation ecosystem, and extending assistance to entrepreneurs in rural communities, Gateway Cities, and other historically-underserved regions.”

MassFAST will build upon the MSBDC's longstanding commitment to supporting small business development and economic growth throughout Massachusetts. By integrating specialized innovation assistance with the MSBDC’s existing statewide services, the MSBDC will help ensure that entrepreneurs across the Commonwealth have access to the expertise and support needed to advance their innovations.

About MassFAST

MassFAST is a Massachusetts initiative supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration's Federal and State Technology (FAST) Partnership Program and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development. Through the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center, MassFAST helps entrepreneurs and small businesses navigate federal innovation funding opportunities, particularly the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. The initiative supports technology development, research commercialization, and innovation-driven economic growth throughout the Commonwealth.

About the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center

The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC) provides no-cost, confidential business advising and educational resources to entrepreneurs and small businesses throughout the Commonwealth. Through its statewide network, the MSBDC helps businesses at every stage navigate challenges, identify opportunities, access resources, and build the strategies needed for sustainable growth.

The MSBDC's statewide work is made possible through the support and collaboration of key public, academic, and private-sector stakeholders, including the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA); the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development and Massachusetts Office of Business Development; a consortium of higher education institutions led by the University of Massachusetts Amherst Isenberg School of Management; and a broad network of public and private partners. Representatives from several of these stakeholder organizations will also participate on the Advisory Council, bringing their perspectives and expertise to help inform and strengthen the MSBDC's statewide efforts. Together, these relationships strengthen the MSBDC's ability to connect Massachusetts entrepreneurs and small businesses with expertise, resources, and opportunities across the Commonwealth.

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MassFAST services are provided by the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC), Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts Amherst. MassFAST is funded in part through cooperative agreement SBAOIIFT260095-01-00 with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Matching funds are provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development. All opinions, conclusions, and/or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA.

A partnership program with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Massachusetts Office of Business Development under cooperative agreement SBAOEDSB250134-02-03 through the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Isenberg School of Management. SBDCs are a program supported by and funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. SBDC services are provided in a nondiscriminatory way to all legal residents and citizens in the United States. The U.S. Small Business Administration cannot endorse any products, opinions or services of any external parties or activities.