

Entrepreneurial UA Researchers Encouraged to Attend SBA Road Tour

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Shiva Planjery was a dual doctoral student at the University of Arizona and a university in France when he jointly developed a new error-correction algorithm for data storage with his advisers.

"At the time, we were focused on solving an interesting problem from an academic standpoint," Planjery said. "We weren't really thinking about the commercial applications of our research or taking our research to market."

But after he and his colleagues received an outpouring of feedback from the data storage industry on the results they presented at conferences in the early 2010s, they began to realize their research had direct commercial applications and could address a major need in the flash memory market – think USB sticks, cellphones and cloud storage.

Planjery began to search for sources of funding to launch a company. It was at this time, a week after he defended his dissertation, that he attended a workshop on Small Business Innovation Research grants organized by the UA Center for Innovation. This eventually led the team to form a company, Codelucida. Planjery is now CEO.

Even more UA researchers will have the chance to learn about how to acquire seed funding to take their research from the lab to the marketplace. The Center for Innovation has partnered with the U.S. Small Business Administration, along with 21 program managers from 17 federal agencies such as NASA, the Department of Defense, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the National Institutes of Health and more, to bring America's largest seed fund to Tucson for the very first time as part of a 16-stop [road tour](#) ^[1] across as many states.

"I would encourage researchers from every field across the campus to attend, especially those who are interested in funds specifically allocated to help them commercialize their inventions," said **Carol Stewart**, associate vice president of Tech Parks Arizona.

The workshop not only introduced Planjery to SBIR grants and the application process, but it also encouraged him to submit an SBIR Phase-I proposal to the National Science Foundation. The proposal won Codelucida SBIR Phase-I funding in July 2014. The company then secured a Phase-2 award from the NSF a year later.

"Being first-time entrepreneurs with a deeply technical founding team along with a niche technology makes it very challenging to attract early-stage investment," Planjery said. "It was the SBIR funding we secured that really caught the attention of our local angel investors and provided a level of validation for our company as a business."

Later funding followed and, to date, Codelucida has been awarded about \$1.4 million in SBIR grants from the National Science Foundation.

"It was such a critical source of funding for us in the initial stages that we would not have reached the stage we are today without it," he said.

Applying for the SBA resources, which include Small Business Technology Transfer in addition to SBIR, can be a competitive and sometimes complicated process that is important to understand, Planjery said. Tech Launch Arizona, the UA office that commercializes the inventions born from University research, also worked with Planjery and the team to protect the intellectual property and launch Codelucida.

"The SBIR/STTR programs provide over \$3 billion in early-stage funding in a wide variety of technology areas such as unmanned systems, advanced materials, health and bio-tech, cybersecurity and defense, which allow innovators to advance new technologies," Stewart said. About 5,000 awards are given annually.

Highlights of the road tour stop, scheduled for Aug. 12, include opportunities to meet one-on-one with federal program managers, learn about funding priorities, network with other entrepreneurs and receive personalized assistance and resources. Elizabeth Cantwell, incoming senior vice president for research and innovation, will speak at the event about the value of these partnerships and more.

"We will also have a fun networking mixer called Travel Through the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem where we are bringing together business incubators, accelerators, coworking spaces, subject matter experts and other entrepreneurial support resources that are dedicated to nurturing the unique startups in this community," Stewart said. "Attendees will move throughout the room to a variety of food, dessert and drink stations to learn more about the resources available."

The event will be held at the UA Center for Innovation, located at the UA Tech Park, 9040 S. Rita Road, Suite 1270.

Find more information and get tickets on [Eventbrite](#) ^[2]. UA employees receive a 50% discount when they use the code "UA19."

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[1] <http://www.sbirroadtour.com/> [2] <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/sba-road-tour-southern-arizona-tickets-60493448533>