 **SBIR road tour brings vital resources to Nextcorps**

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The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Road Tour hit Nextcorps on Monday, marking the first ever stop in Rochester and an opportunity for budding businesses to meet and mingle with their financial, legal, educational and mentoring life givers. The SBIR program is a federally funded program administered through the Small Business Administration, with support from 11 different government agencies. The result is a highly competitive grant program available to companies demonstrating potential in research and development. Past recipients of SBIR funding include Rochester **SiMPore** and LighTopTech. But the Road Show was not just a chance for companies to vie for funding. It was also an opportunity for local institutions to show what they have to offer to fledgling start-ups. Often, they are resources that entrepreneurs may overlook, such as the logistics of patenting. Cody Andrushko, a J.D. candidate at the Syracuse University College of Law, pointed to just some of the assistance they can offer start-ups. “Any resource we provide is free to the companies who reach out,” Andrushko said. “So, students are able to do the reports, which allows us to get great experience, but we also have very experienced professors that work alongside us, as well as our directors who are attorneys who review it. So, we don’t give legal advice, but we can do research, such as patent landscape, patent availability searches, trademark searches which allow companies to get an understanding of where they are in the market sphere.” That research can be invaluable for establishing a product and securing commercialization rights. But that is also a path which may need some support from the world of higher education, the mesh of incubators and research labs sprawling across the state, and the people who mark their expertise in fostering ideas.

One such place is the **Cornell Center for Materials Research (CCMR)**. Focused specifically on materials and extending its arms across the state, it links companies, such as the Luminate NY accelerator’s **Molecular Glasses**, with experts who can help turn concepts into reality.“Our mission is to help any company facing any challenge relating to material access and resources available at Cornell,” said industrial partnerships director Michelle van de Walle. Funded through the National Science Foundation, the CCMR has provided a litany of companies with access to invaluable resources. They’re not alone, as van de Walle points out, a good university is indispensable for fostering ideas, but the future is hinged on them also bringing those ideas to reality. “Universities have a role to play in educating people, but also in helping their startups to develop,” van de Walle said. “And they’re more and more fulfilling this mission by creating incubators, applying for NSF I-Corps and providing education in terms of classes and projects as partnerships with students, from engineering to those in the business schools.”

And while these resources are inherently critical, at the end of the day, the future of a start-up comes down to funding. Assistant Vice President at Tompkins Bank of Castile Mark Brooks gave some insight on just how a company can secure a funding stream. “There’s such a broad definition of start-up, for instance, it might be a start-up, but the person might have a lot of experience in their field,” Brooks said. At the end of the day, Brooks’ advice for a start-up just getting off the ground was as timeless and ubiquitous as every other attendee at the road show. It’s a piece of advice echoed time and time again, whether it’s from a university research lab or a venture capitalist. “Start with a good business plan that you can follow,” Brooks said. “If you don’t have a plan, you’re not really going anywhere.”