

How TinyStride gets funded

A practical capital-access playbook: where to look, what to ask for, what proof to bring, and what to do next.

Recommendation: do not begin with a broad venture-capital search. Build a funding stack that buys the next proof point: paid design partners and founder/angel capital for validation; carefully matched non-dilutive R&D funding; then a focused pre-seed when retention, pricing, and a repeatable channel are visible.

The capital sequence

Now	Next	Only after proof
Validation capital Founder resources, paid design partners, small angels, local competitions.	Non-dilutive + pre-seed Mission-fit SBIR/STTR or state programs; a small, targeted angel/pre-seed process.	Seed Institutional capital only when cohort retention, observed payback, and pilot evidence support it.

What to target in the next 90 days

Cash target \$75k-\$150k in validation capital, enough to harden the product, run a measured pilot, and build a credible evidence base.	Proof target 100+ activated pilot users, 20+ structured interviews, a defined D14 retention baseline, two pricing tests, and 3-5 potential design partners.
---	---

Match the money to the work

Source	What to pursue	What they need to see	Do not use it for
Paid design partners	3-5 small adult-facing practices, community organizations, or employers willing to co-design a scoped workflow.	A narrow problem, clear consent/data boundary, a short pilot plan, and a modest paid commitment or LOI.	Free “partnerships” that create custom work without learning or revenue.
Angels and operator syndicates	Targeted \$10k-\$50k checks; seek a potential lead capable of \$50k-\$150k.	Live product, customer evidence, a precise use of funds, and a credible next milestone.	Mass cold outreach before the data room and narrative are ready.
SBIR / STTR	Only pursue if TinyStride has a genuine R&D question aligned to an agency mission—for example, validating an accessibility/routine-support intervention with a research partner.	Specific research aims, evaluation plan, commercialization plan, eligibility, and adequate preparation time.	General marketing, ordinary app development, or a substitute for an investor-backed operating plan.
State / local programs	State innovation agencies, university entrepreneurship centers, pitch competitions, and local small-business support.	Local eligibility, a concise pitch, milestones, and a realistic budget.	Assuming a program exists or is open without checking current eligibility and deadline.

Grant reality check: SBIR Phase I is generally a 6-12 month proof-of-concept award path, not fast runway. Current official guidance lists typical Phase I awards of \$50k-\$275k and Phase II awards of \$400k-\$1.8m; review the exact agency solicitation and eligibility before committing time.

Official starting points: [SBIR Apply](#); [Grants.gov application guide](#); [NIH small-business applicant resources](#).

How to go about it

Build the minimum fundable package

Investor package

- 10-12 slide deck and 1-page investor memo
- Live product demo and 2-minute walkthrough
- Metric dictionary and cohort dashboard
- Use-of-funds plan tied to 12-18 months of runway
- Entity, cap table, IP, and security/privacy summary

Pilot / partner package

- One-page pilot brief: audience, workflow, duration, fee
- Consent and data-boundary outline
- Success measures: adoption, D14, support burden, renewal
- No unsubstantiated clinical or compliance claims
- Simple conversion path at pilot close

Run a focused 8-week process

Week	Action	Target output
1-2	Validate readiness; write memo; assemble data room; identify 40-60 aligned angels, operators, and early-stage investors.	Clean narrative, realistic ask, warm-intro map.
3-4	Ask advisors, customers, and founder network for 15-20 warm introductions; begin design-partner conversations in parallel.	8-12 first investor meetings; 3-5 qualified pilot conversations.
5-6	Send a short weekly investor update: product learning, cohort metrics, pilot movement, and the specific ask.	2-4 serious follow-ups; clear objections log.
7-8	Close a lead or pause and improve the proof. Do not extend the process with no clear next-step signal.	Commitments toward validation round, or a documented reset plan.

Who to approach, and when

Target list criteria

Target	Why they fit	Specific ask
Founder-friendly operators	Can assess an early consumer product and open practitioner, accessibility, or family-tech doors.	\$10k-\$50k check, product feedback, and 2 relevant introductions.
Impact / accessibility / family-tech angels	May understand the user problem and value trust-first positioning.	\$25k-\$100k plus help refining the evidence narrative.
Pre-seed funds with consumer + health-adjacent experience	Useful only after observable retention and paid learning are available.	\$500k-\$900k pre-seed, contingent on a clear 12-18 month milestone plan.
Research institution partner	Required for STTR; can strengthen a credible research design.	Defined research role, IP terms, and evaluation plan—not merely a logo.

Readiness gates

- **Talk to angels now** if the product works, the founder can demo it, and there is a specific pilot/learning plan.
- **Raise a pre-seed** when 1,000+ MAU, D14 retention at or above 30% in the target cohort, first paid cohorts, and two attributable acquisition tests are visible.
- **Apply for SBIR/STTR** when the project has a real research question, a suitable agency fit, eligibility confirmed, and time to prepare; federal registrations can take time.
- **Pause** if the funds would only amplify weak retention or force an unsupported clinical claim.

The first ask: “We are raising \$75k-\$150k to prove a specific routine-support loop with a measured pilot. Here is the product, the evidence we have, what we will learn in 90 days, and exactly what a successful result unlocks.”

Source notes: SBA's SBIR guidance describes the phased model, eligibility, and typical award ranges; Grants.gov states that organization registration, including SAM.gov/UEI, is required and should be started early. Check every solicitation directly because rules and deadlines change.