Project Background

Drs. Diana and Adri van Duin, who were both employed at Penn State, had been toying with the idea of starting their own business for some time. The van Duins are computational chemists skilled in the design of complex simulations that can yield important parameter data (material strength, boiling point, brittleness, etc.) by analyzing the interaction of material force fields (in computational chemistry, material force fields are quantitative measures of the material’s properties). They attended the Penn State SBDC’s Research to Start-up seminar, a 90 minute overview of what is involved in commercializing research, and then decided to take the plunge and start their business in the fall of 2013. With the help of the Penn State SBDC and the Ben Franklin Technology Partnership, RxFF Consulting is already negotiating contracts with an impressive list of clients.

SBDC Assistance

The Penn State SBDC introduced the van Duins to the steps necessary to commercialize their University research and helped them to understand the process of setting up their new business. With the SBDC’s assistance, the van Duin’s registered their company in September, 2013 and began negotiating their first service contract shortly thereafter.

The SBDC consultant also encouraged the pair to seek the specialized technology development assistance of the Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Pennsylvania. The van Duins were competitively-selected to participate in the TechCelerator Boot Camp, an intensive 8 week training session designed to help entrepreneurs master the fundamentals of technology commercialization. The SBDC supports the TechCelerator with consulting and administrative staff that help make the program possible. Through the TechCelerator, the van Duins received 16 hours of seminar training and many hours of no-cost consulting.

Outcome

RxFF Consulting is now fully operational and has contract leads that may yield first year revenues in excess of $100,000. The client list includes major companies looking to reduce the cost of developing new materials by leveraging RxFF Consulting’s ability to predict key parameter data about the combination of various materials. The company has already created one full-time and one part-time job in its first year of operation, with the possibility of additional employment as the client list grows.