# Dossier: SMALLSTEP LABS INC

## SBIR Award Details

**Award Title:** N/A

**Amount:** $74,924.00

**Award Date:** 2022-11-03

**Branch:** USAF

## AI-Generated Intelligence Summary

**Company Overview:**

Smallstep Labs Inc. provides automated certificate management solutions designed to simplify and secure machine identity for modern infrastructure. Their primary business revolves around building tools that address the complexities of managing X.509 certificates, TLS, SSH keys, and other credentials in dynamic environments like cloud, Kubernetes, and microservices. Smallstep's core mission is to make secure identity accessible and manageable for all organizations, regardless of size or technical expertise, by automating workflows and reducing the operational burden associated with traditional certificate authorities. They aim to solve the problems of certificate sprawl, manual renewal processes, and the difficulty of ensuring secure communication between services and machines, thus reducing the risk of outages and security breaches. Their unique value proposition lies in their developer-centric approach, offering open-source tools and a SaaS platform that are easy to integrate and automate within existing DevOps workflows.

**Technology Focus:**

* Smallstep provides an open-source, ACME-based certificate authority (CA) implementation called `step-ca`. It enables automated certificate provisioning and management for various infrastructure components, including Kubernetes clusters, IoT devices, and servers. The CA can also be used to generate SSH certificates and manage key lifecycle.
* The company offers a commercial SaaS platform called Smallstep Certificate Manager, which builds upon the open-source foundation and provides enterprise-grade features such as role-based access control, audit logging, reporting, and integrations with identity providers (IdPs). It centralizes the management of certificates across multiple environments and offers enhanced scalability and support.

**Recent Developments & Traction:**

* In October 2021, Smallstep Labs announced a $26 million Series A funding round led by StepStone Group. Other investors include Bain Capital Ventures and Boldstart Ventures. This funding round was used to expand the team and accelerate product development and go-to-market efforts.
* Smallstep has seen increasing adoption of its open-source `step-ca` project, with a growing community of users and contributors. They have actively contributed to the broader security ecosystem through open-source contributions and participation in industry conferences.
* Smallstep continues to release updates and enhancements to both its open-source tools and SaaS platform, focusing on improving integration with popular DevOps tools and expanding support for emerging technologies like WebAssembly and service meshes.

**Leadership & Team:**

* Mike Malone (CEO):\*\* Previously held leadership roles at various technology companies, focused on product and engineering management. Strong experience in building and scaling enterprise software solutions.
* Oliver Steele (CTO):\*\* Founder and open-source contributor. Deep technical expertise in cryptography, security, and distributed systems.

**Competitive Landscape:**

* HashiCorp (Vault):\*\* Similar focus on secrets management and identity-based access. Differentiator: Smallstep focuses \*specifically\* on certificate management and offers a more streamlined, automated approach, especially tailored for DevOps environments where rapid iteration and deployment are crucial. HashiCorp Vault is broader and requires more configuration.
* Venafi:\*\* Established player in the certificate management space, targeting large enterprises. Differentiator: Smallstep's focus is on providing a more developer-friendly and agile solution, appealing to organizations embracing modern DevOps practices and requiring automation and self-service capabilities.

**Sources:**

* [https://smallstep.com/](https://smallstep.com/)
* [https://techcrunch.com/2021/10/19/smallstep-labs-raises-26m-series-a-to-automate-certificate-management/](https://techcrunch.com/2021/10/19/smallstep-labs-raises-26m-series-a-to-automate-certificate-management/)
* [https://github.com/smallstep/certificates](https://github.com/smallstep/certificates)
* [https://www.stepstone.com/news-insights/smallstep-labs-series-a-round/](https://www.stepstone.com/news-insights/smallstep-labs-series-a-round/)