The Ohio State University Accelerator Awards

**Request for Applications**

**Pre-Proposal Deadlines**

Refer to [Accelerator Awards website](https://keenan.osu.edu/accelerator-awards) for key submission due dates for all stages of Accelerator Award applications

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# Accelerator Awards Overview

The Ohio State University Accelerator Awards is an annual $1 million pool of funds awarded on a competitive basis to advance the translation of Ohio State innovations from the university to the marketplace through commercialization to Ohio-based startup companies. Funded by Ohio State and the State of Ohio, through the Ohio Third Frontier [Technology Validation and Startup Fund](https://development.ohio.gov/bs_thirdfrontier/tvsf.htm) (TVSF), the Ohio Third Frontier aims to foster creation of Ohio-based startup companies commercializing technologies that will lead to greater economic growth in the region.

Administered by Innovation and Commercialization at The Ohio State University, funding is intended to support innovative technologies proposing compelling solutions to address an unmet need and that have advanced beyond basic research but are not ready for commercialization. Funding will be used to validate or demonstrate the proof needed to impact the commercial viability of the technology.

Applicants may be interested in participating in customer discovery programs that help validate the problem and market need. For information on customer discovery programs please email acceleratorawards\_@osu.edu

# Award Information

* **Total program funding available:** $1,000,000 per year.
* **Funding mechanism:** Sponsored grant with a1:1 cost share. Cost share funds are provided through the Accelerator Awards Program.
* **Anticipated number of Awards:** 8-12 awards annually.
* **Funding amount:** Individual project budgets may request up to a maximum of $100,000 in funds. Funding requests for individual projects are anticipated to vary and should be aligned with validation work required. Biomedical solutions that will be regulated by the FDA may require greater resources and may be eligible to request up to $150,000.
* **Project funding period:** Projects must be achievable and completed within 6-12 months.
* **Grant reimbursement:** the objective of the Ohio Third Frontier, in supporting the Accelerator Awards, is to create jobs and business opportunities in Ohio. If a technology developed through Accelerator Awards funding is licensed to a company outside of Ohio within five years of the award notice, the university may be required to repay the Accelerator Awards grant funds to the Ohio Third Frontier.

# Application Process

There are two funding cycles a year occurring in the spring and fall. The application process consists of three stages: a pre-proposal, full proposal and pitch presentation (by invitation).



# Key Eligibility Summary

* **Who**: Faculty and staff of The Ohio State University that are inventors on an invention disclosure submitted 15 days prior to the pre-proposal deadline.
* **Intellectual Property:** Intellectual property (IP) protection must be secured by the full proposal deadline.
* **Types of technology funded:** All proposals must fall within the following technology focus areas.
	+ Advanced Manufacturing
	+ Advanced Materials
	+ Biomedical/Life Sciences
	+ Energy
	+ Sensors
	+ Software/Information Technology
	+ **Project Requirements:**
* Validation activities increase the value of the technology and reduce risk for commercialization.
* Specific milestones are industry informed and demonstrate the commercial viability of a technology.
* Technologies should have laboratory-scale proof of concept established.
* Projects pursuing basic or discovery research are too early to be eligible for funding.

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| Examples of activities **too early** for the Accelerator Awards | Examples of activities **appropriate** for the Accelerator Awards | Examples of activities **too advanced** for the Accelerator Awards |
| * Basic science research
* Preliminary/pilot data
* Generate laboratory-scale proof of concept
* Research customer demand
 | * Prototype development
* Pre-clinical or clinical development
* Technical validation
* Outsourcing of tasks to external vendors
* Scale-up pilot studies
* Validate markets
* Regulatory assessment
 | * Beta prototype development
* Deployment of beta prototype to potential customers for testing and evaluation
* Business development activities
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# Detailed Eligibility Requirements

# Principal Investigator & Team Requirements

* The principal investigator (PI) must be faculty or staff at The Ohio State University with PI status to serve as PI on an externally sponsored grant. The PI must be an inventor on the associated invention disclosure.
* Applicants can submit one (1) proposal as PI or co-PI per application cycle.
* Awardees may only serve as PI on one (1) Accelerator Award project at a time. Once an awarded project is completed, investigators are eligible to apply for funding for a different market application of the same technology or for new technologies that present an independent commercialization opportunity. Investigators must be compliant and in good standing with all previous award requirements.
* If a PI transfers from The Ohio State University to another institution, Accelerator Award funds cannot be transferred to the new institution. If a co-inventor is unable to take on the role as the new principal investigator, the award will be terminated. The principal investigator should notify the Accelerator Awards program and provide contact information at the new institution.
* All members of the team should be committed to the commercialization objectives of the project and be open to receiving coaching and oversight of their projects.

# Intellectual Property Requirements

* Projects must be based on and advance the commercialization of university-owned intellectual property.
* Invention disclosures are submitted through [Cayuse Inventions](https://innovate.osu.edu/log_in/)

**Pre-Proposal IP Requirements**:

* Technologies must be the subject of an invention disclosure filed 15 days in advance of the pre-proposal submission deadline and be under active management by a licensing officer. **Please reach out to the licensing officer assigned to your technology if you intend to submit a pre-proposal.**

**Full Proposal IP Requirements:**

* Technologies must have IP protection, defined as patent pending or patent issued, by the full proposal submission deadline. Copyrighted materials, including software, are eligible if OSIF has the right to commercialize the copyrighted materials via an exclusive license agreement.
* If a technology is jointly owned with another academic institution, OSIF must be designated as the lead institution in commercializing the technology under a fully executed inter-institutional agreement (IIA).
* The technology must be available for OSIF to exclusively license at the time of the award notice and remain unlicensed during the funded project period.
	+ Intellectual property rights must not be encumbered by any prior obligation, such as an industry sponsored research agreement or consultant agreement.
	+ Technologies under an option agreement in the applicable field of use are NOT eligible for Accelerator Awards funding.
	+ Technologies under a license agreement in the applicable field of use are NOT eligible for Accelerator Awards funding.

New intellectual property generated during the performance of an Accelerator Award including, but not limited to, discoveries, inventions, patents, and copyrighted materials is subject to The Ohio State University [*Intellectual Property Policy*](https://policies.osu.edu/assets/policies/IP-Policy.pdf) and must be promptly disclosed.

# Funding Requirements

* Proposed work that is funded through industry sponsorship, research grant support, or investment partners is not eligible for funding. Technologies that are the subject of a TVSF Phase 2 award, or similar stage funding are considered too far developed and ineligible for funding.
* Projects are funded in tranches aligned with project milestones. At least one milestone must be proposed per quarter. Quarterly milestone progress is evaluated through report submission and a meeting. Meaningful progress must be achieved for approval and release the next tranche of funds.
* The Program reserves the right to halt financial support for reasons including, but not limited to:
	+ Technology is no longer available to OSIF for licensing (e.g. active license agreement is entered into, IIA lead is transferred to another institution).
	+ PI leaves Ohio State.
	+ IP protection cannot be secured or offers limited protection of the technology or potential business model.
	+ Opportunity for the startup becomes limited, including market opportunity.
	+ Failure to complete project milestones on time or with affirmative results.
	+ Failure of PI to comply on time with all Accelerator Awards reporting requirements.
	+ Technology is deemed ready for commercialization. License to an entity can be pursued and precludes the need for further development through the Accelerator Awards.

# Use of Funds

Accelerator Awards funds are used to validate and demonstrate the viability of a technology. Given the technology transfer goals of the program, emphasis is placed on validating the technology outside of the lab.

* At least of 75% of the total budget should be allocated to work performed outside of the originating lab by independent third-party vendors. In line with wider economic development goals, there is a preference for use of Ohio-based vendors.
* Ohio State Core Facilities that provide services to external customers may be requested but require justification describing the critical or specialized need(s) the facility fulfills that is otherwise inaccessible through an external vendor. The work must be performed independently of the PI lab and personnel.
* Funds requested should align with the cost required to achieve specific milestones. For a full proposal submission, supporting quotes will be required.
* A maximum of 25% of the total project budget may be allocated to personnel and materials and supplies expenses to support limited in lab work.

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| **Expense Categories** | **Allowable?** |
| Purchased services | Yes |
| Supplies | Yes |
| Equipment | May be requested, approval required |
| Ohio State non-faculty employees | May be requested, approval required |
| Basic research | No |
| Bonuses, incentives or rewards | No |
| Faculty salary/fringes | No |
| Indirect costs | No |
| Industry expert payments  | No |
| IP protection costs | No |
| Legal fees | No |
| Professional affiliations or membership dues | No |
| Publication costs or reprints | No |
| Research subject payments | No |
| Student stipends, tuition or fees | No |
| Subawards to other institutions | No |
| Travel expenses including conference fees | No |
| Any activity determined to not be consistent with the intent, goal, or rules of the Program | No |

# Industry Experts

* Applicants must engage with an industry expert prior to submitting a full proposal and are encouraged to proactively identify potential industry experts early in the application process.
* Industry experts are valuable contributors who volunteer their time and expertise. Applicants are encouraged to leverage relevant industry and/or entrepreneurial experience to help inform development of a commercialization focused project scope and milestones intended to address a market need. This helps to ensure that proposed milestones align with the proof needed to demonstrate the technology is viable for commercialization.
* Industry experts cannot be paid or have a financial relationship with the PI, or any consultants/vendors funded by the Accelerator Awards.
* Please refer to the [industry experts webpage](https://keenan.osu.edu/accelerator-awards-industry-experts) for additional guidance.

# Awardee Requirements

Given the commercialization focus of the program, awardees will be expected to:

* Attend a project kickoff meeting.
* Submit quarterly milestone progress reports.
* Participate in quarterly discussion and review of project progress, and ad-hoc meetings as required.
* Engage regularly with Innovation and Commercialization team members to facilitate commercialization efforts.
* Submit a final report within 30 days of the end of the project period.
* Failure to provide timely progress updates and complete reporting requirements may result in early termination of the project and may preclude the PI from being eligible for any Ohio Third Frontier funding in the future.

# Review process

* **Pre-Proposals** are screened for compliance with the eligibility requirements and alignment with the goals of the program. Pre-proposals that meet the screening requirements will be reviewed by an external selection committee and scored using a defined rubric and review criteria. Those that best fit the evaluation criteria will advance as a finalist and will be invited to submit a full proposal and present a pitch presentation to the committee.
* All applicants who submit a pre-proposal will be notified of the outcome and provided a review summary.
* **Full Proposal and Pitch Presentation (by invitation). Instructions will be provided** **to finalists**. The committee review full proposals and pitch presentations and score proposals using a defined rubric and review criteria. Proposals and review scores are discussed prior to determining funding recommendations.
* The selection committee consists of external members with startup, entrepreneurial, venture capital, investment, and domain expertise across a broad range of technology sectors. The Selection Committee is chaired by the Senior Director, Strategic Development and Operations, within Innovation and Commercialization.

# Award Decisions

* Final funding decisions are confirmed by the chair of the selection committee, based on committee recommendations. Proposals may be funded as proposed or with modifications to the budget and or milestones. Review outcomes will be communicated to all finalists. Projects recommended for funding and associated milestones and budgets are subject to approval by the external sponsor.

# General Evaluation Criteria

* **Problem and Solution:** Clear unmet need is identified and articulates the problem the technology will solve. A product/solution is presented that is intended to solve the unmet need.
* **Competition:** Current and anticipated competitors identified. Degree to which the technology is disruptive and offers a compelling value proposition. Describes superiority to current standard practice and solves the need better than current solutions.
* **Market Opportunity:** Demonstrates an understanding of the relevant market segments and customer profiles with respect to customer adoption, projected trends, and monetary value.
* **Commercialization:** Solution is a product or service to be commercialized; scalable to achieve commercialization objectives. Completion of the Accelerator Award will generate the proof needed to commercialize the technology.
* **Project Plan:** Project milestones and plan validate/de-risk the technology for the proposed commercial application(s). Achievement of the milestones would increase the value of the product to enable licensing to a startup company upon completion of the project. Milestones are specific, measurable, and achievable with clear deliverables and success criteria validated by industry input. Strategy to execute the milestones is effective and potential risks have been adequately addressed.
* **Startup Opportunity:** Achievement of the project will increase the value of the innovation and clearly reduce risk to enable launch of an Ohio startup company. There is opportunity to sustain a startup company within a reasonable time (3–5 years). Successful completion of the Accelerator Award positions the anticipated startup company to pursue follow-on funding.
* **Funding:** Funds requested are tied to project milestones and specific go/no-go decision points. Degree to which technical validation activities will be conducted or overseen by an independent party. The project can be successfully completed within one year with the funds requested.
* **Intellectual Property:** strength of intellectual property position to protect the business model.
* **Team:** Appropriate expertise to successfully complete the proposed project; PI and Co-PI(s) will dedicate the time needed to complete the project within proposed timeframe; the inventor(s) is committed to developing and commercializing the technology.

# Projects Involving Human Subjects and/or Animal Subjects

* The PI must determine if activities involving human subjects require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or exemption. Documentation indicating IRB approval, or pending approval, or exempt studies, is required as part of a full proposal submission. IRB approval for the project must be current within one (1) year of the notice of award.
* If a project involves animal subjects, the PI must obtain Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval. Documentation indicating IACUC approval, or pending approval is required as part of a full proposal submission. IACUC approvals must be current within three (3) years of the notice of award.
* Awarded projects must have IRB/IACUC approval prior to the release of any funds. Funds may not be awarded if the necessary IRB/IACUC approvals are not obtained within 3-months of the award notice.

# Confidential Information

Confidential proprietary information that has not been protected through the technology commercialization office should not be publicly disclosed. Applicants should request a confidentiality disclosure agreement (also known as a non-disclosure agreement) prior to sharing proprietary information with industry experts or other external parties. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Licensing Officer working with them on their technology with any questions or for additional guidance.