The Ohio State University Accelerator Awards

Request for Applications

Pre-Proposal Deadlines

Fall 2023 Cycle: October 2, 2023
Spring 2024 Cycle: March 4, 2024

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

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Fund Overview

The Ohio State University Accelerator Awards are a $1 million pool of funds awarded on a competitive basis to advance the translation of cutting-edge Ohio State innovations from the University into the marketplace. The goal of the Accelerator Awards program is to generate the proof needed to advance technologies to the point that they are either ready to be licensed by an Ohio-based startup company upon completion of the project or determined to be unfeasible for commercialization. The Accelerator Awards are partially funded by the State of Ohio, through the Ohio Third Frontier Technology Validation and Startup Fund (TVSF) and are administered through the Keenan Center for Entrepreneurship, Office of Innovation and Economic Development (OIED). The Ohio Third Frontier aims to foster greater economic growth in Ohio through the creation of Ohio-based startup companies that commercialize technologies developed by institutions of higher education.
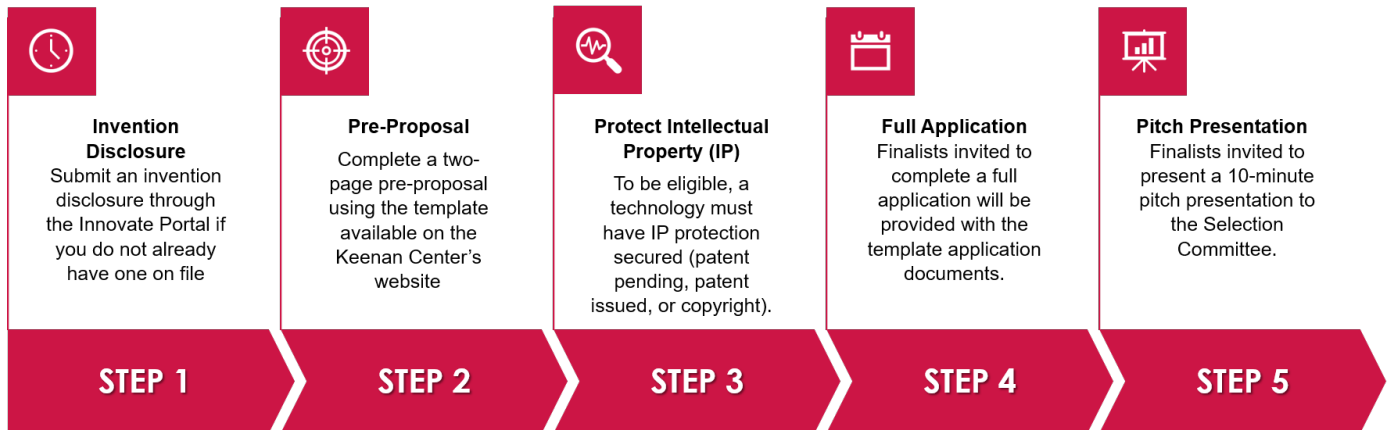
Funds are used to support validation of technologies that have demonstrated proof-of-concept but are not ready for licensing or securing venture capital from investment partners. Program funds will be allocated to projects that propose industry informed, measurable project milestones that are key to validating the technology and demonstrating commercial viability. The project scope must be achievable within a period of 12 months, with the majority of project funds allocated to independent third-party service providers. Achievement of milestones and quantitative metrics of success will be evaluated on a quarterly basis. The Accelerator Awards program is open to all Ohio State faculty and staff who meet the eligibility guidelines.

Award Information

- **Type of award:** grant funding to an Ohio State principal investigator.

- **Total funding available:** up to a total of $1,000,000 is available through the Accelerator Awards annually, with the Ohio Third Frontier and the University contributing $500,000 each.

- **Maximum award size:** applicants may request a total award of up to $100,000 in direct costs (includes cost share). Because some biomedical technologies typically require greater resources in order to meet regulatory requirements, proposals creating a healthcare product regulated by the FDA may be eligible to request up to $150,000 in direct costs.

- **Cost share:** the Ohio Third Frontier requires a cash cost share commitment of at least one dollar for every dollar of Ohio Third Frontier funds requested (1:1 cost share). The Keenan Center provides the cost share funds for the Accelerator Awards program.

- **Purpose:** demonstrate the technology is commercially viable by performing validation activities.

- **Project timeline:** is up to a single 12-month period from the date of funds disbursement. In certain extenuating circumstances, an extension may be approved the Ohio Third Frontier for up to 6-month intervals for a maximum of 12 months. Awards may be withdrawn for any project not started within 3 months of the project start date.

- **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 that was developed through Accelerator Awards funds 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 to the Ohio Third Frontier.

Application Process
The Accelerator Award Program holds two funding cycles a year. Application cycles typically start in the spring and fall, though specific dates change from year to year. The application process consists of three required stages: a pre-proposal, full application (by invitation), and a pitch presentation (by invitation). Specific dates for each stage of upcoming cycle can be found on our website: https://keenan.osu.edu/accelerator-awards

Invention Disclosure
Submit an invention disclosure through the Innovate Portal if you do not already have one on file

STEP 1

Pre-Proposal
Complete a two-page pre-proposal using the template available on the Keenan Center's website

STEP 2

Protect Intellectual Property (IP)
To be eligible, a technology must have IP protection secured (patent pending, patent issued, or copyright).

STEP 3

Full Application
Finalists invited to complete a full application will be provided with the template application documents.

STEP 4

Pitch Presentation
Finalists invited to present a 10-minute pitch presentation to the Selection Committee.

STEP 5

Project Eligibility

- The program funds milestone-driven technology development and validation activities that are informed by industry and demonstrate the commercial viability of a technology. Funds are not to support early-stage research or discovery necessary to establish proof-of-concept, or for continued research to be performed in an inventor's lab. Technologies supported by an Accelerator Award must be advanced beyond basic research and have the equivalent of a laboratory-scale proof of concept established. Projects that have performed initial customer and market research are often well positioned to apply for an Accelerator Award.

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
o Basic science research o Preliminary/pilot data o Generate laboratory-scale proof of concept o Research customer demand	o Prototype development o Demonstration and assessment of critical failure points in subsequent development o Optimization studies o Scale up pilot studies o Validate markets and customer demand o Assess regulatory pathways o App development o Bioassays including, therapeutic index tests, toxicology, target specificity, formulation studies, pharmacokinetics o Large scale production/synthesis o Clinical trials o Corrosion/materials testing o Fabrication	o Beta prototype development o Deployment of beta prototype to potential customers for testing and evaluation o Business development activities

- Funded activities should increase the value of the technology along the spectrum of development towards commercialization to a startup company.

- All proposals must fall within one of the six Ohio Third Frontier's technology focus areas.

  - Software/Information Technology
  - Biomedical/Life Sciences
  - Advanced Materials
  - Sensors
  - Energy
  - Advanced Manufacturing

Intellectual Property Requirements

- Projects must be designed to advance the commercialization of University-owned intellectual property (IP) assigned to The Ohio State University or to the Ohio State Innovation Foundation (OSIF). All intellectual property generated during the performance of the Accelerator Award project including, but not limited to, discoveries, inventions, patents, and copyrighted materials is subject to ownership by The Ohio State University as set forth in Ohio State's *Intellectual Property Policy* and must be promptly disclosed to Technology Commercialization, Office of Innovation and Economic Development using an invention disclosure form.

Pre-Proposal Submission Requirements:

- The technology must be the subject of an invention disclosure filed with Technology Commercialization, OIED in advance of the pre-proposal submission deadline and must be under active management by the assigned licensing officer. **Please reach out to the licensing officer assigned to your technology if you intend to submit a pre-proposal.** Sufficient time must be allowed to evaluate the invention disclosure and conduct patentability review, to determine the invention's commercialization potential. Invention disclosures are submitted through Ohio State's online inventor portal, Innovate.

Full application Submission Requirements

- Technologies must already have IP protection, defined as patent pending or patent issued, by the full application submission deadline for the Accelerator Awards program. Copyrighted materials, including software, are eligible if OSIF has the right to commercialize the copyrighted materials via an exclusive license agreement. It is the applicant's responsibility to proactively engage the licensing officer assigned to their invention disclosure at least **30 days** prior to the full application submission deadline to confirm the IP meets eligibility requirements.

- If the 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). Applicants should contact their assigned licensing officer with any questions related to IP ownership.

- The technology must be available for OSIF to exclusively license at the time of the award notice.
  - 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.

Principal Investigator & Team Requirements

- The principal investigator (PI) must be faculty or staff at The Ohio State University with an appointment allowing them to serve as PI on an externally sponsored research project. The PI must be listed as an inventor on the associated invention disclosure form. Eligible post-docs and Ohio State staff that are co-

inventors on the invention disclosure are eligible to apply as co-PIs.

- An investigator is limited to submitting one (1) application as PI or co-PI per application cycle.

- An investigator may only serve as PI of one (1) Accelerator Award project at a time. Once an awarded project is completed, investigators are eligible to re-apply with proposals for a different 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 the PI transfers from The Ohio State University to another institution during the project period, the Accelerator Award funds may not 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 personnel and provide contact information at the new institution in case the program needs to contact the investigator after they have left the university.

- 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.

Funding Requirements

- Technologies with industry sponsorship, research grant support, or investment partners are not eligible for support under the Accelerator Awards. Technologies that are the subject of a TVSF Phase 2 award are considered too far developed and are also therefore ineligible for funding under the Accelerator Awards program.

- Funding is provided in tranches aligned with the project milestones. At least one milestone must be proposed per quarter. A quarterly progress report must be submitted and approved at the quarterly progress meeting for the subsequent tranche of funds to be released.

- The Accelerator Awards program reserves the right to halt financial support for the project for reasons including, but not limited to the following:
  - 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.
  - Intellectual property offers limited protection of the technology or potential business model.
  - Potential opportunity for the startup is limited, including market size.
  - 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 a startup with an identified business lead can be pursued and precludes the need for further development through the Accelerator Awards.

Use of Funds

- All technologies are eligible to apply for up to $100,00 in funds. The average award amount will be closer to $75,000. Proposals creating a healthcare product regulated by the FDA that request to fund activities with significant cost to address FDA requirements, for example, clinical trials, large animal model studies, large commercial-scale animal studies, or FDA regulatory consulting and assessment, FDA or IND enabling studies, may request a budget up to a maximum of $150,000. Proposals seeking to fund small animal studies, pre-clinical studies including cell-based work, medical device prototyping and bench top-testing are not eligible to request an increased budget. All budgets will require clear justification and the selection committee will evaluate proposals for the appropriateness of the project budget to complete the

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project within a 12-month timeframe and that all requested funds are reasonable and necessary.

- Funding requested should align with the amount necessary to achieve milestones that validate and de-risk the technology and must be supported by quotes from independent third party-service providers. Budgets must be directly aligned with specific milestones that address the key objectives required to validate and add value to the commercialization potential of the technology and require a clear deliverable and metric of success to determine if the milestone was successfully accomplished.

- Funding is disbursed in milestone-driven tranches. Continued funding is dependent on satisfactory quarterly progress and achievement of milestones.

- Funding will only be provided for project expenditures specified in the approved budget, and up to the award amount. Any funds not expended at the conclusion of the project period will be forfeited and returned to the Keenan Center and the Ohio Third Frontier.

- A key benefit of the Accelerator Award is the availability of funds to validate the technology outside of the inventor's lab which helps provide proof that the technology is viable for commercialization. Given the technology transfer goals of the Accelerator Awards program, technologies applying for an Accelerator Award should be sufficiently developed to transition from in-lab work to independent third-party service providers. To align with this goal, one of the key budget requirements is that **75% of requested funds must be allocated to validation work using independent third-party service providers, that are either:**

    a) External to the university. The Ohio Third Frontier prefers use of Ohio-based vendors.
    b) Ohio State Core Facilities that are available to external customers as a purchased service may be requested but require strong justification. The work must be performed independently of the PI lab and project personnel. Rationale must be provided describing the critical need for use of the facility that may be due to unique and technically specialized needs that is otherwise inaccessible through use of an external vendor. Justification for how the work independently performed through a core facility validates the technology will also be required during the full application submission.

- The remaining 25% of the total project budget may be allocated internally to support personnel and materials and supplies.

- Allowable budget expenditures are direct expenses necessary for the conduct of the project and includes salary and fringe benefits for non-faculty project personnel, purchased services, materials and supplies. Equipment may be requested in extraordinary circumstances but must meet certain criteria to be considered an allowable expense. Approval of expenses is at the discretion of the Accelerator Awards program and the Ohio Third Frontier. A summary of allowable and unallowable expenses is provided below.

Expense Type	Allowable?
Consultants	Yes
Service contracts	Yes
Supplies	Yes
Bonuses, incentives or rewards	No
Faculty salary/fringes	No
General support for PI's lab	No
Indirect costs	No
Industry expert payment or fees	No

Legal fees	No
Licensing fees	No
Overhead	No
Professional affiliations or membership dues	No
Publication costs or reprints	No
Subcontracts	No
Travel – domestic or foreign	No
Tuition costs	No
Equipment	May be requested, approval required
Ohio State non-faculty personnel	May be requested, approval required

Industry Expert

- Industry experts are valuable contributors who volunteer their time to advise faculty who are submitting an Accelerator Award proposal. Applicants engage with industry experts, leveraging their industry and entrepreneurial experience to guide applicants to develop milestones that are commercialization focused. This helps to ensure that key deliverables and success metrics are aligned with the end-user/customer technology features and/or specifications. Industry experts may assist with identifying vendors or other external resources that are necessary for successful completion of the project. Industry experts are encouraged to remain engaged throughout the application process and funded projects.

- To protect the technology underlying an Accelerator Award application, please submit a request for a confidentiality disclosure agreement (CDA) (also known as a non-disclosure agreement) electronically through Ohio State's online inventor portal, Innovate, prior to engaging in discussions with industry experts or external parties.

- Industry experts cannot have a financial relationship with the PI or with any consultants or vendors funded by the Accelerator Awards. Upon conclusion of the Accelerator Award project, the industry expert will not receive any preferred rights to negotiate for an option or license agreement.

- Please see the industry experts webpage for additional guidance.

Pre-Proposal Expectations
Time Commitment >1hr

- Identifying the right industry expert can take time. The key to maximizing the benefits of working with an industry expert is to ensure adequate time is available to provide guidance.
- The ideal time to identify potential industry experts is prior to/during the pre-proposal submission. The licensing officer managing the technology may have suggestions or recommendations. Alternatively, contacts in industry or industry representatives from technical conferences may have suggestions. If applicants don't know where to start, please contact the Accelerator Awards Program who can facilitate identification of potential experts.
- Initially contact potential industry experts to discuss their interest in participating, as well as providing an overview of the role, expectations, and time commitment.

Full Proposal Expectations
Time Commitment (2-6 hr over a 5–6-week period).

- Engaging with an industry expert is required to submit a full proposal.
- Confirm participation with the industry expert. If not in place, initiate a CDA request prior to discussing the proposal and technology.

- Opportunity to discuss project scope, milestones, and the letter of support. Include follow-up engagement to get industry input on the proposal and milestones and addressing review comments.
- The industry expert is required to provide a letter of support to the applicant as part of the full application package. Guidelines for the LOS are provided in the full application instructions.

Questions to Guide Engaging with Industry Expert
- What do we need to prove that this product will be of interest to investors?
- Do the project milestones address key specifications or capabilities needed to demonstrate attract interest through licensing or investing?
- What is the price point at which the product/service is acceptable to the market? How does the cost of producing the product/service compare to this price?
- Is the project plan outlined reasonable? Especially with respect to timeline, budget, outcomes.
- How do I define quantifiable success criteria that can be used to assess if milestones were successfully achieved or not?
- Who do you think would be the best customers/target market to start with?
- What other products in the market would be our competitors?
- What differentiating features would be important for adoption?
- What is a reasonable go to market strategy? What critical steps and barriers should we consider?

Funded Project Expectations
Time Commitment (<1 hr per quarter, quarterly or mid-year meeting (1hr) over a period of 12 months).
- Accelerator Awardees are encouraged to continue engaging with industry experts throughout the funded project. This can be on an ad-hoc basis as needed, or regularly to obtain feedback on successful completion of milestones and development of the technology. Attendance at quarterly and/or a mid-year project meeting is helpful to review progress to date and discuss commercialization goals of the project.

Review process

- **Pre-Proposals** will be reviewed for compliance with the program's requirements and alignment with the goals of the program. Pre-proposals that meet the screening requirements will be reviewed by an external selection committee. Applicants with pre-proposals that best fit the evaluation criteria will advance as a finalist and submit a full application.

- All applicants who submit a pre-proposal will be notified of the outcome (invited or not invited to submit a full application) and provided feedback and suggestions. Applicants who do not advance to the full application phase may request a debriefing to guide a resubmission.

- **Full Application and Pitch Presentations (by invitation) instructions will be provided to finalists**. The Selection Committee discuss and review all finalist full application packages and pitches and determine funding recommendations.

- The external selection committee consists of a representative from the Keenan Center for Entrepreneurship and a mixed group of external participants with commercialization, entrepreneurial, venture capital investment, and technical expertise across a broad range of technology sectors.

Award Decisions

- Final funding decisions will be made by the Ohio Third Frontier based upon recommendations of the external selection committee. **Intent to fund notifications will be communicated to finalists via email after the pitch presentations.** Projects not selected for funding will receive review comments and

feedback from the review process.

General Evaluation Criteria

- Project Plan: project will generate the proof needed for the technology to be licensed to a startup company; proof is defined by industry input; proof is meaningful, measurable, and impactful; milestones are clearly defined and can be completed within 12-months and with resources requested; degree to which project activities use independent, third-party vendors.

- Project Outcome/Startup Opportunity: commercialization plan clearly articulates plan for license to Ohio-based startup company; sufficient opportunity to sustain startup company within reasonable period of time (3-5 years); the project is well positioned to attract follow on funding for the next stage of development and ultimately funding for commercialization.

- Technology: degree to which the technology is innovative/disruptive; strength of the proof-of-concept data; stage of technical development; time to market for product; competitive advantage over technologies currently available/in development/status quo.

- Intellectual Property: strength of intellectual property position to protect the business model.

- Market: market assessment performed and demonstrates a strong market/clinical need; reasonable path to market entry.

- Commercialization: the value proposition is clear, robust and compelling; technology is significantly scalable to achieve commercialization objectives.

- Team: team has the appropriate expertise to successfully complete the proposed project; PI and Co-PIs will dedicate the time needed to complete the project within proposed timeframe; the inventor(s) is committed to developing and commercializing the technology.

Confidential Information

Members of the Accelerator Award external selection committee who will be reviewing the proposals and making the funding recommendations, are NOT under any confidentiality agreements. **Accordingly, applicants must not include proprietary information that has not been disclosed or protected by the Technology Licensing Office.** Publicly disclosing confidential information to external parties without a confidentiality agreement risk destroying the patentability of the invention. When preparing the application materials, a typical approach is to focus on what the invention does, rather than the detailed technical information as to how it does it. Applicants are encouraged to contact their assigned licensing officer with any questions or for additional guidance.

Projects Involving Human Subjects and/or Animal Subjects

- If an Accelerator Award project contemplates activities involving human subjects, the PI must obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the project, such approval to be current within one (1) year of the notice of award. Any modifications to the project plan must be approved by the IRB.

- If an Accelerator Award project contemplates activities involving animal subjects, the PI must obtain Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval for the project, such approval to be current within three (3) years of the notice of award. Any modifications to the project plan must be

approved by the IACUC.

- Given the length of time needed to obtain the necessary approvals to conduct human and/or animal subject research, all full application submissions must have IRB/IACUC protocol(s) approved or pending by the full application submission deadline.

- Awarded projects must have IRB/IACUC approval prior to the release of any funds. Documentation submitted to Accelerator Awards program should include (1) the IRB/IACUC-approved protocol and (2) a signed letter from the IRB/IACUC indicating that the study has been approved or exempted. Applicants are strongly encouraged to complete these requirements during the application phase so as to not cause any delays in funding. **Funds may not be awarded if the necessary IRB/IACUC approvals are not obtained within 3-months of the award notice.**

Post-Award Administration & Award Requirements

The Ohio State University Keenan Center for Entrepreneurship is responsible for the administration and implementation of the Accelerator Awards in conjunction with the Office of Sponsored Programs. Awardees are expected to engage with the commercialization team on a regular basis. As a condition of the award, awardees will be expected to:

- Attend the project kickoff meeting.
- Meet quarterly (in person or by telephone) with the Accelerator Awards program and the commercialization team.
- Provide written quarterly progress reports.
- Submit a final report within 30 days of the end of the project period that summarizes technical achievements and discusses commercialization next steps.
- Present a final pitch to the selection committee.

Failure to provide timely and complete required documents may result in early termination of the Accelerator Awards project and may preclude the PI from being eligible for any Ohio Third Frontier funding in the future.

Contact Information

For more information or questions, please contact the Accelerator Awards team by email at accelerator_awards@osu.edu.

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