



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Innovation Partners

**Translational Investment Fund
Program Guidelines**

OVERVIEW

Who We Are

Texas A&M University Innovation Partners is the dedicated member commercialization office for Texas A&M University responsible for overseeing and managing the Texas A&M University System's intellectual property and technology commercialization interests for the Texas A&M University member consistent with System Policy 17.01. Texas A&M University seeks to empower its researchers to experiment, discover, and build solutions to today's challenges.

About the Translational Investment Fund

The Translational Investment Fund is designed to provide an annual opportunity to qualifying Texas A&M University researchers to compete for an investment of \$50,000 - \$75,000 over a 1-year project period specifically to fund the further development of early-stage technologies that have the potential to address industrial or commercial needs. Translational research is research that is in the process of transforming ideas from research based-theory into a pre-commercial product or service, often for prototype-development activities. This fund exists to bridge the gap between basic research funding and product-oriented funding, to ensure that productive ideas can survive to become commercialized assets.

Funding cycles will open once per year beginning summer 2020. Following the pilot year, preference will be given to researchers whose projects have not been selected for funding in the previous two years.

To be considered, a qualifying researcher or research team that meets the project requirements outlined below must submit a Letter of Interest to the Innovation Partners faculty advisory committee who will then review and invite a subset of researchers/teams to submit a full proposal.

The award amount will be determined based on the type of technology, the stage of the technology's development, the milestones during the performance period, the proposed project budget, which must be disclosed in the full project proposal, as well as allowable uses of funds as described in the program budget guidance. Budgets are subject to approval by the faculty advisory committee who may either approve the amount requested or recommend adjustments to the budget prior to funding.

In order to receive and maintain funding, the recipient will be required to meet designated milestones and submit reports mid-way through and at the conclusion of the project period outlining their progress.

ELIGIBILITY

Qualifying Researcher(s)

To submit a Letter of Interest to the committee, the researcher must be a current Texas A&M University employee and must have previously filed an invention disclosure of System-owned intellectual property* with Texas A&M Technology Commercialization (TTC) that has been assigned an invention number and is managed by Innovation Partners.

*Inventions and their related IP that are jointly-owned with another institution, where Texas A&M has entered into an inter-institutional agreement (IIA) or research agreement and is indicated as the lead institution for commercialization, are also considered eligible for this program.

Qualifying Project

To qualify for the program, the subject matter of the project must be an existing disclosed invention that has been assigned an invention number by TTC, is managed by Innovation Partners, has not been released to the inventor(s) or licensed at the time of submission, and is on track to be transformed into new products/services/companies. The technology must have at least completed proof-of-concept stage (or Technology Readiness Level 3 or higher), with demonstrated commitment by the inventor(s) to move the technology forward in the commercialization process.

Upon submission of a Letter of Interest, the committee will confirm that the project qualifies for the program.

Examples of qualifying projects include, but are not limited to:

- Therapeutic drug lead optimization
- Creation of prototypes, or prototype development
- Completion of programming, code development, or development of user interface
- Acquisition of technology validation data, often for “endpoints” of interest to industry

This program is NOT designed to fund basic research, market analysis, or business plan creation as other mechanisms exist to support these efforts.

SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Submission and Award Timeline

Refer to the Request for Proposals for the current submission cycle for specific deadlines.

Letter of Interest

Qualifying Researchers will first submit a letter of interest to the Innovation Partners faculty advisory committee via an online form provided in the current Request for Proposals. The initial letter of interest (**2500-character maximum**) must include the following components in order to be considered.

- Project Title, Inventor Information, and Assigned Invention Number from TTC
- Summary of Proposed Project, to include:
 - Description of the project
 - Market need to be addressed
 - Commercially-relevant goal(s) to be achieved by the end of the project term
 - Brief introduction of researcher and/or team members
 - Estimate of total budget request

Full Proposal Invitations

Following the review of letters of interest, the faculty advisory committee will select projects that will then be invited to submit a full proposal for review and evaluation by the committee. Upon receipt of the invitation to submit a full proposal, the inventor will have a limited time to submit. Full proposals should **not exceed 5 pages** (not including the budget template and letters of intent or support) and review with the inventor’s assigned Innovation Partners Licensing Manager prior to submission is also encouraged. An outline of the desired proposal sections and submission instructions is provided in Appendix A.

Budget Guidelines

The budget period is for 12 months and budgets may include, but are not limited to:

- Salaries and wages for research support personnel (including graduate students and post-docs)
- Travel as necessary to perform the research
- Non-capital equipment

- Project-specific research materials and supplies

Budgets may NOT include items such as:

- Faculty salary support
- Student tuition and fees
- Indirect or overhead costs
- Capital equipment
- Supplies considered general research supplies

A budget template and additional guidance will be provided to those invited to submit a full proposal.

Proposal Review & Selection Criteria

Following the submission deadline, the faculty committee will review full proposals and accompanying budgets, and make selections on which projects will be funded based on the following criteria. In addition, proposals will be expected to include mid-way and final project milestones that will be approved during proposal evaluation and awardee selection.

The committee will consider the following criteria when reviewing and scoring proposals.

- *Need* – Does the proposed project focus on an important unmet customer and market need?
- *Approach* – Is there a clear overall strategy, with methods and analyses? Does the proposal describe a unique approach for addressing the customer and market need? Is the approach well-reasoned and suitable to complete proposed specific aims?
- *Benefits* – Will the specific benefits that would result from the stated approach be significant and measurable? Is the proposed work focused on translation/development of a research finding, rather than further research?
- *Competition* – Do the benefits of the proposed project approach convey superiority to its competition and alternatives in the market?
- *Feasibility* – Is the project scope of work appropriate for the timeframe and level of funding?
- *Student Engagement*, if part of the research team. – How, if at all, does this project engage students? Are there clear learning outcomes to be achieved that will aid in advancing the educational mission of the university?

Awardee Announcement

Once the committee has determined the recipients of the award, awardees will be notified and a formal announcement will be made via email distribution. Additionally, feedback will be provided to unfunded proposals to provide an opportunity for researchers to revise and resubmit in a future cycle.

AWARD MANAGEMENT

Distributions and Milestones

Funding will be released in two tranches, with the first at the start of the performance period and the second upon the report of successful completion of the mid-way milestone. It will be the awardee's responsibility to provide a departmental fiscal contact at the time of proposal submission so that the distribution of funds will be as streamlined as possible.

Upon the completion of each milestone, awardees will be expected to fulfill the reporting obligations as described below. Following the release of the first tranche of funding at the start of the project period, awardees must first meet the approved mid-way milestone in order to receive the second tranche of funding. If an awardee fails to meet a milestone or submit interim reports/statements, further funding will cease until the negotiated milestone has been met. If an awardee feels they cannot achieve a milestone within the allotted timeframe, they are encouraged to contact Innovation Partners as soon as possible. The faculty advisory committee will be consulted as necessary.

Reporting Requirements

Upon completion of the mid-way checkpoint of the performance period, awardees will be required to submit a brief report providing a progress update on the project (with supporting data) confirming the mid-way milestone has been met, total expended budget to date from the award funds, along with a summary of the next steps in the technology's development through the end of the performance term.

Awardees will also be required to submit a final report within 30 days of the conclusion of their performance period in the form of a presentation to Innovation Partners and the faculty advisory committee to summarize their accomplishments with supporting data, analyze the commercial viability of the technology, and outline what they believe are the next steps in the technology's development.

FOLLOW-ON ACTIVITIES

Ongoing Progress Reporting

Innovation Partners is also interested in the long-term impact of technology development it has supported and will contact awardees annually following the showcase to determine if significant translational events have been achieved as a result of this funding. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Abstracts/presentations, manuscripts, published guidelines
- Milestones achieved in animal models, manufacturing and toxicity campaigns
- Regulatory meetings and filings (e.g., 510K, IDE, IND, BLA, NDA)
- Improved diagnosis or treatment of disease
- Initiation of appropriate clinical studies
- Implementation in clinical practice or community, and/or outcomes in the like
- Translation of models to other therapeutic or geographical areas
- Agreements with partners and strategic collaborators to translate more broadly
- Follow-on funding (e.g., commercialization-related grants, SBIR/STTR, angel and venture capital investment)
- Commercialization (e.g. new intellectual property, license or commercial partnerships, start-up company)

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information or questions about the Translational Investment Fund, please contact [Megan Brown](#).

Appendix A*

1. **Abstract** (1/2 page max)
Summarize your project and need for funding.
2. **Project background and intellectual property status** (1/2 page max)
Include information about the foundational research forming the basis of the technology, the technology's current stage of development, necessary next steps in the development process, and the status of any intellectual property filed.
3. **Proposed product or solution & market need**
Include information about the problem you are aiming to solve, the primary target market and potential customer, and the potential competition (think other technological solutions, not companies).
4. **Work Plan/Scope**
Lay out your project plan to include milestones, timeline, facilities, and expected accomplishments by the end of the performance period.
5. **Collaborators and other sources of support**
Include information on any previous funding received to develop this technology, along with pending applications for funding to support the development of the technology.
6. **Project team roles and responsibilities**
Include a brief summary of each contributor's role and responsibilities on the proposed project.
7. **Budget & Justifications**
Provide a brief description of how each line of requested funds in the provided budget template will be used to achieve the stated goals.
8. **Letters of intent/collaboration/support** (if applicable)
Of particular interest are letters from potential commercial partners or licensees in the development of the technology.

* Full Proposals should not exceed 5 pages, not including the budget template and letters of support/intent.