Innovate Carolina

KickStart Venture Services Commercialization Grant-Award Program

Request for Applications

Description

The KickStart Venture Services Commercialization Grant-Award Program provides up to $50,000 in non-dilutive funding to intellectual property (IP)-based (i.e., patents, copyright, know-how) UNC-Chapel Hill IP-based companies. Administered by KickStart Venture Services, a department within UNC-Chapel Hill's New Ventures and Partnerships organization, the Commercialization Grant-Awards are part of a campus-wide effort to translate discoveries made in Carolina's academic laboratories into products and services that can benefit North Carolinians and those around the world. Award disciplines range from life sciences to physical sciences, including but not limited to, therapeutics, diagnostics, medical devices, digital health, energy, materials science, engineering or computer science.

Awards are given only to companies that have licensed IP from UNC. Applications from companies who are unable to complete a license agreement prior to the award will not be considered for this funding. For applications that are deemed ineligible after submission, the project might be forwarded within Innovate Carolina for consideration under programs focused on technological development within UNC.

Purpose

The primary purpose of these awards is to provide funding for early-stage proof-of-concept experiments, validation studies, and prototyping. This funding will help generate data that can be leveraged for the company's next round of funding. For example, the award can be used to generate preliminary data to apply for an SBIR/STTR grant or develop a prototype to attract a seed round investment. A secondary purpose of these awards can be to gather business intelligence for the company. This could include conducting market research, competitive landscape analysis, or generating partnership discussions.

Eligibility

The eligibility requirements are as follows:

1. The program is open to any early-stage company developing research innovations from UNC-CH where at least one of the founders is a faculty member, student, or staff, or have a primary appointment at UNC-Chapel Hill or the joint UNC-NCSU Biomedical Engineering (BME) department with their primary appointment based in UNC-Chapel Hill. Startups developing a research innovation from a UNC-CH laboratory where the faculty member is not a founder are also eligible. Note, an adjunct faculty position does not qualify for eligibility. For eligibility of companies that have a UNC-CH student as a founder, UNC-CH faculty or staff members must be involved in a mentorship/advisory capacity at minimum.

2. Grants will only be given to companies developing IP owned by UNC-CH and disclosed to UNC-CH in the form of a Report of Invention (ROI). It is the applicant's responsibility to notify the Office of Technology Commercialization (OTC) Commercialization Manager prior to application submission to ensure the IP and license, is in good standing (proper report of invention, filings, up to date on patent costs, etc.).

3. Lower priority will be given to companies who have previously acquired significant funding from other sources (e.g., STTR/SBIRs, angel investment, venture capital, etc.). The KickStart Grant Award is intended to serve as one of the first sources of financing for the company.

4. Preference will be given to companies who have participated in KickStart Venture Services' programming, including but not limited to the Venture Catalyst Program, Via Verus Customer Discovery Workshop, NSF I-Corps, KickStart Advisory Group Meeting or similar campus programs such as 1789 Venture Lab or Launch Chapel Hill.

5. Companies must be incorporated prior to application submission. The award is given to the startup company and not an individual founder.

6. The company must have licensed the IP prior to receiving the award. Eligibility in the absence of a completed license requires OTC approval.

7. A non-faculty business lead or advisor (e.g., part-time CEO, KickStart Venture Services Entrepreneur-In-Residence) must be engaged in company activities.

8. A business strategy for commercializing the product or service must be provided at the time of submission. Note: a full business plan is not required.

Funding

The KickStart Venture Services Commercialization Grant-Award Program will provide a limited number of awards of up to $50,000. The number and size of these awards depend upon the quality of proposals received and the availability of funds. Companies that have previously received a grant-award may be eligible for another round of funding if there is a justifiable need.

Application Process

Given the wide range of technologies and their stage of development, faculty are encouraged to contact KickStart Venture Services prior to submitting this application. By contacting our team, we can provide a preliminary assessment of the proposal and its eligibility for the Commercialization Grant Award. Please email our Program Manager at rspeakman@unc.edu and copy our Director at mireya.mckee@unc.edu with any questions about the application process.

Confidentiality: At the applicants' request, KickStart Venture Services will make reasonable efforts to keep information disclosed during this discussion in confidence (unless disclosure of information is required by law).

A complete application must include:

A. Executive Summary of the proposal which includes summaries of each section below (500 words maximum)

B. Main Application composed of the following sections (please note word limit for each)

1. **Problem or Unmet Need (500 words maximum)**
    - Describe the problem(s) or unmet need(s) which the company aims to address
    - Include all relevant information such as who is affected by the problem, magnitude of problem, current solutions in place, etc. Be specific about what part of the problem you aim to solve.

2. **Solution (500 words maximum)**
    - Describe the product/service you are developing and how it will solve the problem described above
    - At what stage of development is the product/service (i.e., idea, prototype, ready for commercial sales)?

3. **Technology (500 words maximum)**
    - In detail, describe the underlying technology that supports or enables the product/service
    - Describe how technology is differentiated or innovative relative to offerings in development or currently on the market
    - Describe the IP position for technology (e.g., disclosed to OTC, provisional patent filed, issued patent)

4. **Market (500 words maximum)**
    - Briefly describe the market for the product or service. Include information on market size, market potential, market segment and customer profile. Justify this information with primary or secondary market research
    - If appropriate, include a discussion of channels which the company will leverage to advance the product or service to market

5. **Company (500 words maximum)**
    - Describe the current status of the company which includes corporate structure, date of incorporation, registration and most recent capitalization table
    - Outline the current status of licensing discussions with either UNC-CH or other license holder(s)

6. **Regulatory Strategy (if appropriate) (500 words maximum)**
    - Include details on the appropriate regulatory pathway for the product/service (e.g. IND, NDA/BLA, 505(b)2, 510(k), FCC, UL, etc.) If available, include proposals or letters of support from contractors and/or consultants who support this regulatory strategy

7. **Team (500 words maximum)**
    - Provide a summary of the company's current founders, management team and advisors. Please include short bios for each team member
    - How will the current management team leverage their expertise to help grow the company? As appropriate, include relevant accomplishments which may strengthen the proposal (e.g., partnering deals, previous experience with launching a startup, etc.)

8. **Impact (500 words maximum)**
    - Describe in detail how this award will impact future development and growth of the company. Are the funded activities on a critical path towards enabling a successful commercial milestone? How is this funding part of a larger fundraising strategy?
    - Has the company applied for funding through other sources which may overlap with the current proposal? Are there any sources of academic funding which similarly overlap with the current proposal?

9. **Proposed Study / Experimental Plan (1000 words maximum)**
    - Summarize the proposed specific aims and/or objectives to be funded by the award. Include a timeline, milestones and metrics for success.
    - For each specific aim, describe how the work will be completed, the responsible party (i.e. the company, contractor, etc.) and any anticipated pitfalls and alternative directions to be considered

    Note: When completing the online application, the Proposed Study / Experimental Plan may be uploaded as a PDF or typed into the text field. PDF is preferred.

10. **Funding and Budget Justification (500 words maximum)**
    - Include the total funding requested and a detailed budget describing how funds will be used (i.e., technology development/validation or operational expenses). Note, operational expenses do not include overhead, facilities and administration (F&A), indirect costs, or personnel costs. At a minimum, the budget should include the following:

        i. Activity: Describe the specific activity or experiment[1] to be financed. See below for a list of suitable expenses
        ii. Outcome/Milestone: Commercial milestones to be achieved from activity
        iii. Funds Requested: Amount of money requested to complete activity

    Suitable expenses may include, but are not limited to, the following:

    1. Exploratory translational technology development activities[2]
    2. Validation studies involving in vitro or in vivo models
    3. Hardware prototyping activities to produce a minimal viable product
    4. Validation studies involving human tissue samples
    5. Software development which may include mobile software, website, or cloud infrastructure
    6. Systems and process development which provide a clear competitive advantage for the company
    7. Contract engineering for specialized prototype development
    8. Rapid prototyping designs for user studies
    9. Market research
    10. Regulatory consultation

[1] Companies cannot conduct their research activities on campus or subcontract the work without prior approval. Work can be performed in the KickStart Accelerator (UNC-CH's dedicated laboratory space for companies

founded from the university) where the company has completed its Facility Use Agreement for access to the Accelerator prior to award disbursement.

[2] Development activities should not involve basic research. In some exceptional cases, salary support may be requested where personnel costs are critical to completion of the proposed activities

An inadequate budget justification may result in a less favorable score and/or reduced award. The KickStart Venture Services team is available to provide budget preparation and budget justification advice.

Note: When completing the online application, the Funding and Budget Justification may be uploaded as a PDF or typed into the text field.

Supplementary Material (optional)

In addition to the application, the following *optional* materials may be uploaded as a single PDF.

- Business plan
- Up to 3 full publications
- Relevant quotes from a third-party vendor
- Any relevant letters of support

Application Submission

Applications are only accepted though an online portal. To access this website, click the link below.

CLICK HERE TO APPLY

Applications are due February 27th at 11:59 pm EST.

Confirmation of receipt of application will be sent within 5 business days of the deadline.

If you have any questions, problems, or feedback regarding this application, please email our Program Manager at rspeakman@unc.edu.

Application Review

1. Each application will be reviewed, as appropriate, by the Review Committee (comprised of the KickStart Venture Services team and external reviewers).
2. Research involving animals or human subjects must be reviewed in accordance with the University's general assurances and HIPAA. Applications involving human subjects must be submitted to an Institutional Review Board (IRB).
3. The Review Committee will review applications, provide preliminary recommendations, and ultimately make funding recommendations to OTC.

Notification, Award Disbursement, and Terms

1. Notification of awards will be made approximately 8 weeks following application submission, with funding disbursement following shortly thereafter.
2. Projects must be completed in the timeframe described in the approved application.

3. Funds will be administered under a collaborative agreement between the University and the Company.

4. Disbursement of funds will be through the payment of company invoices provided to OTC. The award may be tranched as appropriate and determined by milestones set by the Review Committee.

5. If company research activities are conducted on campus, these experiments must be performed in the company's leased space in the KickStart Accelerator (UNC-CH's dedicated laboratory space for companies founded at the university). A Facility Use Agreement must be completed and approved prior to disbursement of the award.

6. Final reports must be submitted to KickStart Venture Services within 60 days of the award completion date. This report will be reviewed by the Review Committee. Any unexpended funds must be returned to OTC.

7. Expenditures may begin at any time after the official start date of the award and must be expended according to budget statements submitted in the application. No-cost extensions are possible, but rarely approved in circumstances with insufficient cause and justification.

8. As a condition of accepting a KickStart Commercialization Grant-Award, recipients are required to keep records detailing expenses according to requirements set forth in the award notification. These records must be submitted prior to the disbursement of subsequent tranches of the award.

9. If the company has not maintained a license agreement with UNC-CH for use of UNC-CH intellectual property, and/or if the intellectual property underlying the company is licensed to a third party at any time during the term of the Commercialization Grant-Award or prior to the final report, the Company must repay KickStart Venture Services for any funds disbursed under this Award. Such payments are due 60 days after the date of such a license to the third-party.

10. The award shall not be used for overhead, personnel, facilities and administration (F&A), or indirect costs. Budgets submitted including these items will be adjusted prior to disbursement.

11. Further terms and conditions may be imposed by the KickStart Venture Services team and will be provided on the KickStart Venture Services website.