Translational Funding from University of Cincinnati’s Technology Accelerator for Commercialization ("UCTAC")

UCTAC awards proof-of-concept funding grants several times per year to promote further development of new inventions that through eventual formation of a startup company, address a large unmet market need and offer a commercially viable solution to those needs. The awards are available for full-time faculty and/or staff with a primary employment appointment at the University of Cincinnati.

In accordance with UC policy and Ohio law, all inventions created by UC employees in the course of their employment and/or using substantial UC resources are owned by UC. Moreover, **UCTAC is the only entity legally allowed to manage UC inventions and associated intellectual property on behalf of the university.**

**Purpose of the Award**

In the performance of your research at UC, you may have disclosed to the UCTAC a technology you developed that has led to a new understanding in your field or otherwise provided something useful that had never before existed. As outlined above, innovation like yours has the potential to transform society. Federal grants typically fund basic research, and will not fund the translational research needed to transition your technology to a potentially “commercial-ready” stage. The UCTAC is committed to shepherding new discoveries that have the potential to be transformed into new products and services to the next level, where they have a better chance of commercial success. The UCTAC will provide the financial resources and other support allowing proof-of-concept work, so you can further develop your discovery and to prepare it for entry into the commercial marketplace through new venture creation (a startup company).

**The Award**

The Accelerator solicits multiple applications annually from full-time UC faculty and staff for proof-of-concept funding. Awards are made on a competitive basis, and all projects are eligible for two application/funding phases:

- $25,000 to $40,000 in the Phase I award
- up to $75,000 for the Phase II award

All funds awarded must be expended within one year. In addition to the funding, the Accelerator offers training to help develop an entrepreneurial mindset in approaching your work and will match you with one of our Entrepreneurs-in-Residence, who will provide important guidance in readying your technology for the marketplace.

**The Process**

The selection process is managed by UCTAC, however, local entrepreneurs, comprising an external Commercialization Advisory Committee, also review the applications, and will make the final decisions of which applications are eventually awarded. The committee members all have relevant experience with scientific/engineering innovation, are well-connected to local and regional investors and other resources and have proven themselves in translating innovation into commercial success. The
Commercialization Advisory Committee considers a number of factors in reaching a decision on which projects receive funding, in particular the Committee will consider:

- The technology’s state of development and where it fits in the market
- Your research plan and chances of successful completion (strength of the project team)
- Attractiveness of the market for your technology
- Competitive advantage your technology brings
- Economic impact of your technology
- Potential to form a startup company that can attract further resources and investment, and
- Overall quality of your proposal

Following the call for proposals, you must submit your written application, which will then be reviewed by both UCTAC staff and the Committee. If your proposal makes this first cut, you will be invited to give a ten minute presentation to the UCTAC staff and the Committee. Following this stage, the Committee will vote on which proposals to fund, and you will be notified shortly thereafter. Within three weeks of notification of award, UCTAC staff along with a few Entrepreneurs-in-Residence will give a presentation to all awardees on how to focus on the commercial aspects of your project. This “On-Boarding” session will show you methods, approaches and other tools needed to successfully transition your invention towards a commercial outcome.

Outcomes

**Funded proposals.** Projects completing Accelerator-funded research are better positioned to compete for additional, and more substantial, funding from sources like the Technology Validation and Startup Fund and CincyTech. Project teams will also be more competitive if they decide to apply for the entrepreneurial training offered by I-Corps Ohio, a program based in Columbus that funds small teams to investigate the market/commercial potential of their discovery/invention.

**Unfunded proposals**

We may reject your application for several reasons:

- Your technology is too early stage, with too many unanswered technical questions
- You have already publically disclosed your invention, limiting the scope of patent protection available and rendering the invention less valuable
- The invention already exists
- There is no clear need for the invention in its current form, or there is no clear path to commercializing it

In the event your project was not awarded due to the technology being too early stage, we would encourage you to continue conducting basic research on it, under your existing grants. In some cases, you may also learn that a major shift in research direction is needed, which can be a beneficial outcome for non-awardees. Once certain milestone(s) demonstrating commercial readiness are achieved, we would be delighted to review a new proposal from you. If your proposal is not funded but has potential, UCTAC will help you to gain the necessary training to better understand the commercialization process, and how to determine where your invention stands with respect to commercial need, implementation, market and market size, etc. UCTAC can also help you approach I-Corp Ohio, if it is determined that your application was undermined by not having a clear road towards commercialization. Once a suitable path
to commercialization is determined via I-Corp Ohio, teams can then reapply to the Accelerator (or another funding source) and expect a much greater chance for success.

This tutorial is by no means exhaustive. It is intended to provide an overview of one of the important services offered by UCTAC to the UC community. For additional information on UCTAC or on applying for Accelerator funding, please contact our office using the information on this web site.