

The Corridor Early-Stage Innovation Fund

**the
florida
high tech
corridor**

early-stage innovation fund



The Florida High Tech Corridor and USF Research & Innovation Early-Stage Innovation Fund supports early-stage innovations and applied research with significant commercial potential. These funds are meant to seed USF-developed technologies that could lead to industry investment, start-up creation, and/or licensing opportunities. USF researchers may request **up to \$25,000** to support USF research expenses associated with the further development of the target innovation.

Key Considerations:

- Funding is intended to support USF-developed innovation and cannot be used to further develop an outside companies' existing technology.
- Funds can be used for faculty, student, and staff time, supplies and materials, lab access fees, and other associated USF research expenses. Funds cannot be used to support outside consultants or other non-USF expenses.
- Because these funds are internal to USF, no indirect costs will be applied to these awards. Please be sure to consult with your individual College or Dept. on any specific budgetary considerations.
- Awardees will have six months from the date of award to complete the outlined research. Additional time and extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Multi-disciplinary projects with collaborations across multiple colleges and/or departments are highly encouraged.
- Given the substantial interest in this program, researchers and projects that have previously received significant Corridor funding through its Matching Grants Research Program may not be considered.
- If you have not already, be sure to [work with USF Tech Transfer to disclose the technology](#) central to your submission. Failure to do so may jeopardize your ability to protect this technology in the future
 - Tech Transfer can also provide valuable insight and guidance on the technology's potential commercial viability and long-term commercialization strategy. Interested applicants are strongly encouraged to meet with TTO staff prior to submitting their proposal.

Key Dates:

- Round FY24-1:
 - Friday, November 17, 2023 (5pm) - Letter of Intent Due
 - Friday, January 19, 2024 (5pm) - Full Proposal Due
 - Friday, March 1, 2024 - Awards Announced (Anticipated)
 - Funded research will coincide with summer 2024 term

- Round FY24-2 (Anticipated):
 - Spring/Summer 2024
- Funds are available to support a minimum of three awards per round.
- Proposals not funded in previous rounds are welcome to submit in future rounds. Researchers interested in resubmitting are highly encouraged to receive feedback from program staff. Proposals resubmitted with little to no changes may not be considered.

Letter of Intent: To be considered for funding, interested applicants must submit a Letter of Intent by the due date above through the Corridor’s ESIF AirTable web portal:

<https://airtable.com/shrE87zKnQ8AXP1vn>

The LOI will request:

- **Lead Principal Investigator - Name, Title, Department, & College**
- **Project Title**
- **Funding Request Amount**
 - **Preliminary Budget:** Detailed justification is *not* needed at this time. Please provide one to two sentences on how the funding will be allocated into the anticipated budget categories. (*i.e. Request includes 1 month salary/benefits for the PIs (\$10,000); 6 months stipend/benefits for 1 graduate student at 0.5 FTE (\$10,000); and lab material/supplies (\$5,000).*)
- **Abstract:** In common language, provide an overview of the early-stage innovation, the research proposed, and potential commercial impact. One to two paragraphs maximum (limit to 250 words). If awarded, this abstract may be shared publicly. Do not disclose any private information.
- **Any USF Intellectual Property Included**
- **Alignment to [Corridor Key Industries](#) & [USF Strategic Areas of Focus](#)**
 - Proposals that align with these areas will be viewed most favorably.
- **Technology Sector/Subsector**
 - This information will be used by program staff to organize the review process.

Note: Only one Letter of Intent per lead PI will be accepted.

Full Proposal: Select researchers will be invited to submit a full proposal addressing the points below. Proposals must be submitted via email to the **Florida High Tech Corridor** at rsch-fhtcorridor@usf.edu by the due date above. Proposals must be a PDF. It should include a proposal coversheet, a narrative, and a 1-page budget with budget justification. Additional details below. ***Proposals that do not adhere to outlined requirements, format and guidance will not be considered.***

Note: The review committee will be comprised of representatives from across USF and USF Research & Innovation, the Florida High Tech Corridor, and the local economic development community. The committee is not composed of peer researchers or technical experts. Reviewers will be focused on the translational and commercial potential of the innovation and the team’s ability to deploy this innovation to solve real-world challenges. Please write for this audience – provide adequate context and explanation, limit and simplify complex technical descriptions, define acronyms, etc.

Proposal Coversheet

- **Lead Principal Investigator - Name, Title, Department, & College**
- **Other Participating Faculty/Staff, if applicable**
- **Project Title**
- **Funding Request Amount**
- **Abstract (250 words):** In common language, provide an overview of the early-stage innovation, the research proposed, and potential commercial impact. One to two paragraphs maximum. If awarded, this abstract may be shared publicly. Do not disclose any private information.
- **College Leadership Signature:** Proposals must be signed by the lead PI's Dean, Associate Dean of Research, or appropriate College Leadership.

Proposal Narrative (with maximum word counts by section)

- **Background (250 words):** Provide a general description of the early-stage innovation and its place among the current state-of-the-art. Please identify any collaborators or co-inventors. Summarize the research and development you and your team have previously completed. What is the innovation's current patent status? Outline any previous funding (internal or external) that has been invested into this early-stage innovation.
- **Potential Commercial Viability (300 words):** What problem or unmet need does this innovation address? What unique competitive advantage does the innovation offer over what is already available? Who is the target market/end-user for this technology? Is there a demonstrated demand for a solution to this problem/unmet need? How have you determined this demand?
- **Current Barrier (200 words):** What is the most pressing obstacle towards commercialization of the technology (i.e. lack of pre-clinical data, prototype development, technical validation, etc.)? How will these funds address this obstacle? How will this research help move the early-stage innovation further towards commercialization?
- **Project Plan (300 words):** Please outline the proposed research plan. What is the overall goal of the research effort? What tasks will be completed to achieve this goal? What results are expected?
- **Long-Term Commercialization Strategy (300 words):** What is your anticipated path to commercialization for this early-stage innovation? What has informed this pathway/strategy? What steps have you previously taken to support this path (i.e. market research, networking, industry engagement, etc.)?
- **Follow-On Funding Strategy (250 words):** Upon completion of the proposed research, how will additional funding be secured? How will those funds be deployed to advance the technology towards commercialization? Proposals with a specific future funding strategy will be viewed most favorably.

Be sure to spend adequate time thoroughly addressing these points with specific detail and well-founded justification for any claims or proposed strategies. Proposals that do not adequately adhere to this guidance may not proceed to full committee review. Click here to review the [program rubric](#).

Proposal Budget (1 Page)

- **Budget & Justification:** Provide a one-page budget breakdown including budget justification. Provide the name and contact information of your fiscal & business administrator who will oversee fund transfer should the proposal be awarded.

- Funds can be used for faculty, student, and staff time, supplies and materials, lab access fees, and other associated USF research expenses. Funds cannot be used to support outside consultants or other non-USF expenses.
- Please be sure to consult with your individual College or Dept. on any specific budgetary considerations. i.e. Tuition waiver requirements.

Award Notice:

The review committee expects to notify applicants of the funding decision within six weeks of the due date. Researchers will have six months from the date of award to complete the outlined research. Additional time and extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Funds will be transferred to awardees as a lump sum to be spent in accordance with the proposed budget.

Reporting Requirements:

To capture impact and ensure that funds are spent in full towards the intended purpose, awardees are required to submit the following information within 30 days of the project period end date.

- Reconciliation of funds expended
- Summary of work completed
- Future workplan based on these accomplishments

Annual surveys of follow-on progress may be requested up to five years beyond the project period. Awardees will be required to report major milestones associated with this technology to program staff – including external investments, company formation, licensing opportunities, etc..
