

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
USC STEVENS CENTER FOR INNOVATION
TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT GRANTS (TAG)**



LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) DEADLINE: 5:00 pm, Friday, January 17, 2020

INVITED PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 5:00 pm, Friday, March 20, 2020

PURPOSE

Technology Advancement Grants (TAGs) support technologies invented at USC through validation or proof-of-concept development. The awards add value to unlicensed USC owned technology, aiming to increase the probability of obtaining a license in the future. These awards are not intended to fund basic research or app development.

TAGs have a competitive two-step application process comprising an initial review by USC Stevens' staff and advisors and a final review and recommendation by an external advisory board of industry experts. It is anticipated that part of the award may be spent on outside organizations that will work with the principal investigator and USC Stevens to further develop the technology. The external advisory board may recommend that changes be made to the Project Plan in order for the project to be eligible for funding.

AREAS OF INTEREST:

- Innovations created at USC in any discipline that demonstrate strong potential for commercialization through additional investment on the scale of \$50,000 or less.
- TAG prioritizes projects that are not eligible for other USC technology advancement programs, such as the Alfred Mann Institute at USC, or Ming Hsieh Institute for Research on Engineering-Medicine and Cancer.

Applicants interested in financial assistance for customer discovery and research should consider applying to the CaDRE program at Innovation Node-Los Angeles (<http://lanode.org/boom>). Applicants interested in support for start-up creation should consult the resources available at <http://incubate.usc.edu>.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is limited to projects that satisfy these criteria:

- The application must be based on existing Intellectual Property (IP) developed at USC with the rights assigned to USC.
- The IP cannot be licensed, optioned, or subject to any third-party rights at the time of application (other than government interests via sponsored research).
- The principal investigator must be a USC employee eligible to serve as principal investigator, other than a term employee or visiting employee.

- A complete invention disclosure must be on file with USC Stevens prior to the submission of the letter of intent.

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

TAG Awards provide up to **\$50,000** for a project duration of no more than one year. Permissible expenses include:

- Prototype development
- Biological target validation and screening
- Software optimization
- Preclinical studies, such as toxicity
- Other advanced pre-commercial research, including sub-contracts to contract research organizations.

TAG funding is not intended to duplicate or replace the types of research support normally provided by external research sponsors, such as NIH or NSF, or to serve as pilot funding toward obtaining a research grant. It is not intended to support work that is eligible for other commercialization programs at USC.

GRANT CONDITIONS

- Funding is not provided for tuition, faculty salary or equipment. Funding may be used for Student or post-doc salary.
- Awards will include fringe benefits, but awards are not assessed Facilities & Administration Costs (*i.e.*, *Indirect Costs*).
- Awards are not transferable to other institutions; recipients must be employees of USC, with IP rights assigned to USC, during the award period.
- Awards are not transferable to other employees.
- Awards are not intended to duplicate currently funded efforts, pilot new research, or provide interim bridge funding.
- All USC rules, with respect to conflict of interest, human subject research, animal research, etc., apply to projects funded under this program. Funding will not be provided until all pertinent reviews are complete.

If, for a project funded by a TAG, the USC inventors wish to form a startup company and license the technology, then USC Stevens will discuss this option with the inventors, as well as assess whether to license the technology to an existing company.

EVALUATION STEPS

1. Inventors submit an invention disclosure via Sophia at: <http://stevens.usc.edu/researchers/what-is-sophia/>
2. USC Stevens licensing associate meets with inventor to discuss options for development and commercialization of invention, and whether further proof-of-concept work would be beneficial.
3. Interested inventors submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) describing their interest in further proof-of-concept development, including an approximate budget, scope of work, and expected benefits and outcomes (by **January 17, 2020**). An invention disclosure covering the work must be submitted prior to submission of the LOI. LOI's should be submitted in the online application portal at: <https://bit.ly/USCStevensTAG2020>.

4. LOI is reviewed by USC Stevens Center staff and USC Stevens' Faculty Advisory Committee according to the evaluation criteria stated below.
5. Applicants will be notified **February 21, 2020** if they have been selected to submit a Full Proposal.
6. If invited, successful applicants should submit a Full Proposal (by **March 20, 2020**).
7. Full Proposals are reviewed, and select Finalists identified **April 10, 2020** and asked to make a brief presentation to an external advisory board which will be convened in mid-April 2020. **Oral presentations will take place the week of May 11-15, 2020.**
8. The USC Stevens Executive Director makes final funding decisions based on the advisory committee's guidance, with awardees announced by end of **May 2020**.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The LOI and proposal will be reviewed based on the likelihood that proof-of-concept funding will result in a successful licensed invention on a scale merited by the investment. USC Stevens will provide information on the criteria list below and successful applications will demonstrate:

- **Potential Market:** the technology will be evaluated on the size of its total potential market and likely addressable market.
- **Impact:** the likelihood that this technology will significantly impact the industry and whether the technology presents a unique value proposition relative to competition.
- **Technical Feasibility:** the likelihood that this project (if funded) will advance the technology to a point of license to a third party or to receiving external investment within 1 to 2 years.
- **IP:** strength of Intellectual Property protection available.
- **Transformative Potential:** is this technology able to cause an important and lasting change to a market segment.

NOTIFICATION AND TERM OF AWARD

Proposers will be notified of the outcome for their proposals by **end of May 2020, and funds will be awarded by July 31, 2020**. Funds that are not expended within 12 months of award will be returned to the USC Stevens Center for Innovation.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions about the Stevens Center for Innovation Technology Advancement Grant Award or the application submission process can be directed to:

Michael Arciero, Director of Technology Licensing & New Ventures

arciero@usc.edu

213-821-0942

For submission instructions, see Proposal Guidelines below.

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GUIDELINES

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Before preparing a proposal, applicants should read closely the program description, including the sections on eligibility and evaluation criteria.

Format: Proposal documents should be written using 12-point Times or Times New Roman font, single-spaced with one-inch margins. Documents should be uploaded in Portable Document Format (PDF).

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF LETTER OF INTENT

- File an Invention Disclosure with USC Stevens:
<http://stevens.usc.edu/researchers/commercialization-process/>
- Review the evaluation criteria, then contact your licensing associate to discuss potential fit to the program.
- Submit letter of intent (LOI) not to exceed two pages, containing this information:
 - Title, stating name of technology
 - Names of inventors
 - Brief explanation of technology.
 - The anticipated market for the technology, including state of available competitive technology (why is it unique, why is it superior to solutions currently on the market) and include a description of any efforts undertaken by the investigators to validate market need.
 - Description of proposed additional work including justification statement describing how the funded work will improve the technology's marketability/commercial potential.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF FULL PROPOSAL AND PRESENTATION

- Selected applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal including a project plan, and prepare a 15-minute presentation for the external advisory board. Full proposals must contain this information:
- **Cover page information** (*to be filled out online*)
 - a) Proposal title
 - b) Keywords
 - c) Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PI contact information
 - d) Budget summary: fill in appropriate fields on the online budget form as completely as possible.

Sections to be uploaded: Materials for each item below should be uploaded as a single PDF file. It is requested that applicants follow instructions carefully and **do not submit** additional materials not

requested by this RFP. Information that is uploaded beyond what is requested **will not** be included in the proposal package provided to reviewers.

- a) **Abstract:** (not to exceed 30 lines of text) The project abstract is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the application.
- b) **Project Narrative:** (not to exceed 5 pages) No other ancillary text, appendices, etc., will be accepted; page limits are inclusive of figures and tables. The narrative must include the following components (use headers below):
 - i. **Introduction**
Provide a brief background and the specific aims of the project. Explain the project's innovations and significance relative to serving a market need.
 - ii. **Prior Work**
Describe prior achievements in development of the technology, and how the prior work has been supported. Explain areas in which the prior work needs to be advanced towards commercialization, and why these additional steps cannot or should not be supported by conventional research sponsors.
 - iii. **Competitive Landscape**
Describe the current commercial solution(s) to the problem your innovation intends to solve and how your solution is superior. If no solution currently exists describe barriers to innovation or market entry in the space and how your innovation meets this commercial need.
 - iv. **Project Plan and Outcomes**
Present the steps that will be followed in the project, and explain why these steps are important to commercial application of the innovation. Describe the anticipated outcomes of the project and how these outcomes will make the technology more marketable.
 - v. **Qualifications and Organization**
Provide the qualifications of the team for the proposed work. For multi-investigator projects, describe how the project will be organized and the contributions of each participant.
 - vi. **Future Activity**
Describe the future plans to extend the proposed work, and how the project outcomes will lead to commercialization.
 - vii. **Budget Justification:** (not to exceed one page) Provide a justification for the project budget, explaining why the proposed expenses will achieve the project aims.
- c) **Current Funding:** List all current or pending sources of internal and external support, both as PI or co-PI, related to the technology under development. In cases in which existing funding appears to be similar to the proposed project, take special care to explain the differences.
- d) **Curriculum Vitae** (not to exceed 5 pages)
Summary vitas, per PI, should be provided. Applicants may use any standardized CV format, or institutional ones (such as those for submissions to NIH – Biosketch - etc).

Contact Information

For additional information, contact:

Michael Arciero, Director of Technology Licensing & New Ventures

arciero@usc.edu

213-821-0942