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

LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) DEADLINE: 5:00 pm, Friday, February 4, 2022
INVITED PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 5:00 pm, Monday, April 4, 2022

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. USC Stevens has a budget of $300,000 available to fund up to 6 projects in 2022. The amount available per project cannot exceed $100,000. The number of projects funded will be based on the budget requested for those selected for funding and shall not exceed $300,000 in the aggregate for all projects.

TAGs have a competitive two-step application process comprising an initial review by USC Stevens' staff and an external advisory board, and a final review and recommendation by a second external advisory board of industry experts. The final presentations will be held via Zoom. 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 and taken to the next level through additional investment on the scale of $100,000 or less.
- TAG prioritizes projects that are not eligible for and which have not received funding from 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 BOOM (formerly 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 any time during the application or review process. USC Stevens reserves the right to withdraw funding if it learns that there is a party intending to license the technology (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.
- The project submitted would benefit from using the types of permissible expenses as described in "Types of Assistance" below to move a project closer to commercialization.
- Examples of innovations or technologies that can benefit from TAG funding include, but are not limited to, new therapeutics, diagnostics, medical devices, software (health and non-health) with commercial applications, new battery types, novel chip designs, new materials for aerospace and other projects with clear commercial applications.

Examples of past funded projects can be viewed at:

2021 Funded TAG Projects
2020 Funded TAG Projects

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

TAG Awards provide up to **$100,000** for a project duration of no more than one year. Permissible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Prototype development
- Biological target validation and screening
- Software optimization, user interface design, and/or hardening
- 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.
- Awards may be used to pay for third party services such as prototyping and contract research organizations.
- 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. If they have not already done so, Inventors submit an invention disclosure via Sophia at: https://usc.wellspringsoftware.net/kms/saml/login/
2. A USC Stevens Licensing Associate will meet with the inventor(s) to discuss options for development and commercialization of the 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, budget justification, scope of work, and expected benefits and outcomes by **February 4, 2022**. 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: bit.ly/USCStevensTAG2022Apply.
4. The LOI is reviewed by USC Stevens Center staff and an external advisory board according to the evaluation criteria stated below.
5. Applicants will be notified by **March 4, 2022,** if they have been selected to submit a Full Proposal.
6. If invited, successful applicants must submit a Full Proposal by **April 4, 2022**.
7. Full Proposals are reviewed by our external advisory board and the selected Finalists notified by **April 27, 2022.** Finalists will be asked to record a 10-minute Zoom presentation for the external advisory board and submit it by **May 18, 2022.**
8. Finalists will be invited to a live Zoom Q&A with the external advisory board the week of **June 6, 2022.**
9. The USC Stevens Executive Director makes final funding decisions based on the advisory committee's guidance, with awardees announced by **June 15, 2022.**

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:

- **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 the

competition.

- **Technical Feasibility**: the likelihood that this project (if funded) will advance the technology to a point where it will be of interest to a third party for licensing or further research funding.

- **IP**: strength of the Intellectual Property.

- **Transformative Potential**: would this technology 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 **mid-June 2022 and funds will be awarded by June 30, 2022.** 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 your Licensing Associate or:

Donaldson Santos
Director, Licensing & New Ventures
USC Stevens Center for Innovation
dgsantos@usc.edu
213-821-0946

For submission instructions, see Proposal Guidelines below.

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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: https://usc.wellspringsoftware.net/kms/saml/login/

- Review the evaluation criteria, then contact your Licensing Associate to discuss potential fit to the program and, if it is helpful, for assistance with item (c) below.

- Submit letter of intent (LOI) **not to exceed two pages**, containing this information:

    a. Title, stating name of technology
    b. Brief explanation of technology.
    c. 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.
    d. 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. 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 – does not count towards the 5 page limit)*

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 for each researcher)*
Summary vitas, per PI, should be provided. Applicants may use any standardized CV format, or institutional ones (such as those for submissions to NIH/NSF – Biosketch - etc).

After review by our external advisory board, a group of finalists will be asked to record a 10-minute presentation in Zoom about their project and attend a live Q&A session with the external advisory board during the week of June 6.

For additional information, contact your [Licensing Associate](#) or:

Donaldson Santos
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USC Stevens Center for Innovation
dgsantos@usc.edu
213-821-0946