

The Corridor Early-Stage Innovation Fund

the
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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 potential for commercial or community impact. These funds are meant to seed USF-developed innovations that could lead to industry investment, community engagement, 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.

During Round 24-2, The Corridor Early-Stage Innovation Fund is seeking innovations that align with the following USF Strategic Areas of Focus: [Design, Arts, & Performance](#) | [Social Justice & Human Rights](#)

Proposals that do not align with these areas will not be considered during this round.

What is an 'Innovation'?: This program is designed to support new or early-stage ideas that have practical applications in the marketplace or community. This could be new technology, a new method of completing a task, or a new process for achieving results.

Innovations are created every day, across the University. If you have questions about how your work may align with this program, Program staff will be available throughout the application period to answer questions and provide guidance. Please join the Early-Stage Innovation Fund Office Hours: <https://calendly.com/ernelson1/early-stage-innovation-fund-office-hours>

Key Considerations:

- Multi-disciplinary projects with collaborations across multiple colleges and/or departments are highly encouraged.
- Funding is intended to support USF-developed innovation and cannot be used to further develop an outside companies' existing technology or intellectual property.
- 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 food and beverage, 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.

- 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 innovation](#) central to your submission. Failure to do so may jeopardize your ability to protect this intellectual property in the future.
 - Tech Transfer can also provide valuable insight and guidance on the innovation’s potential market, community impact, and engagement strategy. Interested applicants are strongly encouraged to meet with Tech Transfer staff prior to submitting their proposal.
- 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, as appropriate based on the round’s Strategic Area of Focus. Researchers interested in resubmitting are highly encouraged to receive feedback from program staff. Proposals resubmitted with little to no changes may not be considered.

Key Dates - Round FY24-2:

- Letter of Intent Due - Friday, May 10, 2024 (5pm)
- Full Proposal Due - Friday, June 28, 2024 (5pm)
- Awards Announced (Anticipated) - Friday, August 9, 2024
 - Funded research will coincide with fall 2024 term

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**
- **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.
- **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).*)
- **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.
- **Innovation 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 commercial and/or community impact 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 Market and/or Community 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? What is the potential community impact of this innovation? Who is the target market/end-user for this innovation? 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 practical application of the innovation (i.e. lack of feasibility 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 commercial or community use?

- **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 and/or Community Engagement Strategy (300 words):** What is your anticipated path to deploy this early-stage innovation into the marketplace or community? What has informed this pathway/strategy? What steps have you previously taken to support this path (i.e. market research, networking, industry/community 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 innovation towards practical application? 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 food and beverage, 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 innovation to program staff – including external investments, company formation, licensing opportunities, etc..