



PROTO STAGE AWARD

PROTO STAGE AWARD OVERVIEW AND FORMAT FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS

OBJECTIVES

To accelerate promising translational research projects toward commercialization by adding value and creating more "partnership ready" opportunities through the achievement of one or more value-creation inflection points including:

1. Proof-of-Concept: establishing proof-of-concept and building a robust validation package in connection with a new or ongoing translational research project with manifest commercial potential (i.e., "de-risking").
2. Intellectual Property: generating new Intellectual Property (IP) assets or augmenting existing IP positions.
3. Deal flow: (i) enhancing and enabling the ability to license the relevant IP covering new technology to an established company, and/or (ii) fostering research collaborations with industry and securing an industrial partner to fund continued research in the framework of a dedicated research alliance.

PROJECT TYPES

- For devices or digital health projects where the commercialization and marketing efforts for a technology would be expedited and enhanced greatly through the development of a prototype and other select early-stage projects (e.g. therapeutics, diagnostics, software) that could benefit from a small cash infusion to advance commercially.
- Projects may be structured such that the budgeted activities may be outsourced to an external organization.
- Project duration cannot exceed 12-months

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

- Principal Investigators with a research portfolio and laboratory space whose full-time employer is Weill Cornell Medicine. Investigators who may have a faculty appointment to Weill Cornell Medicine but who are not full-time employees of WCM are **not** eligible.
- No PI may submit more than one proposal to this RFP.
- PI must have an active disclosure to the Center for Technology Licensing (CTL) related to the project.
- Your proposal/application must be approved by the head of your lab and/or your department chair.

FUNDING AND BUDGETING

- Proto Stage Awards have a maximum funding amount of \$50,000.
- The budget justification must be clearly linked to specific development activities to advance project (e.g. prototyping, assay development, etc.)
- PI salary and capital equipment will not be funded and should not be included in the budget.
- Funding will not be subject to WCM IDCR.
- CTL will have oversight of any external companies or collaborators used to conduct some or all of the development activities included in the project plan,

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE AWARD

- The PI will commit his/her time and effort, as appropriate, to lead and oversee the project.
- All intellectual property, including background patents, if any, and any inventions made in the course of performing the funded project, must be assigned to Cornell.
- The PI must collaborate with CTL and Enterprise Innovation on any commercialization activities related to the project.
- If industry funding is obtained for the project within the award period, Catalyst funding must be returned.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

- Proposal submissions are accepted on a rolling basis.
- Proposals will be reviewed by the External Advisory Board (EAB) on an approximately quarterly basis (first review date TBD, likely August 2025).
- Funding decisions will be announced within two weeks following the EAB review.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

All submissions must be sent using the online form available on the Enterprise Innovation website -

<https://innovation.weill.cornell.edu/programs-offerings-and-support/de-risking-gap-and-seed-funding-sources/enterprise-innovation>.

The link to the online form or the answers to questions related to the Proto Stage Award can also be requested by sending an email to ei-catalystfund@cornell.edu.

PROJECT ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION CRITERIA

- Projects will be selected through an independent review process by members of the External Advisory Board (EAB) comprising recognized scientific and thought leaders drawn from the biopharma, life sciences and venture capital communities.
- The selection criteria will consider the following factors, which should be addressed in the body of the proposal:
 - Potential impact and significance for human health and public benefit – must meet a critical unmet medical need.
 - Market need and opportunity.
 - Competitive advantage over technologies or platforms that are currently available or in development.
 - Scientific rigor and validity.
 - Innovation and novelty.
 - Potential to generate IP assets and/or strengthening pre-existing IP.
 - The potential to achieve a significant value inflection point that increases the commercial potential of the project and/or technology.
 - Evidence of preliminary interest from potential industry partners.
 - Probability of achieving project objectives with the allotted funding.
 - Innovation and technical risk - probability of overcoming technical obstacles to achieve project objectives.
 - Appropriateness of the research objectives and proposed milestones.
 - Clear delineation of a feasible R&D roadmap, detailing how Catalyst funding will have an impact and lead to a significant value-creation inflection point. **This must include at least one proposed technical milestone** to be achieved during the proposed funding period – **proposals submitted without such milestone(s) will not be considered.**

Project proposal details are on the next page.

FORMAT FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS

The proposal submission is via the following link:

<https://airtable.com/appFK8RvBXidzaAjs/pagxOPhTpTIWAGnIF/form>

The emphasis of the proposal should be on defining what the next value-creation inflection point is, and articulating how this will be achieved via the research plan with at least one well-defined technical milestone, and a corresponding budget.

The form requests that the project proposal is submitted via a two-page attachment uploaded to the form.

Your department chair needs to approve the project submission.

PROPOSAL FORM

- The form consists of several boxes which require you to add your details and general information about your project via text or selections from a drop-down list.
- The main project proposal and your NIH biosketch need to be added via uploading attachments to the form.
- Up to 3 key background references can be added via adding the URLs for these to the form.

PROJECT PROPOSAL (2 PAGES)

Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format, in a font no smaller than Arial or Calibri 10

Background and Significance

- Background and problem statement: What is the problem that you are addressing and why?
- Briefly describe recent research directly relevant to the problem, including others in the field, and in particular, your own prior work, if any.
- What is known and what is novel in the approach?
- Highlight the risks and potential benefits of the project.

Research Plan

- Summarize the work that needs to be performed to solve the problem (i.e., to advance the technology to the next value-creation inflection point)
 - i) What are the short- and longer-term goals of the research?
 - ii) What can be accomplished during the funding period requested?
 - iii) What are the anticipated challenges?
 - iv) What is/are the proposed technical milestone(s) to be achieved during the proposed funding period?

Intellectual Property

- Provide a brief description of any inventions you have already made related to the proposed research.
- Provide a brief statement about the current IP status of the invention.
- Describe how the proposed research will add value to and enhance the invention's patentability and/or commercial potential and/or importance.

Funding

- Detailed budget. **Do not include capital equipment or PI salary**
- Indicate whether any of the work will be conducted by an external company or collaborator (e.g. to create a device prototype or any other activity that cannot be completed internally). Provide details of the external company or collaborator if they have already been identified.