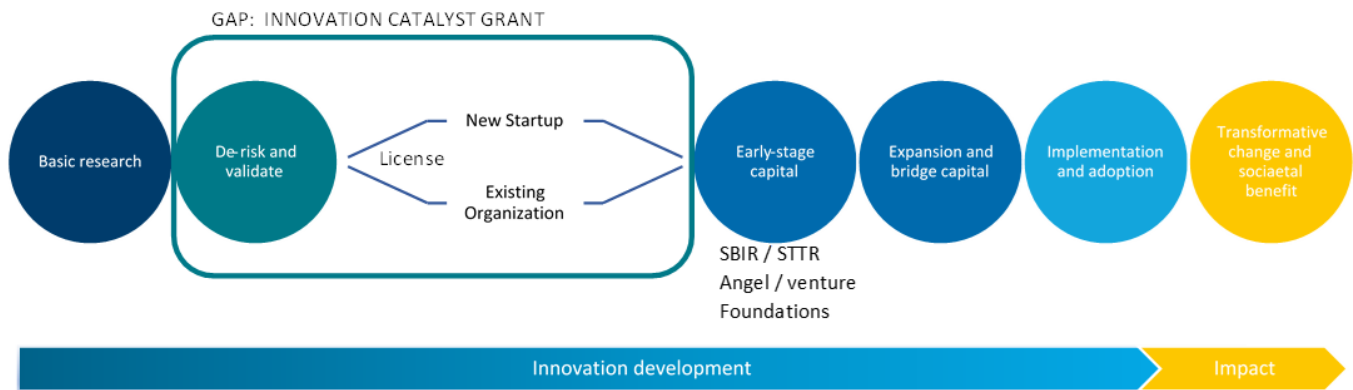**INNOVATION CATALYST GRANT**
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS – 2024 CYCLE

Overview
The Innovation Catalyst Grant is a proof-of-concept program managed by the Innovation & Business Engagement Hub, focused on providing targeted gap funding, training, mentorship, and support to UC Santa Cruz (UCSC) researchers in order to help de-risk and/or validate the implementation and adoption potential of early-stage technology innovations. The overall objective of the program is to better position innovations to move out of the University (e.g., attract the interest of entrepreneurs, companies, and investors for licensing), and catalyze the process leading to transformative change and societal impact.

The Innovation Catalyst Grant helps to fill the longstanding gap in the innovation capital landscape between basic research funding and early-stage investment, while also providing University researchers with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the pathway to innovation implementation and adoption.

New for this Cycle
In addition to considering a broad range of technology innovations, for the 2024 cycle, the Innovation Catalyst Grant will also include a special Climate Action Solutions Track focused on technology innovations addressing California's most pressing climate challenges. Where applicable, the sections below will indicate any unique features and specific considerations for this Track.

Funding
Each Innovation Catalyst Grant will provide up to $50,000 for direct costs incurred over a project period of up to 12 months. A total of up to $300,000 is available for the 2024 cycle, allocated as follows:
● Core program: up to $100,000
● Climate Action Solutions Track: up to $200,000

Eligibility

Any UCSC employee with Principal Investigator (PI) status is welcome to apply for the Innovation Catalyst Grant.[1]

An Innovation Catalyst Grant project must focus on a technology innovation that:
1. has already advanced beyond the basic research stage;
2. has no existing intellectual property license obligations[2]; and
3. now requires proof-of-concept support to demonstrate implementation, adoption, and commercial feasibility.

Projects supported by Innovation Catalyst Grants must be functionally distinct from other projects funded through federal, state, local, foreign, public or private foundations, non-profit organizations, industrial or other commercial organizations, or internal funds. For more information see the Proposals section below.

Key Dates
- Grant cycle opens: December 1, 2023
- Online program information session: December 15, 2023 (to receive a Zoom login, please register here)
- Proposal submission deadline: January 12, 2024
- Anticipated notice of award: March 28, 2024
- Anticipated project period: up to 12 months

Proposals

Applicants can submit a proposal for the Innovation Catalyst Grant through InfoReady. The proposal comprises the following sections:

1. **Innovation Description (limited to no more than 350 words):**
   - Introduce the technology innovation you seek to develop, describing the real-world problem and market need it addresses, how it will solve the problem and address the market need, and the potential for transformative change and societal impact
     - For the Climate Action Solutions Track, ensure this content covers how the solution addresses one or more of California's climate action priorities. Some examples include but are not limited to, zero-emission mobility, community resilience, wildfires, food security in the context of climate change, and drought
   - Provide a summary of the progress made developing the innovation so far (e.g., successful results) and any challenges encountered
   - Discuss next steps and future plans if proof-of-concept is demonstrated through the Innovation Catalyst Grant

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[1] PI exceptions will not be considered for Innovation Catalyst Grant proposals.
[2] Projects developing UCSC innovations that have already been optioned or licensed to a company are not eligible to receive Innovation Catalyst Grant funding.

2. **Advancement and Adoption (limited to no more than 350 words):**
   ● Describe what is required to de-risk and/or validate the technology innovation to advance development and adoption potential
     ○ For the Climate Action Solutions Track, also describe the anticipated community engagement needed to facilitate implementation of the solution and help ensure that local California communities are prepared and resilient
   ● Identify technical and/or commercial hurdles that must be overcome to facilitate implementation and adoption of the innovation
   ● Discuss the difficulties (if any) of overcoming these hurdles through conventional funding and resources
3. **Project Plan (limited to no more than 1,500 words):**
   ● Provide a statement of work detailing the key tasks, activities, and experiments proposed to achieve proof-of-concept results and address the challenges outlined in the preceding sections
   ● Funding should primarily be used to support activities that address the unique de-risking and validation needs of the innovation, such as the following, and may be used to support access to external resources and equipment and/or secure external technical services and contractors.
     ○ prototype fabrication
     ○ performance validation testing
     ○ software development
     ○ contract chemistry and analytical services
     ○ third party validation of results
     ○ small-scale animal model research
     ○ community engagement[3]
   ● While building on previous work, the proposed scope of work must be functionally distinct from other funded projects – it should not be dependent on funding from another source, and should not directly overlap with the scope of work of any project funded from another source.
   ● Project objectives must be achievable within a 12-month period following disbursement of the Innovation Catalyst Grant and using only awarded Grant funds
4. **Budget Summary and Justification (limited to no more than 350 words):**
   ● Provide a budget summary and justification detailing how requested Innovation Catalyst Grant funds would be used for eligible expenses aligned with activities detailed in the Project Plan[4]
   ● Funding can be used for up to $50,000 of direct costs only and is <u>not</u> intended to be used for:
     ○ capital equipment purchases
     ○ maintenance agreements
     ○ market research reports
     ○ campus or project administrative or operational costs
     ○ conference attendance or travel
     ○ faculty summer salary
   ● No more than 20% of the total requested budget may be allocated to salary support including salary, fringe, and tuition and fees. The salary limit includes support for any graduate students, post-doctoral scholars, or other university researchers, and any academic year support for

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[3] For any proposed community engagement work, provide a brief summary of the key stakeholders. In addition, briefly describe the extent of any existing collaborations with specific community partners or stakeholders that may be leveraged for the community engagement work or discuss anticipated collaborations with new community partners or stakeholders.
[4] Research that has already been performed or expenses that have already been incurred prior to Grant award are <u>not</u> eligible for funding.

faculty – if salary support is requested, then clear justification must be provided to explain why such salary support is necessary for achieving the project objectives[5] and, in addition to the budget summary, a detailed budget must be uploaded to the proposal (see Proposal Attachments below)

- As an exception, for projects where software development is integral to establish proof-of-concept, then up to 40% of the total budget or a total of $20,000 may be allocated to salary support – the software development need must be clearly articulated in the budget justification.
- If the proposal includes external technical services and contractors, then it should identify contemplated providers
- If the project plan includes collaborating with a community partner to facilitate community engagement, then the budget should identify the partner and address funding appropriate to support the partner's efforts
- For questions regarding or assistance with the proposal budget, please contact Jeffrey Jue, Industry Agreements Officer (jljue@ucsc.edu)

5. **Milestones and Outcomes (limited to no more than 500 words):**
   - Provide a schedule of key project milestones to be achieved sequentially using Innovation Catalyst Grant funding within a project period of no more than 12 months
   - Explain how achieving each milestone would help de-risk and/or validate the implementation and adoption potential of the technology innovation in order to accelerate use and impact, make it more attractive for licensing to an existing company, or enable the formation of a startup company within 1-2 years of project completion
   - Provide a summary of your overall expected project outcomes, such as:
     - building a working prototype
     - developing integral software
     - generating data/results that enable patent claims or patentable improvements
     - demonstrating commercial feasibility and scale-up potential
     - producing results that support follow-on funding through sources such as the federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs

6. **Proposal Attachments:**
   - Upload a detailed budget utilizing the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) Detailed Budget Builder template if your proposal budget includes any salary support for faculty, graduate students, post-doctoral scholars, or other university researchers. In addition to uploading the detailed budget, the proposal should still include a budget summary and justification section. For questions regarding or assistance with the detailed budget please contact Jeffrey Jue, Industry Agreements Officer (jljue@ucsc.edu).
   - Upload a biosketch for the PI using a standard format (e.g., NSF, NIH, or other)

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[5] Salary support is not intended to cover faculty summer salary. If the proposal includes funding for graduate students, then the PI responsible for supervising the education, training, or thesis-directed research or related activities of participating graduate student(s) must certify that participation of the student(s) in the program will not adversely impact the education, training, or thesis-directed activities of the student(s).

Intellectual property developed using Innovation Catalyst Grant funding will be assigned to UC and managed by the UCSC Innovation Transfer team. Based on an assessment of the subject innovation by the Innovation Transfer team, some PIs may be asked to submit a [UCSC Invention Disclosure Form](#) as part of the proposal process. For questions about intellectual property and the Invention Disclosure Form, please contact Jeff Jackson, Director of Innovation Transfer (jeffjackson@ucsc.edu).

Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis by an external Selection Committee[6] comprising industry R&D leaders and technology scouts, professional investors, technical consultants, and experienced entrepreneurs with subject matter expertise across relevant research disciplines. The Selection Committee will review proposals using a scoring rubric focused on program fit, innovation and technical merit, and proof-of-concept project milestones in order to make recommendations to the Vice Chancellor for Research, who will select the Innovation Catalyst Grant awardees:[7]

1. **Program fit**
   ● Does the proposal fit with program objectives?
   ● Is the technology innovation at a stage where proof-of-concept funding will substantially enable next steps towards implementation, adoption, and commercialization?
   ● Does the project address a gap in the development of an innovation with potential for transformative change and societal impact?
2. **Innovation and technical merit**
   ● How unique or novel is the innovation and does it have the potential to address a real-world problem and market need and drive transformative change and societal impact?
     ○ For the Climate Action Solutions Track, does the project address one or more of California's most pressing climate challenges and will the solution help ensure that local communities are prepared and resilient?
   ● Has the prior research conducted generated results that support proof-of-concept development and the activities that would be funded by the Innovation Catalyst Grant?
   ● How clearly does the proposal describe the proposed activities and anticipated results?
3. **Proof-of-concept project milestones**
   ● Does the proposal indicate clear recognition of the steps, challenges, and value- generating milestones that would help de-risk and/or validate the implementation and adoption potential of the innovation?
     ○ For the Climate Action Solutions Track, does the proposal demonstrate an understanding of community engagement needed to facilitate implementation of the solution?
   ● Is there a reasonable likelihood of achieving project milestones, given the available financial and technical resources identified or anticipated, within the program timeline?
   ● Would achieving the milestones accelerate use and impact, make the innovation substantially more attractive for licensing to an existing company, or enable the formation of a startup company?

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[6] Selection Committee members will be obligated to protect the confidentiality of Innovation Catalyst Grant proposals, and will be expected to disqualify themselves in cases of conflict of interest.
[7] Recommendations for Climate Action Solutions Track awardees will also be reviewed and approved by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research (Strategic Initiatives).

All submitted proposals will receive consolidated feedback from the review process to help guide future work on the innovation and inform proposals for proof-of-concept funding.

Program Benefits and Requirements for Selected Projects
In addition to notes and feedback from the review process, all awardees will be assigned an Innovation & Business Engagement Hub liaison as well as one or more project mentor(s) from the Selection Committee to offer direct insights and guidance to the team on advancing the innovation. Prior to receiving funding, awardees will be required to meet with their assigned mentor(s) to review the project plan and budget, make any minor agreed-upon adjustments within program parameters, and receive final approval. Spending of Innovation Catalyst Grant funding must be in accordance with the proposal budget, or a revised budget, approved by the IBE Hub.

During the project period, awardees will be expected to meet with their mentor(s) and Innovation & Business Engagement Hub liaison on a quarterly basis to provide updates on project progress and budget, and discuss the results of completed tasks, activities, and experiments. If an awardee, mentor(s), and Innovation & Business Engagement Hub liaison all agree that a project pivot is necessary to address identified de-risking and validation milestones, a revised project plan and budget may be submitted for approval by the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Innovation & Business Engagement.

Within the first half of the project period, all team members identified in an awarded proposal will be required to participate (as a team) in a lean launchpad workshop series or NSF I-Corps immersive short course, and meet all of the course expectations necessary to receive an instructor recommendation. This activity provides valuable training for teams to identify pathways for adoption and find a scalable business model through the customer discovery process.

For the Climate Action Solutions Track, awardees will also be required to participate in capacity-building workshops organized by Campus + Community (C+C) focused on providing training to enhance meaningful and effective engagement with stakeholders and impacted communities. The workshops, planned for the week of April 22, 2024 and early summer, will be delivered in two sections: one for teams with existing active community partners and the other for teams just getting started with community engagement. Teams will be expected to engage in supplemental consultations with the C+C team and address the workshop requirements including producing a plan for future community engagement to facilitate implementation of the innovation.

In addition, for Climate Action Solutions Track awardees working on innovations aligned with ocean health and coastal climate resilience, teams will have access to an extended mentor network and a series of venture development workshops organized by the [Sustainable Ocean Alliance](#) and aimed at those considering a new venture or collaborating with an established startup to advance the solution.

All awardees will also be required to submit a final report that will summarize the outcomes from project work as well as learnings from the lean launchpad customer discovery process. In addition, key members of the team will also be expected to provide a short presentation at an Innovation Catalyst Grant symposium organized in conjunction with a Selection Committee meeting for the following cycle. In addition, awardees will be contacted on occasion to provide updates and applicable metrics on continued advancement of the innovation.

Funded projects requiring regulatory compliance approvals (e.g., IACUC for animal use) must obtain such approvals within 12 weeks of award notification. Innovation Catalyst Grant funding will not be distributed until all requisite approvals are obtained, and failure to obtain such approvals within the allotted time may result in loss of funding.

Questions

Please contact the Innovation & Business Engagement Hub team (hub@ucsc.edu) with any questions about the Innovation Catalyst Grant program.