REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

Baltimore Innovation Initiative (BII)

Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Programming and Infrastructure Grant Application Guidelines

Contents

Summary

Purpose

The Baltimore Innovation Initiative ("BII") Program was created to support an equitable innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem in institutions of higher education throughout the Baltimore-Columbia-Towson Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). As a component of the State of Maryland's matching contribution toward the [Baltimore Tech Hub](), the Program seeks to advance technology toward commercialization of a product or service and bolster support systems for entrepreneurs developing technology-based ventures.

The Program will award two grant types: (1) the **Technology Advancement Grant** and (2) the **Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Programming and Infrastructure Grant**. This document will outline the details of the **Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Programming and Infrastructure Grant**.

Eligibility

Eligible recipients of the Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Programming and Infrastructure Grant include faculty or staff responsible for operating entrepreneurship or commercialization programming at an Eligible Institution. Eligible Institutions are those named in BII enabling legislation [CH0710/CH0711] who have opted in to the BII program. As of August 4, 2025, these institutions include the following:

- Johns Hopkins University
- Loyola University
- Maryland Institute College of Art
- Morgan State University
- Towson University
- University of Baltimore
- University of Maryland, Baltimore
- University of Maryland Baltimore County

Funding Amount

Subject to selection by the Maryland Innovation Initiative Board, a grant award of up to $50,000 may be made for a project from a single Qualifying Institution (a "Sole Application").

Project funding will be subject to the successful completion of several project milestones.

Application Instructions

How to Apply

All applications for the award should propose a project plan for the Entrepreneurship Development and Commercialization Infrastructure phases of the grant, as described below.

Applications will follow a two-step process:

- First, applicants will submit an *Indication of Interest* ("IOI") via the form at this address: Submit IOI form.
    - Following submission of the IOI, BII staff will review the information provided to ensure eligibility and invite a full invitation.
    - Please allow up to **two weeks** for BII staff to invite a full application.
- After acceptance of the IOI, applicants will submit a full application as described below.
    - A link to the full application portal will be provided upon acceptance of the IOI.

Applications must be submitted to BII by Thursday, November 6th, 2025, at 11:59pm ET. In order to allow two weeks for review and at least one week to assemble a full application, applicants should expect to submit an IOI before **Wednesday, October 15th, 2025.** Eligible applications will be evaluated by the Board of the Maryland Innovation Initiative for funding in **December 2025**.

Additional application requirements:

- Applicants must engage the On-Site Project Lead at their respective institution for approval prior to submission of an IOI. Further, the full application will require a letter of support from the On-Site Project Lead. Applicants who are unsure of their On-Site Project Lead may email jlewis@tedcomd.com for further information.
- Applicants are expected to engage their respective grants management office as required by their institutions' policies and procedures.
- Prior to submission, applicants will require a TEDCO DEI ID number assigned which may be obtained by visiting TEDCO MII PI REGISTRATION.

The **General Application Information** will be requested via the application portal and should include:

- TEDCO ID Number
- A Project Title (must not exceed 15 words)
- The Principal Investigator's name and contact information
- The principal investigator's Eligible University
- Key words describing the Entrepreneurship and/or Commercialization initiative

Then, a **Full Proposal**, which contains the Budget (described below), must be submitted as a single document in PDF format via the application submission portal and must adhere to the guidelines described below. The Full Proposal should be submitted as an attachment to the email containing the General Application Information.

Finally, the **Budget** is included as part of the Full Proposal. When creating a budget, please classify each budget item into one of the following categories in tabular format:
- Personnel, Fringe Benefits
- Materials & Supplies and
- Other Direct Costs (must be itemized)

BII funds may not be used for Indirect Costs.

Full proposal guidelines

Full Proposals must follow the guidelines stated below. **Any proposal that does not follow these guidelines will be returned without review.**

The Full Proposal may not be more than **5 pages** (one-sided) in length excluding Budget, References, and other Support Letters with at least **one-inch margins** and a **12-point font**. Each page must be **numbered**.

The Full Proposal should contain the following components in the order given below.

Description of the Program (suggested 2 pages)

This section should begin with a **general description** of the proposed entrepreneurship initiative (whether existing or new), highlighting its significance, innovative aspects, and potential impact on the institution and local business community. Applicants should outline the specific challenges or gaps in the current entrepreneurial ecosystem that the initiative aims to address, its importance, and why it offers a more effective approach compared to existing initiatives. Next, provide a **detailed description** of the initiative, including an overview of peer entrepreneurship initiatives at other institutions and the unique advantages of the proposed approach. The description should incorporate preliminary data or compelling evidence demonstrating the project's potential effectiveness, such as success stories from pilot initiatives or relevant case studies from comparable institutions. Include specific components of the program, such as curriculum development, mentorship opportunities, workshops, or technology transfer support. Explain how these elements will work together to foster innovation, support technology commercialization, and drive economic growth in the region.

Project Plan and Milestones (suggested 2 pages)

A Project Plan and Milestones to achieve the proposed project must be included. The Project Plan must not exceed **12 months**. The Project Plan should include specific implementation phases, a detailed description of the work to be performed, and quantitative endpoints that can be used for objective evaluation of the project. A Gantt chart or similar workplan is suggested.

Descriptions for Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Programming projects should include **three milestones** associated with demonstrating the initiative's impact on fostering innovation and supporting technology-based ventures within the institution and Baltimore region. These

milestones may include both intermediate milestones (e.g., enrollment of startups in an accelerator program) or final project milestones (e.g., deployment of funding or resources toward startups).

For proposals that seek to establish new programs, milestones should include a set of outcome metrics that the program ultimately seeks to accomplish, whether inside or outside of the project period.

For proposals that seek to augment existing programs, applications should articulate the existing set of outcome metrics that are used to evaluate the program. The milestones should specify how funding via the BII program can augment these milestones.

Sustainability plan (suggested 0.5 pages)

The description of the assessment should include a plan to develop a Commercialization Plan as the final deliverable. The application should describe an approach to draft a document that comprehensively outlines specific steps required to complete the development of an infrastructure such as a Technology Transfer Office, entrepreneurship education programs, incubator facilities, funding mechanisms, and industry collaboration platforms. The purpose of a Commercialization Plan is to identify and create steps to resolve high-risk portions of a business model. By developing this comprehensive plan, the institution will create a clear pathway for translating innovations into marketable products or services, effectively addressing potential obstacles, and maximizing the chances of successful commercialization in a competitive business landscape.

Guidelines for the proposal and development of a Commercialization Plan can be found at the end of this RFA.

Project team (suggested 0.5 pages)

A list of project personnel should be provided for the proposed study with a brief statement of their background and their proposed contribution to the proposed project. The reviewers will want to ensure the project team is qualified to carry out the proposed work.

Budget & Budget Justification

A detailed budget must also be included in the Full Proposal. This budget should match the general format described above in the Application Components - Budget section. A justification for each line item in the budget should be included in a narrative form. An example is included in the Appendix of this document.

The Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Programming and Infrastructure Grant does not have any cost sharing or matching requirements. Justification should include total hours committed to the proposed project, the cost/hour for everyone included in the budget, and the associated fringe benefits. Travel costs may not be included unless justified as critical to completion of the proposed project. International travel costs may not be included.

This section does not count toward the 5-page limit for the Full Proposal

References & Support Letters:

The applicant should include any relevant references and letters of support as appended documents to the full submission package.

This section does not count toward the 5-page limit for the Full Proposal

Review Process

Compliance Review

BII Staff will first review all applications to ensure they meet the basic requirements indicated by this RFA. Those not meeting the specified requirements will be rejected without further review and the applicant will be so notified.

Technical Review

BII conducts an internal review of the Full Proposal by a selection of individuals with relevant technical and commercial experience. The technical review is conducted under terms of confidentiality. The reviewers comprehensively evaluate elements of the Full Proposal for translational potential, appropriateness of design, methods, analysis, innovation, the potential of the applicant to carry out the proposed project with the ultimate aim of supporting commercialization infrastructure. After reviewing the application, the reviewers' input will be aggregated by BII Staff. BII Staff will include this input as well as its internal review toward recommendations for funding to the MII Board of Directors. For applications not recommended for funding, the reviewers will list their concerns with the application so they can be provided to the applicant. The final award decision is approved by the MII Board of Directors.

Notification of Award

In the event of an award, an award letter will be sent to the applicant with a copy of the BII Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Programming and Infrastructure Grant funding agreement. BII will also send a copy of the award letter and the funding agreement to the applicant's grants and contracts office and technology transfer office, as applicable. If an application is rejected, BII will notify the applicant. Such notification will include the Review Committee's comments and concerns and a copy of any independent technical review, if available.

Review Criteria

The Review Committee will base its recommendation for funding to the MII Board of Directors using the following Criteria for each application

Adherence to the Purpose and Enabling Legislation

This consideration will be based on applicants' ability to articulate innovative approach to entrepreneurship, feasible development goals, and appropriate endpoints within scope of the funding amount and timeline. The extent to which the proposed project will enhance entrepreneurship support, strengthen commercialization capabilities, and create opportunities for technology-based ventures will be evaluated.

Adherence to relevant elements of the BII enabling legislation, including support for tech-enabled startups that align to the priorities of the Baltimore Tech Hub, will also be considered.

Sustainability Plan

The Review Committee will assess the sustainability of the proposed entrepreneurship and commercialization programming based upon information provided in the application. This assessment will be based on the strength of arguments made by the applicant through the Detailed Description of the Initiative, Project Plan and Milestones, and Commercialization Assessment sections of the Full Proposal.

Proposed Impact

The proposed impact of the project and the likelihood of its success will be considered. This will include an evaluation of the feasibility and detail of proposed metrics and milestones. Projects that impact more than one institution will also be given greater weighting in this category.

Project Team

The relevance of the project team, including past experience, connecting ecosystem entrepreneurship activities, and roundedness of team will be considered.

Award Process

Once a proposal is recommended for funding, a funding agreement will be sent to the applicant for processing and an authorized signature. The applicant will have 30 days to sign the agreement and to return a copy to BII. If the agreement is not signed and returned within 30 days, the proposal becomes inactive, and the applicant must reapply to receive an award.

Payment structures will be further outlined in funding agreements, but will generally adhere to the following format:
- 75% on signature of agreement
- 25% on completion of final deliverable

Project Period

The project period will be as proposed in the full application, with a **maximum of 12 months** from finalization of the award agreement. In addition to execution of the program as outlined in the application, awardees will further be required to meet with BII staff for a Midterm Report approximately halfway through the project period and to complete a Final Deliverable within 30 days from the end of the project period. Both are outlined below.

Midterm Report

PowerPoint presentation at TEDCO offices or virtually at BII's option. Must include a description of project activities and results to date, the progress toward meeting mid-term milestones, an accounting of expenditures charged to the award, and details on the proposed Sustainability Plan progress and budget – BII will expect copies of the slides (no more than 10) one week in advance of the Mid-term presentation.

Final Deliverables: Entrepreneurship Development Report and Commercialization Plan

There are two deliverables at end of the project:
- Entrepreneurship Development Report
    - 4-page, final programming results report, with the same formatting requirements as the full application
        - An overview of all activities undertaken during the funded project;
        - A description of the results of the program and the success in achieving the proposed program milestones;
        - A review of the proposed milestones and metrics, and the program's success in achieving them;
        - The impact of the program milestone results on commercialization at the respective institution(s); and
        - Two case studies (e.g., specific startups or students)
- Sustainability Plan Report
    - 0.5 pages, final sustainability report, with the same formatting requirements as the full application
        - An overview of activities undertaken to build entrepreneurship infrastructure and/or programming;
        - Explain the long-term strategies for sustaining the program, including continued investment in infrastructure and industry collaboration.
        - Include a plan for tracking the continued growth and success of entrepreneurial ventures post-program.

Program Information

Inquiries regarding the Entrepreneurship Commercialization, Programming and Infrastructure Award should be directed to:

Jalaycia Lewis
Program Manager
Baltimore Innovation Initiative
Jlewis@tedcomd.com

Appendix A: Budget

The Entrepreneurship Commercialization, Programming and Infrastructure budget (maximum $50,000) must be entered separately into a spread sheet in tabular form as indicated in the example below, and each line item should be classified into one of the following categories and clearly indicated in the budget. **Please upload the completed budget as a PDF file.**

Personnel – Salaries,
Personnel – Fringe Benefits,
Equipment,
Materials & Supplies,
Other Direct Costs, and
Commercialization Plan Development

Example of a budget with category headings and sample line items:

EXAMPLE BUDGET ITEMS	AMOUNT
Personnel - Salaries	
Director	-
Mentors/Interns	-
Personnel – Fringe Benefits	
Director	-
Mentors/Interns	-
Health Insurance (if applicable)	-
Equipment	
Hardware/Prototyping Materials	
Computer/Software	-
Materials and Supplies	
Software Licenses	-
Workshop Supplies	-
Other Direct Costs	
Marketing Materials	-
Venue Rental	-
Subtotal	x
COMMERCIALIZATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT	
Legal/Intellectual Property Filing	-
Research Database Subscriptions	-
Development Workshops	-
TOTAL	x