MA Acorn Innovation Fund 2019

Maximum Award: $15,000

The MA Acorn Innovation Fund is intended to support the demonstration of the viability of a technology developed at a Massachusetts university. Awards could be used to further develop a prototype or to gather additional data in order to show proof of concept or to obtain data that shows how the technology compares to existing technologies and what the competitive advantages are. The Acorn Awards are designed to fund small, rapidly accomplished projects. The aim of these small projects is not to perfect the technology but to demonstrate the technology so that its features can be shown and additional proof of concept or commercialization funding can be obtained. To be eligible for an award, applicants must be a Principal Investigator with technology disclosed to your host institution. Your host institution must be a university in Massachusetts. Seven awards of $15K each will be granted.

PIs from UMass are not eligible to apply, as the UMass Acorn Innovation Fund has already been launched separately for UMass applicants.

Schedule for MA Acorn Innovation Fund

September 5, 2018	Open invitation to apply
October 5, 2018	Applications due
October 24, 2018	Notification of finalist status
November 7, 2018	Finalists presentations via video conference
November 26, 2018	Finalists notified of awardee status
December 28, 2018	Contracts must be under agreement
January 2019	Announcement of award recipients

If you have any questions, contact Michele Bernier from the MTTC office at mbernier@umassp.edu.

Application Information

Completed applications must be received by October 5, 2018. Applications should be concise, yet complete in description. Reviewers with technical and business backgrounds will be carefully selected; however, they may not be familiar with your particular technology. Provide information that will enable them to judge the technical feasibility. Do not disclose any proprietary information. All finalists are expected to make a presentation by video conference to MTTC and external reviewers.

Reply e-mail will confirm receipt of your completed application.

A template for the proposal must be used and can be found at: http://www.mttc.org/grants/

The proposal should be no more than 4 pages (a cover page and three pages of narrative) and must be sent to Michele Bernier at mBernier@umassp.edu with a copy sent to your campus technology transfer office.

Applications that are not received by the closing deadline will not be considered in this solicitation. If you would like to be placed on an e-mail list for receiving notification regarding other grant solicitations, contact Michele Bernier at mbernier@umassp.edu.

Applications should be:
  Submitted via e-mail to mattawards@umassp.edu
  Submitted in MS WORD or PDF Format, using Ariel 11 font
  Maximum file size of 4MB
  Maximum of one file submitted per application

Applicants *must* use the pre-formatted template for their application, available at: www.mttc.org/grants.

Process for Awards

The funds are awarded through an external review process judged by a pool of independent experts. The steps in the process are as follows:

- Proposals are received and distributed to industry experts for review of technical merit and feasibility
- Finalists are selected and notified
- Finalists submit a draft presentation to MTTC about their technology and intended use of award funds
- Finalists present final presentations via video conference and discuss their project with industry reviewers
- Awardees are notified and feedback is provided to all finalist teams

Note: If you receive an award from the MA Acorn Innovation Fund, the PI, campus and award will be disclosed to the public.

The MTTC staff oversees the process and approves the final recommendations from the external reviewers. MTTC determinations are final and not subject to discussion. **In addition, MTTC reserves the right to withdraw an applicant if the applicant violates any criteria in the application guidelines or does not provide sufficient information in the proposal.**

Judging Criteria

The reviewers will be asked to consider the following:
- technical merit;
- viability of market; and
- impact of project plan.

Award, the PI may also apply for this award but both awards will not be granted for the same project.

Project Criteria

The project must be able to start on January 15 and take no more than 2-3 months to complete.

Uses of Funds

Typical use of funds (maximum $15,000) include:

- to conduct further defined research on an invention that will lead to proof of concept or prototypes;
- to undertake testing of a technology or material to obtain initial data on performance;
- to develop a more user-friendly software interface;
- to send a material out to independent third party for testing under industrial conditions; and
- hire outside expert consultants to validate technology.

As the awards are so small, the MTTC hopes that research institutions will waive overhead.

Please note that funds may not be used for the following:
- basic research;
- legal expenses to advance intellectual property protection;
- publicity expenses (e.g., the development of marketing materials);
- legal and other expenses of business formation and operation;
- attendance at scientific conferences; and
- purchase of computer or other unrelated equipment.

Timeline

The award will be valid for work to be completed within three months from the date of award.

In addition, the award recipients must submit a formal final report on the research completed, milestones achieved, new technologies disclosed, use of funds, and commercialization activities. It is also anticipated that throughout the award period the recipient will maintain contact with MTTC on commercialization plans for the technology.

Proprietary Information

It is the policy of MTTC to keep your information confidential, but we cannot guarantee its security. Application materials are shared with a panel of independent reviewers and may be subject to public disclosure requirements in the future. Applicants should only submit publicly available and other non-confidential information about their technology in the proposal. Generally, technology can be described in broad terms that do not require submittal of proprietary information. The technology's commercial potential is the most important issue for selection for MTTC support. However, limited information on the actual technology or experimental data should be included in the proposal to allow reviewers to assess the maturity and validity of the technology. Discuss any concerns with your technology transfer office and work with them on the contents of the proposal.