BLAVATNIK BIOMEDICAL ACCELERATOR
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Release Date: August 2, 2024 (Updated November 19, 2024)

Background and Purpose: The **Blavatnik Biomedical Accelerator at Harvard University** supports Harvard faculty in the performance and commercialization of translational research. A significant obstacle to the development of early-stage university discoveries is the lack of funding for the proof-of-concept and validation studies needed to demonstrate commercial potential. To overcome this barrier, the Accelerator helps faculty further develop and de-risk their technologies, thereby strengthening intellectual property positions and increasing the likelihood of attracting investors or industry partners who will advance these innovations to the marketplace.

The Accelerator supports projects of varying magnitude as appropriate, aligning project budgets with the overarching objective that technologies be developed to a stage where startup formation or industry partnership may be achieved. There are two application cycles per year: a "fall cycle" for Pilot Grant applications only, and a "spring cycle" for both Pilot and Development Grant applications. In addition to funding support, Accelerator projects and investigators benefit from access to a **team of industry consultants** with deep expertise spanning all areas of therapeutics discovery and development, as well as to a network of nearly one hundred **contract research organizations (CROs)** from across the globe that can be utilized as needed. *The Blavatnik Biomedical Accelerator makes these expert consultants and CRO resources available to all Harvard faculty on an on-going basis, including to researchers not currently receiving Accelerator grant funding.*

Separate from its grants program, the Blavatnik Biomedical Accelerator endeavors to broadly support therapeutics efforts at Harvard by providing all researchers access to drug discovery platforms such as DNA-encoded chemical libraries (DELs) and programs for development of biologic therapies. Please contact the Accelerator team directly to learn more about these resources.

Now in its 18th year, the Accelerator has provided more than **$30 million in direct research funding to 169 projects** from across Harvard University. The supported projects encompass a wide range of areas, including novel drug discovery platforms, therapeutics development, diagnostics and biomarkers, medical devices, instruments, and other biomedical technologies. **27 new startups** have been launched to commercialize Accelerator-funded innovations and these companies have collectively raised over **$2.9 billion in equity financing**. Additionally, the Blavatnik Biomedical Accelerator's partnered technologies and collaborative research projects have **generated more than $170 million in licensing revenue and research funding**, supporting future discoveries and innovation at Harvard.

The Accelerator and its funded projects are managed by the Office of Technology Development (OTD) under the auspices of the Office of the Provost, in consultation with an independent advisory committee comprising leaders from the Boston business and investment community.

I. Application Timelines

	Fall 2024 cycle	Spring 2025 cycle
Application type	Pilot grants	Development and Pilot grants
Pre-proposal due date	September 6, 2024	January 29, 2025
Announcement of finalists	October, 2024	February, 2025
Full proposal due date	November 6, 2024	April 18, 2025
Announcement of awards	December, 2024	June, 2025
Funding start date	January 1, 2025	July 1, 2025

II. Program Eligibility

Applicant: Anyone with rights as a principal investigator (PI), whose employer is Harvard University and who has an obligation to assign intellectual property (IP) rights to Harvard, is eligible to apply.

Activities Eligible for Funding: The focus of the proposal must be applied research in the Life Sciences. Examples of studies eligible for funding during projects include but are not limited to:

- Optimization of small molecule modulators of novel therapeutic targets
- Development and validation of cell therapies and gene therapies
- Development of therapeutic or diagnostic antibodies or other biologics
- Testing of lead molecules or biologics in cell-based and/or animal models of disease to confirm their clinical or diagnostic relevance
- Preclinical development and optimization of lead molecules, biologics or novel modalities (e.g., ADME/T, PK/PD, formulation, or safety studies)
- Development and validation of clinical biomarkers and/or relevant diagnostic methods
- Development and validation of novel vaccine technologies
- Development and validation of drug delivery technologies

III. Award Types and Funding Levels

Accelerator awards are made in two categories: Pilot Grants and Development Grants. Within the established budgetary parameters, projects will be funded at the level deemed necessary to achieve the proposed research objectives.

Pilot Grants: Pilot Grant awards are funded at a maximum of $150k for a period of up to 12 months. Pilot Grants are intended to support proof-of-concept activities that (if successful) would establish a basis for a subsequent Development Grant proposal. For example:

- Confirmation that candidate therapeutic compounds or biologics demonstrate target-specific biological activity
- Demonstration that a candidate vaccine antigen or technology elicits a functional immune response in a suitable animal model
- Demonstration that a candidate biomarker detection method is appropriately sensitive and specific under ideal lab conditions.
- *In vitro* development and validation of a therapeutic delivery platform

Development Grants: Development Grants are funded at a maximum of $400k for a period of up to 24 months. Development Grants are expected to generate partnerable technology within the proposed timeframe. For example:

- Optimization, efficacy testing, and preclinical evaluation of lead therapeutic molecules or biologics
- Demonstration that a candidate vaccine elicits protection against challenge, formulation/stability studies
- Validation of a biomarker and an appropriately sensitive and specific detection method using clinical samples, correlation of biomarker status with clinical outcomes.
- *In vivo* validation of a therapeutic delivery platform

IV. Proposal Review and Selection Process

1. Pre-proposals

OTD staff will work with applicants to develop a pre-proposal according to the Word template. Based on recommendations from the Accelerator Advisory Committee and OTD, a subset of applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal.

2. Full proposals

OTD will assist applicants with the development of full proposals, particularly with respect to determining a technology's commercial potential and establishing sound technical milestones to enhance that commercial potential. Full proposals will be reviewed by the Accelerator Advisory Committee and a small group of external technical advisors. The Advisory Committee will make all award decisions in consultation with OTD.

3. Evaluation criteria

The goal of Accelerator funding is to advance technologies to the point where technology transfer is achieved, or additional funding is secured from industry. Thus, proposals will be evaluated on overall potential for technology transfer, including scientific/technical merit, need, and commercial potential of the technology. The following evaluation criteria considered during the review process:

- Potential impact and significance for human health and public benefit
- Significant market need and opportunity
- Competitive advantage over technologies that are currently available or in development
- Likelihood of generating high-value intellectual property assets
- Significant de-risking or value inflection point without which the technology is not partnerable
- Demonstrated interest from potential industry partners
- Innovation and technical/execution risk
- Appropriateness of the research objectives and proposed technical milestones

Note: Pre-proposals and Proposals may be shared with a limited number of Harvard's industry partners, under confidentiality, to solicit feedback regarding research plans, support the Accelerator's assessment of the technical and commercial viability of proposed projects, and begin engaging partners with the goal of increasing the likelihood of eventual commercialization.

V. Budget and Funding Period

Pilot Grants will be funded for up to 12 months of effort, and Development Grants will be funded for up to 24 months of effort. Funding will be awarded in tranches according to milestones agreed upon by the applicant and the Accelerator.

If a proposed project secures funding from industry during the interval between the date the proposal is submitted to the Accelerator and the time funding decisions are made, it will no longer be eligible for Accelerator funding.

Accelerator funding is exempt from Harvard indirect expense charges. Funding may only be used for research approved by the Accelerator and may not be used for any other purpose. Budget items may not include equipment, computers, travel, student tuition, PI salary, or salary for collaborators at other institutions. Accelerator awards are intended to fund work supporting the advancement and technical validation of Harvard's biomedical technologies and therapeutic programs, thereby strengthening and expanding the intellectual property positions that protect them. It is anticipated that many of the funded activities in projects will be outsourced to one or more approved contract research organizations (CROs), and that no more than 50% of the funding shall be spent on salary support for personnel within the PI's lab. Accelerator staff will assist the PI in identifying qualified CROs and developing work plans, and OTD will negotiate work-for-hire agreements on behalf of the PI.

VI. During the Award

For each Accelerator award, a project team will be assembled to manage the specific needs of the project and review its progress throughout the funding period. In addition to the PI, team members may include Accelerator/OTD staff, research personnel, or external consultants with specific technical expertise (e.g., medicinal chemistry, PK/PD, and product development and commercialization).

VII. Terms and Conditions of the Award

1. **Time and Effort**: Personnel expenses should accurately reflect the time commitment necessary to complete the agreed-upon work. Accelerator funding is intended to support only the effort required for the project and is not intended to cover a full-time salary unless the project demands 100% of the individual's time. Additionally, total personnel support must not exceed 50 percent of the awarded budget. If the Accelerator project is completed earlier than the anticipated timeline or secures external industry funding before the original end date, personnel support will end.

2. **Inventions and Intellectual Property**: There is no requirement for any background or pre-existing inventions, nor any prior intellectual property. However, if there is any background intellectual property for the project, it must have been assigned exclusively to Harvard. Any new inventions that are conceived or reduced to practice in the course of performing an Accelerator-supported research project must be disclosed to the Office of Technology Development and, thereafter, assigned exclusively to Harvard. The PI ***must*** report any and all inventions to OTD no fewer than 30 days in advance of a public disclosure to allow OTD staff to determine if such public disclosure contains new, potentially patentable subject matter.

Intellectual property conceived, reduced to practice, or otherwise made, improved or further developed with Accelerator support and assigned to Harvard will be managed in accordance with Harvard's "Statement of Policy in Regard to Intellectual Property" (the "IP Policy"), as most recently amended on June 11, 2019, and any Net Royalties received on account of the licensing or other distribution of such intellectual property will be done *per* Section V.C. of that Policy.

3. **Research Plan and Milestones**: Each award is made for a research plan with objective and achievable technical milestones that are agreed upon with the Accelerator. The achievement of these milestones will serve as key decision points when assessing progress for approval of continued funding. A project may be terminated if the scientific or therapeutic hypothesis cannot be validated or if the agreed-upon technical milestones are not met within specified timelines. The research plan or budget may be adjusted during the funding period; however, any significant changes must receive prior written approval from the Accelerator.

4. **Funding Status**: Awardees must inform the Accelerator immediately if internal or external funding is obtained to support any of the specific aims that are included in the awardee's Accelerator project. If the project secures significant external funding, such as industry support in the form of sponsored research funding, or if the technology is licensed to an industry partner (including a new startup company), then Accelerator funding will end, and the remaining awarded amount will not be available. On a case-by-case basis, the remaining Accelerator funds may be redirected to other activities, provided that those activities are closely related to the funded project and may help generate new intellectual property for licensing; however, consideration of such proposals will require discussion with the Accelerator team, followed by written approval.

5. Research Compliance: Accelerator grants are an internal funding mechanism and will therefore not be set up in GMAS or require OSP/SPA approval. The PI and department are responsible for meeting all compliance requirements associated with the award. Accelerator will not reimburse any interest accrued due to late payments or expenses that exceed the awarded amount.

6. Publications: "The Blavatnik Biomedical Accelerator at Harvard University" must be cited in all publications and presentations that describe work supported by the Accelerator. Copies of all publications containing this acknowledgment should be provided to the Accelerator. As noted above, the PI ***must*** report any and all inventions to OTD no fewer than 30 days in advance of a public disclosure to allow OTD staff to determine if such public disclosure contains new, potentially patentable subject matter.

7. Reporting Requirements: A project team, including the PI, will be assembled for each award and will meet on a monthly basis. Progress reports will be required at quarterly intervals during the funding period, and a final report is due no later than 30 days after the end of the funding period. Each report should specifically address research results relative to each specific aim and a statement of any inventions made in the course of the performance of the funded project.

Periodic financial reports will be run to confirm that all charges adhere to the terms of the award and qualify as allowable expenses. To facilitate this, awardees must provide detailed financial reports, including transaction listings and names of any personnel whose salary and benefits are to be charged to the Accelerator.

Additional Resources:

Pre-Proposal Template Spring 2025 (.docx download)

Blavatnik Biomedical Accelerator website