

# ignite Startup Projects

## Program Overview

One of the three signature programs of Ignite Cornell Research Lab to Market gap fund series. This Ignite program is to **support proof of concept of technologies which can lead to investment and funding opportunities for very early-stage startup companies for their initial growth.**

Each project should be designed to reduce technology risks via validation of a prototype, beta-testing with potential customers, data generation and analysis, feasibility demonstration, and business plan refinement.

Up to \$75,000 in project funding is available through a SAFE note, with an additional conditional second tranche of funding or **Prime** to bring the total to \$100,000. The second tranche (Prime) is contingent upon the successful achievement of milestones and clear indications of strong investment interest. Projects that target significant and specific milestones achievable within 12 months are preferred.

Eligible companies include all active CTL Startup Licensees from Ithaca, Weill Cornell Medicine, Geneva or Cornell Tech campuses; and/or members of the Praxis Center for Venture Development, the Center for Life Science Ventures, REV Ithaca, current cohort of the Runway Postdocs program at Cornell Tech, and the award winners of the Cornell Tech's startup studio program.

### Eligibility:

- Applications are welcomed from startup companies with licenses to Cornell innovations from Cornell's Ithaca, Weill Cornell Medicine, Geneva, and Cornell Tech campuses or companies who are members of Praxis, CLSV, REV Ithaca, current cohort of the Runway Startup Postdocs program at Cornell Tech, and the award winners of the Cornell Tech's startup studio program.
- Startup companies are expected to be pre-Series A financing. If your company has already raised Series A financing, please contact **Lynda Inséqué**, Director of Technology and Venture Initiatives & Engagement, your BD & Licensing Officer, or your qualifying program's director to determine eligibility.
- Previously funded Ignite Innovation Acceleration projects are eligible for Ignite Startup Projects, but not previous funded Startup Projects unless applying to Ignite Startup Prime.
- Applicant should be in "Inc." not "LLC" structure.
- All proposed projects must comply with university policies.

**Applications:**

Applications are received on open, rolling basis through the CTL website via the InfoReady software platform. Applications are reviewed for alignment, receive feedback from external Technology Advisors evaluating the project and company, and are invited to present to a Ignite committee.

The simple, online application form requests summaries of the following information:

- A brief overview of the underpinning technology.
- Its scientific/technical merit.
- A financial overview of the company with investment information.
- Summary of the target market.
- The intellectual property status.
- The proposed activities to be funded.
- Specific deliverables from such activities.
- The project budget and timelines.
- Other funding applied for.
- A support letter from a Business Development and Licensing team Officer (BDLO) or your respective qualifying incubation or accelerator program director if you are a member of the above listed incubators.
- A description of how the project will bridge a key gap for the company helping it reach the next inflection point for commercialization, investment and funding.

The respective Business Development & Licensing Officer (BDLO) or your respective qualifying program director is available as a resource to provide assistance, feedback and suggestions on your application. The BDLO or respective program director may also be a source of perspective and feedback to the Ignite committee.

Please direct any questions regarding issues with the InfoReady platform or the application submission process to **Lynda Inséqué**, Director of Technology and Venture Initiatives & Engagement, phone: (607) 254-454, [Lci2@cornell.edu](mailto:Lci2@cornell.edu).

**Application Guidelines and Considerations:** Funded project activities typically include validation of a prototype, beta-testing with potential customers, data generation and analysis, feasibility demonstration, and business plan refinement. Role of the Startup Principal Investigator (PI):

- Preparing and submitting Ignite project applications.
- Presenting to the Ignite committee to support project selection.
- Managing approved funds and their associated budgets.
- Submitting all required project progress and final reports outlining the delivered versus proposed results.

- At the invitation of CTL, presenting the project at meetings or showcase events.

Project proposals that target significant and specific milestones achievable within 12 months are preferred.

All proposals, unless specified otherwise, will be submitted to external Technology Advisors who are industry and investment experts to provide feedback whether the company should advance to further consideration. Please note, external Technology Advisors, like many investors, are NOT under any obligation of confidentiality. It is preferred that applications do not contain confidential information. If confidential information is necessary, please select “Yes” when prompted “This application contains confidential information” during the application process and a member of the CTL team will follow-up with you on next steps.

#### **Application Review and Award process:**

- 1) All applications will be reviewed and organized by CTL for compliance with the eligibility criteria identified above and completeness. Noncompliant or incomplete applications will be returned to the applicants. The presence of any confidential information will be confirmed and complying, non-confidential applications will be submitted for external reviews.
- 2) Compliant and eligible proposals referred by CTL to at least two Technology Advisors, external industry and investment experts who are experienced technology industrialists, early-stage venture investors and/or managers of early-stage ventures. Technology Advisors evaluate proposals based on the likelihood that the proposed project will succeed, that the company presents a sound investment and the company’s chances for success be enhanced.
- 3) The Ignite committee for Startup Projects comprised of: Executive Director, CTL; Director, the Center for Life Science Ventures; Administrative Academic Director, the Praxis Center for Venture Development; Director of Runway and Spinouts, and external committee members (2 of which will be engaged in each specific application based on domain expertise). The review board will organize a meeting where the applicants will present the proposed project. Additional time will be allocated for Q&A with the review board. Director of the incubator program where the startup resides will not be a voting member for the specific company.

External committee members are comprised of Cornell alumni, active investors, and regional business executives with the proper domain expertise who

volunteer their services to the program and strong supporters of Cornell innovation.

- 4) Based on the submitted proposal, presentation and supporting feedback from external reviews, the Ignite committee will reach the final funding disposition decision and amount. Assuming no awards pending additional questions from the committee, notification of the funding decision will be made shortly following the committee meeting to applicants via email and via the InfoReady platform.

**Presentation of the Proposed Project:** The invited applicants will be allocated a predetermined amount of time for a presentation that addresses the following:

- 1: Project Title, Key Team, Amount Requested, Project Period.
- 2: Brief summary of the proposed technology project
- 3: Brief overview of the company, investors and plans
- 3: Market needs and competitive advantages
- 4: Current status and specific needs to be addressed
- 5: Anticipated impact of proposed project on the company

**Funding and Project Launch:** After notice of funding approval for funding, CTL will prepare and provide the SAFE note for review and signature. Upon full execution of the note, CTL will coordinate the distribution the awarded amount (of up to \$75,000 per proposal) via wire transfer to the Startup PI's company.

The SAFE note is non-negotiable and is available for review prior to application if desired. Please contact the CTL Ignite program manager.

Startup PI's are responsible to share any significant changes to the project budget or timing with CTL who will either approve or, as necessary, submit to the Review Board for approval.

**Prime Startup Project:**

A second tranche of funding for Prime Startup Projects is possible after the company successfully achieving milestones and demonstrating of strong indications of investment and funding to the company. PI of a Startup Project should include their plan for the Prime project at the time of application, including appropriate milestones and feedback from investors and funders. After reaching the milestones, the company can request a follow up meeting with the Ignite committee. The decision whether a second tranche should be awarded will be reached by the committee based on milestone achieved and investment potential. If a second tranche is awarded, a second SAFE note will also be issued.

**Reporting:** As Projects are implemented, the Startup PIs are responsible for providing a brief progress report at mid-term period.

Within 1 month of the close of the Ignite project, the Startup PI is required to submit a final report to CTL. The report should compare the actual vs. proposed expenditures, achievements relative to expectations, and detail any next opportunities, planned or realized, for follow-on funding including grants, investment funding, income or partnerships.

Funding alumni are also required to provide updates to periodical requests from CTL on the progress of the technology towards commercialization as well as any follow-on funding success. Funding is tracked through the alumni's Series A financing round.

Awarded applicants may be invited to present at a showcase event or similar to highlight the development of the technology under Ignite project funding.

<https://ctl.cornell.edu/ignite/startup-projects/>