



Acorn Innovation Grant 2025

Maximum Award: \$36,000

The MA Acorn Innovation Grant is intended to support the demonstration of the viability of a technology developed at Massachusetts research universities with commercialization potential. Awards could be used to further develop a prototype or to gather additional data to demonstrate 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 accomplishable projects to demonstrate the technology features such that additional proof of concept or commercialization funding can be obtained. To be eligible for an award, applicants must be a Principal Investigator at a Massachusetts academic research center with the technology disclosed to your institution. Up to 6 awards of \$32,500 each will be granted.

Schedule for Acorn Innovation Grants 2025

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| September 23, 2024 | RFP Launched. Open Solicitation. |
| October 11, 2024 | Applications due with a 3 min pitch video |
| November 25, 2024 | Winners notified |
| December 20, 2024 | Contracts must be under agreement and Projects begin |
| January 2025 | Announcement of award recipients |

If you have any questions, contact Priya Yadav from MassVentures at pyadav@mass-ventures.com

Application Information

Technology areas of focus:

- Life Sciences
 - Therapeutics
 - Diagnostics
 - Medical Device
 - Other: _____
- Physical Sciences
 - Advanced Materials
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Photonics
 - Robotics
 - Quantum computing
 - Other: _____

Completed applications with a 3 min pitch video must be submitted by October 11, 2024. 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.

You can upload your 3 min pitch video or provide a link to your 3 min pitch. Your video can be recorded as a Zoom session sharing 4-5 slides and with your webcam. It should include: (1) Unmet need that your technology is addressing, (2) A brief description of the technology solution, (3) Competitive advantage of the technology vs incumbents, (4) What you will accomplish with the Acorn grant.

Applications that are not submitted by the closing deadline will not be considered in this solicitation.

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 and 3 min video pitch are received and distributed to industry experts for review of technical merit and feasibility.
- Winners are selected and notified, and feedback is provided to all finalist teams.

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

The MassVentures staff oversees the process and approves the final recommendations from the external reviewers. MassVentures determinations are final and not subject to discussion. **In addition, MassVentures 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
- Commercialization potential and business viability
- Impact of Project Plan; and
- Project team and its ability to execute the plan

UMass applicants:

If the PI currently has an active proposal under consideration for an OTCV Technology Development Award, the PI may also apply for this award, but as a general rule UMass will not allow one project to claim funds from both sources. PIs should disclose if they have support from ACORN when applying to UMass grants.

Project Criteria

The project must be able to start on December 20th, 2024 with a final report due upon completion on June 20th, 2025. It is expected that the statement of work will have realistic goals/milestones with timelines that can be achieved within this 6 month duration. No-cost extensions should not be requested and will not be granted.

Uses of Funds

Typical use of funds (maximum \$36,000) 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 small, do not include any overhead in the budget.

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 for business formation and operation.
- attendance at scientific conferences; and
- purchase of computer or other unrelated equipment.
- travel

Timeline

The award will be valid for work to be completed by June 20th, 2025.

The award recipients must submit a formal final report using the template provided by MassVentures 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 MassVentures as needed on the commercialization plans for the technology.

Proprietary Information

It is the policy of MassVentures 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 MassVentures 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.