



FY24 SACT GRANT PROGRAM SOLICITATION

TRACK 1: LAB TO MARKET

AWARD OVERVIEW

Type of Award	Competitive Grant
Solicitation Opens	June 30, 2023
Application Submission Deadline	February 1, 2024
Total Funding, provided by SCRA	\$2,580,000
Maximum Award	\$860,000
Performance Period	36 months
Eligible Lead Applicants	Clemson University, University of South Carolina, and Medical University of South Carolina

INTRODUCTION

As a strong proponent of the South Carolina innovation ecosystem, SCRA’s SC Academic Innovations Program supports the translation of commercially relevant technology emanating from our state’s Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs). Such outcomes generate tangible solutions that have the potential to create lasting economic and societal benefits.

This commitment to build the state’s innovation economy is reflected in the Strategic Collaboration Agreement, signed, and executed in 2016 by SCRA and the Comprehensive Research Universities (CRUs – comprised of Clemson University, Medical University of South Carolina, and University of South Carolina).

The purpose of the collaboration is:

“[...] to align existing and prospective resources to advance the innovation economy of the state. The innovation economy includes technology development and commercialization in both the private and public sector and among entities both large and small. The State of South Carolina has many strengths upon which to build, and we intend to use this collaboration to create better focus, alignment, and pace across all stakeholders—public and private—in building the state’s reputation and strength in technology development and commercialization.”

The signatories of the Collaboration Agreement agreed that it would serve as the foundation for SCRA’s support not only to the CRUs but to all academic institutions within the state. To provide guidance to SCRA on the design and implementation of programs to fulfill the Collaboration Agreement, the SCRA-Academia Collaboration Team (SACT) was formed.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The FY24 SACT Grant Program seeks to champion the vital role of all IHEs in fulfilling the mission of the Collaboration Agreement, including (i) those institutions with an established infrastructure for technology development and commercialization and (ii) those institutions seeking to build this capacity to maximize the impact of their applied research. To achieve these goals, the FY24 SACT Grant consists of two solicitations having separate eligibility requirements.

1. Under the **LAB TO MARKET TRACK**, only Clemson University, University of South Carolina, and Medical University of South Carolina are eligible Lead Applicants.
2. The **CAPACITY BUILDING TRACK** is specific to other IHEs (not included in the Lab to Market Track) that seek to build capacity for fundamental outcomes in technology development and commercialization at their institutions.

Under both solicitations, applicants should pursue activities and partnerships that will create a sustainable framework for and accelerate the pace of translational/use-inspired research, technology development, and commercialization. These primary goals should be supplemented with workforce development initiatives that support technology-based economic development. In doing so, we will create a nourishing environment for innovators, entrepreneurs, businesses, and jobseekers, thereby enhancing the quality of life for residents and communities.

LAB TO MARKET TRACK

The Lab to Market Track seeks to help Clemson University, University of South Carolina, and Medical University of South Carolina to accelerate the path to market of university-owned technology to generate tangible solutions having the potential to create lasting economic and societal benefits. Elements necessary for a compelling proposal include:

- Identifying and advancing at least one commercially viable technology through translational activities during the grant period, where the selected technology has a clear proof of concept and the potential to be positioned for federal SBIR/STTR or similar pre-seed funding in Year 3 of the program;
- Public/private partnerships, including a minimum of one industry partner, that leverage interests, assets, and expertise in a manner that achieves the program goals outlined above;
- Multi-institutional collaboration with at least two IHEs in South Carolina, excluding fellow CRUs;
- A sustainability plan, including financial and non-financial resources to enable the cohort of technologies to continue commercialization activities after the three-year performance period of the grant, including management team and fundraising opportunities (dilutive and nondilutive); and
- Faculty and student educational/training opportunities to grow the technical entrepreneur capacity in South Carolina and/or to pursue translational/use-inspired research and development careers.

The subsections below outline points of consideration when preparing a proposal.

I. Project Plan

1. Propose a minimum of one primary technology that will be accelerated through the Lab to Market Track.
 - i. Selected technologies should focus on the science- and technology-intensive industry sectors identified in the June 2022 report [Vision 2030: South Carolina Science and Technology Plan](#) (page 6-7). These sectors are: Advanced Manufacturing, Human Health Life Sciences, Information Technology, and Clean Tech, Sustainability, and Resiliency. The full report can be viewed at: <https://scepscor.org/Vision2030/SC%20S&T%20Plan-Vision%202030.pdf>.
 - ii. Selected technologies must have a differentiated and defensible market position in the form of intellectual property (existing or potential).
2. Outcomes at the conclusion of the three-year performance period must include key commercial milestones that will position the technology for a variety of follow-on funding sources including, but not limited to, federal grants (e.g., SBIR/STTR), pre-seed or seed stage funding.
3. Proposals should consider relevant commercialization assessments including, but not limited to market analysis, intellectual property landscape/freedom-to-operate, regulatory strategy, reimbursement strategy, manufacturability assessment, etc.
4. Customer discovery and market validation activities are strongly encouraged, with the outcomes of such activities culminating in a demonstration/pilot project with an industry partner in Year 2 or Year 3 of the performance period.
5. Describe the educational/training opportunities that will be offered to enable faculty and students to pursue various professional pathways in use-inspired research and development, entrepreneurship, and technology-based economic development. This may include student and faculty participation on project activities. SCRA encourages Track 1: Lab to Market awardees to extend an invite to Track 2: Capacity Building awardees to applicable educational/training opportunities they can attend (e.g., virtual webinars, in-person events, etc.).

II. Principal Investigator (PI) and Senior Personnel

1. The PI should have experience as a project coordinator or project manager that embraces the vision and drive for technology development and commercialization. The PI does not need to have a Ph.D. or be a faculty member but must be able to work with faculty, university administration, students, and external stakeholders in achieving grant objectives. The PI must be eligible to submit a proposal from the Lead Institution.
2. To facilitate technology development and commercialization activities, at least one member from the technology transfer office of the lead institution must be included in Senior Personnel. This individual is also eligible to serve as the PI.
3. SCRA encourages the representation of various skillsets in the project team and partners including, but not limited to, translational/use-inspired research, sponsored research and grant management, technology transfer, entrepreneurship, industry engagement, and economic development.

III. Sustainability

1. Describe the matching funds (cash and/or in-kind) that will be dedicated to this initiative by both the lead institution and collaborating partners. (Note: Matching funds are encouraged but not required for this funding opportunity.)
2. What monetary and non-monetary resources will enable the supported technologies to continue commercialization activities after the three-year performance period of the grant, including management team and fundraising opportunities (dilutive and nondilutive)?
3. Are there other complementary initiatives that are in progress or planned in the future that can align with and amplify the goals in this proposal? If so, please describe.

IV. Evaluation Plan

1. The proposal should describe how the project will be objectively monitored and evaluated over the performance period of the grant. What outcomes and deliverables are expected in Years 1, 2, 3, and beyond?
2. Include a projected timeline that outlines these outcomes and deliverables.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Only Clemson University, University of South Carolina, and Medical University of South Carolina may submit as a Lead Applicant under the Track 1: Lab to Market solicitation. All other eligible IHEs must submit under the Track 2: Capacity Building solicitation.

An eligible IHE can submit a maximum of one proposal as a Lead Applicant. Lead Applicants may participate on other proposals as a collaborating institution.

Proposals from collaborating institutions must be submitted from a single institution that has been identified as the Lead Applicant.

Previous Principal Investigators (PIs) of SACT grant funding are not eligible to submit under this solicitation during the performance period of their previous SACT grant.

FUNDING INFORMATION

I. Funding Amount

The total funding amount for the Track 1: Lab to Market award is provided in Table 1. The Lead Applicant is responsible for subawards to collaborating institutions.

Table 1. Allowable Award Amounts

Award Track	Max. No. of Awards	Max. Funding per award
Track 1: Lab to Market	3	\$860,000

**Amounts are inclusive of 20% indirect costs (if applicable).*

II. Disbursement of Funds

Funds will be disbursed annually in three tranches, provided the related milestones have been achieved as outlined in the budget proposal.

The budget does not need to be split evenly across the three years. To comply with the SCRA budget for Year 1, SCRA reserves the right to negotiate budgets with awardees for the first year. Before the next tranche of funds is released, awardees will be required to submit interim progress reports demonstrating achievement of the project's milestones and an accounting for expenditure of amounts already received. Refer to the Reporting & Review of Progress section below for more details.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND DATES

The Office of the Vice President/Vice Provost of Research (VPR) is responsible for the technical review and prioritization of proposals from their institution, based on the criteria outlined in "Review Criteria," for down-selection to a single application.

The application and supporting forms can be accessed at www.scra.org/sact-grant. The completed application must be submitted by the Office of the Vice President/Vice Provost of Research (VPR) of the Lead Applicant's institution.

The list below outlines the sections of the Application.

- Cover Page
- Brief Summary
- Project Plan
- The Team and Partners
- Sustainability
- Evaluation Plan and Timeline
- Budget
- Budget Justification
- References Cited
- Biographical Sketches
- Letters of Commitment (if applicable)
- Equipment Management Plan (if applicable)

The deadline for submission of the Application is February 1, 2024.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by SCRA Directors pursuant to eligibility requirements and alignment with the Lab to Market Track to reach a funding decision.

Applications will be scored based on their ability to meet the criteria outlined below. Criteria will be scored on a scale from 1-5, with 5 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest.

I. Project Plan

1. Does the proposed project align with overall Lab to Market track goals?
2. Are the proposed activities, budget, and timeline reasonable for the expected outcomes within the three-year period of the grant? Outcomes include positioning the technology for a variety of follow-on funding sources to continue pursuing development including, but not limited to, federal grants (e.g., SBIR/STTR), pre-seed or seed stage funding.
3. In addition to technology development, will the proposed activities also confirm market viability and outline the path to market of the technology? Examples include customer discovery and opportunities for industry demonstration/pilot projects.
4. Are the faculty and student educational/training opportunities well-defined and targeted towards the pursuit of professional pathways in use-inspired research and development, entrepreneurship, and/or technology-based economic development?

II. The Team

1. Are the PI and Senior Personnel well-suited to carry out the activities of the proposal?
2. Is at least one member of the lead institution's technology transfer office included as Senior Personnel?
3. Does the team, including Senior Personnel and other collaborators/partners, represent a variety of skillsets necessary for Lab to Market goals including, but not limited to, translational/use-inspired research, sponsored research and grant management, technology transfer, entrepreneurship, industry engagement, professional consultants, and economic development?

III. Evaluation Plan

1. Does the proposal describe how the project will be monitored and evaluated over the performance period of the grant?
2. Are stated milestones clearly defined and objectively measured?
3. Are interim and final milestones relevant to program goals and achievable within the stated timeline?

IV. Sustainability

1. Do matching funds by the lead institution and collaborating partners indicate a shared commitment to the initiatives over the three-year performance period of the project?
2. Are there other complementary initiatives (monetary and non-monetary) that are in progress or planned in the future that can align with and amplify the goals in this proposal?
3. Are there resources (monetary and non-monetary) anticipated after the three-year performance period of the grant that will enable commercialization activities of supported technologies to continue, including management team and fundraising opportunities (dilutive and nondilutive)?

V. Benefits to SC

1. Does the proposal have the potential to impact the capacity for and accelerate the pace of translational/use-inspired research, technology development, and commercialization at the lead institution, and other IHEs in South Carolina?

2. Does the proposal have the potential to impact the state's innovation economy (e.g., generation of new jobs, startups, intellectual property, workforce development, investment, number of organizations affected and/or number of people affected)?

AWARD START DATE

The award start date will be determined by the date the contract is executed by SCRA and the PI's institution, but no later than June 30, 2024. Subawards will flow down from the PI's institution.

USE OF FUNDS

General: Funds may be used only for operational and programmatic costs related to developing and supporting SACT grant initiatives. SCRA funds may not be transferred directly to companies (i.e., startups and individuals) being served by the lead or collaborating institutions.

ICR: The indirect rate is not to exceed 20%. Equipment is not eligible for indirect expenses.

Salary: Salary support is an allowed expense so long as it is paid to an employee of the lead and collaborating institutions. Student stipends are an allowable expense so long as the student time charged reflects the actual time the student spent working on the proposed project. Salary support for industry partners is prohibited, but in-kind contribution of time from the industry partner will be taken into consideration if documented on the Budget Form.

Contractual: Funds may be used for third-party service providers including legal services, business consulting, regulatory/reimbursement consulting, market research, prototyping, animal studies, demonstration/pilot studies, etc.

Restrictions: Expenses related to conference attendance and travel may not exceed 1.0% of the total budget.

Equipment: Any proposed equipment purchase exceeding \$25,000 must be made available to all IHEs and include a Management Plan, described in the Application document. Indirect expenses are not allowed on equipment. Refer to policies of the Lead Institution in purchasing equipment.

AWARDEE INSTITUTION REQUIREMENTS

Awardee institutions must provide the necessary facilities and infrastructure for the project and accept the conditions of the award. Additionally, Awardee institutions must adhere to current federal and state regulations, including those regarding financial conflict of interest and research misconduct. Institutions must assure compliance with the prevailing national guidelines for animal and human studies and provide proper oversight of the grant funds.

Awardee institutions must safeguard the rights and welfare of individuals who participate as subjects in research activities by reviewing proposed activities through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) as specified by the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Human Research Protections, HHS OHRP](#). Additionally, the grantee's institution must assure appropriate governance of animal studies.

If the research involves either animal or human subjects, IRB approval and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee numbers are not required at the time of application submission but must be provided for final signature of the grant agreement.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Confidentiality is important to SCRA; therefore, please do not include confidential information in grant applications. The project summary, applicant's name, and institutional affiliation(s) for awarded applications may be used by SCRA for promotional and marketing purposes at SCRA's sole discretion. Any potential promotion and marketing will be coordinated with the PI.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY GUIDELINES

SCRA, the SACT members, and their affiliated institutions do not claim any rights whatsoever to patents, copyrights, trademarks, or any other intellectual property (IP) created as a result of work sponsored under this grant, except to the extent an institution receives a grant and claims IP pursuant to that institution's IP policy.

The Lead Institution should take measures to ensure protection of any IP in accordance with federal and institutional requirements. The technology transfer office representative included in Senior Personnel is expected to oversee the management of any potential IP in accordance with these respective requirements.

REPORTING & REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Awardees will be required to submit interim mid-year and annual progress reports as well as a final report at the conclusion of the performance period.

Mid-Year Progress Report: Mid-year progress reports will be due at the midpoint of each year of the performance period. The mid-year progress report will be a two-page fillable PDF document that will allow the Awardee to provide an update on the current status of the project, key findings to date, next steps, and communication of potential problems.

Annual Progress Report: A more detailed annual progress report will be due June 1 of each year of the performance period (Year 1 and Year 2). Reports may be submitted early if all related milestones have been achieved for the performance period. Annual reports will include a confirmation of progress toward milestones, an accounting for expenditure of amounts already received, publications resulting from the project, new IP generated during the project, plans for pursuing follow-on funding (including submission dates), and new collaborations (both commercial and academic) that have resulted from the project. Annual progress reports must be received and demonstrate achievement of the project's milestones before the next tranche of funds can be released (prior to June 30). The award document will specify how these reports must be submitted and the contents.

Final Report: In place of an annual progress report at the conclusion of Year 3, Awardees are required to provide a final report within 60 days of the end of the performance period. Similar to the annual report, the final report will include a confirmation of progress toward milestones, outcomes of project objectives,

an accounting for expenditure of amounts received, publications or other media resulting from the project, new IP generated during the project, plans for pursuing follow-on funding (including submission dates), and new collaborations (both commercial and academic) that have resulted from the project.

All publications or other media resulting from the funded project shall acknowledge SCRA as a funding source. Copies of any such publications will be submitted to the SCRA Director of Academic Innovations at academicinnovations@scra.org. SCRA will continue to follow longitudinal progress of the technology and reserves the rights to request annual updates related to the project for five years after project closing.

CHANGES TO PROJECT SCOPE

A significant change in the project scope of work or budget requires approval by SCRA. Any such requests should be submitted to academicinnovations@scra.org.

COMPLIANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

SCRA will assure compliance with program policies and will be responsible for all administrative matters.

The PI and lead institution are solely responsible for execution of the project, including compliance with all relevant federal and state laws and guidelines. The awards will be made via contracts between SCRA and the lead institutions. Subawards and cost share, if applicable, will be the responsibility of the PI's institution.

SCRA reserves the right to refine and amend policies, as required.

If there are any questions regarding this Funding Announcement, please submit them to academicinnovations@scra.org.

HOW TO APPLY

The application and supporting forms can be accessed at www.scra.org/sact-grant. The completed application must be submitted by the Office of the Vice President/Vice Provost of Research (VPR) of the Lead Applicant's institution. Send completed applications to academicinnovations@scra.org.