UNLV Sports Innovation Initiative

Catalyst Grants
Request for Proposals (RFP)

Spring 2024 – Timeline & Deadlines

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1. Sports Innovation Initiative- Catalyst Grant Overview

The UNLV Office of Economic Development (“OED”) is pleased to announce a call for proposals under the Sports Innovation Initiative - Catalyst Grant Program (the “Catalyst Grant” or the “Program”). This Program is supported by the Nevada Governor’s Office of Economic Development (“GOED”) through its Knowledge Fund initiative. During Spring 2024, there will be two different types of awards as detailed in this RFP. These funding awards will be made to seed commercially promising inventions where UNLV has the greatest potential to impact the local economy through commercialization activities.

The Sports Innovation Initiative’s purpose is to: 1) generate new products and services based on sports related UNLV owned or controlled intellectual property; 2) collaborate with and grow Nevada-based companies with real-world opportunities for UNLV faculty, students and graduates; 3) attract new companies to Nevada to diversify the economy; and 4) conduct cutting-edge applied research with industry collaborators to drive economic development and diversification within the region. All grants provided under this program support these purposes.

2. Award Types

The Catalyst Grant program may award two different types of awards under this round of the program. The Proof of Concept Grants (“POC Grants”) are intended to fund projects with existing intellectual property (“IP”) that is created at and owned or controlled by UNLV. The Product & Service Development Grants (“PSD Grants”) are intended to support and to foster development of products and services toward commercialization and requires an industry collaborator. PSD Grant proposals may focus on products and services already under development by an Industry Collaborator.

The Catalyst Grant Program was created with an understanding that many projects initially seeded by these catalyst grants, as well as other opportunities, may benefit from funds focused on moving the funded idea along the commercialization continuum. While catalyst grants rely on both internal and external scientific review, PSD Grant awards may utilize serial entrepreneurs and investors, in addition to scientific reviewers, to help judge projects most appropriate for grant funds.

Proposals may span research from proof-of-concept (with existing IP) through market development stages. Two award types are offered under this program: POC Grants and PSD Grants, as described below:
A. Proof of Concept Grants (POC Grant)

Proof of Concept Grant projects must propose research and development activities for technologies or products on the brink of commercialization or licensing that must overcome a specifically identified hurdle. It is a requirement of the program that the proposed work be directly related to an active intellectual property matter with OED. Such a requirement is supported as a statutory metric of the Knowledge Fund program. This may include an invention disclosure already submitted to OED, a new invention disclosure related to the proposal (new disclosures should be submitted in advance of the proposal submission deadline), an active patent application (provisional or utility application), an issued patent managed by OED or an active copyright matter.

New invention disclosures should be submitted to OED on an approved form that can be found at https://www.unlv.edu/econdev/disclose-invention

Focus Areas & Funding Priorities:
- Biomedical Engineering – including biomedical imaging
- Military Health & Performance
- Sports Betting
- Sports Performance & Recovery
- Sports Psychology
- Gender-Based Performance & Training
- Sports Safety – including software, devices, and sensors
- Materials – including advanced nano-materials
- Nutrition & Supplements
- Physical therapy and rehabilitation
- Healthcare – including software applications
- Esports

- Other – other program areas may be considered based on well demonstrated commercial partnerships and ability to advance sports innovation and economic development regionally.
The successful outcome of the proposed activities should result in the technology being licensed or spur the development of a startup company. In addition to appropriate technical details, applicants must describe a clear path to commercial development, market potential and significant impact of funding on advancement to commercialization for their projects.

Projects solicited under this program may include:
1. The building of a prototype or second iteration prototype to prepare for commercialization.
2. Commercial feasibility tests.
3. Research to demonstrate mitigation of risk for potential licensees.
4. Research to address a specific gap identified by an industry that impairs the ability to attract capital.

A POC Grant:
- Provides funding for projects where IP related to the proposal has been disclosed to the OED.
- Is awarded on a one-time basis only.
- Provides funding for up to one-year maximum.
- Provides funding for work that is not currently supported by, or not eligible for, other sources of funding.

B. Product & Service Development Grants (PSD Grant)

Product & Service Development Grants provide funding through a competitive process that is a simple mechanism intended to support new collaborations between UNLV faculty and an industry collaborator (an “Industry Collaborator”) for a one year period. UNLV researchers will apply to receive matching funds, up to $50,000, to conduct research with, or on behalf of, the Industry Collaborator, dollar-for-dollar to those cash funds supplied by the Industry Collaborator. Priority is given (a) to proposals focused on a product or service that can deploy within one year of the completion of the project, and (b) include Industry Collaborators that have a business presence in Nevada.

A PSD Grant:
- is supported by a sponsored research agreement with, one or more eligible Industry Collaborators.

The maximum total cash amount provided by UNLV for the PSD grant is $50,000 with a total budget of $100,000 (UNLV plus Industry Collaborator cash contributions). For clarity, this PSD Grant only matches cash committed by an Industry Collaborator. Industry Collaborator in-kind matches or commitments will not be considered.

3. Focus Areas

The Program is designed to focus on areas where UNLV has the greatest potential to impact the local economy through research, development and commercialization activities including science, psychology, athletics, engineering and many additional disciplines related to sports and sports innovation. The program seeks to emphasize research areas that complement regional capabilities, including:
• Biomedical Engineering – including biomedical imaging
• Military Health & Performance
• Sports Betting
• Sports Performance & Recovery
• Sports Psychology
• Gender-Based Performance & Training
• Sports Safety – including software, devices, and sensors
• Materials – including advanced nano-materials
• Nutrition & Supplements
• Physical therapy and rehabilitation
• Healthcare – including software applications
• Esports
• Other – other program areas may be considered based on well demonstrated commercial partnerships and ability to advance sports innovation and economic development regionally.

4. Catalyst Grant Outcomes

The success of the Catalyst Grant Program is measured in five areas: research and scholarship, intellectual property, corporate collaborations, startup companies, and general economic indicators. These areas provide both leading indicators and outcome measures related to economic development.

- **Research and Scholarship** – measures include peer-reviewed publications and the ability to attract follow on funding. These measures demonstrate the basic strength of UNLV’s research program which is important to attracting partner companies as well as the best and brightest faculty and students.

- **Intellectual Property** – Intellectual property measures (including invention disclosures, patent applications and issued patents) provide a measure of the generation of ideas which are a key driver for economic development.

- **Corporate Collaborations** – measured through partner meetings and corporate sponsored research contracts that are fostered by catalyst grants.

- **Startups** – measures include business plans, option agreements, license agreements, and small business innovative research (SBIR) grant applications.

- **Economic Indicators** – Economic measures indicate the impact on our community and region and include:
  - Companies relocating to Nevada as a result of a funded project
  - Total number of jobs created
  - Degree of workforce training and development
  - Number and revenue of products or services commercialized

5. Eligibility Criteria

Catalyst Grants are open to all fields of research in which the proposed project fulfills the goals and funding priorities of the program outlined above, and which are identifiable to the OED as commercially relevant sports innovations. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the UNLV OED about the project’s appropriateness and eligibility for this opportunity.
The following are not eligible for funding under this program:

- Proposals to fund basic research or theoretical development, or to generate models, new data, or solely for academic curiosity
- Projects requiring more than one year to accomplish

Applicant Eligibility
Any Principal Investigator who meets University eligibility [https://www.unlv.edu/research/policies-forms/pi-eligibility](https://www.unlv.edu/research/policies-forms/pi-eligibility).

Applicant’s willing to participate in UNLV’s NSF I-Corp program [https://www.greencarcongress.com/2023/11/20231120-doe.html](https://www.greencarcongress.com/2023/11/20231120-doe.html) as a team will be given preference.

**A. Additional Eligibility Requirements – POC Grants**

**Intellectual Property**

*It is a requirement of the program that the proposed work be directly related to an active intellectual property matter with the OED.* Such a requirement is supported as a statutory metric of the Knowledge Fund program. This may include an invention disclosure already submitted to OED, a new invention disclosure related to the proposal (new disclosures should be submitted in advance of the proposal submission deadline), an active patent application (provisional or utility application), an issued patent managed by OED or an active copyright matter.

All intellectual property (IP) related to the proposal must have been disclosed to the UNLV OED and must be identified in the proposal by UNLV Tech ID and title. During the review of proposals, the OED may provide information to reviewers describing any marketing efforts for the IP, any prior obligations that might encumber the IP, and include a statement indicating that project completion would overcome a barrier towards commercialization. This information will be considered, along with the rest of the application materials, in the review and evaluation of the proposals.

IP related to the proposal must be assigned to UNLV and be available for licensing (i.e. not subject to prior obligations, such as existing license, sponsored research agreement, ongoing collaboration with an industrial partner, or ongoing licensing negotiation). Existing IP cannot be jointly owned with a commercial entity. If IP is jointly owned with an academic institution or non-profit, there must be an inter-institutional agreement in place and UNLV must have the lead role in commercializing the technology.

Intellectual property resulting from the research must be assignable to UNLV.

**B. Additional Eligibility Requirements - PSD Grants**

**Industry Collaborator Participation Criteria**

In order to participate in the PSD Grant program, Industry Collaborators must meet both the eligibility criteria and application requirements outlined below. Please note specific guidelines for start-up companies.
I. **Industry Collaborator Eligibility**
A participating Industry Collaborator must be a *for-profit company* and preferably be headquarterd in Nevada, have a significant presence in Nevada, or demonstrate the outcome of the sponsored collaboration will benefit Nevada and its citizens.

**Start-up Companies -- Additional Application Requirement:**
Start-up companies must provide a detailed business plan demonstrating their intent to develop research and development or manufacturing operations in Nevada.

II. **Industry Collaborator Application Requirements:**
As part of the application, Industry Collaborators must provide a Letter of Intent. The amount of the company’s cash contribution and a commitment to execute UNLV’s standard commercial sponsored research agreement as described in the Application Instructions (Appendix A) and must designate the following personnel to the project:

1. A Technical Liaison who is the Industry Collaborator’s scientific counterpart to the UNLV principal investigator (PI), and whose expertise and role in the sponsoring company is relevant to the proposed project. The Industry Collaborator technical liaison may not be a member of the proposed UNLV project team.

2. A Financial Liaison who has the authority to make the financial commitment to the proposal and who acts as the Industry Collaborator’s financial contact.

3. An authorized executive of the Industry Collaborator who will serve as the point of contact with UNLV for execution of a standard Corporate Sponsored Research agreement.

6. **How to Apply**
Submit all documentation, applications, and materials related to Catalyst Grants via email to innovation@unlv.edu. The subject line of the email must contain the PI Name and type of grant sought.

During Spring 2024, the POC Grant, the application process consists of two steps (steps 1-2 below). For the PSD Grant, the application process consists of three steps (step 1-3 below):

1. **Submission of a Letter of Intent (“LOI”):** Submission and approval of an LOI is required in order to submit a full proposal. LOI’s are non-binding and used for administrative and review planning purposes. For this grant cycle, LOIs may be submitted through Friday, Tuesday, January 30, 2024 (12:00 Noon PT) extended to Tuesday, February 22, 2024 (12:00 Noon PT).

2. **Proposal Submission:** Upon approval of the LOI, applicants need to submit the full application. For Spring 2024 applications, complete applications must be submitted by the deadline deadline Friday, March 1, 2024 (12:00 Noon PT) extended to Friday, March 22, 2024 (12:00 Noon PT). Applicants must adhere to the Application Instructions and guidelines. By submitting a proposal, the PI is attesting that the technology is unencumbered by prior obligations (e.g., obligations assumed under a consulting agreement).
3. **Industry Collaborator Letter of Intent to Fund**: An Industry Collaborator letter of intent must be submitted with the proposal. The amount of the company's cash contribution and a commitment to execute UNLV's standard commercial sponsored research agreement must be included. In cases of more than one Industry Collaborator, each Collaborator must submit a letter of intent, the amount of the company’s cash contribution and commitment to execute UNLV’s standard commercial sponsored research agreement.

Full schedule and timeline for each grant cycle is as follows:

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Questions should be directed to the UNLV Office of Economic Development:

Nancy Lough, Ed.D. nancy.lough@unlv.edu 702-895-5392  
John Mercer, Ph.D. john.mercer@unlv.edu 702-895-1356  
Zach Miles, J.D  zach.miles@unlv.edu 702-895-4507

7. **Review Criteria**

Full proposals will be reviewed by internal and external reviewers. Final recommendations for funding will be submitted to the UNLV Vice President for Economic Development and will be made based on internal and external assessments and commercial assessment by the OED.

**Qualification Criteria**: Qualifying proposals must meet the following criteria:

- **Fields of Study** – Sciences, engineering, psychology, medicine, healthcare, or other areas identified above;
- **UNLV researcher** – ULV PI Eligible [https://www.unlv.edu/research/policies-forms/pi-eligibility](https://www.unlv.edu/research/policies-forms/pi-eligibility);
- **Funding period** – funding period shall be for up to one year;
- **Amount of funding** – project funding up to $25,000 for POC Grants and up to $50,000 for PSD Grants;
- **Intellectual property (POC Grants Only)** – Active intellectual property matter with the UNLV OED (disclosure, patent application, or issued patent). Investigators who do not currently have an active matter should submit an invention disclosure in advance of the abstract submission.
- **Industry Collaborator Match (PSD Grants Only)** – a PSD Grant proposal must include a cash contribution from an Industry Collaborator supported with a Letter of Intent including the
amount of the company’s cash contribution and a commitment to execute UNLV’s standard commercial sponsored research agreement.

Programmatic/Commercial Criteria: Qualifying proposals will be reviewed by the OED based on programmatic and commercial criteria. In keeping with the program’s goal of fostering economic development, review of the full proposal will be made based on the following criteria:

- **Intellectual Property** – current intellectual property (disclosure, copyright matter or patent application), the potential for future patents, freedom to operate, strength of potential intellectual property claims;
- **Market Assessment** – total market size, addressable market, other market dynamics including a well-defined path to market;
- **Licensing Potential** – potential licensees, assessment of license revenue potential;
- **Corporate Collaboration** – the potential for corporate collaborations and/or startups, tie-in with regional industrial clusters.

Scientific Evaluation Criteria for Grant Applications: Complete proposals will undergo scientific evaluation by both internal and external reviewers using criteria established for the UNLV Faculty Opportunity Awards program. Scientific reviewers will be asked to prioritize all reviewed proposals and rank proposals against national standards (top 10%, next 40%, bottom 50%).

- **Quality** – Excellence and novelty of the concept, approach, and methodology; clarity and appropriateness of project plans; desirability and impact of potential results on the national and international scholarly community;
- **Return** – Return on investment (ROI) through follow-on extramural funding or commercialization [expectation: 3X requested seed funding from external sources, the potential for intellectual property, licensing revenue, corporate partnerships, startup companies, and other commercial return measures];
- **Risk** – Availability of necessary skills and experience, the likelihood of achieving the intended outcomes; probability of securing extramural funding or engaging in commercialization; and potential for self-sustainability after the seed investment phase

Nevada Benefit: Complete applications will be reviewed for intended economic development impacts within Nevada as demonstrated by:

- Accelerating innovation and creating a path to commercialization of new technologies and products
- Increasing competitiveness of Nevada companies, by attracting greater investments and retaining jobs in Nevada
- Establishing the basis for founding new Nevada companies
- Identifying new solutions to problems critical to Nevada
- Creation of new jobs

Investor Evaluation Criteria: Complete applications may be reviewed by entrepreneurs, investors and/or scientific reviewers. These reviewers will be asked to rank the proposals based on the following criteria:

- **Commercial Return** – Ability of the project to advance a technology toward commercialization – through a key proof of concept, prototype development, cooperative research effort with a
Commercialization may be measured by the completion of a license agreement, the launch of a startup company or ability to secure outside investment.

Applicant’s willing to participate in UNLV’s NSF I-Corp program [https://www.greencarcongress.com/2023/11/20231120-doe.html](https://www.greencarcongress.com/2023/11/20231120-doe.html) as a team will be given preference.

8. Review of Proposals and Funding Decisions

Proposals will be reviewed in multidisciplinary panels including scientists as well as business experts and may include members of the investment community and/or Representatives of GOED. Review of proposals and technical and commercial progress made with Catalyst Grant awards may utilize serial entrepreneurs and investors in addition to scientific reviewers to help judge projects most appropriate use for grant funds.

Protected and confidential information should not be included in proposals. Although reviewers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to the review, protected or proprietary information should not be included in proposals. Applicants are encouraged to avoid jargon and to prepare their proposals in a manner comprehensible to a general audience.

Applicants may submit the names of potential reviewers who are not affiliated with the applicant’s laboratory. Applicants may request the exclusion of certain reviewers, and such requests must include a brief explanation/justification for such exclusion. OED will constitute the panels, assign reviewers, and make final determinations regarding panel composition. Reviewers are expected to disqualify themselves in cases of potential conflict of interest.

Review panels will evaluate proposals based on the scoring criteria and generate a rank-ordered list of applications that are recommended for funding.

Awards are subject to final approval by the Vice President for Economic Development and are contingent on the availability of funding.
Appendix A. Full Proposal Boilerplate

UNLV Sports Innovation Initiative
Catalyst Grant Program
Full Proposal – Spring 2024

Full proposal Instructions: Instructions are in red italics font – please delete these in the completed application.

Please limit your Proposal to 6 pages total for a POC Grant Application and 8 pages total (inclusive of Industry Collaborator’s Letter of Intent) for a PSD Grant, including basic project information about the PI, title, summary, milestones, return on investment, intellectual property, commercialization, budget justification, project narrative and references. Please use size 10 Calibri font as well as single lined spacing and 1” margin on all sides.

Email completed proposals as a single PDF file to innovation@unlv.edu by the full proposal deadline of 12:00 pm Noon on 03/01/2024 extended to 03/22/2024. Please include the PI name in the title of your PDF file. You should receive a confirmation within one business day; if you do not, please immediately contact the UNLV Office of Economic Development.

For questions about this application, contact Zach Miles, Senior Associate Vice President for Economic Development, zach.miles@unlv.edu, 702-895-5200.

Title of Project:

Principal Investigator(s): Provide information for each PI and Co-PI

Name: 
Department/School: 
Position: 
Email: 

Project:

Type of Request: _____ Proof of Concept Grant
______ Product & Service Development Grant

Amount Requested: See Call for Proposals for guidelines on amount

Dates of Proposed Period of Support: __/__/2024 through __/__/20__ Applications should be for 12 months, starting as early as January 1, 2024.

Human Subjects Research: □ Yes □ No If “Yes”, Study Approval Date

Vertebrate Animals: □ Yes □ No If “Yes”, IACUC Approval Date

Performance site if other than UNLV: ____________________________

Willing to participate in UNLV NSF I-Corp as a team: □ Yes □ No

Executive Summary:

Provide an abstract that succinctly describes your project in lay person’s terms. (Please limit your executive summary to 350 words.)

Proposal Narrative/Description:

Describe concisely the design and methods for achieving your goals. Describe the rationale and techniques you will use to pursue your goals. In addition, in two or three sentences, describe in plain, lay language the relevance of this research to Innovation and
Commercialization. You may also wish to include: 1) business description, 2) product or service, 3) market, 4) management team and 5) financial projections.

Project Deliverables:

List technical milestones and scholarly and extramural deliverables. Include prototype development, key proof of concept tests, anticipated submissions of extramural funding applications, commercial collaborations, invention disclosures and/or potential patent filing.

1. 
2. 
3. 

Return on Investment:

For Proof of Concept Grant Applications: Include any commercialization opportunities and potential for related sponsored research projects from corporate collaborators. List and barriers to commercialization that can be overcome with POC Grant funding. List sources of extramural funding (including agency title/type, total dollar amount, anticipated submission date) that will be enabled by this research.

Product and Service Development Grant Applications: Describe how the project will advance a technology toward commercialization – through a key proof of concept, prototype development, cooperative research effort with an industry collaborator or other means. Commercialization may be measured by completion of a license agreement, launch of a startup company or ability to secure outside investment.

Intellectual Property: ______ UNLV Matter Number (5 digits. e.g., 19-022)

Provide title (and four-digit OED reference) for the related Intellectual Property matter. If appropriate, please also provide a description of patent filing and status of intellectual property.

For POC Grant Applications: Existing IP matter is required. Emphasis is on potential or existing intellectual property.

For PSD Grant Applications: Existing IP matter is NOT required. However, preference will be given to those applicants with an existing related UNLV IP matter.

Customer Discovery and Commercialization:

Provide a summary of customer discovery which may include the following information: who do you hypothesize is the customer for your technology (customer definition), what value do you potentially bring to that customer (value proposition), how do you define market segments and/or your archetype customer, which potential customers have you spoken to, what did you learn from those conversations.

In addition to the customer discovery process, applicants may wish to describe the potential for commercialization through corporate partnerships, licensing, or start-up company. For POC Grant Applications: Emphasis may be on commercial potential. For PSD Grant Applications: Emphasis should be on discrete steps toward commercialization.

Budget:

[Insert OSP Budget form here]

Budget Justification:

For Catalyst Grant Applications: Describe the amount requested and provide a short rationale for type and amount of expenditures – including salary (RA’s, graduate students, and summer salary), major purchases. Requests for summer salary must include strong justification. Note that tuition and fringe benefits must be included where appropriate. Overhead charges will not apply. A complete budget is required for this proposal; see budget instructions.
References:

NOTE: All Product and Service Development Grant Applications must include an “Industry Collaborator Letter of Intent to Fund”.

Appendix B. PSD Grant Award Calculation

The PSD Grant Program was developed as a mechanism to enable UNLV to share the direct costs of a meritorious Innovation project(s) with the private Industry Collaborator(s). Proposed In-kind contributions will not satisfy the required cash commitment of an Industry Collaborator.

Industry Collaborator Cash Contributions

Allowable cash matching contributions:
- will be committed by an eligible Industry Collaborator specifically for the approved project and do not represent funds that would have come to UNLV under other programs or for other purposes. For example, funds awarded to UNLV for membership in an industrial affiliate or liaison program for research centers are ineligible as a matching contribution;
- must be expended within the period of the sponsored project; and
- may not include state or federal flow-through fund sources.

The PSD Grant program will not award PSD grants that involve previous Industry Collaborator cash contribution currently in arrears for any ongoing or past Catalyst Grant(s) or any other sponsored research agreements with any NSHE institution.
Appendix C. Research Agreements and University Research Policy

Central goals of the Catalyst Grant program are to incentivize new innovation collaborations and facilitate the prompt transfer of University-developed technology to the marketplace for public benefit. The University uses a standard Commercial Sponsored Research Agreement to accomplish these goals.

The Research Agreement will ensure that the Industry Collaborator contribution, when committed in the form of a grant or contract, is dedicated to the proposed research and that the matching contribution is not contributed as a subcontract that may carry obligations to a third party.

Research agreements in support of the proposal will be executed by the UNLV Office of Sponsored Programs.

Applicants are strongly encouraged, at the earliest possible time, to consult with the UNLV Office of Sponsored Programs (email: osp@unlv.edu) or the UNLV OED on the Commercial Sponsored Research Agreement.