

## **SUNY TECHNOLOGY ACCELERATOR FUND CLASS OF 2024 APPLICATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES**

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The SUNY Technology Accelerator Fund (“TAF”) provides funding to support the advancement of SUNY innovations from the lab to the marketplace. Since its launch in 2011, TAF has successfully advanced the commercial readiness of 65 SUNY innovations. In most cases, SUNY innovations developed through sponsored research lack critical proof-of-concept data that is needed to attract investment by potential licensees or investors. TAF support targets the critical milestones needed to demonstrate that an innovation is worthy of external investment. The aim is to identify opportunities where small investments will provide significant impacts on making SUNY innovations available to the public. Different from fundamental research, TAF investments support proof-of-concept and technology development projects to validate the commercial feasibility of SUNY technology. TAF’s goal is to facilitate the translation of SUNY technology into marketable products and/or services by enhancing strategic academic-industry partnerships and building new entrepreneurial ventures.

### **PROJECT ELIGIBILITY**

- Projects from all disciplines are welcome to apply for TAF Class of 2024 funding.
- Previously funded TAF projects are eligible for TAF Class of 2024 funding so long as the eligibility criteria are met.
- Only SUNY faculty, staff, and students are eligible to apply for TAF funding, and proposals must be endorsed and submitted by the campus RF Operations Manager or designee.
- Projects must be led by an individual who has technology commercialization and project management experience and has proven to be effective at tracking deliverables.
- Only proposals which can demonstrate that commercialization milestones are achievable within six months will receive an investment. However, the TAF Managing Director may make an exception to this requirement if the applicant demonstrates that interim milestones can be reached within six months.

### **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

All applications will be reviewed for compliance with the eligibility criteria identified above. Noncompliant applications will be rejected without further review. The TAF Managing Director will review the applications and make funding decisions. Each eligible application will be judged strictly on the likelihood that follow-on investment and public utilization shall result from TAF support. Projects enabling near term (e.g., within six months) commercialization events will be prioritized for an investment.

Competitive proposals will clearly answer all questions in each of the categories below. The TAF Managing Director will consider the answers to these questions when making final investment decisions.

**The Technology:** What is innovative about the technology? What type of product, process, or software can the innovation be incorporated into? What is the status of any such intellectual property protection (e.g., patent applications, issued patents, registered copyrights or marks)? What is the business strategy for establishing and building an intellectual property portfolio? What technical challenges will the proposed TAF project help overcome?

**The Market Opportunity:** What specific market need will the technology satisfy? How has the market opportunity been validated (i.e., customer or industry outreach)? Has any member of the proposed project team (or startup team) participated in any formal customer discovery training either through an NSF I-Corps Node, I-Corps Site, etc.? Who was contacted and what is their feedback? Have potential licensees expressed interest? What specific feedback from a licensee is available? If a startup company will be established, what would be the potential market entry point?

**The Commercialization Opportunity:** What is the projected development and commercialization path? How long is it projected to take for a product (or service) to be developed and brought to the market? What are the potential barriers to commercialization? What questions will be answered during the proposed project and how will those answers drive the future commercialization and development of the technology? How does the proposed TAF project support the commercialization strategy? How did customer or end-user feedback inform the commercialization plan for the technology and/or the aims of the project proposed by the project team and potential (or existing) development partners? What support structures exist (or are needed) in order to introduce the new product or service to the market?

**The Commitment:** What commitment of resources (e.g., patent expenditures, equipment) has the campus or a third party made to support the TAF project? What type of commitment is needed to achieve the commercialization strategy? What steps will the campus and project team take to secure the commitment of a third party to support the commercialization and development of the technology post-TAF?

**The Team:** Does the proposed project team have a successful track record of working together? Do any members of the team have expertise in technology development and entrepreneurial interests and aspirations? Who is advising the startup team, if one is envisioned?

## **FUNDING**

Up to seven TAF Class of 2024 investments are expected to be made. Each award will be up to \$50,000, but projects will be funded at the level deemed necessary to achieve the proposed project objectives.

One Turbo-TAF award of up to \$100,000 is expected to be made. Only projects that include third party support (cash or in-kind) will be considered eligible for the Turbo-TAF award. For more information, see number 11 under Proposal Process below.

The evaluation and award process will include a rigorous budget review, therefore applicants are strongly encouraged to work with their sponsored programs office to ensure appropriate project budgeting. The project plan and budget of any submitted proposal may be negotiated by the TAF Managing Director before

an award is made. All TAF funding agreements will include a provision requiring that ten percent (10%) of the gross revenue or equity received by the campus from the licensing or other commercialization of TAF-supported technology be transferred to the TAF. By submitting a proposal to the TAF for consideration a campus acknowledges and agrees to follow The Research Foundation for SUNY's [Guidelines for the Administration of Industrial Relationships](#) when negotiating an agreement related to TAF-supported intellectual property.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES**

TAF awards are intended to close the gap between research and commercialization, therefore TAF projects need not be restricted to laboratory research. Allowable expenditures of TAF funding include but are not limited to the following:

- Materials;
- Supplies;
- Travel;
- Prototype development; and
- Independent contracting.

Class of 2024 funds cannot be used for tuition, construction, renovation, legal fees, patent costs, or permits. Funds may be used for salary and fringe benefits for project personnel if a definitive need is outlined in the proposal submitted. All funds must be used solely for the project described in the application.

TAF applications will be shared with an independent market analysis and intellectual property firm retained by the TAF Managing Director for evaluation purposes, but otherwise will be kept confidential. The firm will review each application and provide technology assessment, competitive landscape, end user inputs, specific market dynamics and an intellectual property review. The TAF Class of 2024 application evaluation process begins with a call between the project team and proposal review teams immediately after the proposal submission period closes. By applying for TAF Class of 2024 funds, the project manager and all proposed project participants hereby consent to this process and agree to actively participate in the evaluation process. The project manager and proposed project participants also agree to be reasonably available to the TAF Managing Director to answer any questions that may arise during the evaluation process and to cooperate with the TAF Managing Director and the institutional official.

## **PROPOSAL PROCESS**

**All individuals intending on participating in the TAF Class of 2024 are strongly encouraged to contact their technology transfer offices immediately to formally express their interest and ensure compliance with all campus specific TAF proposal (or pre-proposal) submission requirements.**

The deadline to submit TAF Class of 2023 proposals for consideration is **March 20, 2024**. Each SUNY campus may submit a maximum of two proposals for consideration. Proposals must be submitted only by the campus RF Operations Manager or designee. Please consult with your campus RF Operations Manager or designee to ensure compliance with any local procedures regarding your participation in the TAF program. Proposals must be no more than seven pages in length (not including items 1 and 5-11 below, as applicable), use a font size of 11 points or larger, and have at least one-inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages. Funding decisions will be made by the TAF Managing Director within

approximately eight weeks of the proposal submission deadline, March 20, 2024 and the decision will be communicated promptly by written notice from the TAF Managing Director to the individuals identified on the proposal cover page (see item number 1 below) and copied to the appropriate campus RF Operations Manager or designee and other individuals deemed appropriate by the TAF Managing Director.

TAF Class of 2024 Proposals should contain:

1. A cover page with the names, roles (i.e., Principal Investigator), and contact information for all staff proposed to be part of the project team, the name of an institutional official who will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the obligations identified in a TAF funding agreement, the topic area(s) that the technology aligns to (*see Project Eligibility*);
2. A nonconfidential description of the technology related to the proposed project that is no longer than five sentences. Nonconfidential descriptions should be developed with the aim of sharing it with industry and customers for feedback;
3. An executive summary describing the market problem to be addressed, the solution offered by the technology, why it is likely to be successful, the project aims, the proposed budget, the product or service that is envisioned to be developed from the technology, and a brief justification for why the technology aligns with the topic areas indicated on the cover page;
4. A project narrative, to be developed with the campus Technology Transfer Office or other appropriate office, that includes:
  - Problem: Describe the problem and who has the problem (i.e., the customer) and include whether the problem and hypothesis has been verified through customer discovery;
  - Technology Description and Solution: Concisely describe your invention; the solution; the invention's value proposition; the potential product, process, or software that the innovation can be incorporated into; and why the invention is superior to existing alternatives (i.e., compare to the competition);
  - Technical Feasibility: Outline the key studies and findings to date that support the viability of this technology, provide a concise review of recent research in the field, and list related peer-reviewed journal publications;
  - Intellectual Property: If patentable, describe the nature of the invention and what will be claimed (i.e., composition of matter, device, method), discuss the status of any domestic or international patent filings, summarize any known prosecution risks, explain the filing strategy, and provide a concise review of the relevant prior art. If non-patentable describe what measures have and will be taken to protect the intellectual property (e.g., copyright registration);
  - Market Opportunity: Describe the potential size and scope of the target market, provide data and sources supporting market assumptions, and explain the potential market entry point; discuss any startup potential and any business models that have been successful; describe feedback from marketing and customer discovery efforts, including any interest from companies or investors; discuss why the target market demands the product or service that will include the underlying technology of the proposed project; explain how the target market has been validated and describe potential customers or what steps will be taken during and post-TAF to validate the target market;
  - Commercialization and Development Plan: Describe the specific aims of the technology development plan and how it will better position the technology for

- commercialization (e.g., technical validation, address questions raised by industry, strengthen or broaden intellectual property, quantify market opportunity, funding strategy); explain how end-user or customer feedback helped inform the commercialization and development plan. For each aim, provide a budget and timeframe for completion. Identify the potential barriers to commercialization and the strategy to overcome them;
- Team: Describe the specific attributes or experiences of the team that will make the proposed project successful (e.g., successful track record, prior industry experience, entrepreneurial interests).
  - Milestones: Describe the milestones expected to be accomplished utilizing the TAF award and how achievement of those milestones will drive the overall technology commercialization strategy. Include a completed [TAF Class of 2024 Scope of Work](#) showing the expected timelines and itemized costs for completing each milestone.
5. A summary of the commitment that the campus or third party has made to support the TAF project. Describe what commitment is needed post-TAF in order to achieve commercialization and development milestones and what the strategy is for securing that commitment.
  6. A description of the roles and responsibilities of the project manager and other project staff, including a biography/CV for each.
  7. A summary of feedback from at least two industry partners, investors, or seasoned entrepreneurs planning to develop a startup company around the invention. Include letters of interest and/or support from potential partners, if available. **Proposals that include letters of commitment from potential development partners will be reviewed more favorably. Additionally, proposals that include specific requests from potential commercialization partners for data or other information resulting directly from the proposed projects will also be reviewed more favorably.**
  8. A letter of support from the campus RF Operations Manager or designee.
  9. A completed [TAF Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form](#) for all staff proposed to be part of the project team. Proposals submitted without a completed TAF Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form may be rejected by the TAF Managing Director.<sup>1</sup>
  10. For Prior TAF Awardees Only: Describe any outcomes that have occurred as a direct result of receiving prior TAF funding (i.e., new industrial partnerships, new intellectual property filed, significant challenges solved). Provide information relating to the status of previous TAF milestones and how they increased the value of the technology. To receive additional TAF investments, prior awardees must be able to illustrate that a partner is committed to supporting the continued development and commercialization of the TAF-supported technology, which can include but is not limited to sponsoring research, licensing, and agreeing to provide matching funds. Prior awardees must also explain how another TAF award will result in the successful achievement of a commercialization milestone (e.g., product on the market, IND submission, regulatory approval, attraction of experienced management team).
  11. For Turbo-TAF Consideration: All TAF Class of 2024 applicants have the option to compete for the Turbo-TAF award of \$100,000. Interested applicants should include

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<sup>1</sup> Each TAF Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form will be reviewed by the TAF Managing Director. Based on this review, the TAF Managing Director may determine that a conflict of interest management plan for project personnel is required in order to receive a TAF award.

additional narrative of no more than one page articulating why a \$100,000 investment (opposed to an investment of up to \$50,000) is necessary to achieve a commercialization or technology development milestone (e.g., license, option, industry sponsored research). Turbo-TAF requires third party match (cash or in-kind) and letters of definitive commitment from potential licensees or other strategic partners. Letters should include specific requests for data, clinical results, or materials to demonstrate the necessity of funding.

## **AWARD PROCESS**

TAF Class of 2023 awardees will be required to submit within two weeks of receiving an award letter a project scope of work that includes a budget for each task. Projects are required to commence within six weeks of receipt of the funding notice or the award may be revoked.

## **OPERATING REVIEWS**

TAF awardees may be required to present project findings and experiences at the request of the TAF Managing Director. Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate the schedules of all parties.

## **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY POLICY**

The project manager and project staff shall abide by all SUNY policies, with particular attention to [Patents, Inventions and Copyright](#) policy.

## **PROJECT MANAGER RESIGNATIONS AND TRANSFERS**

In the event of the project manager's resignation or inability to continue the project, the TAF Managing Director, in consultation with the appropriate institutional official, will evaluate the specific circumstances to determine the disposition of remaining funds. If a project manager intends to transfer to another institution, he/she is required to contact the TAF Managing Director, who will evaluate the specific circumstances to determine if the award is transferable.

## **PRIVACY POLICY**

Information provided in each TAF application will be used to determine whether or not to fund the project. As part of this decision-making process, the TAF Managing Director may rely on outside advisors to assist in the review of all applications. The TAF Managing Director will use reasonable efforts to distribute applications only to those involved in the application review process. All outside advisors and reviewers will sign a non-disclosure agreement.

## **APPLICATION SUBMISSION and QUESTIONS**

Applications for TAF Class of 2024 funding should be submitted by the campus RF Operations Manager or designee to [TAF@rfsuny.org](mailto:TAF@rfsuny.org). All questions regarding this program should be e-mailed to [TAF@rfsuny.org](mailto:TAF@rfsuny.org).