

Provost's Proof of Concept (PPOC) Fund Application Guide

Application Opens: Monday, December 16th, 2024

Application Closes: Friday, February 7th, 2025.*

Awards Announced: April 9, 2025

Purpose: The Provost Proof of Concept (PPOC) Fund, administered by Tulane's Innovation Institute, furtheres the vision of accelerating and amplifying ideas and discoveries benefiting New Orleans and society by providing funds for the development of Tulane technologies. The PPOC is non-dilutive competitive grant funding and an early-stage commercialization resource for the Tulane research community. These funds will be used for early-stage development to determine the most actionable market application, formulate the most viable business model, and to develop proof-of-concept for a targeted application. Funds can be used for a variety of development tasks such as: market studies, validation studies, consultants, customer discovery efforts, detailed IP analysis, and prototype development. Customer discovery is an essential component of this process, and applications must incorporate this into milestones and explain their customer discovery strategy in the appropriate application section.

Eligibility: PPOC is administered once in the Fall Semester and once in the Spring semester. Proposals are evaluated by external experts in their fields. Below is a list of program requirements:

- Applicants **must** have a connection to Tulane as faculty, research staff, or graduate students/postdocs/fellows/residents.
 - o Non-faculty applicants must have a faculty sponsor for the application along with a letter of support.
- For those resubmitting a previously submitted application, you **must** include a cover letter detailing changes made to address judges' comments. Please contact TUII for previous judges' feedback as necessary.
- The relevant technology must have an invention disclosure filed or in preparation and an identified commercial application. All applications must file a disclosure for their technology or innovation concept via Tulane's Office of Intellectual Property Management before Friday, March 7th. If you do not file by the due date your application will not be considered by our review panel. For more information on how to file a disclosure, please visit:

<https://research.tulane.edu/oipm/faculty/invention-disclosure>

- A completed application that includes a project narrative, quad chart milestones, competitive intelligence and budget.
- **PPOC Quad Chat Template Link:**
<https://tulane.box.com/s/dgjv9j1y21ha1f21crlas97kz92z1>
 - o This template must be completed in its entirety and uploaded as part of your application. You will be provided a field to upload your completed template when you apply.
- Typical applications for these funds will be prototyping, customer discovery, market application research, animal studies, detailed IP analysis, etc. *Customer discovery must be included.*
- Funding is up to \$50,000 for a 12–18-month project period.
- Applications involving already licensed technologies are ineligible for funding.
 - o Applications concerning technologies that are already licensed but for new applications not covered by the existing license will be considered.

Important PPOC Proposal Considerations

Successful PPOC project proposals *do not* seek to apply grant funds to basic research activities. Successful PPOC proposals will describe activities and project milestones relevant to making progress in answering fundamental commercialization questions. These include:

- Does it work as intended?
- Do we know who is likely to buy it and why?
- What is our evidence? Successful applications include customer discovery as a component of the work
 - o Incorporating previous or ongoing activities in the design; and/or
 - o Initiating customer discovery activities.

Review of Proposals

All PPOC proposals shall be evaluated on a competitive basis by the PPOC Review Committee, which is composed of individuals external to Tulane with expertise based on the needs of the applicant pool. Members can include industry representatives, commercialization experts from the Tulane Innovation Institute mentor network and external organizations, and early-stage investment professionals. The PPOC Review Committee shall score each written proposal from a technological, market opportunity, and team capabilities perspective. In some circumstances, the Committee may contact the applicant(s) for additional clarifying information necessary to make award decisions.



*We will allow an extension until Sunday, 2/9 at 9PM CT with prior notice. Please contact Jillian at JDelosReyes@tulane.edu if you need this accommodation.

How to Apply:

Please complete your application in StartupTree, including uploading PDFs of the project narrative as well as the technology quad chart, milestones, competitive intelligence and team bios PPT deck. Download the template of the quad chart from the application overview page.

Application Questions:

1. **First Name**
2. **Last Name**
3. **Email**
4. **Project Title** (use minimal jargon, include the end product)
5. **Role** (Faculty, staff, graduate students, PhD students, fellows, and post-docs)
6. **School** (Liberal Arts, Science and Engineering, Law, Medicine, Social Work, Business, Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Professional Advancement, Architecture)
7. **Upload project narrative.** (3 pages maximum, 11pt font for text, 10 pt for figures, 9.5 for margins). Upload separately as a PDF.

Specify the details of the project and use of grant funds. Please define specific non-research related objectives intended to reduce risk (increase confidence) in commercialization of the technology. A strong proposal will have at least one objective directed to increasing confidence in the commercial opportunity (i.e., reducing speculation) and at least one objective directed to increasing confidence in the technology (example: build, test or enhance a working prototype). Strong proposals will reference plans to leverage customer discovery as part of this process.

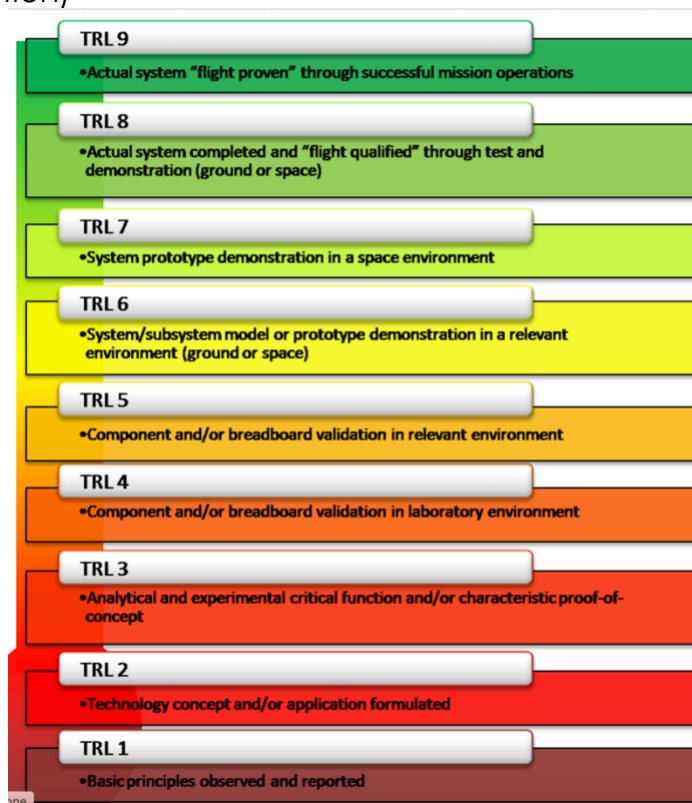
8. **Summary: 3-4 sentences covering:**
 1. What is the problem?
 2. What your proposed solution?

3. What steps you are taking to get to the solution?

9. Research Area and Keywords: (3-4 words)

1. What is the technology?
2. What vertical does it belong to?

10. Current Technology Readiness Level: (dropdown options will be provided in the application)



11. Anticipated Technology Readiness Level at Completion: (see graphic above for reference, dropdown options will be provided in the application)

12. IP Status: (dropdown options will be provided in the application).

- Disclosure in preparation
- Disclosed
- Provisional
- Full Patent

13. Disclosure Date and Number: (if applicable)

14. Introduction and Background:

Approximately 200-250 words of background. This background should be understandable to a non-niche expert. It needs to clearly establish the need for this technology and begin to assess who the end user/customer for the technology is, as well as the specific problem it solves. **The last sentence should be a clear, succinct problem statement.**

15. Objective:

100-150 words on the overall goal of this award. What does this money allow you to do that other sources of funds cannot? This should be a clear, definable outcome related to the development of a technology. It should open with an italicized statement in the form of "*The overall objective of this project is to XXX*".

16. Scope of Work:

100 words on the specific studies/experiments you will be doing. What are the model systems you need? Are there any specialized resources or expertise you would need access to (internal or external to Tulane)?

17. Preliminary Data and Development:

200-250 words (maximum 1 Figure). Clearly articulate what data you have and in what model systems. This should describe the current status of the technology. End with a clear statement on next experimental/development steps and how this will further the development/de-risking of the technology.

18. Preliminary Data and Development Figures (optional upload)

19. Commercialization Landscape and Plan:

250-400 words with one table/figure allowed. Identify the market for the technology. Use patient population sizes, potential revenue, etc. Focus on not just the total market but the specific initial niche that this technology can fill. This should also include a table with competing technologies/companies and how your solution/proposed solution is different. Must illustrate customer discovery process with the goal of gathering insights that will guide you in developing products or services that truly meet customers' needs and solve their problems. *To be considered for funding from the PPOC Fund, you must include customer discovery in your proposal. Proposals without customer discovery plans may not be scored.*

20. Commercialization Landscape and Plan Supporting Table or Figure
(optional)

21. Overall Project Cost: Not to exceed \$50k. Faculty salaries are not allowable, but grad student, postdoc, and technician time are. Break down by supplies, animal fees, salaries, etc..

22. Completed Quad Chart

Template: <https://tulane.box.com/s/dgjevt9jc1y21ha1f21crlas97kz92z1>

Tasks/milestones:

Include 3-4 Milestones. They should have clear go/no-go outcomes and have clear corresponding goal dates ie. Month/Year within the 12-month allowed project timeline (18 months allowed for special circumstances by request). This is not an NIH or NSF basic research grant; they *should* be dependent on one another/waterfall. Success for each should be clearly defined. This section should end with clear next steps for the technology once this program is completed.

Capabilities and History:

What resources and expertise does your research program bring to bear? What personnel will be on this project? Have you published on this subject? Have you been involved in any commercialization activity before (disclosed an invention to the university, launched a spinout, been a part of an SBIR/STTR)?

Competitive Intelligence:

Competitive intelligence allows for an assessment of your proposed technology compared to technologies that address the same problem. These technologies could be already on the market, in development by a company, or the products of published academic research. Please compare your proposed technology to at least three competitors using 4-5 key features. All information should be cited. An example of a completed competitive intelligence analysis is provided in the template. For assistance with competitive intelligence, please contact Jillian Delos Reyes, jdelosreyes@tulane.edu.

23. Customer Discovery Plan: (1 page maximum, 11pt font)
Upload separately as a PDF.

Customer discovery is an essential component of early-stage technology development and market readiness. Customer discovery allows for

researchers to ascertain 1) who their customer is and 2) if their technology solves a real problem. This process is essential to ensuring that technologies developed through PPOC have a real market. Customer discovery plans must include:

1. **Value Proposition:** Concise statement of economic benefits that the proposed solution confers to customers/users.
2. **Customer Segment/Profile:** Who are the Users, Decision-Makers, and Payers for the proposed technology?
3. **Target Customers:** What are the companies/types of companies *and* specific job titles of those within said companies who would be users, decision-makers, and/or payers?

24. Re-applicant Letter (if applicable)

For those resubmitting a previously submitted application, you **MUST** include a cover letter detailing changes made to address judges' comments. Please upload separately as a PDF. Contact TUII for previous judges' feedback as necessary.

25. Faculty Sponsor Letter (if applicable)

Non-faculty applicants **MUST** have a faculty sponsor for the application along with a letter of support from said faculty sponsor. Please upload separately as a PDF.

26. Additional Uploads/Support Documents or Figures (if applicable)