New Funding Opportunity for Healthcare Projects with Commercial Potential

BACKGROUND

The University of Minnesota has recently received one of three NIH Research Evaluation and Commercialization Hub (REACH) awards. The REACH program is intended to facilitate and accelerate translation of biomedical innovations into commercial products that improve patient care and enhance health.

The University of Minnesota REACH program (MN-REACH) will foster the development of therapeutics, preventativeatives, diagnostics, devices, and tools that address the unmet medical needs defined by the NIH's mission in a manner consistent with business case development. The main goal of MN-REACH is translating promising technologies to the private sector, through creating either a viable startup company or a licensing opportunity. It helps by establishing novel partnerships, strengthening existing alliances between stakeholders (including public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors), providing entrepreneurial educational opportunities for innovators, and creating cultural and systemic changes to accelerate the movement of breakthrough innovations to products that will have health, economic, and societal impact.

The MN-REACH program will provide qualified innovators with the initial funding, expert commercial advisers, and other resources to nurture them as they develop high-priority "early" stage biomedical technologies by providing: (1) infrastructure for identifying the most promising technologies, (2) funding for product definition studies (e.g., feasibility studies, prototype development, or proof-of-concept studies), (3) coordinated access to expertise in areas required for early stage commercial-potential technology development (including scientific, regulatory, reimbursement, business, legal, and project management), and (4) specific skills development that
provides innovators with guidance on the process of commercialization.

In addition, MN-REACH will give innovators entrepreneurial educational opportunities in the areas of commercialization processes, assessing market opportunities, development of value propositions, and other elements required for transitioning a technology from an academic lab to the private sector for further development.

MN-REACH invites the University of Minnesota scientific community to submit qualified proposals meeting the criteria outlined below. The application process consists of two steps. On step one, pre-proposals will be accepted and reviewed. Successful applicants will be invited to submit full proposals. The applicants will be assisted by the MN-REACH program during the full proposal preparation.

The proposed projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Projects must be within a single step (or being within a "few clearly recognizable steps") of a commercial transaction (partnering/licensing or MN-IP funding) as determined by MN-REACH and the Office for Technology Commercialization (OTC). Investigators seeking guidance on their project eligibility are encouraged to contact MN-REACH.

2. Priority will be given to therapeutics, medical devices, diagnostics, improved devices, repurposed molecules, biologics, gene triggers, delivery systems, software or algorithms, and apps, with convincing proof of concept (POC). The POC can be defined, for example, as strong and convincing laboratory or prototype data or animal efficacy data, along with some safety data.

3. Innovators should convincingly provide the POC evidence, using both commercial and scientific standards as might be judged in a commercial environment. MN-REACH will assign coaches to assist the applicants in designing competitive proposals. MN-REACH will assist investigators' pivot from research to commercialization and work toward developing the business propositions.

4. Projects become eligible for MN-REACH funding after invention disclosures are submitted to OTC and either an affirmative provisional patent filing decision is made or a project qualifies for market exclusivity through other non-patent means determined by OTC.

5. Sufficient commercial potential and ability to meet an important unmet medical need are necessary to warrant funding. Projects currently under development using other funding sources but otherwise meeting the MN-REACH funding criteria are eligible for funding.

6. MN-REACH will assist innovators with appropriate project management plans and training in entrepreneurship to ensure successful completion of the
project and achievement of commercial developmental milestones supported by MN-REACH.

**HOW TO APPLY**

Interested applicants can access the pre-proposal submission form, as well as information on the full proposals and selection criteria, from the MN-REACH website, [www.mn-reach.umn.edu](http://www.mn-reach.umn.edu).

**SEEKING GUIDANCE**

Investigators seeking guidance are welcome to contact the program via email at [mn-reach@umn.edu](mailto:mn-reach@umn.edu). Assistance is available to every potential applicant.

**FUNDING**

Funding is available in the range of $10,000 to $150,000 per project, depending on the best estimate of actual developmental costs. A detailed budget and budget justification will be required for the full proposal. Certain restrictions will apply.

This e-mail was sent by MN-REACH to all faculty and the Administrative Email List (AEL).