

Kleinmuntz Center Proof-of-Concept Mikashi Awards Overview

The Catherine and Don Kleinmuntz Center for Genomics in Business and Society (Kleinmuntz Center) is committed to supporting innovation taking place here at the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology. As a result, the Kleinmuntz Center will be providing resources to support faculty with their innovations with a new pre-commercialization Proof-of-Concept (POC) Program, named the “Mikashi Awards,” which means “to grow,” honoring the Kleinmuntz children, Mika and Sashi.

The Kleinmuntz Center Mikashi Awards aim to fund IGB projects that demonstrate market viability to help projects succeed. Recipients will be awarded \$50,000 – \$75,000 per year for up to two years, renewable annually.

Requirements:

The Kleinmuntz Center Mikashi Awards are open to all Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology faculty and affiliates.

Application submissions open March 19th, 2021 and close May 7th, 2021.

The application and review process are as follows:

1. Proposal Submission & Application Form

IGB faculty will submit a three to five-page proposal, including a letter of project description, a proposed budget, and a detailed timeline with major milestones indicated. Proposals will be submitted electronically at <https://www.igb.illinois.edu/MikashiAwards> accompanied by a complete application form.

2. Proposal Review

All proposals will be reviewed by an external committee and will be evaluated on the project’s perceived ability to successfully prepare for commercialization within the scope of the project, within the requested budget, and within the proposed time frame.

3. Awards Announced

Mikashi Awards will be announced directly to faculty, as well as in a public announcement June, 2021.

Guidelines for Kleinmuntz Center Proof-of-Concept Funding

1. Statement of Purpose

The Kleinmuntz Center Mikashi Awards are designed to bridge the funding “gap” between government and foundation supported innovations that result from University research and private sector support of those innovations into commercial products. “Gap” funding is designed to facilitate the demonstration of an invention’s or technology’s proof-of-concept, working prototype, or scaled development to make that technology more attractive for private sector funding and partnering. The Mikashi Award Program is funded by Catherine and Don Kleinmuntz and supports the goal of the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology by facilitating transformation of researchers’ discoveries and technologies into useful products and services that benefit society.

This program will invest funds to advance the development of novel applied inventions that have near-term potential for licensing. The Mikashi Awards are not intended to support basic research or existing startup companies, but rather will support activities to advance technologies through proof of concept that have already demonstrated potential commercial appeal. The Mikashi Awards Fund is designed to facilitate an inventor’s ability to leverage external funding to serve as a bridge toward product development and commercialization, with an objective of licensing the technologies into a newly formed company in the near term.

2. Program Outlines

Faculty submitting proposals must propose a plan for further development of University-owned technologies or inventions close to commercialization and/or licensing. Each project should contain defined steps or tangible sets of milestones that would overcome a specific, identifiable hurdle to commercialization. A successful project will enable a technology or invention, within 1-2 years of the program completion, to become more attractive for either (1) licensing to an existing company or (2) enabling the formation of a start-up company that will further develop and commercialize the technology. Projects that relate to a technology or invention that could address a significant market need or are able to achieve proof of concept in less than 12 months are especially encouraged. Projects solicited under this program may include:

- Building of a prototype or second iteration prototype to prepare for commercialization
- Commercial feasibility tests
- Building a mobile application to disseminate a social sciences invention
- Work to demonstrate mitigation of risk for potential licensees
- Work to address a specific gap identified by industry that impairs the ability to license or attract capital

3. Eligibility

All faculty and affiliates of the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology can apply for funding through this program where the proposed project fulfills the goals and funding priorities

of the program outlined above. Additionally, proposals must meet both the application and project eligibility as outlined below. To be considered eligible for funding, both the investigator and proposed project must meet the following criteria:

3.1 Faculty and Staff Eligibility

Applicants must be faculty or affiliates of the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology.

3.2 Principal Investigator Eligibility

- The PI must be a current, full-time faculty member at Illinois, or an emeritus faculty member who maintains an active research group.
- Non-Illinois personnel should be identified within the application as key contributors and their role within the project should be defined.

3.3 Project Eligibility

- The technology that the proposal is based on must not be licensed, optioned, owned, co-owned, or encumbered with other obligations that would preclude moving forward with commercialization (e.g. sponsored research agreement, ongoing collaboration with an industrial partner, or consulting agreement). Please note that technologies that have been non-exclusively licensed may be eligible for the program depending on circumstance.
- The project must be focused on commercial product development or testing. Mikashi Awards funding cannot be used for basic exploratory studies or as general funding for the PI's lab. Project proposals should address how achieving identified project milestones will move the invention towards commercialization.
- Project milestones and deliverables must be achievable within 18-24 months of the start of the funding and within the requested budget.

3.4 Limitations and Exclusions

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 assess the feasibility of a research project.
- Projects for which the proposed activities require more than 24 months to complete.
- Projects with industry sponsorship, an investment partner, or research grant support.
- Renewals for projects funded in previous cycles.
- Funds directly distributed to a start-up company.

All research funded by the Mikashi Awards must take place in the PI's laboratory, the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, or other University research space. Research cannot take place within company facilities (such as a start-up), including companies located in the University's EnterpriseWorks incubator.

4. Proposal Preparation Guidelines

Proposals are due by Friday, May 7, 2021 at 5:00 PM CST. Submissions must be received electronically as a PDF, with the budget submitted using excel workbook. Documents should be submitted to: <https://www.igb.illinois.edu/MikashiAwards>.

The following sections are required in the proposal. Please complete each section quantifying your inputs wherever possible and insuring that evidenced-based rationale, from either primary (e.g., customer validation) or secondary sources (e.g., published reports or databases) is included to support your statements. Do not exceed 5 pages (11 pt. font; 1-inch margins around). Detailed information on the recommended content is as follows:

4.1 Project Description

- **The Problem** – Describe the problem/opportunity your proposal is intended to address.
- **The Solution** – Describe how your proposal will address the problem and how your solution is differentiated from others competing in this market space.
- **Project Impact** – Describe the size of opportunity by identifying the target market, including its size and recent trends in dollars. If applicable, also including units sold or current number of users.
- **Market Attractiveness** – Describe the envisioned end product based on your proposal and the market it will compete in. Identify the differentiating factors (e.g. better/faster/cheaper) that will make your proposal competitive in the marketplace. Provide any industry-specific feedback you have received on the competitive advantage of your proposal and its ability to fulfill an unmet need in the marketplace.
- **Risks** – Identify current technical or commercial risks associated with your proposal that may impact commercial potential.
- **Management Team** – Briefly identify team members and their qualifications for pursuing development of this proposal.
- **Current Development Status** – Describe your proposal development efforts and results to date.

4.2 Budget and Budget Justification

- Download the excel budget workbook template and use the spreadsheets to generate the project's budget. Upload **both** the PDF forms and excel workbook. Use whole numbers only, round to the nearest dollar, and do not use cents.
- Budget line items should directly impact the success of the project and need to be thoroughly justified; budget support must be tightly focused on driving innovations and inventions into the commercial marketplace. Responsible budgeting is a criterion for award selection.
 - List separately each person to be supported by the proposal, their base salary and percent effort committed to the project.

- Provide a brief description of their role in the project (3 sentences max).
- Briefly explain the need for contractual arrangements, pieces of equipment, major supply items (over \$5,000 each), and project-related travel.
- If consulting is necessary, include justification of costs. Consulting fees should not constitute a significant portion of the proposal budget (generally less than 10-15% of direct costs).
- Note: Budget expenditures encumbered before the award date will not be reimbursed.

4.3 Timeline with Specific Aims/Milestones

- Identify the key next steps in the development of this proposal and suggest at least 2-3 milestones that will be used to track the progress of your proposal over the course of the funding period.
- Milestones should be logically ordered so that the successful completion of one, triggers work to begin on the next milestone. These milestones will be used during the tracking process.

5. Review Criteria and Selection Process

The review process and funding decisions will be made and announced June, 2021.

5.1 Review Committee – A multidisciplinary panel composed of scientists, business experts, members of the investment community, and industry professionals will review all proposals. Applicants are encouraged to avoid jargon and prepare proposals in a comprehensible manner to a general audience. Proposals will be evaluated based on the project’s ability to successfully complete the outlined project and/or prepare the technology for commercialization within the scope of the proposed studies, budget, and time frame. Proposals will also be reviewed to determine whether the project meets the eligibility criteria outlined in section 3. **Please note: reviewers are not required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to the review.** Protected or proprietary information should not be included in the proposal, but applications must provide sufficient information for reviewers to make a determination regarding commercialization potential.

5.2 Review Criteria – The Review Committee will evaluate proposals based on the scoring criteria below and will generate a rank-ordered list of applications that are recommended for funding. Each proposal will receive a final score on which the funding decision will be made. The following criteria will be evaluated as indicated below:

- **Market attractiveness and commercialization strength** – The Review Committee will evaluate the proposal’s estimates of the size and growth potential of the market, the impact the proposal will make, merit of the opportunity in filling identified gap(s) in the market, and

evidence of a practical business model. Commercialization analysis will include assessing any hurdles or threats that may affect the value of the proposal from the perspective licensees as well as an assessment of what resources will be required to develop the invention for commercial applications.

- **Mikashi Award funding as an appropriate enabler of commercialization for this proposal** – Reviewers will assess whether Mikashi Award funds will accelerate product development, evidence that the budget is reasonable and sufficient to achieve milestones, if the proposal has been demonstrated or sufficiently reduced-to-practice to justify Mikashi Award funding (including the identification of defined hurdles to commercialization), and whether the proposed deliverables will clearly reduce the future licensee or investor risk to enable licensee or investor interest.
- **Expertise and Commercialization interest** – Reviewers will evaluate the project team presented in the proposal for their experience, qualifications, and strengths with regard to the suggested studies, project milestones, and interest and qualification as it pertains to commercialization and entrepreneurship.

6. Award Funding Obligations and Limitations

The Kleinmuntz Center Mikashi Award funding will be awarded in the amount of \$50,000 – \$75,000 per year for up to two years. The award is intended to provide support for project-related expenses and cannot be used to provide salaries for principal investigators, to purchase laptops or large equipment, for travel (except when it directly supports project completion), for publications, subcontracting work from other institutions, or to cover legal costs or obtain intellectual property projection. Furthermore, funds cannot be used as general support for an investigator’s lab. Funding may be used to provide salary support for academic staff, graduate, or undergraduate students involved in the project.

For projects that are funded under the Kleinmuntz Center Mikashi Awards, funds are expected to be released within two weeks of the award announcement. Investigators must not spend any funds prior to fund release into the investigator’s account. After the first year, the release of additional funds will be contingent upon achievement of the stipulated milestones and deliverables. Released funds will be triggered based on the progress conveyed in the project’s review in the required Annual Progress Report. Carryover balances will be addressed as necessary. Failure to complete the stipulated milestones and deliverables may result in the delay of payment and potential termination of the project.

7. Post-award Funding Obligations and Reporting Requirements

In addition to meeting the specified milestones and deliverables in the project proposal, awardees will be required to participate in the following activities:

7.1 Post-Award Meetings – Awardees may be asked to meet with the Kleimuntz Center Mikashi Awards Review Committee to discuss plans, questions, and next steps. If requested, completion of this meeting is mandatory and funds will not be released until there is confirmation this meeting has occurred.

7.2 Project Update – An project update will need to be submitted at the end of each year. The update will outline the milestones (e.g., completion of proof-of-concept) and deliverables (e.g., prototype or product completion) that were met or not met based on the initially proposed project timeline, as well as describe the progress toward commercialization of the project including an updated business model if applicable. Carryover balances should be addressed if applicable. This update will also provide an outline of potential roadblocks to meeting the project deadline if any exist and will provide information back to the Kleimuntz Center Mikashi Awards Review Committee on whether the next round of funding should be released, if there are any unused funds, and general feedback on the project.

7.3 Final Project Presentations – Awardees and their teams will be required to present project findings and success to IGB community members and a committee of key parties and influencers, upon the completion of the funding round.

8. Contact

Please direct general questions to: KCPOCFunding@igb.illinois.edu.

Please direct budget questions to: rbilbrey@illinois.edu (Rochelle Bilbrey).

9. Acknowledgements

The Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology thanks Catherine and Don Kleimuntz for the creation of this program. It is due to their generous support that we are able to provide this opportunity to all IGB faculty and affiliate members.