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Fall 2025 Pre-Proposal Instructions and Template

**Submission Due Date**

March 3, 2025, by 6 PM ET

We are delighted with your interest in the Deshpande Center for Technological Innovation (DCTI). The goal for this pre-proposal is to find those ideas and teams that are a fit with the Deshpande Center’s commercialization objectives, near the point of readiness to bring to a commercial transaction, and for which our value is evident.

For the pre-proposal, DCTI does not expect you to have all the answers to your commercialization challenge. Rather, we hope that you will be frank about your status and understanding of needs. If you are selected to advance to the next round, there will be time to gather more information, and you will have an opportunity to add further details during the full proposal and presentation phases.

**Requirements and Criteria**

**Grants are open only to MIT faculty and students. Applications must be submitted by MIT employees with Principal Investigator (PI) status.**

* Funding must be for research done in MIT laboratories
* Outside and cross-disciplinary collaborations are welcome

Initial grants are intended for the first year of funding and awarded in an amount up to $100,000. This includes F&A. Each grant’s period of performance is designed for one year. All selected projects get the full assistance of the Deshpande Center, regardless of the grant amount. ***The funding request total must include standard*** [***institute Facilities & Administrative (F&A) for sponsored research***](https://ras.mit.edu/facilities-and-administrative-fa-rates)***.***

**Selection Criteria for Initial Grants**

Pre-proposals will be evaluated for both technology readiness and fit with the center’s mission. We look for ideas and teams with qualities that meet most or all the following criteria:

* Transformative ideas that 1) change the paradigm of how things are done to solve a known problem; and 2) will have long-term impact
* Already generated data (technology derisking underway) and/or a proof of principle
* Clear potential the project will result in a commercial transaction, such as licensing or a spinout.
* One to three years away from a commercialization transaction
* There is reason to believe the idea is protectable and free of any commitments to other companies. We recommend disclosing the intellectual property to the Technology Licensing Office to validate the protectability. (To submit to the TLO, please visit [tlo.mit.edu](https://tlo.mit.edu/))
* Team has researched competitive companies and technologies and can elucidate the competitive advantage of this new technology over each

The promise of an idea’s impact potential is a combination of a unique, valuable solution and the passion and commitment of the team to behind it. To that end, we also look for researchers committed to seeing the technology become a viable product. These team members may include:

* A PI who either has spun out a company before, or demonstrates interest in being a scientific founder\*
* A postdoc or doctoral student willing to be the agent for a spinout\*
  + \* Both may be waived for a clear licensing opportunity
* Someone on the team (advisor is fine) who represents the target industry
* Demonstrated passion and commitment to commercialization by satisfying at least one of the following:
  + Attending another MIT (or other university) entrepreneurial program (e.g., I-Corps™ Spark, Engine’s Blueprint, Engine’s Whiteboard, Sandbox, Faculty Founders)
  + Met with potential customers to understand a market need the technology can solve

**Confidential Information**

This pre-proposal will be viewed under confidence by our grant selection committee, which includes individuals from outside of MIT. Committee members abide by the MIT Deshpande Center guidelines for confidentiality and conflict of interest.

This proposal does not constitute a public disclosure.

**Submitting Your Proposal**

Go to the online submission site: [https://mitdeshpande.smapply.us](https://mitdeshpande.smapply.us/)

Step 1: Complete the online project information form

Step 2: Write the online executive summary (200 word max)

(Tip: You may write it offline and copy & paste it in)

Step 3: Write and upload your pre-proposal document (as a Word or PDF file)

Step 4: Submit your pre-proposal

**Page Length and Format**

* **Do Not Exceed Two (2) Pages, excluding cover page and summary.** (Please note: This does not include graphics or references – additional images and graphics are encouraged.)
* Do not change the font, spacing, or page margins. Do not include links in this submission.
* Entire file **may not exceed 4 MB.** Minimize file size and the resolution of the graphics for the convenience of our reviewers. (Please compress all pictures in the file.)
* Submit your pre-proposal as an **MS Word or PDF file**.

**Naming Your File**

* **Use this format to name your file: PILastName\_Preproposal\_Fall25**

**(e.g. Smith\_Preproposal\_Fall25).**

* If you are submitting more than one preproposal in this round, it is important to differentiate the files by adding 1 and 2 after PILastName (e.g., Smith1\_Preproposal\_Fall25 and Smith2\_Preproposal\_Fall25)

**Acknowledgment**

You will receive an email confirmation from the system completed acknowledging receipt once all steps are completed.

*If you do not receive a confirmation email within one business day of submission, please contact Andi Blumenau at ablumen@mit.edu.*

START OF TEMPLATE

[Project Title]

[PI Last Name]

Please do not exceed 2 pages of text. Show us why you meet the criteria.

# 1. Background

* Describe the scope and nature of the problem you seek to remedy with your solution.
* Discuss the unmet need and how it affects current customers (we encourage use of market data and testimonials.
* Explain why current solutions. are insufficient or unable to address that need

# 2. Your Idea

* Tell us about your product/solution and how it addresses the unmet need
  + What is the status of the idea? What lab testing has been done?
* Describe the intended market setting and population that would benefit from your technology.

# 3. Preliminary Research

* Provide a **concise synopsis** of your preliminary data that support your statements of the novelty and benefits of your solution and its commercialization potential.
  + You may include key figures or tables that support these conclusions in a 1-page appendix
* Discuss any participation by team members in an MIT or other university entrepreneurship program (e.g., I-Corps, Sandbox, the Engine’s Blueprint or Whiteboard, Faculty Founders).

# 4. Project Plan and Continued Development

* Identify the goal of the proposed work as a Deshpande Center project.
* Provide an outline of your project plan, including key research elements, resources, timelines, milestones, and how the success of each milestone will be assessed.
* Describe the expected outcome and endpoint from a Deshpande Center grant. Why is this achievement critical to the commercialization path of the proposed solution?
* Upon completing the grant year, what would be the next steps needed to bring this idea to a commercial transaction, such as license to a third party or funding for a spinout? Keep in mind that this is a pre-proposal for an initial, one-year grant of $100,000 (a renewal is $150,000).

# 5. Intellectual Property

* Describe the status of your interactions with the TLO regarding this idea.
* What is the nature of your claims or other measures to protect this IP?
* If you are collaborating outside MIT, comment on any potential IP ownership implications. Please disclose any financial interest or affiliation that investigators have with collaborators.
* Have any of the team members established a startup related to the work? Identify any potential conflicts of interest.

# 6. References and Appendix

Not included in the page count. You may attach key figures, drawings and tables that document the status of your idea as a one-page appendix.