



OCAST

Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science & Technology

FY25 INTERN PARTNERSHIP NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)

ocast.ok.gov

Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST)

Intern Partnership Program

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

NOFO Issue Date:	06/17/2024
Application Open Date:	07/01/2024 12:00:00AM

Submission Deadline for Applications:	Anticipated Date for Award Announcement:	Target Contract Start Date
07/31/2024 11:59:59 PM	09/17/2024	10/01/2024
10/31/2024 11:59:59 PM	12/03/2024	01/01/2025
01/31/2025 11:59:59 PM	03/11/2025*	04/01/2025
04/30/2025 11:59:59 PM	06/10/2025*	07/01/2025

- To apply to this NOFO, applicants must register with and submit application materials through OCAST’s online application portal OGX at <https://ogx.ok.gov>.
- Applicants must be registered as a State vendor PRIOR to final award consideration.
- Applicants must designate points of contact in OGX with whom OCAST will communicate to conduct award contracting. OCAST will only communicate with designated points of contact.
- If an application is selected for award contracting it is imperative that the applicant be responsive during award contracting and meet contract deadlines.

Failure to meet the above requirements may result in cancelation of further award contracting and rescission of the selection.

*Final OSTRaD Board schedule not released at the time of this NOFO was published.

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Background

OCAST

The Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST) was established in 1987 by the Oklahoma Legislature as part of a broader initiative to diversify the state's economy and promote technological innovation. OCAST was founded with the mission of advancing science and technology in Oklahoma to stimulate economic growth and enhance the state's competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Since its inception, OCAST has played a key role in fostering innovation and supporting research and development activities across various sectors, including aerospace, biotechnology, energy, and information technology. The agency provides funding through competitive award programs to support innovative development of new technologies, processes, and solutions-based projects conducted by private companies and research partners.

Over the years, OCAST has expanded its programs and initiatives to address emerging technological challenges and opportunities. It has also collaborated with other state agencies, industry partners, and academic institutions to promote entrepreneurship, technology transfer, and workforce development in Oklahoma.

Intern Partnership Program

OCAST awards funding from \$10,000 to \$60,000 through the Internship Partnership Program. This award program supports internships in Oklahoma companies engaged in research, innovation development, or implementation of new technology. For example, a manufacturing operation that is improving product or processes through the implementation of new technology. The program encourages students to prepare for careers in scientific and technical fields as well as ancillary areas that support high-tech industry in Oklahoma. The OCAST internship funding program acknowledges that the principal resources of the two-year and four-year higher education institutes are the students. This program places these students into established, successful industries with applied research projects within Oklahoma.

Eligible projects must:

- Have hands-on applied experience, introducing the intern to employment opportunities within the company and industry in Oklahoma, and immersing the intern into the business culture of the company while directly supporting the industry. The most competitive applications show high potential for student interns (1) to become acquainted with prospective employers, (2) to become better prepared for the workforce and (3) to be encouraged to pursue advanced degrees and/or careers in science, technology, and engineering.
- Benefit Oklahoma directly from having a highly qualified pool of STEM employees to meet Oklahoma's science and technology workforce demands. Having a strong, highly educated STEM workforce is vital to driving innovation, economic growth, competitiveness, and the overall standard of living in Oklahoma.
- Benefit an Oklahoma company by providing the opportunity to become acquainted with prospective employees; by interfacing with academic institutions on workforce needs; by encouraging interns and those who may pursue advanced degrees to remain in Oklahoma; and

by encouraging those seeking further education outside the state to return to Oklahoma following graduation.

Oklahoma State Innovation Pipeline

As part of the [2021-2026 Science and Innovation Strategic Plan](#), OCAST aims to solidify Oklahoma's position among the top 10 states in innovation and economic growth by strategically investing in three key technology sectors: aerospace/autonomous systems and defense, biotechnology/life sciences, and energy diversification.

1. **Aerospace, Autonomous Systems, and Defense:** With a legacy of aviation leadership and infrastructure, including the FAA's Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center and Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma is primed to capitalize on this sector. Leveraging its expertise in weather research, advanced air mobility, and public safety, the state is poised to become a hub for autonomous systems and aerospace innovation.
2. **Biotechnology/Life Sciences:** Oklahoma boasts a strong foundation in biotechnology, with renowned research institutions like the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University, along with numerous biotech companies. With investments, Oklahoma has the potential to emerge as a leading state in the biotechnology industry.
3. **Energy Diversification:** Building on its history in oil and natural gas, Oklahoma is expanding its focus to include efficient and eco-friendly energy solutions, such as wind, solar, and geothermal. With significant wind capacity and a commitment to renewable resources, the state is positioned to lead in diverse energy initiatives.

By prioritizing these sectors, Oklahoma aims to maximize job creation and return on investment, propelling its economy forward in the realm of innovation and growth.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for funding, the proposed project must solely address an issue identified by a private sector business.

Eligible applicants intending to submit an application must meet the following criteria:

- Private Sector Enterprises of special importance to the Oklahoma economy, defined as firms with a permanent office in Oklahoma, registered with the Secretary of State.
- The business must certify the identified issue's negative impact on efficiency, potential for improvement, and/or hindrance to future growth.
- Business must acknowledge that the proposed project can address the issue based on their expertise and commit to implementing the results if deemed a solution.

Principal Investigators preparing applications:

- Must be individuals employed by an eligible applicant organization.
- Defined as persons proposing research projects and primarily responsible for their execution.
- Able to successfully mentor all interns and oversee their work within the organization.

Interns

- Must be currently enrolled undergraduate or graduate students from a college or university, including Career Tech students concurrently enrolled in college programs.
- Are students majoring in STEM-based disciplines, including natural sciences, computer science, materials science, engineering, biomedical/biotechnical, data analytics, finance/mathematics, or a support area related to building successful Oklahoma high-tech companies.

Principal Investigator changes:

- Changes can be made prior to the award announcement.
- If the PI is unable to perform, OCAST must be notified within ten (10) calendar days of the realization. If OCAST does not agree with the proposed alternate or one is not available, award funds will revert to OCAST.

Eligibility criteria for past awardees:

- Failure to correct a material breach of a previously awarded contract may disqualify from future funding.
- Delinquent progress reports:
 - o Disqualify investigators or co-investigators from submitting applications, undergoing external peer review, or receiving contracts until reports are submitted and satisfactorily evaluated.
 - o If outstanding progress reports of existing awards are not submitted within sixty (60) days of the award date, the award may be nullified, and funds returned to the Industry Innovation Fund.

Funding Available

For State Fiscal Year 2025, OCAST will make available \$750,000* in funds for the Internship Partnership Program. This will be allotted to the highest-ranking project(s) for each period. Non-awarded project(s) may still be considered in future periods of this fiscal year until funding is exhausted. The total award for each project shall not exceed \$60,000.

*Pending the final FY25 State Budget and OSTRaD Board Approval

Application Process

OGX Registration

Applicants must use OGX to complete and submit applications at <https://ogx.ok.gov>. OGX requires organization to assign an Agency Administrator role and an Authorized Official role for submission of an application. If necessary, one person may have both roles. Find additional information about using the OGX system at <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/ocast/documents/ogx/ogx-user-guide.pdf>

Application Steps

Applications will be initiated through the OGX system by selecting the application in the My Opportunities section of OGX:

Multiple applications are allowed per organization under the stipulation that each application contain a unique project meeting the above criteria. Each application will receive a unique Document Name (AR25-XXX). Once initiated, applications can be continued at any point through the My Tasks Section:

The application will consist of input fields directly in the OGX system through several pages. Character limits will be stated in each section and required fields will be denoted. The below Application Outline provides additional information of each field. Applicants will have the ability to start, save, and return to their application as many times as desired before submitting it to OCAST.

All applicants must change the Status of each application to “Application Submitted” prior to the deadline to be considered for review. **All applications left in the “Application in Process” status at the**

end of the application period will be automatically changed to “Application Not Submitted”. No Status changes can be made after the submission deadline.

Application Outline

The following section contains a brief description for several items required in the application.

Project Information

- Project Title – Keep title as concise as possible for marketing purposes.
- Project Description – A brief executive summary of the project, which will be used to describe the project to the OSTRaD board and State Legislators. This section should describe the industry problem to be solved in a brief manner. Please limit responses to a paragraph.
- Project Abstract – A detailed explanation of the project plan and an outline for the main goals of the project. This section should completely encompass all aspects of the project, including plans, equipment needs, background research, and significant anticipated milestones. This should outline the specifics of the student involvement.
- Total Project Budget – Total cost expected to be expensed to complete this project. This could include funds beyond the period of OCAST funding.
- OCAST Funds Requested – One-to-two-year breakdown of OCAST funds requested. This will be used to define budgets for contracted years.
- Intellectual Property (IP) Status – an overview of any potential IP issues and what licenses, patents, or other IP vehicles will be required or result from this project.
- Project Objective and Milestones – specific measurable goals of the project. These should be both aspirational and achievable as outcomes to the project abstract, as described.
- Significance of the Project – the overall impact goals of the project and what effect it will have on the technological economy in Oklahoma.
- Project Team – a list of all relevant staff associated with the project. Uploads of the resume/CVs of each staff member will be required. Any potential staff, e.g., backup Principal Investigators, should also be included for review.

Student Impact

- Number of Interns Expected to be Hired – Total number of interns funded through this application
- Internship Period – Expected dates of employment for all interns funded through this application
- Student Job Duties – Responsibilities and tasks to be completed by the interns funded through this application, please include copies of job postings or descriptions in the upload section, if applicable

- Student Reporting/Presentation Opportunities – Reporting and presentation opportunities provided to students. This could include board presentations or reporting to management staff.
- Intern Hourly Rate – total compensation rate provided to students as part of this internship
- Weekly Hours Required – anticipated weekly schedule required of students
- Anticipated Source of Matching Funds – fund source for matching funds

Budget

Upon award of any funded project, the budget included in the application will become the contractual budget for the project. This budget should include all expected project related expenditures, both from OCAST funds and outside resources. Please include full amounts of outside resources as ‘match’, which in most cases will exceed the required matching amount. During the project period, contractors may move up to 10% of their total annual budget between budget categories without requesting approval from OCAST. However, once more than 10% of the total annual budget is or will be moved between budget categories, a formal budget modification request must be submitted for OCAST’s review. Budget modification may be allowed upon approval by OCAST. Projects that progress faster than anticipated could potentially amend budget years to receive funds earlier. However, delayed projects will not be allowed to rollover funds to future contracted years. Budget categories will include items such as:

- Personnel – all W-2 employees paid directly from the applicant organization
- Professional Travel – Subject to guidelines and restrictions for State of Oklahoma employee travel (<https://www.ok.gov/DCS/documents/StateTravelPolicy.pdf>)
- Supplies – Itemized by category
- Equipment – All items over \$500
- Contractual services – including contract (1099) employees

Evaluation Rubric

All applications will receive a primary and secondary review by recognized experts in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) field(s) associated with the proposed project, a majority of whom reside outside the state of Oklahoma. These reviewers will be provided by an OCAST contractor and will be directed to evaluate applications as follows:

- Technical merit of the project (50%)
 - Quality of the Project Abstract
 - Appropriateness of field to the Oklahoma State Innovation Pipeline
 - Probability of success of the research plan

- Likelihood the proposed project will be able to solve the business-identified problem or statement of need
- Competence of the investigator(s), team, organization, and partners as measured by training, research, and commercialization experience
- Commitment of the applicant organization as evidenced by resources dedicated to the project
- Potential for student impact in Oklahoma (50%)
 - Potential for creating jobs that will enhance the technology base in OK
 - Commitment of financial resources from both the company and its partners to successfully bring product to market
 - Job training and experience provided to interns
 - Experience gaining from reporting and presenting in a professional environment
 - Financial impact on student

Review Process

Review Timeline

All applications will be pre-reviewed by OCAST staff upon submission for completeness and eligibility for the program. Once the application period has ended, all pre-reviewed and eligible applications will be sent for external review. No adjustments or feedback can be provided on pending applications during this period.

Applications will be reviewed by subject matter experts contracted by OCAST staff in compliance with the program guidelines. Two reviewers will evaluate each application based on the provided evaluation rubric and provide comments, as directed by OCAST staff. The review contractor will provide a ranked list of all applications for OCAST to consider recommending for board approval.

Vendor Portal Registration

All applicants must begin the process of registration to be a State vendor immediately upon submitting their application. Applicants that are not registered by the State of Oklahoma as a supplier WILL NOT be recommended to the board for approval. Registration information can be found here:

<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/omes/documents/NewSupplierGuide.pdf>

Board Approval

Based on available funding, OCAST staff will present a list of applicants to be funded to the OSTRaD board for approval. These will consist of applications recommended for funding by the reviewers for each period. Non-awarded projects are encouraged to resubmit new applications (with reviewer comments amended) in the remaining periods. New submissions will be considered by their own merit in future periods of this fiscal year until funding is exhausted.

Notification of Award

All applicants will be notified of the award funding decision via an e-mail automatically generated by OGX. (Please ensure your email server is set up to receive emails from OGX.) Once the decisions are announced, evaluations will be available to view within OGX. Notice of Award Letters for funded applicants will be emailed to Principal Investigator and Contract Officials within seven business days of the award funding decision. The Notice of Award Letter will contain important information regarding

documentation required for award contract initiation. When an award is made, applicants may be required to provide certification that all regulations pertaining to research use of human subjects, vertebrate animals, recombinant DNA, radioisotopes, narcotics and dangerous drugs, and biological hazards have been satisfied. When information requested in the Notice of Award Letter is received, the contract proceedings will be initiated by OCAST.

Contracting

Contract Specifications

1. The funding mechanism for the Internship Partnership award will be a professional services contract between OCAST, the applicant organization. OCAST issues payments to contractors on a reimbursement basis upon receipt of satisfactorily completed requests for reimbursement, including any OCAST-required additional documentation, that are submitted to the agency via OGX. While making a funding determination to ensure compliance with the contract, reimbursement payments may be held by OCAST for as much as 45 days.
2. The Contractor is the applicant organization that: (1) employs or is affiliated with the Principal Investigator, (2) provides project services and/or facilities for the funded project, and (3) executes the contract.
3. The Fiscal Agent is the applicant organization that submits requests for payment to OCAST and receives and accounts for all contract payments from OCAST and is designated as such in the application. The contract shall include commitments on the part of the contractor(s) to perform the activities described in the application and funded by OCAST. However, the obligations of each party to a contract shall be limited to that portion of the contract they have committed to perform.
4. Start dates for contracts cannot be delayed more than 60 days after the notification of award is sent and requests for delayed start dates will only be considered if there is a compelling reason such as an unavoidable delay in securing IRB approval, the Principal Investigator is unavoidably detained on another project, unavoidable material shortages, etc.
5. Contract extensions may be considered by OCAST, including no-cost extensions, but cannot be permitted for more than 90 days after the original contract end date. Requests for contract extensions must be submitted through the OGX system and no fewer than 30 days before the end of the contract period.
6. Contractors MUST sign up for EFT payments to receive award funds. Additional information on this process can be found here:

<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/omes/documents/SettingUpBankingUser.pdf>

Audits

OCAST may perform compliance reviews and audits of contracts executed by the agency for all OCAST programs including the Internship Partnership program. The acceptance of an OCAST professional service contract obligates the contractor to permit authorized representatives of OCAST and the State of Oklahoma to have full access to, and the right to fully examine, all such records and documentation pertaining to the project.

Use of Application Information

OCAST is subject to the Open Meeting and Open Records Acts. OCAST may use the content of application abstracts from OGX and summaries from annual progress reports for the required OCAST annual report or other publications without obtaining permission from the applicant or applicant organization(s). Public release of information in any proposal or application submitted will be subject to existing statutory and regulatory requirements.

Reporting Requirements

Request for Reimbursement

Funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis. Reimbursement requests will be submitted through the OGX system. Requests can be submitted for a minimum of a monthly period with a total maximum number of requests of twelve, annually.

Reimbursement requests and any submitted documentation will be reviewed by OCAST staff for adherence to the stated budget and compliance with the project goals. OCAST may return reimbursement requests for contract/budget amendments, as needed.

Progress Reports

OCAST requires each Principal Investigator who is funded under the Internship Partnership program to submit quarterly progress reports corresponding to the date of each contract period except for the end of the final contract period. Each PI must submit a final report thirty (30) days after the end of the final contract period. Failure to submit these reports as required may result in a gap in funding or loss of funds.

Project performance will be evaluated by contracted reviewers. Any questionable progress report may be returned for revision and/or clarification and may be submitted to another reviewer for additional evaluation. An unsatisfactory performance evaluation may result suspension of payments until remediation plans have been arranged or potentially in the termination of the project and forfeiture of remaining funds.

Economic Impact Reporting

Organizations funded by OCAST are required to respond to requests for economic impact data, which may be disseminated by OCAST on an annual or semi-annual basis beginning in year one of the funding project period and extending up to four years after the end of OCAST funding.

Appendix A – Unallowable Costs

OCAST reimburses contractors for only expenses incurred during the contract funding period for purposes and activities in the original proposal approved by OCAST. OCAST does not reimburse for indirect costs. Below are some types of expenses that OCAST generally does not allow. This list is not exhaustive.

1. Alcoholic Beverage Costs - Costs of alcoholic beverages, regardless of intended use are unallowable.
2. Advertising/Marketing – newspaper, billboard, magazine, direct mail advertising (costs associated with recruiting test subjects or interns may be allowable).
3. Administrative Support – Costs associated with secretarial, human resources, bookkeeping, professional accounting, consultant services, etc.
4. Audit Costs – Fees for the performance of internal or external audits.
5. Automobiles – Costs associated with the purchase or lease of a vehicle, regardless of its intended use; costs associated with vehicle maintenance and servicing.
6. Bad Debt – Losses resulting from uncollectible accounts receivable; collection agency expenses.
7. Building & Equipment Depreciation – Non-cash expenses associated with the reduction in value of buildings or equipment as the result of wear and tear, age, or obsolescence.
8. Computers/Computing Equipment - Desktop, laptop, tablet, and handheld computers and related computing devices; includes computer peripherals (monitor, keyboard, mouse, printer, scanner, audio equipment, touch pad, digital stylus, graphic drawing tablet, etc.), computer data storage (hard drives, USB flash drives, magnetic tape, cloud-based, etc.) and computer network components (routers, switches, modems, network adapters, etc.).
9. Consulting Costs - Costs associated with a consultant work and fees.
10. Contingencies - Costs associated with a possible future event or condition, the outcome of which is undeterminable.
11. Contributions or Donations - Such costs include cash, property or services, and are unallowable regardless of recipient.
12. Dues and Membership Fees – Memberships in civic or community organizations, country clubs, social or dining clubs, etc.
13. Entertainment - Costs of social activities (office parties, picnics, etc.) and any directly associated costs (tickets to shows or sporting events, meals, lodging, gratuities, etc.).
14. Fines and Penalties - Such costs result from violations of, or failure to comply with, Federal, State, local or foreign laws. Such costs would be allowable if incurred to comply with specific terms and conditions of the contract.
15. First Class Air Travel – Costs associated with the purchase of or upgrade to first class.
16. Housing Cost – Rent or mortgage costs associated with primary residence or temporary housing.
17. Independent Research and Development Costs - Such costs include research and development expenditures not sponsored by, or required in, the performance of an OCAST contract.
18. Insurance - Costs of insurance on the lives of officers, partners, or sole proprietors where the contracting organization is the beneficiary; property insurance; malpractice insurance.
19. Interest and Other Financial Costs - Interest on borrowings, costs of refinancing capital, fees paid in connection with preparing prospectuses, issuing stock rights, bank service charges, insufficient funds fees, credit card fees, etc.
20. Late Fees – Fees associated with delinquent payments on accounts.
21. Legal Services – Any work provided by a legal professional for the benefit of or on behalf of the organization.

22. Library Services – general library support.
23. Lobbying Costs – Lobbying services provided internally or by an outside firm.
24. Maintenance and Repair Costs - Costs incurred for necessary maintenance, repair or upkeep of buildings and equipment.
25. Meals - Working lunches/dinners, staff meals, meeting refreshments.
26. Office Supplies – Pens, pencils, paper, folders, printer toner, notebooks, note pads, staplers, hole punchers, binder clips, tape dispensers, etc.
27. Office Equipment –calculators, phones, fax machines, copier machines, audio/video projectors/recorders, video conferencing equipment, etc.
28. Office Furniture – desks, tables, chairs, bookshelves, filing cabinets, etc.
29. Organization Costs - Costs associated with incorporating the organization, registering with the Oklahoma Secretary of State, reorganizing the corporate structure of the business, or raising capital.
30. Patent, Licensing, Invention, or Copyright Costs - Fees or costs associated with preparing or submitting patent applications, fees paid to the US Patent and Trademark Office for patent application, patent maintenance, etc.
31. Public Relations/Marketing – Costs to produce press releases, brochures, fliers, etc. or develop websites for the purpose of marketing a service or product.
32. Relocation Costs - Costs associated with relocating an employee.
33. Regulatory Approvals – IRB, IACUC, IBC, or other approvals required to performed specific types of research.
34. Royalty Costs - Such costs include royalties paid for use of the patent, or in cases where the patent is invalid, unenforceable, or expired.
35. Selling and Marketing Costs – Fees paid to marketing firms, advertising costs, other costs directly associated with the selling of a product or service.
36. Taxes - Such costs include federal and state income taxes, and taxes associated with financing, refinancing, or reorganizations.
37. Tuition and Fees – Tuition costs and related fees incurred by students associated with the OCAST contract.

Appendix B - Additional Resources

Program Website:

<https://oklahoma.gov/ocast/programs/intern-partnership.html>

Request for Reimbursement Guide:

<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/ocast/documents/ogx/budget/rfp-submission-guide.pdf>

OGX User's Guide:

<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/ocast/documents/ogx/ogx-user-guide.pdf>

OCAST Frequently Asked Questions

<https://oklahoma.gov/ocast/programs/faqs.html>