



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

STEM Intern Partnership Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

NOFO Issue Date:	09/01/2025
Application Open Date:	09/02/2025 12:00:00AM

Submission Deadline for Applications:	Anticipated Date for Award Announcement:	Target Contract Start Date
10/31/2025 11:59:59 PM	12/09/2025	01/01/2026
01/31/2026 11:59:59 PM	03/17/2026*	04/01/2025
04/30/2026 11:59:59 PM	06/16/2026*	07/01/2025

- To apply to this NOFO, applicants must register with and submit application materials through OCAST's online application portal, found at <https://funding.ocast.ok.gov/application-list>.
- Applicants must be registered through the [Secretary of State](#) AND the [State Supplier Portal](#) PRIOR to final award consideration.
- Applicants must designate a Contract Official to act as the point of contact in their application with whom OCAST will communicate to conduct award contracting. OCAST will only communicate with designated points of contract and they be responsive during award contracting and meet contract deadlines.

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

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

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STEM Intern Partnership

OCAST's STEM Intern Partnership Program is a competitive funding initiative awarding projects up to \$30,000 to companies, including manufacturers, spearheading innovative endeavors with the potential to bolster Oklahoma's economic landscape. These projects must address industry-specific needs and possess practical applications within targeted sectors. The program offers non-dilutive funding to Oklahoma-based companies to facilitate the recruitment of scientific and technical talent, forge partnerships, procure essential resources, or validate technologies poised for market entry.

Economic Impact and Innovation

OCAST's goal is to stimulate innovation in science and technology, promote economic growth through strategic investment in cutting-edge research and capital deployment and provide STEM educated students practical applications of STEM. This program aligns with Oklahoma's Science and Innovation Strategic Plan, specifically to boost Oklahoma's competitiveness in science and innovation, leading to an enhanced economic return.

Successful applicants to OCAST's STEM Intern program will provide unique experiences for students that typically cannot be found in the classroom. Awardees will work with OCAST in telling the story of their success through their impacts in the Oklahoma Innovation ecosystem.

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 STEM 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, certifications, credentials, 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, certifications, or credentials 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 a need identified by a private sector business.

Applicant Organizations

- Be a private sector enterprise contributing to the Oklahoma economy, defined as firms with a permanent office in Oklahoma and registered with the Secretary of State to do business in the State of Oklahoma.
- Must be able to certify the industry need being addressed has a demonstrable negative impact on efficiency, the potential for improvement, and/or presents a hindrance to future growth.
- The business applicant must acknowledge that the proposed project can address the need based on their expertise and commit to implementing the results if deemed a solution.
- Concentrate on established or emerging technologies within three key industry sectors vital to Oklahoma's economy: Aerospace/Autonomous Systems and Defense, Biotechnology/Life Sciences, and Energy Diversification.
- Solve an industry identified problem and be technically robust, yielding one or more quantifiable outcomes; and
- Exhibit reasonable potential to support job creation or retention, enhance capital investment in the company applicant, and drive increased revenue, thereby contributing to economic growth within the state.

Principal Investigators

- Must be individuals employed by the eligible applicant organization.
- Defined as person proposing 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 in an Oklahoma CareerTech program or be degree-seeking at a college or university
- 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.

Previous awardees

- Failure to correct material breach of a previously awarded contract may disqualify the applicant company from future funding.
- Delinquent progress reports:
 - May disqualify organizations and/or individuals from submitting future applications, may prevent an application from undergoing external peer review, or may prevent an awarded contract from receiving a contract until the delinquent report(s) are submitted and evaluated with a satisfactory rating.
 - If outstanding progress reports of active awarded projects are not submitted within sixty (60) days of the award date, the award may be nullified, and funds returned to the Industry Innovation Fund.

Application Process

Portal Registration

Applicants must use the OCAST Funding Portal to complete and submit applications at <https://funding.ocast.ok.gov/application-list>. The portal requires individuals to register and verify their email address to access the system. Each application will be tied to the registered account that initiated the application, and this account will be considered the point of contact for information requests concerning the application.

Application Steps

Applications will be initiated through the OCAST Funding Portal by selecting “New Application” in the My Applications section of the Funding Portal. Previously initiated applications will be listed on this page and will be open for editing prior to the submission deadline. If an application is submitted in error prior to the deadline, please contact Sam.Snow@ocast.ok.gov.

Multiple applications are allowed per organization under the stipulation that each application is based on a unique project that meets the above criteria. Each application will receive a unique Document Name (AR25-XXXX). The application will consist of fields input directly in the OCAST Funding Portal. The below Application Outline provides additional information of each field.

All applicants are encouraged to verify that the Status of each application shows “Application Submitted” prior to the deadline to ensure that they are to be considered for review. **All applications left in the “Application in Process” status at the end of the application period will be changed to “Application Not Submitted”. No Status changes can be made after the submission deadline.**

Application Outline

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

Company Description

- Applicant Organization – Organization intended to be the contracting organization for the award. This may or may not be the application associated with the user’s account.
- Full-time Employees – The number of current full-time employees with the applicant organization that receive a W-2 tax form (if any)
- Part-time Employees - The number of current part-time employees with your organization that receive a W-2 tax form (if any)
- 1099 Employees - The number of current employees with your organization paid as contractors and receive a 1099 tax form (if any)

Contract Official – Employee authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the application organization.

Fiscal Agent – Person Responsible for submitting and reconciling financial records relating to awarded contracts.

Principal Investigator – Employee primarily responsible for the presented project. This person will be responsible for all required progress reports and would be the point of contact for any OCAST inquiries regarding this award.

Project Information

[Note: Many of these fields are limited by character. If copy/paste does not function, this limit has been exceeded.]

- Project Title – Keep title as concise as possible for marketing purposes.
- Project Abstract– A brief executive summary of the project, which will be used to describe the project to the OSTRaD board, the public and State Legislators. This section should describe the industry problem to be solved and the approach to that solution in a brief manner. Please limit responses to a paragraph.
- Project Description – A detailed explanation of the project plan and an outline for the main goals of the project. This section will expand upon the Project Abstract and should encompass a detailed description of all aspects of the project, including plans, equipment needs, background research, and significant anticipated milestones, and an estimate of the number of interns involved as well as their level of educational attainment (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, post-doc, or career tech).
- Total Project Budget – Total cost expected to be expensed to complete this project. This could include anticipated costs beyond this period of OCAST funding.
- Research Area – the area of research that best aligns with the project.
 - Biotechnology Sector – Health and medical projects
 - Energy Sector – Oil, gas, alternative fuels, and other energy production and/or efficiency project

- Aerospace Sector – Aerospace, drones, Department of Defense, space, and automation projects
- Intellectual Property (IP) Status – an overview of any potential IP issues, including any licenses, patents, or other IP vehicles that will be required or may result from this project. If none expected, please list “N/A”
- Significance of the Project – the overall goals of the project and what effect they are anticipated to have on the company and what impacts they may have on the technological economy in Oklahoma.
- Preliminary and Related Work – overview of project background and phases already complete (if any), including research outside the OCAST funded project directly completed by applicant.
- Project Objectives and Milestones – specific measurable goals of the project. These should be both aspirational and achievable outcomes to the project as described in the abstract.
- Project Facilities and Dedicated Equipment – an outline of all facilities and equipment used for this project, both company and contractor owned assets, and any items intended to be purchased with awarded funds.
- Project Team – a list of all relevant staff associated with the project. Uploads of resumes/CVs of each staff member will be required in a later section. Any potential staff, e.g., backup Principal Investigators, should also be included for review.
- Resubmission – If this project was previously included in a prior Industry Innovation (or OARS) OR STEM Intern Partnership application, please list the previous project number.

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 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

Supporting Documents

OCAST has included this section of the application for applicants to upload additional supporting documentation. Documents uploaded on this page that are denoted optional

are not required to be reviewed by the reviewers but may be utilized by the reviewers at their discretion in support of the application review.

- CVs and Resumes (required): Documentation for all team members, contract official, and principal investigator
- Supporting Graphics (optional): Diagrams, graphics, or other material to be shared with reviewers.
- Works Cited (optional): Any previous research referred to in the project description that may be needed to inform reviewers of related works
- Existing Contracts (optional): Official agreements with Institutions of Higher Education or other outside organizations with a stake in the outcomes of the project
- Letters of Commitment and Support (optional): Any letter or documentation of contracts or other partnerships supporting this project

Budget

Upon award of any funded project, the budget included in the application will become the contractual budget for the project and be incorporated into the final contract. The budget should include all expected project-related expenditures, from both OCAST funds and outside resources. Please include full amounts of outside resources as 'match', which in most cases will exceed the required 1:1 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. If the total change of the overall budget will move more than 10% of the total contacted amount, 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, whether full-time or part-time
- Professional Travel – Subject to guidelines and restrictions for State of Oklahoma employee travel
(<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/omes/documents/Travel.pdf>)
- Supplies – Consumable items to support the project, itemized by category
- Equipment – Non-consumable items over \$500
- Contractual services – including contract (1099) employees

Evaluation Rubric

All applications will receive a primary and secondary review by recognized industry experts in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) field(s) associated with the proposed project, and a majority of whom reside outside the state of Oklahoma. These reviews will be provided by an OCAST contractor who 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
- Significance of the research to generate intellectual property to meet Oklahoma's technology goals
- Likelihood the proposed project will be able to solve the business-identified problem or statement of need
- Degree of technical risk, as evidenced by a project that has never been attempted and/or successfully done before and that faces technical hurdles that OCAST Industry Innovation funds will help overcome
- Probability of success of the research plan
- Adequacy of facilities and equipment
- 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 students

Applicants should ensure that the application information they enter the OCAST Funding Portal effectively addresses the evaluation criteria listed above.

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.

Company Registration

To receive funds from the State of Oklahoma, all awardees will become State vendors with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES).

All applicants must begin the process of registration to be a State vendor immediately upon submitting their application. Registration information can be found here:

<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/omes/documents/new-supplier-guide.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 sent by OCAST. Please ensure your email server is set up to receive emails from the State of Oklahoma domain. Once the decisions are announced, evaluations will be available through the OCAST funding portal. Contracts for funded applicants will be emailed to Contract Officials via Adobe Sign and will need to be signed in a timely manner. In the event OCAST is unable to contact listed recipients and/or receive a signed contract in 30 days, the award is subject to cancellation.

Contracting

Contract Specifications

The funding mechanism for the Internship Partnership award will be a professional services contract between OCAST and 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. While making a reimbursement request determination to ensure compliance with the contract, reimbursement payments may be held by OCAST for as much as 45 days.

1. 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.
2. The Fiscal Agent is an individual acting on behalf of the applicant organization that submits reimbursement requests to OCAST, 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 fulfilling.
3. 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.
4. Contract extensions may be considered by OCAST, including no-cost extensions, but cannot be permitted for more than 60 days after the original contract end date. Requests for contract extensions must be submitted to OCAST no fewer than 30 days before the end of the contract period. Contract extensions will not delay the start of subsequent contract periods and no more than a total of 90 days of extension will be allowed for the life of the award.
5. Contractors MUST sign up for Electronic Funds Transfer (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 Title, Abstract and Descriptions from applications and 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 intended to protect the confidential and proprietary information provided by the applicant.

Reporting Requirements

Request for Reimbursement

Funds will be issued on a reimbursement basis. Reimbursement requests will be submitted through the funding portal 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. All payments shall be paid within 45 days of approved requests.

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 no later than 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 progress report lacking clarity may be returned for revision and/or clarification and may be submitted to another reviewer for additional evaluation. An unsatisfactory performance evaluation may result in the 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 perform 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.