Deshpande Center Full Proposal Instructions and Template

**Requirements and Criteria**

Familiarize yourself with the [grant program requirements](https://deshpande.mit.edu/mit-deshpande-center-grants/) and criteria for evaluation on our website.

**Page Length and Format**

* **Do Not Exceed Five (5) Pages** (Please note: this does not include graphics – we encourage additional images and graphics)
* File size not to exceed 10 MB
* Submit your proposal as an **MS Word or PDF file**.
* **Use this format to name your file: [PILastName]\_Full\_Proposal\_[Fall25]**

**(e.g., Smith\_Full\_Proposal\_2025).**

* If you are submitting more than one Full Proposal in this round, it is important to differentiate the files by adding 1 and 2 after PILastName

(e.g., Smith1\_Full\_Proposal\_Fall25 and Smith2\_Full\_Proposal\_Fall25)

**Confidential Information**

This proposal will be viewed under confidence by our grant selection committee, which includes some individuals from outside of MIT. Committee members abide by the MIT Deshpande Center [guidelines for confidentiality and conflict of interest.](https://live-mit-deshpande.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Catalyst-confidentiality-and-conflict-of-interest-guidelines.pdf)

This proposal does not constitute a public disclosure.

**Hopefully helpful preamble**

Notes of encouragement:

* Aside from the technology description (your invention/discovery) the measure of a good commercialization proposal it that it should be understandable by someone not skilled in your field
* We favor firsthand market data and testimonials

[Project Title]

[PI Last Name]

Do not exceed five (5) pages of text.

# Multiple applications can be suggested and explored at this point.

**1. Problem, Competition** **(current solutions)**

* State the problem you seek to solve with this idea, what is the unmet need, describe the problem your potential customers have and why they will buy your solution
* What are current competing products and why are current solutions insufficient or unable to address that need? Be sure to include a competitive analysis.
* Why is your solution compelling – advantages over the incumbents?
* Cite any market validation you have secured on this need, e.g. information from customers or end-users with whom you’ve spoken

**2. Market, product, customers**

In this section you should demonstrate that you know what is going on in your market today and how your product will be implemented.

* How big is the market and what specific segments would your product address?
* Describe the envisioned product and how it will be used
* **Tell us about your first target customer**
  + What is the market need?
  + Why would they buy the product?
  + What is the value for them?
  + What are the market requirements beyond technical specifications the technology/product needs to meet to be adopted?
  + What do you know about your potential customers, and who have you talked with in that market to validate your ideas?
* Explain how your proposed solution would be economically attractive and competitive. Include your techno-economic analysis (TEA)
* Please mention if you’ve partaken of the I-Corps™ Spark program (or more)

**3. Technology**

* Tell us about your invention. What is it and what makes it special**?**
* What makes your invention different from earlier solutions and useful in the proposed market?
* What is the maturity of the technology? What have you demonstrated already?
* How do you envision the technology being used in a product or service and what are the benefits relative to existing solutions?
* What are the specifications the technology needs to meet to be viable in the market?
  + How do you know that?
* What have you shown so far and what still needs to be done for the technology to be validated and commercialized?
* What are the technical risks and how will you minimize them?
* What is novel about the technology and proposed solution?

**4. Team: roles, commitment, experience, preparation for commercialization**

* List team members and collaborators and describe their roles in the project
* How does their prior experience help in developing this technology? We don’t need a full biography, just two lines on each team members to introduce them, their knowledge or role in the invention (if any), and note their role on the project.
* Be sure to note which team member(s) will **continue to champion this idea through to commercialization.**
* Who on your team has **demonstrated knowledge and experience in the target industry** (can be an advisor)?
* Tell the reviewers about any training or other efforts (professional advice or mentorship) you’ve pursued (within or outside of MIT) to learn about bringing an idea to market; how have you prepared for and demonstrated commitment towards this (commercial) effort?

# 5. Commercialization Strategy: 1-3 years from a commercial transaction

The Deshpande Center program is up to two years: an initial plus a renewal grant. The objective is to advance your idea from a promising technology (today) to your first commercial transaction, license or spinout (two years or less).

* What path (license or spinout) do you see to commercializing this technology after a Deshpande grant? i.e. how does this get moved out of MIT and into products or services?
* Help us understand why your technology is one to three years away from a commercial transaction (license or spinout)
* Also tell us why you are confident a third party will write that check: why will you be fundable (as a license or spinout) at the end of the Deshpande program
* Why do you need our help to make that happen?

# 6. IP, Prior Art

* Who is your Technology Licensing Officer?
* What is the status of patent applications?
* To the best of your knowledge, what is the prior art in this area – by yourself and others? *List publications, patents, and patent disclosures.* Comment on the novelty of your proposal with respect to this prior art.
* What is the freedom to operate with this prior art? For example, will other patents have to be licensed to practice your technology? Is this an extension of existing research or something new for your team?

# 7. Project plan and milestones

1. **Point A to Point B statement**

Please complete the “Mad Lib” below.

With this funding we will take our idea from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(Point A, where it is today) to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(Point B, project endpoint). This endpoint milestone adds value by \_\_\_\_\_\_ and reduces risk by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The next funder will see that we now have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. **Top risks**

Identify the most important risks to be addressed first, especially those risks that can kill the idea. Prioritize the listed risks from highest risk to lowest risk. See below for a starter list.

1. **Tasks to mitigate risks**

Outline the experiments, tasks, consultation, prototypes, etc. designed to mitigate the prioritized risks.

1. **Milestones:**

Tell us why your technology, with the Deshpande Center’s help can be ready for that first commercial transaction. What will the milestone endpoints for year 1 and year 2 be that prepare you for that transaction? See page below for a characterization of a good milestone.

**8. Impact: We look for transformative technologies**

* Provide an overview of the problem you will solve
* Describe the impact of the successful commercialization of your technology
  + For example, the impact could be social, environmental, or financial
* Why will people care if your technology is commercialized?
  + What are the existing solutions’ shortcomings
* What would a press release from MIT’s communications office focus on when describing the benefits of your technology, and why it is important that your technology be used?
* Are there benefits to more people than your customers? For example, will it help with a public health need or reduce CO2 production?

**9. Resources and Budget**

# (Please submit completed [budget template](https://deshpande.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/PILastName_Budget_Template_Fall25.xls) separately in step 3)

[Summarize resources you require to complete the project. You can request up to $100,000 for Initial Grants.

All projects, regardless of funding amount, receive full Deshpande Center support services. The term of funding should not exceed one year. Indicate whether you anticipate a need for funding in subsequent years and identify potential appropriate sources of support. Continuation of funding from the Deshpande Center will require reapplication and decisions will be made based on progress of research and market analysis. ***The funding request total must include standard*** [***institute Facilities & Administrative (F&A) for sponsored research***](https://ras.mit.edu/facilities-and-administrative-fa-rates)***.***]]

# 10. Other funding sources

* Have you sought other sources of funding?
* Please identify other sources of funding that have been used, or might be used, to co-fund this work
* Also, mention support that the team has received specific to this technology from other programs.

# Expectations and Obligations

**Use of Funds**  
Funding shall be used for technology development as described in the submitted proposal.  
  
**Program Participation**  
Principal investigators (PIs) funded by the Deshpande Center are committed to seeing their promising technology make an impact on the marketplace, whether through a start-up or license (to a third party).   
  
In addition to funding, the center provides expert commercialization guidance and connections to the business world. Teams will be expected to participate in events to propel their technology forward as determined by the Deshpande Center. For example, the center hosts an annual IdeaStream event, a fall showcase, occasional workshops, and other events to enhance and highlight innovative work done at MIT. 

All Deshpande-funded projects are expected to participate, or have participated, in the MIT I-Corps™ program on customer and market discovery.

**Intellectual Property**  
PIs funded by the Deshpande Center shall seek to establish IP, where appropriate, via disclosures of potentially patentable inventions submitted to the TLO as normal MIT practice, with an indication that Deshpande Center funding has been used to support the work.  
  
**Communication**  
The PI shall communicate the project’s progress through various means, including the following:

* Initial kick-off meeting
* Regular meetings with Catalyst (mentor) – usually bi-weekly or monthly
* A midterm and final meeting, which may include external guests
* Final written report or presentation to the Deshpande Center. Report requirements will be distributed during the program.
* Publications – Publication of results from work sponsored by the Center is encouraged, and Deshpande Center support will be acknowledged in all publications.
* Media relations – When appropriate, PIs funded by the center might be asked to interact with the press. Media training will be available.

**Length of Funding**

The term of the grant is one year, and any unused funds will be rolled back into the program unless a one-year no cost extension is approved **prior to the expiration date**. A second extension will only be granted in the event of proven mitigating circumstances.

Eligible teams may be invited to apply for a renewal grant based on their progress toward commercialization.

**Conflict of Interest**Faculty funded by the Deshpande Center should follow [MIT guidelines in Policy and Procedures](https://policies.mit.edu/policies-procedures/40-faculty-rights-and-responsibilities) and be diligent to avoid [conflict of interest](https://policies.mit.edu/policies-procedures/40-faculty-rights-and-responsibilities/44-conflict-interest) related to the funding, research, or collaborators on the project.

**Deshpande Center Financial Sustainability**

The Deshpande Center does not take equity in your idea, team, spinout. This is grant funding.

The first DCTI participants to complete our program and sell their companies recommended we create a vehicle to receive gifts from DCTI alums who want to contribute to and thank the Deshpande Center. They set the precedent. We use these contributions to fund new projects. This practice, established by your predecessors, was a gift of 1% of *your* (not the company’s) founder equity per $50,000 awarded (by the DCTI). If you prefer to donate cash, perhaps calculate a comparable sum.Should you choose to do this, it would be separate from any equity or royalties paid to MIT to license any patents.