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Call for Applications: 2022 Translational Fellow Programme

Background

Innovus offers Translational Fellowships that provide Masters or PhD students that recently graduated or are close to completing their studies the opportunity to develop and commercialise the innovation resulting from their research at Stellenbosch University (SU).

The objectives of the Translational Fellow Programme (TFP) are to:

1. Translate the world-class research performed at SU into innovative products and services that positively impacts society; and
2. Enable recent graduates to pursue an entrepreneurial career upon graduation while developing entrepreneurial, technology transfer, and commercialisation skills.

SU is guided by Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework: 2019-2024. Strategic Framework: 2019-2024 identifies six core strategic themes to enable Vision 2040. The TFP address three of these core strategic themes:

1. Transformational student experience;
2. Research for impact; and
3. Thriving SU.

Innovations emanating from university research often require additional development to demonstrate a commercial use case. This process usually involves identifying and validating potential markets and testing both technical and business assumptions. A structured approach to market validation, business case development, and technology development is required to achieve this. The most effective way to accomplish this is through the continued involvement of the recent graduate who assisted with the research, thus building on the existing momentum and know-how. However, even when the graduate wants to remain involved, financial constraints often force the graduate to enter the job market.

The TFP provides the following support:

1. Up to a maximum of R325 000 to cover the Translational Fellow's living and other expenses for one year. The funding is payable in 12 equal monthly amounts;
2. Commercialisation support from Innovus, including guidance on market validation, business case development, technology development, commercialisation strategy, and assistance with identifying and applying for relevant funding; and
3. Entrepreneurial and business development support from the Stellenbosch University LaunchLab through its programmes, depending on the stage of development of the innovation.

The number of Translational Fellowships awarded each year is dependent on the availability of funds. The primary source of funding for the Translational Fellowship is the Strategic Fund.

saam vorentoe • masiye phambili • forward together

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Application criteria

The TFP Committee will evaluate eligible applications against a set of criteria intended to ensure the TFP achieves the programme's stated objectives.

Eligibility Criteria

1. The applicant needs to be graduated or complete their degree by the end of 2021. The TFP Committee may approve an application conditionally pending successful graduation.
2. The applicant may not hold any employment or postdoctoral fellowships at the same time as the Translational Fellowship.
3. The innovation to be commercialised as part of the TFP is disclosed to Innovus and approved for commercialisation at the time of the application.
4. The applicant may not be employed in a spinoff commercialising the innovation at the time of application.
5. Innovations that have successfully raised funding for commercialisation are generally not eligible. However, the TFP Committee may decide in their sole discretion to consider an application where clear evidence exists that the TFP should result in successful commercialisation and is satisfied that no other funding sources from which to support the applicant are available.
6. The innovation is at Technology Readiness Level 3 (TRL 3) or higher. For more information on TRLs please see the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) explanation at <https://www.tia.org.za/core/uploads/2019/12/TRL-1.pdf>. If you are unsure of the TRL, contact the Innovus technology transfer professional assigned to the innovation.
7. A co-inventor or enabler for the innovation to be commercialised, who is a full-time academic staff member of SU, has agreed to act as the applicant's Host for the TFP.
8. The Host's Department is willing to host the applicant and provide access to the necessary facilities.
9. The Innovus technology transfer professional assigned to the innovation supports the application.

Evaluation Criteria

The TFP Committee will rank each application. The top-ranking applications will be approved. The number of approved applications is subject to the availability of funding and the discretion of the TFP Committee. The TFP Committee will use the following criteria to evaluate and rank the applications:

1. Market interest in the innovation;
2. Business viability of the innovation;
3. Technical feasibility of the innovation;
4. Competitive advantage and differentiation of the innovation;
5. Availability of the resources to complete the planned activities; and
6. Whether the objectives and activities provided in the application demonstrably improve the innovation's commercial potential either through unlocking funding or investment for further commercialisation, resulting in a license agreement, or introducing a product or service to the market.

Call for applications

Innovus invites interested parties meeting the qualifying criteria to apply to the 2022 TFP by completing the online application for at: <https://forms.office.com/r/Hj9qjc8zaG> before midnight (SAST) on 20 October 2021. To enable you to prepare the application please see the attached template of the online application form.

Innovus will screen the applications against the eligibility criteria. The TFP Committee will evaluate eligible applications, and applicants may be required to present their applications or be available to answer clarifying questions.

Innovus will endeavour to notify successful applicants **by 17 November 2021**. The decision of the TFP Committee is final.

To enable payment of the Translational Fellows, they will be required to complete and sign the Translational Fellow Funding Terms.

Important Notes

1. All Intellectual Property (IP) developed by the Translational Fellow are proprietary to SU in compliance with the IPR Act and the SU IP Policy.
2. The TFP reserves the right to require repayment of all funding disbursed to a Translational Fellow should the Translational Fellow decide to exit the TFP before completion.
3. Translational Fellows are required to meet with an Innovus technology transfer professional and the Host on at least a monthly basis.
4. Translational Fellows are required to submit concise quarterly progress reports, a comprehensive final report, and an indexed final data repository to Innovus.
5. The priority of the TFP is bringing SU innovation closer to successful commercialisation. Therefore, further research and publications are a secondary objective. Applicants whose primary objective is further research and publication should instead consider a Postdoctoral Fellow route.
6. Translational Fellows may not be enrolled as a student or a Postdoctoral Fellow or be employed during the same time as the Translational Fellowship to ensure there is no conflict of commitment.

Application Process

1. Complete the online TFP Application form at the following link: <https://forms.office.com/r/Hj9qjc8zaG> by **before midnight (SAST) on 20 October 2021**. To ensure you have all the required information available, please see the attached template of the application form.
2. The Applicant, the Host, and the Head of Department of the Host Department will receive an email with a link to Adobe Sign to sign the application form. The email with the link will be sent within 24-hours of submission of the Application. Applications are not considered complete before it is signed.
3. Innovus screens applications for eligibility and prepares the documentation for the TFP Committee meeting. During this process, applicants may be contacted for further and or supporting information.
4. The TFP Committee meets to evaluate the applications. Applicants may be required to present their applications to the committee or to be available for clarifying questions from the committee. Innovus will send the details of the meeting and requests to be available at least a week before the meeting.
5. Innovus will endeavour to notify successful applicants **by 17 November 2021**.
6. Translational Fellows, Hosts, and Heads of Departments complete and sign the Translational Fellow Funding Terms.
7. The Translational Fellowship is conditional on the applicant completing their studies and starts on the first day of the calendar month after completion of their degree.

Contact Person

For more information, do not hesitate to get in touch with the TFP manager, Joubert de Wet, at sjdewet@sun.ac.za.