

NCBiotech Research Grants: Moving Technology toward Commercialization

Cynthia Sollod, Ph.D., Sr. Director Science & Technology Development Programs
North Carolina Biotechnology Center

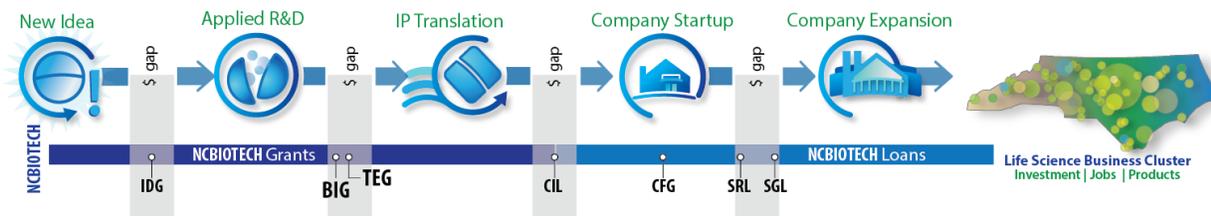
When researchers come up with new and exciting ideas, the question that typically follows is “what next?” How can this innovation be turned into a real product that will help society? How can this technology be developed for success in the marketplace?

The answer is not an easy one. The path to commercialization is long and has many hurdles along the way. But for the life sciences in North Carolina, NCBiotech can help smooth the way. Our research grant programs are designed to help move promising technologies along the path toward commercialization. In addition, our grants fill in some critical funding gaps, stages where it is typically difficult to find funding.

Each grant program has its own distinct goals. The Institutional Development Grant (IDG) is designed to encourage innovation and support university infrastructure. And while the Biotechnology Innovation Grant (BIG), the Technology Enhancement Grant (TEG), and the Collaborative Funding Grant (CFG) all move life science research through key stages of technology development toward commercialization, each has a distinctive niche.

The graph below gives you an idea of what the path to commercialization looks like and where our grant programs come into play. At the later stages, NCBiotech loan programs (CIL, SRL, and SGL) are designed to support start-up companies and help them take the technology through to the finish line.

NCBIOTECH Grant and Loan Funding for Life Sciences in NC



Where does your research fall along this path? Here’s a brief overview of our grant programs to help you identify which program might be a fit. I encourage you to dig deeper and read the guidelines for more details. Then, if you have questions or would like to request a consultation on your project idea, get in touch with us. Contact information is on the program webpages.

Our core equipment grant program is the Institutional Development Grant (IDG) program. Obtaining funding for equipment and infrastructure is difficult to find from outside sources. The IDG program enables purchase of multiuser equipment to be used for innovative research in labs or core facilities. It allows for innovative projects that can run the gamut from basic to applied research, but favors applications in which the overall initiative provides support for broad-based research goals that will have a beneficial impact on life science research for an institution as a whole. A good IDG application will build on existing strengths and lead to projects that will attract outside recognition.

The new *Biotechnology Innovation Grant (BIG)* has a focus that has shifted further downstream from some of our previous research grant programs. The BIG has a sweet spot in which the PI has already made an invention disclosure. The goals of the program are to help the applicant and the tech transfer office determine whether the expense of pursuing a full patent is worth the cost. An ideal project will demonstrate not only technical feasibility, but show that there is also a market and a path forward toward commercialization, including strong IP and freedom to operate. Foundational work should be completed so that the BIG project can move the technology toward a solution and potential commercialization. A portion of funding goes to a commercialization advisor or team that will take on tasks necessary to better position the technology for potential commercialization.

The *Technology Enhancement Grant (TEG)* has similarities with the BIG, but is yet a bit further down the commercialization pipeline. In the case of the TEG, funds go to the Tech Transfer Office, not the PI. The goals of the TEG are to further strengthen the technology so that it can be positioned for licensing by a company, whereas BIG funding is closer to the beginning of developing a commercial concept and includes some additional technical goals as well.

The third grant program that moves technology closer to commercialization is the *Collaborative Funding Grant (CFG)*. This program requires partnership with a company to move the company's technology from the lab toward commercialization. While the funds go to the university in support of a Post-doc and the project is overseen by the academic PI, the project should be driven by the company's needs, not the PI's. A CFG grant funds a project that helps a company move in a new direction or that allows refinement of a product before it is commercialized. It allows a company to gain access to university expertise and may forge the beginnings of new long-term partnerships.

For more information on GRANTS, please visit <http://www.ncbiotech.org/research-grants/research-funding>.

For information on LOANS see: <http://www.ncbiotech.org/growth>