

## MBIA Commercialization Innovation Grant FY26

### Application Review Rubric

**Question 1** Does the proposal demonstrate the applicant's intention to support the innovation ecosystem with the development of an innovative or disruptive technology-enabled business model?

**Category:** Innovation Ecosystem & Disruptive Technology-Enabled Business Model

**Score:**

- 5 The proposal clearly articulates a technology-enabled business model that is novel or disruptive within its industry. The applicant demonstrates a strong understanding of the broader innovation ecosystem and explicitly describes how their work will contribute to it (e.g., job creation, spin-off potential, ecosystem partnerships, or knowledge transfer). The technology's differentiation is well-evidenced.
- 4 The proposal describes a technology-enabled business model with clear innovative elements. The applicant shows awareness of the innovation ecosystem and suggests meaningful, if not fully developed, contributions to it. Some differentiation from existing solutions is evident.
- 3 The proposal references technology as part of its business model, but the innovative or disruptive nature is not fully substantiated. The connection to the broader innovation ecosystem is mentioned but lacks specificity or depth.
- 2 The proposal involves technology use, but the business model largely mirrors existing approaches. The applicant shows limited awareness of the innovation ecosystem and does not articulate how their work advances it.
- 1 The proposal does not demonstrate a technology-enabled or innovative business model. There is little to no evidence of intent to contribute to the innovation ecosystem.

**Question 2** Does this proposal request strategic commercialization support services or materials?

**Category:** Strategic Commercialization Support Services or Materials

**Score:**

- 5 The requested services or materials are directly and explicitly tied to a well-defined commercialization strategy. The applicant clearly explains how each requested item accelerates their path to market, customer acquisition, revenue generation, or scale.
- 4 The requested services or materials are clearly linked to commercialization goals. The connection between the request and market advancement is logical and mostly well-explained, with minor gaps in strategic framing.
- 3 The requested services or materials have a plausible connection to commercialization, but the strategic rationale is underdeveloped or somewhat generic. It is not entirely clear how the request moves the needle toward market success.
- 2 The request is loosely connected to commercialization. The services or materials seem useful in a general sense but are not clearly tied to a specific commercialization strategy or milestone.
- 1 The requested services or materials do not appear to support a commercialization strategy. The request lacks strategic context or is better characterized as operational or administrative in nature.

**Question 3** Do the proposed grant activities require truly "next-level" resources (and not resources that should already be provided pro-bono, as part of center programming, via an Entrepreneur in Residence, or other pro-bono programming within the Maryland business community)?

**Category:** "Next-Level" Resources Beyond Standard Programming

**Score:**

- 5 The requested resources are clearly beyond what is reasonably available through standard center programming, EIR support, or community pro-bono services.
- 4 The requested resources go meaningfully beyond standard programming.
- 3 The requested resources may partially overlap with what could be obtained through existing pro-bono or center programming.
- 2 The requested resources are largely available through existing programming, EIR services, or community support.

- 1 The requested resources are standard services or support that should clearly be available at no cost through center programming, EIR engagement, or the broader Maryland entrepreneurial ecosystem. Grant funding is not warranted.

**Question 4** Based on your understanding of the company's stage in development, do you see the requested resources to be a valuable and timely service or investment in equipment, material costs, or product that will move their commercialization efforts forward?

**Category:** Value and Timeliness of Resources Relative to Company Stage

**Score:**

- 5 The requested resources are clearly well-matched to the company's current development stage and represent a timely investment. The applicant demonstrates that this is the right resource, at the right time, to unlock the next stage of commercialization. The expected impact is specific and compelling.
- 4 The requested resources are appropriate for the company's stage and are likely to advance commercialization. The timing rationale is logical, though the applicant could more precisely articulate the specific impact on their trajectory.
- 3 The requested resources are reasonably relevant to the company's stage, but the timing or fit is not fully justified. It is somewhat unclear whether the investment will produce meaningful commercialization progress at this moment.
- 2 The requested resources seem premature or misaligned with the company's current stage. The applicant has not convincingly demonstrated that this investment will move their commercialization forward in the near term.
- 1 The requested resources are clearly misaligned with the company's development stage. They are either far too early, too late, or otherwise disconnected from near-term commercialization needs.

**Question 5** Do you feel that the funding amount requested and overall project budget is on par with the value of the service requested or cost of products/equipment necessary to achieve the desired outcome?

**Category:** Funding Amount Proportional to Value of Service or Product

**Score:**

- 5 The funding amount is well-justified and proportional to the scope of services or cost of materials requested. The applicant provides clear pricing context (e.g., quotes, market rates, or comparable benchmarks) and the investment appears efficient and reasonable.
- 4 The funding amount is reasonable relative to the requested services or materials. Some pricing context is provided, and the overall request appears proportional, with only minor questions about cost efficiency.
- 3 The funding amount is in a plausible range but lacks sufficient justification. Pricing context is limited or incomplete, making it difficult to fully assess whether the request represents good value.
- 2 The funding amount appears potentially over- or under-estimated relative to the stated deliverable. Limited pricing evidence is provided, raising concerns about whether the investment will yield the desired outcome.
- 1 The funding amount is clearly disproportionate to the value of the service or cost of materials requested. No meaningful pricing justification is provided, or the request appears to significantly misrepresent actual costs.

**Question 6** Do you feel that the metrics for success described are valuable and achievable through the proposed activity?

**Category:** Quality and Achievability of Success Metrics

**Score:**

- 5 The success metrics are specific, measurable, and directly tied to the proposed activity. They reflect meaningful commercialization progress (e.g., signed LOIs, prototype completion, regulatory milestone, revenue target) and are realistically achievable within the proposed scope and timeline.
- 4 The success metrics are mostly clear and relevant to the proposed activity. They reflect commercialization progress and appear achievable, though one or more metrics could be more precisely defined or better linked to the activity.

- 3 The success metrics are present but are either too vague, too broad, or only loosely connected to the proposed activity. It is unclear whether achieving these metrics would meaningfully advance commercialization.
- 2 The success metrics are poorly defined or largely unrelated to the proposed activity. They offer little insight into whether the grant investment will produce tangible commercialization progress.
- 1 Success metrics are absent, entirely vague, or clearly unachievable through the proposed activity. There is no meaningful basis for evaluating whether the grant will produce results.

**Question 7** Do you believe the proposed vendor is qualified to assist this company move ahead in their professional journey to accomplish the strategic commercialization goal identified in the proposal?

**Category:** Vendor Qualification

**Score:**

- 5 The proposed vendor has demonstrated, sector-relevant expertise and a clear track record of supporting companies at a similar stage and in a similar domain. The applicant provides specific evidence of the vendor's qualifications (e.g., credentials, client history, portfolio, or testimonials) and the match between vendor capabilities and company needs is compelling.
- 4 The proposed vendor appears well-qualified, with relevant expertise and reasonable evidence of their ability to deliver. The fit between vendor capabilities and the company's commercialization needs is logical, with only minor gaps in the evidence provided.
- 3 The vendor has some relevant experience, but the case for their specific qualifications to support this company's commercialization strategy is not fully made. The connection between vendor expertise and the company's needs requires assumptions by the reviewer.
- 2 The vendor's qualifications are limited or only tangentially relevant to the company's commercialization goals. Little evidence is provided to support the claim that this vendor can meaningfully advance the company's strategy.
- 1 The vendor appears unqualified or there is no evidence provided to support their selection. The reviewer cannot assess how this vendor would contribute to the company's commercialization progress.

**N/A** Applicant did not provide a vendor through the application.