

IRIS

Grant Program

Innovation & Research for Industry Success (IRIS)

WHAT

The goal of this grant is to stimulate new industry-led research and development (R&D) partnerships between Tennessee-based companies and the state's leading research institutions. IRIS aims to lower the barrier for companies to pilot innovative technologies and pursue new discoveries within the state, while also demonstrating the strength of Tennessee's research capabilities and fostering long-term corporate investment in the state's innovation ecosystem.

This program is designed for companies interested in researching, testing and building for the future in Tennessee.

WHEN

- Program launches July 1, 2025
- Accepting applications on a rolling basis

HOW

- Requires joint application and budget to be submitted by research partner/s and company
- [Click here](#) to apply
- For questions or if a company needs help identifying a research partner, email IRIS@tn.gov

Targeted Industries



Advanced
Manufacturing



Distribution &
Logistics



Automotive



Healthcare &
Life Sciences



Food &
Beverage



Nuclear



Aerospace &
Defense



Technology

Partner Research Institutions

- East Tennessee State University
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Oak Ridge National Laboratory
- Tennessee State University
- Tennessee Tech University
- University of Memphis
- University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- University of Tennessee Health Science Center
- Vanderbilt University

Project Examples

- **University of Tennessee at Chattanooga** partnered with **Denso** to develop technology that predicts the risk of collisions before they happen and detects crashes immediately when they occur.
- **University of Memphis** partnered with **FedEx** to develop a unified fleet maintenance tool for longevity, cost efficiency and strategic application.



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Company Eligibility Requirements

- Company must have a physical presence in Tennessee and be willing to invest in the project
- Company must be in good standing with the TN Dept. of Revenue
- Not designed for early-stage startups or pre-revenue ventures

Eligible R&D Activities

Activities must involve collaboration between a company and research institution/s aimed at developing new products, processes, or technologies that support business growth or innovation.

Activities should be investigative or experimental in nature, with a clear objective to advance technical knowledge or solve industry-specific challenges.

Routine business operations, marketing activities, or general product testing not involving research or technical advancement are not considered eligible.

Examples of Eligible Activities Include

- Collaborative research to develop or improve products, materials, or production processes
- Applied research to address a specific technical or scientific challenge facing the company
- Prototyping or pilot testing of new technologies
- Feasibility studies or proof-of-concept work for emerging innovations
- Development and validation of innovative tools, systems, or software
- Technical modeling, simulations, or lab-scale experiments conducted jointly with a research institution

Note: Funding levels for industry-led projects will be based on the project scope and detailed budget that outlines the company's projected investment and any third-party contributions.