

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 capable of self-funding their R&D initiatives but seeking state support as a strategic incentive.

WHEN

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

HOW

- Prior to applying, the IRIS [Intake Form](#) must be submitted to confirm program eligibility.
- For more information, visit the [website](#).
- Contact us by emailing IRIS@tn.gov

Targeted Industries



Advanced
Manufacturing



Distribution &
Logistics



Automotive



Healthcare &
Life Sciences



Food &
Beverage



Nuclear



Aerospace &
Defense



Technology

Research Partners Include

- Belmont University
- 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.



IRIS Grant Program

Innovation & Research for Industry Success

Company Eligibility Requirements

- Company must have a physical presence in Tennessee and committed to investing financially 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.
- Not intended for companies relying on state funding to proceed.

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.

Only costs incurred by the university or research partner are eligible for reimbursement via the grant program.

Examples of Eligible Activities

- 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: Grant funds are not intended to serve as gap financing or fund projects that otherwise would not proceed without state incentives.