

Jeff Lawrence Innovation Fund

COMMERCIALIZATION COMPETITION GUIDELINES

Competition Application Period

Opens July 6, 2026, 8:00AM EST

Closes August 10, 2026 at 11:59PM EST

Finalists Notified Late September 2026

**Finalists Present In-Person October 27-28, 2026 at the
New York State Innovation Summit in Buffalo, NY**

Contact Information

Questions should be sent to the Innovation Fund program at fund@fuzehub.com.

FuzeHub Privacy Policy

Please review the complete FuzeHub privacy policy [here](#).

Posted/Modified June 16, 2026. Please check back to this site for updates and modifications to these guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

FuzeHub administers the Jeff Lawrence Innovation Fund, which supports initiatives to advance technology development and commercialization across New York State.

As part of the Jeff Lawrence Innovation Fund, FuzeHub will hold a New York State Commercialization Competition on October 27 & 28, 2026, in Buffalo, NY. Participating companies will compete for up to \$150,000 in funding by demonstrating the commercialization potential of their product or technology. This competition is designed to help emerging manufacturing and technology companies further develop their prototype, attract customers and investors, and strengthen their “go-to-market” strategies, as they move from new product/production method to marketplace.

Target sectors include, but are not limited to: advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, cleantech, health/medical, photonics, textiles, consumer products, electronics, agri-tech, robotics, and IoT (such as wearables, or smart devices).

AWARD DETAILS

Up to \$420,000 in funding is available for this year’s competition, as follows:

- Grand award: \$150,000
- Runner-up: \$100,000
- At least 2 awards of up to \$85,000 each

FuzeHub reserves the right to adjust award amounts based on proposal strength and available funding. To receive funding, all winners must execute either a Simple Agreement for Future Equity (SAFE) or a Convertible Note, as determined by the judges. Awards are contingent upon continued funding from Empire State Development.



ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

- Applicants must propose to fund activities to improve upon an existing tangible prototype and/or “go-to market” strategy.
 - Applicants must be able to present in person on October 27-28, 2026 in Buffalo, NY.
 - Company must reside and operate in New York State from the time it submits the application until at least a twelve (12) consecutive month period following the award announcement, or project completion, whichever is **longer**; also, at least one of the founders must reside in New York State at the time of the award. **Winning companies that do not comply with the residency requirements shall be obligated to return all award funds to FuzeHub** to be reinvested in the Commercialization Competition.
 - Company must be pre-revenue (less than \$100,000 in revenue over the company’s entire lifetime, regardless of revenue stream).
 - Company must be pre-seed (less than \$500,000 in investments to date).
 - Company must have received no more than \$2,000,000 in grants in the past two years.
 - A company can receive up to \$250,000 total from the Jeff Lawrence Innovation Fund over its lifetime, across all tracks and rounds.
 - Applicants, whether founders or companies, are only allowed to submit one application per round.
 - In the case of a subsidiary, the parent company must fulfill all eligibility requirements listed above.
- Company must be registered with Dun & Bradstreet, and have an eligible North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code identified in their D&B profile. Acceptable codes include:
 - Manufacturing Sector (Any NAICS Code beginning with 3*) (See <https://www.naics.com/six-digit-naics/?v=2022&code=31-33>)
 - 423510 Metal Services Centers and Other Metal Merchant Wholesalers
 - 4841 General Freight Trucking
 - 4842 Specialized Freight Trucking
 - 488510 Freight Transportation Arrangement
 - 488991 Packing and Crating
 - 4931 Warehousing and Storage
 - 541330 Engineering Services
 - 541380 Testing Laboratories
 - 541420 Industrial Design Services
 - 541511 Custom Computer Programming Services
 - 541512 Computer Systems Design Services
 - 541713 Research and Development in Nanotechnology
 - 541714 Research and Development in Biotechnology (except Nanobiotechnology)
 - 541715 Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Science (except nanobiotechnology and biotechnology)
 - 561910 Packaging and Labeling Services
 - 811310 Commercial and Industrial Machinery & Equipment (except Automotive & Electronic) Repair & Maintenance

FuzeHub is committed to offering services equitably across all communities in New York State, and, as such, encourages participation by military veterans, women, minorities, and socially or economically disadvantaged businesses.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT COSTS

Consultants and vendors should be located in New York State unless the applicant demonstrates that the products, services, or expertise being procured are not available in the state. Eligible costs include:

- Equipment;
- Materials;
- Engineering / design;
- Non-executive team personnel directly related to the project;
- Marketing / customer discovery¹; and,
- Other direct costs (subject to review).

Ineligible costs include the following, but not limited to:

- Applicant company executive team salaries (Founder, Co-Founder, CEO, CFO, COO, CTO) are ineligible costs regardless of the nature of the work to be completed;
- Administrative costs (such as accountant, payroll service fee, etc.);
- Capital improvements;
- Legal consultation;
- Patent fees; and
- Indirect costs (operational expenses that are not directly related to executing the project, for example: office rent, utilities, or non-project-specific personnel costs.)

Projects must be clearly defined and completed within **9 months** of award. Expenses incurred prior to award execution are not eligible.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Companies must complete the online application in the Submittable platform at <https://fuzehub.submittable.com/>.

Online Application Opens	Application Deadline	Finalists Notified	Finalist Presentations
July 6, 2026 8:00AM EST	August 10, 2026 11:59 PM EST	Late September 2026	October 27 - 28, 2026

Information required for the Eligibility Check:

1. **Company Info** (form in Submittable)
2. **Confirmation of Business Status and Founder Residency** (PDF files) - The applicant must provide proof that they are an existing company physically located in New York State, and that at least one founder resides full-time in NYS. For an up-to-date list of acceptable documents, check our FAQ.
3. **Confirmation of Revenue to Date** (PDF file) - Company Profit & Loss Report(s) for the entire lifetime of the company, either as single totals to date, or yearly breakdown since company inception.

Eligible applicants will be given access to the full application. If an eligibility issue is found, feedback and instructions will be provided via email.

Applicant teams deemed eligible receive access to all tasks necessary to fully submit the application, which are:

1. **Video Presentation** accepted video file types: .3gp, .avi, .m4v, .mkv, .mov, .mp4, .mpg, .webm, .wmv; maximum file size 1GB.

Maximum length: 10 minutes.

The video presentation should bring the product, vision, and commercialization strategy to life. It **MUST**:

- a. Be presented by a founder (identify all presenters),
- b. Include a prototype demo (focus on usability, functionality, and current development stage).
- c. Address the 5 scoring criteria (listed further below).

Note - The video does not need to be professionally produced, but it should be clear, well-organized, and easy to follow. See our “Project Video Dos and Don’ts” guide on the competition website for tips.

2. **Project Budget** (table in Submittable)

The Form must outline an \$85,000 project budget to clearly detail how the applicant intends to expend the FuzeHub funds. Only finalists will be asked to also submit \$100,000 and \$150,000 project budgets.

3. **Media Package**

Media contact information, a brief product description, and images for media purposes only.

4. **Payment**

\$80 application fee must be paid by credit card.

CRITERIA AND REVIEW PROCESS

The Commercialization Competition is designed to support innovative companies that demonstrate both strong commercialization potential and a clear path to economic impact in New York State. Applications will be evaluated based on evidence presented, not solely on future projections or potential.

1. Innovation & Technical Differentiation (25%)

Applicants should clearly explain what is innovative or disruptive about their product, technology, process, or business approach. “Innovation” may include new technologies, significant performance improvements, novel applications of existing technologies, new manufacturing methods, or unique approaches to solving customer problems.

Applicants should describe how their solution differs from currently available alternatives and why those differences matter. Reviewers will evaluate the degree of innovation, the strength of the competitive advantage created, and the potential for the innovation to create meaningful value to stakeholders.

2. Market Need & Customer Validation (25%)

Applicants should clearly define the problem being solved, and explain why it matters. Strong applications will demonstrate a deep understanding of the end user, purchaser, and stakeholders that benefit from the solution (these may all be the same person). Applicants should explain the value their product creates, including improvements to efficiency, cost, quality, sustainability, health, safety, accessibility, or other meaningful outcomes.

Applicants should provide evidence that potential customers value the solution. Examples may include customer interviews, user discovery activities, letters of support or intent, pilot discussion, beta users, strategic partnerships, or other forms of engagement with future customers and market validation. Reviewers will assess the product-market fit as well as the strength of the supporting evidence.

3. Commercialization Readiness (20%)

Applicants should demonstrate a clear and realistic plan for advancing the product toward commercial adoption. While it may be too early for a fully developed growth strategy, applicants should be able to provide evidence that they understand the next critical steps required to reach customers and generate traction.

Applicants should explain how they intend to use the award to reduce commercialization risk, validate assumptions, secure customers, strengthen market positioning, or achieve other meaningful commercialization milestones. Reviewers will evaluate whether the proposed activities are likely to move the company closer to successful market adoption.

4. Team & Execution Capability (20%)

Applicants should highlight the relevant technical expertise, business experience, industry knowledge, time commitment, and advisor or partner support in order to demonstrate that the team can successfully execute the proposed plan.

Applicants should also identify key risks and explain how they plan to address them. Reviewers will assess whether the team shows the ability to execute efficiently and achieve meaningful progress within the project period.

5. Impact of FuzeHub Funding (10%)

Applicants should clearly explain how the requested funding will accelerate commercialization and create measurable outcomes. The proposed project should include specific objectives.

Reviewers will consider the likelihood that the funding will result in meaningful progress toward commercialization, including prototype improvement, customer discovery, product validation, manufacturing readiness, pilot readiness, regulatory advancement, investment attraction, revenue generation, or other significant commercialization milestones. Applications should demonstrate that the proposed work would be difficult to accomplish, significantly delayed, or reduced in scope without support from the Jeff Lawrence Innovation Fund.

Applications that do not follow the instructions provided and/or applications that do not include all required items may be deemed incomplete and may be rejected without further review.

Top applicants will be considered “finalists” and invited to present to a panel of judges at the Commercialization Competition on October 27-28, 2026. Details regarding the event and expectations of the participating companies will be provided to finalists at a later date.

In anticipation of a high volume of applications, FuzeHub will not commit to providing debriefs to unsuccessful applicants.

Commercialization Competition Judges

A panel of judges will be announced prior to the event and information will be made available on the FuzeHub website. Semi-finalist and finalist judges are from local, regional and statewide partner organizations.

Award

FuzeHub will enter into an agreement with each award recipient. The agreements will detail project scopes, milestones, payment schedules, and commitments to participate in post-award project tracking and surveys.

Investment Instrument / SAFE / Convertible Note

As a condition to receiving any award proceeds, competition winners will be required to enter into either a Simple Agreement for Future Equity (SAFE) or a Convertible Note, as determined by the judges. Templates of the SAFE and Convertible Note are available on the FuzeHub website. No other versions of the SAFE will be accepted. Awardees that fail to sign the FuzeHub investment instrument **within 5 business days** of the award announcement will forfeit their entire award.

¹Marketing costs are limited to 40% of the award amount and must be supported by measurable outcome expectations.