



Spark Cleantech Accelerator Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Spark Innovation Center?

The Spark Innovation Center was founded in 2020 as the entrepreneurial initiative of the UT Research Park in Knoxville, TN. It is currently an incubator program: 8 energy – focused startups lease laboratory and office space in the Park’s world-class Institute for Advanced Materials and Manufacturing, and the Park is currently developing additional space to support even more startup companies. The Spark Cleantech Accelerator is the newest initiative of Spark in partnership with the Clean Energy Trust, DOE, Tennessee Valley Authority, Launch Tennessee, the City of Knoxville, and many others.

Where is your facility located?

The Spark Innovation Center is located in the Institute of Advanced Materials and Manufacturing at the University of Tennessee Research Park, 2641 Osprey Vista Way in Knoxville Tennessee.

Will the accelerator program be held in-person or virtually?

We are currently planning on the accelerator being an in-person program.

Can you give some examples of eligible technologies?

Eligible technologies will primarily focus on solutions, preferably hardware, that address climate mitigation, resilience and natural resource conservation including but not limited to bioenergy, buildings, energy efficiency, vehicles, fuel cell, advanced manufacturing technologies, grid modernization technologies, carbon capture, and related fossil energy innovations.

How do I apply for the Accelerator?

The best way to apply to the Spark Cleantech Accelerator is to go to our website at www.utresearchpark.org/spark

What investments does Spark make in its accelerator companies?

A stipend will be provided to Spark Cleantech Accelerator companies to help defray the costs of travel, living, and other expenses. We expect the stipend amount to be \$10,000 - \$20,000 depending on the funding ultimately provided by our partners. Funding will be provided in two tranches, half on your arrival in Knoxville and half at the midpoint of the accelerator (mid-July 2022) based on satisfactory participation in the program.

Do you fund companies that are competitive with each other?

In the very unlikely event that we receive applications from two competitive companies, we will make every reasonable effort to avoid the distraction of selecting both.

Where will we live while we're in Knoxville?

We are currently working with the [Knoxville Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Visit Knoxville](#) to identify housing that will be available for our accelerator participants to rent while in Knoxville, or preferably occupy for a longer term.

What is the typical day/week like for a company during the accelerator?

A typical week will begin with one (or more) days of instruction from our staff of technology and business mentors and partners. The remainder of the week will be used for development of your business plans on the topic of that week's instruction, or other area(s) that are a priority for you.

Do I have to work on my company full-time?

We prefer that you work on your company full time during the accelerator program, but understand that there may be other unavoidable time commitments. In those instances, we'll work with you on an alternate schedule.

What is expected of me/our team during the Accelerator Program?

We expect you and your team to be productively engaged in every aspect of the program, and to support your company's development, your accelerator cohorts where possible and the program in general.

What happens at the end of the accelerator program?

The accelerator program will end with a “demonstration day” where participants will present their business, in a pitch format, to our network of institutional and corporate partners and investors.

Am I expected to stay in Knoxville after the program ends?

One of our selection criteria will be the applicant’s plans to bring their business, or a portion of their business (e.g., partners, supply chain companies, etc.) to Knoxville or the Tennessee region. We would love to have companies locate or relocate in this area.

How do you choose which companies are able to participate?

We will follow our published evaluation criteria and program application that can be found on our website (www.tnresearchpark.org/spark)

How many companies will be selected to participate?

Up to six (6).

What will happen to my confidential information when I apply?

Please do not include confidential or trade secret information in your application, even if it is marked as such.

What is the role of corporate partners in the program?

We will make introductions to corporate partners of the Spark Cleantech Accelerator for technical and business mentorship both in cohort and individual instruction, pilot project development, and follow-on working relationships where appropriate.

Where do the mentors come from?

The Spark Innovation Center currently includes three senior mentors who have extensive planning, engineering, startup formation, business development, financial, successful exit, investment and incubator/accelerator experience: [Tom Rogers](#), [John Bruck](#), and [John Derrick](#).

Additionally, the [Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council](#) will be providing mentors through its mentor network, and the Midwest Regional Innovation Partnership’s (of which Spark is a member) programming will be available through its members the Clean Energy Trust, mHub and Centrepolis.