



# SPARK CLEANTECH ACCELERATOR

---

## UT Research Park at Cherokee Farm

2641 Osprey Vista Way  
Knoxville TN, 37920

[www.tnresearchpark.org/spark/accelerator](http://www.tnresearchpark.org/spark/accelerator)

[sparkcta@tnresearchpark.org](mailto:sparkcta@tnresearchpark.org)

---

The Spark Innovation Center is an early-stage business accelerator that offers a comprehensive set of services to support promising technology companies



RESEARCH PARK AT  
CHEROKEE FARM





# Meet the Spark Innovation Center Team

---



## Lilly Tench

*Director of the Spark Innovation Center*

✉ [lilly@tnresearchpark.org](mailto:lilly@tnresearchpark.org)

Over the past ten years Lilly has supported entrepreneurs working to develop solutions in key global industries from energy to agriculture. Lilly has a BA in Peace and Social Justice from Berea College, an MBA, and an MS in Agricultural and Natural Resource Economics from the University of Tennessee.

## John Bruck

*Co-Founder and Lead Advisor, Spark Innovation Center*

✉ [jbruck2@utk.edu](mailto:jbruck2@utk.edu)

John Bruck is a professional engineer, and entrepreneur with specific interests and skills in business planning; market and competitive analysis; business modeling; value proposition development, and financial forecasting and projecting cash flow; strategic planning; development of systems, skills, organizational design, staffing, style, and shared values.



## Carol Seamons

*Spark Expert-in-Residence*

✉ [carol@tnresearchpark.org](mailto:carol@tnresearchpark.org)

Previously a private banker with FirstBank in both Knoxville and Memphis. Carol is a former investment banker whose financial work over the last 25 years has included capital markets origination and strategic consulting to non-profit organizations with Consilience Group.

## Bill Malkes

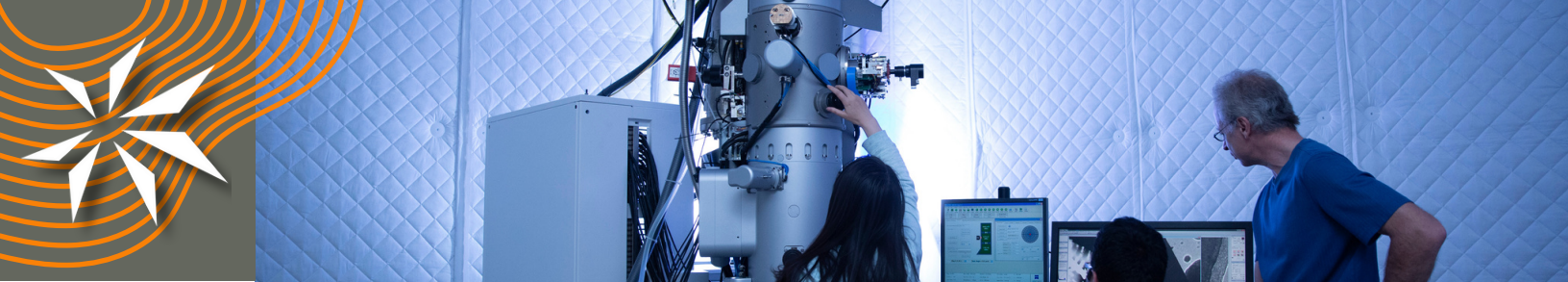
*Spark Expert-in-Residence*

✉ [bill@tnresearchpark.org](mailto:bill@tnresearchpark.org)

Bill is a serial entrepreneur who has founded companies in industries such as integrated circuit design, mobility innovation and biotech, with several successful exits. He is currently the CEO of NellOne Therapeutics.







# Meet the Spark Innovation Center Team

---



## **Cortney Piper**

*Co-Founder and Executive Director, Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council*

Cortney Piper is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council and is also the President and Founder of Piper Communications, a communications firm that specializes in energy and technology. Cortney also oversees the Energy Mentor Network, a state wide mentor network that provides coaching and industry expertise to participants of the Spark Innovation Center.

## **Rickey McCallum**

*VP of Business Development, UT Research Park*

✉ [rickey@tnresearchpark.org](mailto:rickey@tnresearchpark.org)

Rickey has been working with the UT Research Park since 2019, and focuses on developing new public-private partnerships, as well as cultivating new university-industry research opportunities, and fostering his relationships with leadership, faculty and staff at the University of Tennessee.



## **Emily Pedder**

*Operations Manager, UT Research Park*

✉ [emily@tnresearchpark.org](mailto:emily@tnresearchpark.org)

Emily Joined the UT Research Park Team early 2023 and supports both Spark and Cherokee Farm's Development Corp. for back-office operations and communications.

## **Aaron Stone**

*Marketing and Admin. Coordinator, UT Research Park*

✉ [riede@tnresearchpark.org](mailto:riede@tnresearchpark.org)

Aaron is our newest member - having joined this February of 2024. He is currently the main handler of all UTRP social media accounts, and a marketing creative in support of Spark projects. Any administrative and logistical needs are facilitated through him.





01

## Our Mission

To support early stage cleantech businesses and drive commercialization of their technologies by leveraging the unique science and technology resources of East Tennessee.

03

## Eligibility

- Application from Tennessee, the Midwest, and beyond
- Companies that demonstrate a positive impact to energy efficiency, generate renewable energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, carbon capture, increase recycling/upcycling and a circular economy.
- Companies that show strong market potential and defensible intellectual property, with issued patents or pending patents filed.
- Those who demonstrate their technology can support the challenges and needs of Spark partners, such as utilities, local governments, universities, manufacturing companies, commercial building operators, etc.
- Those that create software or hardware technologies including intelligent connected devices, advanced materials process, or with technology companies at a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 2-6.
- Applicants who are open to Tennessee as a permanent business location.

02

## What We Do

**Recruit** the best in-class cleantech technology companies to invest and deploy their technologies in Tennessee.

**Nurture** the development and deployment of those companies and their products and/or services.

**Ensure** the inclusion of promising underserved entrepreneurs, including women, people of color, and veterans

04

## Company Acceptance Criteria

- Evidence of customer discovery, and market validation and interest.
- Understanding of the competitive landscape and market forces
- Dedicated founder and qualified advisors.
- Dedication to developing and growing their business in Tennessee directly or through supply chain partners in the state.

05

## 2024 Spark Cleantech Accelerator Schedule

- |                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| • <b>March 1st</b>         | Applications Open     |
| • <b>May 15th</b>          | Applications Close    |
| • <b>June 14th</b>         | Participants Notified |
| • <b>July 1st</b>          | Acceptance Deadline   |
| • <b>August 19th</b>       | Accelerator Begins    |
| • <b>Week of Nov. 18th</b> | Demo Day              |







# WHAT WE OFFER

---

This is more than an accelerator; it's a launchpad for your cleantech vision, equipping you with the tools you need to succeed and differentiate yourself in a competitive market. Apply now to be part of a journey that transforms your innovative idea into a market-ready, investment-attractive cleantech venture.

---

**01 Stipends**  
A \$15,000 equity-free stipend to help defray travel and living costs and to support business and technical milestones.

**02 Prototyping support**  
Prototyping support through programming, and partnerships with the University of Tennessee.

**03 Mentoring**  
One-on-one support from our experts in business, market analysis and positioning, IP/patent strategy, product design, engineering, prototyping, testing, materials selection, and manufacturing.

**04 Connections**  
Connections with customers, investors, strategic partners, suppliers, universities, and national laboratories.

**05 Training**  
Group trainings, workshops and on-on-one support.

**06 Partnerships**  
Opportunities for strategic partnerships with organizations such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, the University of Tennessee, Oak Ridge National Lab and the City of Knoxville, and members of the Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council.





# CURRICULUM

The Spark Cleantech Accelerator curriculum focuses on four key areas, with a tangible deliverable associated with each: **Product**, **Business Model**, **Finance**, and **Pitch**.



## Product

*What we sell*



## Business Model

*How we make \$*



## Finance

*How we raise and manage \$*



## Pitch

*How to tell the story*

01

Product

**Deliverable:** Minimum Viable Product (MVP) or outline a clear roadmap to MVP

- Focus on defining & creating basic product
- Quick testing & validation of business idea
- Rapid prototyping physically or virtually
- Mitigate capital intensity to prove the concept if applicable

02

Business  
Model

**Deliverable:** Business Model Canvas validated by customer discovery, Go-to-Market Plan

- Formalize Vision, mission & strategy
- Value proposition to target customer
- Understand how to make money generate ROI
- Customer discovery
- Pricing, channels, sales strategy & marketing

03

Finance

**Deliverable:** Basic Financial Model

- Understanding of costs, cost structure, and revenue streams
- Understanding of funding options (dilutive and non-dilutive)
- Funding strategy
- Learn to speak to financial projections & strategy

04

Pitch

**Deliverable:** Public pitch at Demo Day

- Story telling
- Pitching to customers
- Pitching to investors
- Public speaking
- Slide and graphic design
- Lots of practice!

### Minor Topics:

In addition to the core topics, each program participant will have the opportunity to select a "minor" concentration such as Intellectual Property Strategy, Brand Development, or Supply Chain Management. minor topics will be finalized based on the needs and interests of the selected cohort.





# FUNDING SUPPORT

---



# PROGRAMMING SUPPOT

---







# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

Refer below to the most commonly asked questions. Should you have questions in excess of those provided, please reach out to us!

**Email:** [SparkCTA@tnresearchpark.org](mailto:SparkCTA@tnresearchpark.org)

**Webpage:** <https://www.tnresearchpark.org/spark/accelerator/>

**Application:** <https://www.f6s.com/spark-cleantech-accelerator-cohort-3>

---

## **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 that provides energy – focused startups laboratory and office space in the Park’s world-class Institute for Advanced Materials and Manufacturing. The Spark Cleantech Accelerator is 12 week business accelerator welcoming top cleantech companies from all over the country to Knoxville. The accelerator was developed in partnership with the Heartland Climate Tech Partnership, the Department of Energy, Oak Ridge National Lab, the 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 (IAMM) at the University of Tennessee Research Park, 2641 Osprey Vista Way in Knoxville Tennessee.

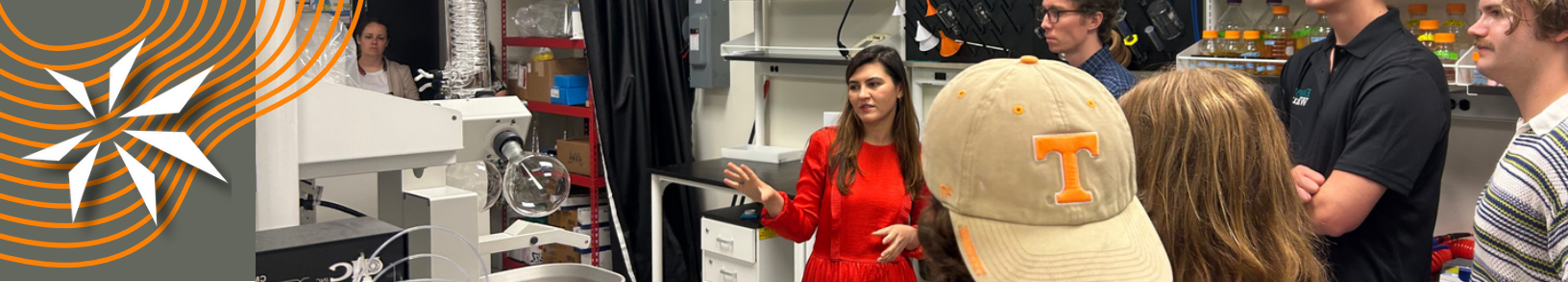
## **Will the accelerator program be held in-person or virtually?**

The accelerator is 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.





### **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 company expenses. The stipend amount will be \$15,000 and can be used at the participant's discretion. Funding will be provided in three tranches, \$5K upon your arrival in Knoxville and \$5K at the midpoint of the accelerator, and \$5K at the end 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 will do our best to assist you in finding housing options that meet your needs. Stipends can be used to offset housing costs.

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

A typical week will include two (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, pitch practices, one-on-one mentoring, 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 try to 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 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 four senior mentors who have extensive planning, engineering, startup formation, business development, financial, successful exit, investment and incubator/accelerator experience: Lilly Tench, John Bruck, Carol Seamons and Bill Malkes. Additionally, the Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council will be providing mentors through its mentor network.

