Rules & Regulations

Product Validation Track

Issue Date: January 6, 2020

Application Due Date: February 7, 2020

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Introduction and Timeline

Mission Statement

Elevating Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Cuyahoga County

Timeline

Application open	January 6, 2020
Final date for submitting applications	February 7, 2020 (12:00 PM EST)
Notification of letters of award or rejection	March 2020
Pilot Period Starts	April 2020
Midpoint Event	May 2020
Pilot Period Ends	June/July 2020
The Lab company presentations	July/August 2020
Evaluation Period	July/August 2020

Background

The success of an entrepreneur or business isn't based on an idea alone. Access to mentoring, capital, and customers is essential for entrepreneurs and businesses to overcome the barriers to entry that exist in any market. To help local entrepreneurs and businesses make the jump from product ideation and validation to product launch, the Office of Innovation and Performance developed **The Lab @ Cuyahoga County** (**The Lab**). By transforming Cuyahoga County into a living lab for the latest innovations, **The Lab** provides local entrepreneurs and businesses with the subject matter expertise, data, and customer feedback needed for business success. Through this investment in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, the County empowers local entrepreneurs and businesses, and inspires a culture of innovation that improves public sector agencies and grows the local economy.

Program Goals

1. Advance Cuyahoga County's technology and entrepreneurship ecosystem by helping existing businesses test new products, services, and technology;
2. Increase entrepreneurship opportunities and provide support to allow entrepreneurs and businesses to grow; and
3. Further a culture of innovation within public sector organizations in Cuyahoga County.

Financial Compensation

The Lab does not offer financial compensation for entrepreneurs and testing their ideas, products, or services with Cuyahoga County or any of **The Lab's** partner organizations as a part of this program.

Test Environments & Subject Matter Expertise

Opportunities exist for local entrepreneurs and businesses to access a number of test environments and subject matter expertise based on **The Lab's** partner organizations. A list of available test environments and subject matter expertise can be found on **The Lab @ Cuyahoga County** website.

Program Design and Benefits

The Lab operates under a cohort model, with a call for applications issued by the County annually to invite local entrepreneurs and businesses to apply and selected entrepreneurs and businesses will progress through the program as a group. Participating entrepreneurs and businesses will be paired with a champion from a public sector partner organization to support them through the program and each will have the opportunity to present their work to County agencies, public sector partners, and other interested parties at a closing celebration.

Because entrepreneurs and businesses have different needs based on their current stage of development, **The Lab** offers two program tracks.

Product Ideation Track	Product Validation Track
• Supports entrepreneurs and businesses that are in the formation stage and need additional information to develop a minimum viable product (MVP). • The public sector partner will provide access to subject matter experts to help answer the what, to whom, why, and how questions that allow entrepreneurs and businesses to complete product ideation, laying the foundation for product development.	• Supports entrepreneurs and businesses that are in the validation stage and need to test their MVP to validate their product before launch. • The public sector partner may provide access to the individuals, technology infrastructure, and facilities that allow entrepreneurs and businesses to test their product in a real-world setting, providing the feedback needed to validate or pivot a product before launch.

The submission requirements, evaluation and selection criteria, evaluation process, selection and planning period, company expectations, and terms and conditions included in this document are for the **Product Validation Track**.

Product Validation Track Submission Requirements

A. Application Deadline

Applications must be electronically submitted by **Noon on February 7, 2020.**

B. Format

Applications must be submitted electronically through **The Lab's** online application.

C. Content

All applicant businesses to **The Lab** are required to outline and describe the following:

- Introduce company/team
- Test environment your product, service, or technology best aligns with
- Product, service, or technology description

- Product, service, technology, or idea's impact to the public sector partner organization(s), and/or community

Additionally, applicant businesses must accurately and precisely describe the following:

- Plan for the pilot period
- Skills and experience of company and/or team members
- Goal(s) and Outcome(s) company/team hope to achieve at the end of the program period
- Metrics used to demonstrate performance against identified goals and outcomes
- Actions required by **The Lab's** partner organizations to make the pilot program successful.

Product Validation Track Evaluation and Selection Criteria

A. Application Evaluation Committee

The Lab Application Evaluation Committee includes representatives from the Cuyahoga County Office of Innovation and Performance, Cuyahoga County Department of Information Technology, as well as representatives from public sector partners based on the applications received.

B. Minimum Criteria

To be considered for **The Lab** 1.0 Cohort, the following minimum criteria must be met:
- All sections of the program application must be completed
- Applicant businesses must commit to participate for the full length of the program (March 2020 to June 2020)
- Applicant businesses must be headquartered in Northeast Ohio as defined by the boundaries of the [Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency](#) (Cuyahoga County based preferred)
- **Product Validation Track Minimum Criteria:**
    - Applicant businesses for this track must have a working, pilot-ready MVP ready to be tested with **The Lab's** public sector partner(s).
    - Applicant businesses must be incorporated and carry insurance.

Criteria for Written Application

Written applications for the **Product Validation Track** will be evaluated using the criteria below.

Product Validation Written Application Evaluation Criteria	
Product	• MVP creatively contributes to the test environment • Pilot is well thought out and defined with key metrics and outcomes • MVP is compatible with or flexible to work with the information technology infrastructure and requirements of **The Lab's** partner organizations • The existence (or lack thereof) of existing and working products in the market
Impact	• The proposed MVP has potential to benefit the people of Cuyahoga County • MVP has the potential to improve the quality or efficiency of services and/or operations of **The Lab's** partner organizations
Inclusion	• Diverse hiring practices • Supportive of the local economy (e.g. hiring of Cuyahoga County residents, doing business with local vendors, etc.) • Located in Northeast Ohio (Cuyahoga County preferred)
Skills, Experience, Background	• Professional qualifications and education of team members • Recent relevant experience of team members

Evaluation Process

1. Initial Application Screening by Program Manager

The Lab program manager will perform an initial screening of all applications to determine satisfaction of minimum criteria. Any application that does not meet the initial minimum criteria will not be eligible for selection.

2. Review by Application Evaluation Committee

The Lab @ Cuyahoga County Application Evaluation Committee will evaluate proposals against the written application evaluation criteria. Proposals will also be evaluated to determine which available public sector partner would be best suited to partner with each applicant.

The Lab's partner organizations are not obligated to award participation to any applicants. Selection of an applicant for participation in **The Lab** 1.0 Cohort will only be granted to applicants that best fit with the program's established minimum eligibility criteria and evaluation criteria.

Selection & Planning Period

The Application Evaluation Committee will recommend applicants for inclusion in **The Lab** 1.0 Cohort. Once selected, the Office of Innovation and Performance will identify a champion from the relevant partner organization with whom entrepreneurs and businesses will be working throughout the pilot period.

After selection, the company and **The Lab** partner organization will agree to a plan of implementation for the pilot period and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU

will be between the selected company and **The Lab** partner organization. This plan of implementation will set clear expectations, a project timeline, progress check-ins and an overall communications plan. If after selection of a company, the participating partner organization cannot negotiate the applicant's participation, the participating partner organization reserves the rights to terminate participation.

Product Validation Track Company Expectations

A. Champion Meetings and Expectations

Each business will be working with a public sector partner organization leader (a "champion"). When the program period starts, businesses must meet with their respective champion in order to set clear expectations, agree on project timeline and milestones, progress check-ins, and an overall communications plan

B. The Lab @ Cuyahoga County Program Manager

Businesses are expected to do bi-weekly check-ins with **The Lab's** program manager in order to provide feedback, discuss milestones, and address any issues.

C. Customer Development Workshop

To prepare entrepreneurs and businesses participating in **The Lab** for customer development interviews, the County will provide access to a customer development workshop. Champions from all participating public sector partners will also participate in this workshop to ensure they are prepared to provide meaningful feedback to the entrepreneurs and businesses.

D. Pilot Project Milestones

Businesses are expected to execute their plan of implementation for the duration of the 12-week pilot. According to their plan of implementation and timeline, businesses are expected to accomplish 2-3 milestones per month.

E. Midpoint Event

Halfway through the pilot period, businesses are expected to attend a midpoint event to share progress with the cohort and other partners. This event will also include an information session on government procurement. More details will be provided closer to the date of the event.

F. Presentation Day

At the end of the program period, businesses will have the opportunity to present at the FastForward Cuyahoga event to showcase their products, services, or technology as well as share their experiences and report progress to the public. More details will be provided closer to the date of the event.

G. Promotional Materials

Businesses will be highlighted via different public avenues of public sector partner agencies. This includes but is not limited to press releases, social media accounts, blog posts, and website content. Businesses are expected to collaborate and provide information for published public material.

H. Networking

Businesses will have the opportunity to connect with partners, show their products/services, and connect with other public sector agencies as appropriate.

I. Exit Interview

Participants will be expected to complete an exit interview with **The Lab** program staff as well as public sector partner organization staff as appropriate. The intent of the meeting will be to share lessons learned, identify areas of improvement, and facilitate conversation about what's next. A resource guide with information on additional opportunities and resources available to program participants will also be provided at this time.

Product Validation Track Terms & Conditions

Businesses are required to read, acknowledge, and attach **The Lab** program terms and conditions to their program application. If selected for **The Lab** 1.0 Cohort, businesses may be subject to legal requirements. Requirements will vary based on the selected entrepreneur or business' program track, proposal, and/or champion organization.

A. Cuyahoga County Requirements

Certificate of Insurance

The County is self-insured. To protect taxpayer funds, Cuyahoga County requires entities working with the County to carry insurance naming the County as an additional insured. Insurance coverage may be required based on each applicants' submission to **The Lab**.

Indemnification

Businesses selected for **The Lab** 1.0 Cohort agree to indemnify the County from liabilities which may arise from their participation in **The Lab**. As a political subdivision of the State of Ohio, the County does not indemnify any person or entity.

B. Other Terms and Conditions

Marketing and Communication

Finalists will be required to adhere to rules and regulations promulgated by Cuyahoga County with respect to marketing materials and communications about the finalist's participation in **The Lab**.

Proprietary Information, Trade Secrets, and Confidentiality Concerns

As a government agency, the County is subject to Ohio's Sunshine Laws. To that end, applicants should refrain from divulging proprietary information or trade secrets in applications to participate without clearly marking them as such. In the event the County receives a public records request for information that an applicant has marked as proprietary or a trade secret, the County will promptly provide the applicant notice of the request. The applicant may then explain in writing, within a reasonable time, why the information should be withheld. The burden of proving an exception under Ohio's Sunshine laws resides with the applicant.

Additional documentation may be needed for businesses selected to be part of **The Lab** 1.0 Cohort. **The Lab's** program manager will contact you if additional documentation is required.

Debarment Verification and Auditor's Findings

Businesses selected for **The Lab** will also be checked against the Agency of Inspector General's Debarment List and the Ohio State Auditor's Findings for Recovery database by Office of Innovation and Performance staff.

Contact & Questions

Information about program eligibility, requirements, process, application, and rules and regulations should be directed to thelab@cuyahogacounty.us. Questions will be answered within three business days until March 3, 2020.

Acknowledgement

The participating company has read and agrees with the Terms and Conditions contained in **The Lab @ Cuyahoga County** Program Rules and Regulations Booklet. Further, the participating company has reviewed, acknowledged, and approved such Booklet.

Participant Organization

ATTEST: Name of Organization: _____

_____   By: _____
                                                Print Name: _____
                                                Title: _____
                                                Date: _____

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