Innovation Crossroads

Starting new companies is a challenge, and start-up funding has declined over the past decade. Innovation Crossroads, supported by the US Department of Energy’s (DOE’s) Advanced Manufacturing Office (AMO), Building Technologies Office (BTO), and Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) leverages Oak Ridge National Laboratory’s (ORNL’s) unique scientific resources and capabilities and connects the nation’s top innovators with experts, mentors, and professional networks in technology-related fields to take world-changing ideas from R&D to the marketplace.

Empowering Aspiring Entrepreneurs

Through an annual national call, top entrepreneurial-minded innovators are selected to join this 2-year program. Participants receive a fellowship that covers living costs and benefits, a travel stipend, a substantial grant for collaborative R&D work at ORNL, and comprehensive assistance to build a sustainable business model.

By embedding the next generation of top technical talent within ORNL, Innovation Crossroads positions entrepreneurial researchers to address fundamental energy, manufacturing, and grid challenges identified by industry.

National lab expertise—ORNL is DOE’s largest science and energy laboratory and home to some of the nation’s most significant user facilities. Because Innovation Crossroads entrepreneurs work within ORNL, they have immediate access to essential tools and resources. This access reduces cost, risk, and R&D time, allowing researchers to focus on creating the next generation of game-changing technologies.

Multidisciplinary collaboration—Innovation Crossroads participants work with ORNL’s renowned scientists and engineers across many disciplines, including biological and environmental sciences, advanced materials, neutron sciences, nuclear science and engineering, and high-performance computing, providing a platform for accelerating innovation.

Business mentoring assistance—Innovation Crossroads has a growing network of partners who offer a unique entrepreneurial and business mentoring experience. The program facilitates connections with industry executives, investors, entrepreneurs, and other experts from academia, government, and finance who can serve as advisors and mentors to help develop priorities, mature skills, provide guidance, and make connections to their broader networks.

“ Innovation Crossroads gives science-minded entrepreneurs access to cutting-edge tools and expertise needed to forge the way. The program fuels a young company’s product and business development with resources, researchers, and business professionals at the Laboratory, TVA, and other businesses in East Tennessee. In turn, this support accelerates our path from lab to market.”

Erica Grant, Quantum Lock Technologies
Empowering Leaders, Igniting Innovation, Launching Businesses

Innovation Crossroads’ impact is far reaching as it enters its fifth year of embedding entrepreneurs at ORNL. The program has supported 26 start-ups that have raised $32 million in grants and awards, created 59 jobs, raised $6.8 million in venture funding, launched 8 products, and have more than $1.1 million in sales revenue.