Vermont GaN Tech Hub
Leading global semiconductor innovation from the heart of Vermont.

University of Vermont | Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships

Request for Proposals

Vermont Initiative for GaN Opportunity and Readiness (VIGOR)

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Background

Vermont is a global leader in the development, production, and application of gallium nitride (GaN) semiconductors. The Vermont Gallium Nitride (V-GaN) Tech Hub's (the "Tech Hub") mission is to build on Vermont's culture of innovation by driving opportunities in education, research, and commerce that lead to the further advancement and commercialization of GaN devices and spur vital workforce expansion across our region. We envision Vermont as the driver of innovative technologies that increase the efficiency, power, and range of applications for GaN and other semiconductor materials.

GaN innovations make products smaller, less expensive, and more energy efficient. The rise of GaN has fueled economic growth for the state's companies in this sector, vocational advancement for their workers, and research and career preparedness opportunities across Vermont's higher education landscape.

The Tech Hub is a federally designated Economic Development Administration Tech Hub and a program of the University of Vermont (UVM) Office of the Vice President for Research. In partnership with the State of Vermont, GlobalFoundries, and the Northeast Microelectronics Coalition, the Tech Hub is creating resources that support innovation across the GaN ecosystem, from start-ups to established companies to university researchers and academic partners. These resources include the V-GaN Test and Characterization Laboratory (TCL), the first publicly accessible facility in the nation offering comprehensive testing for high-power and high-frequency GaN devices, and future public-facing facilities under development.

Through our Vermont Initiative for GaN Opportunity and Readiness (VIGOR) grants, funded by the State of Vermont, the Tech Hub supports companies advancing GaN technology in Vermont, from design and prototyping through testing, packaging, and production. This grant program is subject to the continued availability of state funding.

What We Fund

The Tech Hub is requesting proposals for up to $50,000 for projects that advance GaN products, processes, and technology in Vermont, to be completed within a period of performance of approximately one year, beginning at the time of award in January 2027 and ending December 31, 2027.

The VIGOR grant program funds project costs associated with GaN technology development that has strong potential for success, with the majority of design and development work being performed in Vermont. Eligible and ineligible costs, including a 25% cap on personnel costs, are described in FAQ 5. Applications should describe innovative, business-related development in GaN. This can include new technologies and products, or improvements to the processes used to design, produce, or test these technologies. Applications should also address commercialization potential and how the work will support further growth of GaN technology in Vermont.

VIGOR supports companies at any stage of GaN technology development by funding efforts in the following **priority focus areas**:

1. Design
2. Prototyping

3. Testing, validation, and qualification
4. Production tooling and process development
5. Device packaging and thermal management

Projects may address any GaN application, such as power electronics, radio frequency (RF) and communications, or optoelectronics. See FAQ 1 for examples of fundable projects.

Eligibility

The Tech Hub accepts applications for projects that involve the development of GaN technology. To be eligible:

- The applicant must be a for-profit company, such as a corporation or limited liability company (LLC). Individuals are not eligible.
- The project must work toward an improved or novel GaN technology, product, process, or application, with GaN central to the proposed work.
- The majority of the project's design and development work must be performed in Vermont. Contracted services, such as fabrication, packaging, or testing, may be performed outside Vermont.
    - The applicant company is not required to be headquartered in Vermont.
- UVM faculty and staff may be employees of or affiliated with an applicant company but may not apply as individuals.

Evaluation Criteria

Letters of Intent and full proposals will be evaluated by the VIGOR Advisory Board (the "Board"), made up of UVM and community leaders with expertise in GaN technology and its commercial applications. The Board will review Letters of Intent to determine which applicants are invited to submit a full proposal and will review full proposals and provide recommendations to Tech Hub program staff, who will make final award decisions.

Board members agree to keep application materials confidential and will recuse themselves from reviewing any application where they have a conflict of interest.

Successful proposals will:

- Advance the development of GaN technology, with GaN being central to the proposed work.
- Present a feasible development plan that can be completed within the period of performance.
- Strengthen Vermont's semiconductor ecosystem, including a clear description of what portion of the value chain would be located in Vermont.
- Identify the future commercial market and a path to reach it, including the potential to leverage the award for follow-on funding.

The Board will use a rubric (page 13) to assess the strengths and limitations of each proposal across the following domains:

- Significance and innovation of the proposed work

- Advancement of GaN technology
- Appropriateness of the approach
- Qualifications and experience of the team
- Suitability of facilities and resources
- Impact on Vermont's semiconductor ecosystem, including the portion of the value chain that would remain in Vermont
- Commercial impact and target customers
- Future paths and follow-on efforts

Rubric scores are advisory and will inform, but not determine, the Board's recommendations. Impact on Vermont will be weighted heavily in funding decisions and will be the deciding factor between proposals of comparable merit.

Award Amounts

The Tech Hub will award up to $50,000 per company per funding cycle, to be used within the period of performance. Each company may receive only one award per funding cycle. Companies may apply in future funding cycles, even if they have received a prior award. The grant program is expected to run for three funding cycles, subject to the continued availability of state funding.

Awards will be disbursed as cost reimbursements (alternative arrangements may also be made with justification, demonstrated need, and approval). Awardees will submit invoices to UVM requesting reimbursements according to a pre-determined schedule. Matching funds are not a requirement for first round applicants but may be required to secure subsequent awards on the same project.

Funding Obligations

Tech Hub awards will include the following obligations and restrictions on the expenditure of funds:

- Awardees will submit an interim report at approximately six months and a final report at the end of the period of performance. Reports will include progress toward goals, validation results, and key obstacles to success.
- A final financial report is due to the Tech Hub office within thirty (30) days of the end of the period of performance.
- All reports will be submitted electronically through the system designated at time of award.
- Awards may not be used to support international travel.
- Awardees will acknowledge Tech Hub support in publications and public announcements related to the funded work.
- Awardees agree to respond to brief follow-up requests for up to 2 years after the period of performance regarding project outcomes, such as follow-on funding, jobs, and commercialization progress.

Application Timeline

Milestone	Date
RFP Posted & Application Portal Opens	October 7, 2026
Letter of Intent Deadline	**November 4, 2026, 8 pm**
Invitations for Full Proposals Sent	November 18, 2026
Full Proposal Deadline	**December 16, 2026, 8 pm**
Award Notification	January 15, 2027
Period of Performance	**Jan 31, 2027 – Dec 31, 2027**

Intellectual Property and Confidentiality Considerations

Results of work supported under this grant program remain the property of the awardee, and the awardee retains title to any invention developed with Tech Hub support. Where an academic collaborator, other than one acting as an independent consultant, contributes to the work, ownership of resulting intellectual property will be governed by the collaborator's institutional policies and any agreement between the parties.

The Tech Hub will publish the following information for each award: company name, project title, amount awarded, award dates, and project abstract. UVM is subject to the Vermont Public Records Act (1 V.S.A. §§ 315–320), and application materials may be subject to disclosure upon request. The Tech Hub and the Board will treat application materials as confidential to the extent permitted by law. Information that qualifies as a trade secret or confidential business information may be exempt from disclosure. Applicants should clearly mark only the specific pages, sections, or passages that contain such information. Designating an entire application as confidential is not sufficient.

How to Apply

The Tech Hub and UVM use the InfoReady platform for grant submissions. Applicants will create a user ID and password and will be able to access the Letter of Intent from the application homepage.

1. Follow this link to access the VIGOR Letter of Intent (LOI): https://submit.uvm.edu/#freeformCompetitionDetail/2035602
2. Click “Apply” to be redirected to the Log In screen.

3. Applicants:
    a. Scroll to the “Login for Other Users” box.
    b. Click Register.
    c. Fill out the registration form, including the email address where you would like to receive notifications.
    d. Submit the form and confirm your account using the email address you entered.
    e. You may now log in to InfoReady and begin your VIGOR Letter of Intent.
4. Hit “Submit Application” when completed.

For questions about the application process, please contact Daria Jarani, Program Manager, at djarani@uvm.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What qualifies as a fundable project under this program?**

A fundable project is one that specifically advances GaN-based technology in Vermont, either by moving a concept forward through design, implementation, and/or validation, or by improving the processes used to produce, test, or commercialize it. GaN must be central to the project, meaning the work would not be possible, or would not deliver its key benefit, without GaN. A broad range of applications can qualify if the project meets the core criteria below.

To be fundable, a project must:

- Advance an improved or novel GaN device, circuit, component, system, application, or manufacturing process
- Be proposed by an eligible company, with the majority of design and development work performed in Vermont (see Eligibility)
- Demonstrate a credible path to a commercial product or service, including an identified target market
- Be achievable within the period of performance, with defined milestones and deliverables

Examples of fundable projects include, but are not limited to:

- **Power electronics:** GaN-based power converters, inverters, motor drives, chargers, or power supplies, including electric vehicle, renewable energy, data center, and industrial applications
- **RF and communications:** GaN power amplifiers, front-end modules, or radar and wireless systems
- **Optoelectronics:** GaN-based light-emitting diodes (LEDs), laser diodes, ultraviolet (UV) emitters, or photodetectors
- **Device and circuit design:** new GaN transistor designs, integrated gate drivers, or monolithic GaN integrated circuits (ICs)
- **Packaging and thermal management:** packaging, interconnect, or cooling solutions that improve GaN device performance or reliability
- **Test, reliability, and qualification:** characterization, reliability testing, or qualification work needed to bring a GaN product to market
- **Manufacturing and process development:** processes, tooling, or methods that improve GaN device yield,

cost, or scalability

Examples of projects that are not fundable:

- Basic research into GaN materials or physics conducted in academic labs without a defined commercial outcome
- Projects where GaN is incidental, such as integrating an off-the-shelf GaN component into a product without advancing the GaN technology or its application
- General business operations, marketing, or sales activities not tied to technical development
- Projects in which the majority of design and development work is performed outside Vermont

2. **Who is eligible to apply for a grant?**

The grant program is open to US based for-profit companies working toward new or improved GaN technology, products, or processes. The majority of design and development work must take place in Vermont, but companies do not need to be headquartered in Vermont. See Eligibility for full requirements. Impact on Vermont's semiconductor ecosystem will be weighted heavily in selecting projects for funding.

3. **I am a faculty/staff member at the University of Vermont. Am I eligible to apply?**

No. This funding opportunity is for companies only. UVM faculty and staff may be employees of or affiliated with an applicant company, but the company must submit the proposal and lead the proposed work. Faculty and staff should follow UVM's conflict-of-interest policies when participating in a funded project.

4. **How do I know how much funding to request for the project?**

Request the amount that will have the greatest impact on your project while considering feasibility and your company's current capacity. Future paths and follow-on efforts are part of the evaluation, so focus the request on the project's immediate needs and avoid proposing more than can be completed within the period of performance.

5. **What project costs are eligible, and which are ineligible?**

Costs essential to completion of the project scope of work are eligible but must be compliant with this RFP and UVM guidelines.

Examples of eligible costs include:

- Materials
- Software licenses
- Salaries/time for project personnel (no more than 25% of requested funds)
- Consultant expenses (technical expertise)
- Contract services (fabrication, prototyping, packaging, testing, characterization)
- Domestic travel (under $5,000)
- Equipment under $5,000 (e.g., technology, tooling, fixturing)

Examples of ineligible costs include:

- Capital equipment ($5,000 or more)
- Building renovations
- Entertainment costs
- Real estate or lease costs
- Lobbying/membership to lobbying organizations
- Cash incentives
- Promotional items (Items to give away: conference giveaways; T-shirts; bags, pens, pencils, etc.)
- Indirect costs
- International travel

For questions on eligible costs, please contact Daria Jarani, Program Manager, at djarani@uvm.edu.

6. **What is the VIGOR Advisory Board?**

Applications are reviewed by the VIGOR Advisory Board, made up of UVM and community leaders with expertise in GaN technology and its commercial applications. Board members volunteer their time, agree to keep all application materials confidential, and recuse themselves from reviewing any application where they have a conflict of interest. Only the award information listed under Intellectual Property Considerations will be made public.

7. **What are the reporting requirements for this grant program?**

Awardees will submit an interim report at approximately six months and a final report at the end of the period of performance, along with a final financial report within thirty (30) days of the end of the period of performance. The Tech Hub intends to keep reporting streamlined and will reduce the burden on awardees wherever possible.

8. **How does the Tech Hub work with funded projects during the period of performance?**

The Tech Hub can offer technical advising and help identifying resources for executing aspects of funded projects. This may include introductions to relevant members of the Tech Hub community, access to facilities such as the TCL, and support identifying and securing follow-on funding.

9. **If I am denied funding for this cycle, what are my next steps?**

The grant program is expected to run for three funding cycles, subject to the continued availability of state funding, and companies may reapply in future cycles. Applicants will be provided with brief feedback on their application.

10. Is a Letter of Intent required?

Yes. Only companies that submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) and are invited by the Board may submit a full proposal.

11. Can I include academic or other partners in my project?

Yes. Companies may include partners, such as universities, consultants, or contract service providers, provided the company leads the project, and the work is directed toward a commercial outcome. Partner costs should be budgeted as consultant expenses or contract services. See Intellectual Property Considerations for how academic collaborations are handled.

12. Can I apply for funding to continue a previously funded project?

Companies may apply in future funding cycles, even if they received a prior award. The grant program is expected to run for three funding cycles, subject to the continued availability of state funding. Applications can also build on projects previously funded by other sources, provided that the proposed work is new and does not duplicate previously funded work.

13. How will awarded funds be paid?

Awards will be disbursed as cost reimbursements where awardees submit an invoice detailing expenses (hours worked, material or services involved, etc.). Awardees will submit invoices to UVM requesting reimbursements according to a pre-determined schedule. Invoices must adhere to format and requirements outlined during the contracting period.

Letter of Intent Questions

Applicant Information

- Applicant First/Last Name
- Email Address
- Phone Number

Company Information

- Company Name and Entity Type
- Company Address (Local and headquarters, if applicable)
- Location where work will be performed
- Number of Employees

Project Information

- Project title
- Short project description (500 characters)
- Estimated project duration (months; must be completed by December 31)
- Estimated amount requested (up to $50,000)
- Describe the proposed work, what is new or improved compared to existing technology or current practice, the expected benefit, and why GaN is central to the work. (300 words)
- Briefly describe how the work will be carried out and completed within the period of performance. (150 words)
- Who are the target customers and stakeholders, and what is the value proposition of the work? How will the project strengthen Vermont's semiconductor ecosystem? (250 words)
- Outline the primary expenses you anticipate. See FAQ 5 for eligible costs. (100 words)

Full Proposal Questions

The following questions and attachments are **only required if <u>invited for a full proposal</u>. They are included here for planning purposes. Invited applicants will receive full proposal submission instructions. Proposals can be entered directly into InfoReady or attached as PDF documents during submission (figures do not count towards word limits).

- Abstract (150 Words)
    - Publicly released summary of project

- Project Description (2,200 words):
    - Describe the **problem** the proposal is addressing and the **technical approach** in sufficient detail to allow for evaluation by reviewers. Include a description of the project goals, methodology, and the expected outcomes. Explain how the work advances GaN technology. If appropriate, provide a summary of preliminary results originating from your work or outside sources.
    - Describe how the proposed work compares to the current state of the art or your company's current capabilities and identify key technical risks and how they will be addressed.
    - Include figures, diagrams, and visual elements to support your project's justification and approach.
    - Clearly mark any trade secrets or confidential information using footnotes in the text

- Deliverables and Timeline (500 words, bulleted list):
    - List **the specific goals and deliverables** of your project with a targeted timeline. For each, provide measurable outcomes, quantitative and/or qualitative, that will demonstrate achievement. Include a graphical timeline of the proposed work, including indicators for milestones and deliverables.

- Team (250 words):
    - Outline the **team's qualifications and ability to perform the work described**. Include a description of key skill sets necessary for the project and how they are covered by the team or external resources.

- Commercialization and Vermont Impact (750 words):
    - What is the commercialization potential? Who are the target customers of the technology? What portion of the value chain could **remain in Vermont** over the lifecycle of the technology? How will the project **strengthen Vermont's semiconductor ecosystem**?

- Follow-on Efforts (250 words):
    - How do you plan to **sustain** the project beyond the period of performance, and what follow-on funding sources (e.g., federal grants, private investment, customer revenue) could support further development? Describe the impact of the project on your company's future.

- Resources (200 words):
    - What **resources** are currently available, and what resources need to be secured for the project to be successful? Resources include equipment, facilities, software, and

partnerships/relationships that enable the proposed work to be performed.

- References cited

Additional Attachments

- Estimated Project Budget (required) (PDF)
- Budget Breakdown and Justification (required) (PDF)
- Resumes for Key Personnel (required) (PDF)
- Letter of Support (optional) (PDF)

VIGOR Proposals Evaluation Rubric

Fall 2026 Funding Cycle

***Please note**: This Evaluation Rubric is a tool that is used to assess project eligibility and alignment. While your project may score highly on the rubric, a high score does not guarantee funding.*

Objective	Description	Letter of Intent	Full Proposal
Significance and innovation of the proposed work	What is new or improved about the proposed work compared to existing technology or current practice?	5 – Clearly identifies what is new or improved, whether a technology, product, or process. 1 – Does not address what is new or improved.	5 – Clearly describes what is new or improved and how it differs from existing technology or current practice, supported by comparison to the state of the art or the company's current capabilities. 1 – Does not clearly describe what is new or improved.
	How large is the expected benefit of the work, and how will it be measured?	5 – Clearly describes the expected benefit and why it matters. 1 – Does not address the expected benefit.	5 – Quantifies the expected benefit with specific metrics (e.g., performance, efficiency, yield, cost, throughput, reliability, or time to market) and explains why the improvement is meaningful. 1 – Does not describe the expected benefit, or the benefit is minimal.
Advancement of GaN technology	Is GaN essential to the proposed work, and does the work advance GaN technology or the capability to design, produce, test, or commercialize it?	5 – Clearly shows that GaN is central to the work and how the work advances GaN technology or related capabilities. 1 – GaN is incidental to the work.	5 – Clearly shows that the work depends on GaN and advances GaN technology or related capabilities through one of the targeted focus areas. 1 – GaN is incidental, or the work offers no practical advancement in GaN technology or related capabilities.
Appropriateness of the approach	Does the proposal lay out an appropriate and feasible approach that can be completed within the period of performance?	5 – Describes a feasible approach based on current technology, capabilities, or practice. 1 - Does not address the approach or its feasibility.	5 –Describes a clear, well-reasoned approach with defined tasks, milestones, and measurable outcomes that can realistically be completed within the period of performance and identifies key risks and how they will be

			addressed. 1 – Does not describe a clear approach, or the approach is not feasible within the period of performance.
Qualifications and experience of the team	Does the proposed team have the experience and qualifications to execute the proposed work	N/A	5 – The team has directly relevant technical, production, and/or commercialization experience, and each key role needed to complete the work is filled. 1 – The team lacks the experience or qualifications needed to execute the proposed work.
Suitability of facilities and resources	Do the available facilities and resources, including partnerships, provide what is needed to complete the proposed work?	N/A	5 - Identifies the equipment, facilities, software, and partnerships needed for the work, with a clear plan to secure any that are not yet in place, including partners that fill gaps in team expertise. 1 –Does not identify the resources needed, or available resources are clearly insufficient to complete the work.
Impact on Vermont's semiconductor ecosystem	How do the project and its outcomes strengthen Vermont as a leader in gallium nitride (GaN) and semiconductor technology?	5 – Briefly describes specific ways the project and its outcomes will contribute to Vermont's semiconductor ecosystem. 1- Does not address impacts on Vermont.	5 –Clearly outlines specific impacts on Vermont's semiconductor ecosystem and the state's economy, such as jobs, workforce development, new capabilities, or partnerships with Vermont organizations. 1 –Does not address impacts on Vermont.
	Does the proposed work offer lasting impact on Vermont, with potential for the value chain to remain in Vermont over the technology's lifecycle?	5 – Identifies which parts of the value chain (e.g., design, manufacturing, testing, sales) could remain in Vermont. 1 – Does not address where the value chain would be located.	5 - Clearly describes which parts of the value chain will remain in Vermont over the technology's lifecycle, with a credible plan to keep them here. 1 –Does not address the value chain, or little of it is expected to remain in Vermont.

Commercial impact and target customers	Does the proposal outline the potential commercial impact of the outcomes?	5 – Briefly describes the commercial impact of the work with a clear value proposition. 1 – Does not discuss potential commercial impact.	5 - Provides a strong commercial justification for the work, including the target market, the value to customers, and how the outcomes will lead to new or improved products, production, or revenue. 1 –Does not clearly articulate commercial potential.
	Does the proposal identify target customers and stakeholders in the work?	5 – Briefly identifies target customers and stakeholders. 1 – Does not discuss potential customers or stakeholders.	5 –Clearly identifies target customers and stakeholders, with convincing evidence of interest such as letters of support, customer engagement, or partnerships. 1 –Does not clearly describe customers or stakeholders.
Future paths and follow-on efforts	Does the proposal provide a future path for development and funding of the project?	N/A	5 – Clearly articulates one or more future paths for the work, such as further development, scale-up, or production, along with potential funding sources (e.g., federal grants, private investment, customer revenue) to get there. 1 –Does not provide a meaningful path to future advancement of the proposed work.