



Olympus **Spark Grant** Program Overview

The purpose of the **Spark Grant** program is to help students achieve an important and meaningful milestone or overcome a barrier in the discovery phase of their business. Examples of such purposes could be attendance at a key conference or event to conduct customer discovery, hiring an intern usually to develop a POC or MVP, or purchase specialty equipment to develop a POC or MVP. The following are not approved uses for Spark Grants: Legal fees, basic research, generic equipment such as a laptop, launch or execution of a business plan, or food and drink products.

Grants can be up to \$3,000. A partial payment is granted initially and if the proposed milestone(s) is reached, the student is eligible for the remaining amount.

Spark Grants are available only to active projects that have met regularly over time with an Olympus EIR. We look for projects that have demonstrated commitment to the business idea by consistently making progress toward milestones, goals and objectives, and have participated regularly in the Olympus program(s). One of the founders must be a current CMU student.

Generally, **Spark Grants** are awarded on an as-needed basis. Students should talk with Melanie Simko to determine if they are eligible. If eligible, students are asked to submit an application. Finalists are expected to give a 5-minute presentation. The presentation will be given to our review committee including Olympus and Swartz Center staff, Olympus advisors, fund donors, experienced entrepreneurs and/or investors.

Awardees are expected to meet at least monthly with Melanie Simko, Project Olympus Senior Program Manager, or their assigned EIR, to report on progress, provide brief final written reports on milestones/objectives reached, challenges/issues experienced and other outcomes or progress made according to the timeframes specified in the application. The report may be shared with Olympus Spark Fund donors. At the Spark Fund donor's discretion, awardees may be asked to meet with a donor who wishes to learn more about the project.

Students can contact Melanie Simko (msimko@cmu.edu) to learn more about the program and eligibility.

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