

Center for Life Science Ventures

Category:

Best Incubator, Accelerator, Equity

Program/Fund Name:

Center for Life Science Ventures

Corporate Name:

Cornell University

Date of Creation:

2011-06-01

Indications:

The Center for Life Science Ventures is an early-stage startup incubator located on Cornell University's Ithaca campus to help develop young life science companies. The program supports a wide range of life science innovations, including therapeutics, medical devices, animal health, agri-tech, etc. Among the therapeutics and medical device startups we have incubated, their indications include, but not limited to

- Check-point Refrac-to-ry Cancers
- Glaucoma
- Neuroma
- Stroke
- Benign prostatic hyperplasia
- Kidney diseases

Please note our incubation program does not require a certain indication or therapeutic areas. We work with startups that are developing potentially game changing technologies in healthcare.

Therapeutic Areas:

Our incubation program does not specify or select a certain therapeutic area. We work with startups that are developing potentially game changing technologies in healthcare. So far the therapeutic areas our startups work in include, but not limited to:

- oncology
- ophthalmology
- neurology

- urology
- nephrology

FUND & SERVICE File Document upload:

[Cornell University Center for Life Science Ventures Overview Prix Galien.pdf](#)

History of the development of the fund / Incubators:

The Center for Life Science Ventures (CLSV) at Cornell University started operation in 2012 as a startup incubator to help develop young life science companies. The Center is funded through the Cornell University's Research and Innovation Division and New York State Foundation for Science, Technology, and Innovation.

CLSV focuses on helping companies from formation to Series Seed, the very early stage of their journey. The Center's program focuses on accelerating research and development of its client companies' technology and products, validating its client companies' business plans, and strengthening their management teams. CLSV's goal is to facilitate the forward progress of client companies to the point where each will merit significant outside investment and achieve self-sufficiency. In doing so, the Center for Life Science Ventures contributes to the return on intellectual property to the University and the inventors, as well as the University's mission support local, regional, and state-wide economic development.

CLSV offers free consulting to all interested life science startups or projects with entrepreneurial interest, including business feasibility / viability assessment, referrals to various Cornell and New York State resources, assistance to their federal small business grant application, etc. The goal is to get the teams ready to launch a company and license the technology if applicable.

Once a company has been formed, and relevant technology has been licensed, that company is eligible to apply to the resident incubation program at the CLSV. A very selective admission process requires an application package, a thorough review with the staff and mentors, and an admission vote with our Advisory Council. The CLSV Advisory Council, composed primarily of experienced investors and entrepreneurs, was created to review, select, and oversee incubator companies-shifting the focus from academic prestige to commercial viability. The Council makes the final decision based on the investability of the startup in 2-3 years.

In the incubation program, the Center provides state-of-the-art lab spaces and equipment at a subsidized rate to enable the startups to focus their resources to achieve the proof-of-concept and attract investment. The Center also has experienced staff, Executives-in-Residence, and a large network of volunteer mentors to coach the

entrepreneurs and help them navigate the complicated environment in healthcare and fundraising. More importantly, the companies and the Center mutually agree upon an incubation plan that lays out the key milestones to achieve in the Center. The Center team works very closely to make sure the companies are on track and make progress.

When a company has raised over \$2.5 million in equity funding, CLSV will "graduate" the company. CLSV consulted with over 500 teams, assisted in the formation of over 150 life science companies, admitted 34 companies into its residential incubation program, and successfully graduated 14 of these companies to date.

History of the development of the fund / Incubators:

CLSV operates at the heart of the "ONE Cornell" innovation framework, in close partnership with the Center for Technology Licensing (CTL) through program such as the Ignite Cornell Lab to Market program series. In particular, CLSV plays a critical role in two synergistic CTL programs:

- Ignite Fellow for New Ventures: A 12-month acceleration program supporting a fellow to co-fund a startup as CEO or CTO and translate Cornell innovations. CLSV teams serve as hands-on mentors throughout the program guiding business model development, market validation, and go-to-market planning for life science innovations. The CLSV director serves on the Ignite Fellow interview committee, contributing to the selection and evaluation of fellowship candidates.
- Ignite Startup Funding: A \$75K gap funding mechanism available to startups that have licensed Cornell intellectual property or are current clients of a Cornell-affiliated incubator. The CLSV director serves on the Ignite Startup investment committee, contributing to funding decisions for early-stage startups.

This tight integration fosters a seamless transition from lab to market, and exemplifies Cornell's translational ethos: building high-impact, investor-ready life science ventures through shared governance, mentorship, and capital support.

HISTORY & FOCUS File Document upload:

N/A

How do you address your portfolio needs:

CLSV offers the following key services to our portfolio companies:

Technology development assistance: CLSV manages a 7,000 sq. ft. life science-specific wet lab facility and over \$2M lab equipment on Cornell's campus for shared use among the companies in the incubation program. The fee to use the facility is subsidized by Cornell and set at a very competitive versus commercial market rate. The company would have convenient access to an extremely wide array of University-based, Center-based, and College-based specialized research service facilities. This addresses the startups' needs for high-quality, move-in ready space and focuses their resources on advancing the technology and achieving the proof of concept.

Business plan development and validation: CLSV staff, Executive-in-Residence, and a large roster of volunteer mentors regularly meet with the entrepreneur to provide ongoing coaching and mentorship towards incubation plan goals, especially on the regulatory and reimbursement pathways for life science innovations. With respect to business plan validation and development, a critically important piece is primary market research. CLSV also utilizes student teams, Cornell's alumni, and the University's survey research capabilities to perform product and technology concept testing amongst relevant Cornell alumni. For example, CLSV client company Embark was able to engage with a list of 3,500 alumni veterinarians to develop their product concept, refine their canine genomic test kit for veterinary practices, and were then able to test various pricing schemes, demonstrating to its prospective investors a high probability of profitable success. Embark graduated in 2019 and is the leading player in canine DNA testing.

Team building: CLSV staff act as matchmakers to identify interested and qualified candidates for the executive positions, advisory board, etc. Companies also have access to various Cornell student resources as interns or volunteers and eventually full-time employees.

Fundraising assistance: CLSV assiduously cultivates and maintains contacts with individual angel investors, angel groups, and various early-stage life science venture capital companies. When CLSV clients are ready for investment, the Center makes introductions and referrals to the warm leads we see as a fit. The Center supports companies' federal small business grant applications by providing support letters and referring high-quality consultancy. The Center also has an active collaboration with various funding programs in New York State, such as the Center of Advanced Technology grant and Fuzehub. We also utilize a Cornell internal fund called \"Ignite\", managed by the Cornell Technology Licensing Office, that provides fellowship opportunities and SAFE note investment to early-stage companies.

Employee engagement: Startup employees in the incubation program can use local bus services for free and access to Cornell's library resources. By co-locating and sharing space together, company employees form a close-knit community. The Center organizes monthly lunch and quarterly social events to build belonging and maintain the work-life balance.

In summary, the Center provides onsite, "all-in-one" services to the startups addressing all the needs they might have so they feel supported, well-cared for, and eventually skilled to lead the company to the next stage

Impact / Metrics to measure Success:

In over 10 years of operation, the Center has achieved the following accomplishments:

- Over 500 entrepreneurial teams / projects assisted
- Over 130 new companies formed
- 32 companies admitted to resident incubation ("Clients")
- 14 client "Graduates" (raised over \$2.5M in equity)
- \$40M SBIR/STTR and other federal grants awarded to Clients during incubation
- \$105M equity investment raised during incubation
- Over \$550M equity raised during and after incubation
- >\$2B in combined shareholder value
- 430 Jobs created
- \$50M product and services in Client sales
- Named among "North American Top 10 University Business Incubator" by UBI in 2015

Importantly, CLSV has established a remarkable 68% 10-year survival rate for clients and former client companies, which is notable given the current life science environment where 80-90% mortality at ten years post formation is the norm.

Why your model is innovative, and/or how it will improve the human condition:

CLSV's incubation model is unique and innovative because it combines a rigorous incubation process, a deep integration with academic ecosystem, and a unique "One Health" approach that integrates human, animal, and environmental health. Unlike traditional academic incubators, the CLSV prioritizes commercial potential through:

- Rigorous incubation process: Admission and progression of incubator companies are driven by an external Advisory Council composed of life science investors and entrepreneurs, ensuring commercial viability rather than academic favoritism. All the companies agree on an incubation plan as a roadmap for their progress. If they do not make progress and cannot remedy the situation in a reasonable timeframe, the Center will terminate the relationship, which is very rare among incubators. Our concierge-style services provide entrepreneurs very close support and mentorship. We help them with questions as strategic as identifying beach head market and fundraising to as operational as who my accountant should be.

- State-of-art facility and infrastructure: Our BLS-2 wet lab / office space with fully serviced equipment at a subsidized rate enables early-stage startups to focus their resources on achieving the technology milestones. Our model links Cornell's extensive life sciences resources-including faculty expertise, advanced core facilities, and specialized programs like the Biotechnology Resource Center, Cornell's Veterinary Medicine, Weill Cornell Medical School's Clinical Translational Service - to move research into animal model and human trials.
- Deep integration with academic ecosystem: The center is deeply integrated with the academic ecosystem. The CLSV model exemplifies \"ONE Cornell\": a deeply integrated translational engine that unite center across Cornell innovation ecosystem. Over the years, CLSV has established robust ties with Cornell's Technology Licensing Office, so the early entrepreneurial interests are cultivated timely. Joint programming across Cornell's centers such as the Ignite program series has created a repeatable translational pathway that accelerates the journey from discovery to venture formation, enabling the development of sustainable, high-impact startups with the goal to impact patient.

How it improves the human condition

- Translating life science innovation to impact: CLSV supported startups are tackling real-world health, agricultural, environmental, and sustainability challenges with commercially viable solutions-e.g., canine genomics (Embark), cancer therapies (Kanvas Biosciences), and diagnostics for stroke (TETMedical highlighted earlier). Kanvas Biosciences particularly as highlighted in a recent NBC News story showcased the transformative potential of microbiome-based interventions. In Tim Story case, a fecal transplant from a cancer patient who had been completely cured by immunotherapy helped reignite his own immune response. Building on such breakthrough insights, MD Anderson has partnered with Kanvas Biosciences to leverage its proprietary spatial microbiome mapping technology, and isolate the key bacterial strains driving therapeutic to cure cancer
- Job creation and economic development: By fostering high-value, science-based employment in New York State, the model contributes to regional economic resilience and access to better healthcare, food systems, and environmental solutions.
- Global collaboration for local impact: The program has attracted companies and entrepreneurs from 10 states and 12 countries to relocate to NYS, driving global innovation into tangible local benefit.

Please provide appropriate references (PubMed, Abstract, Website):

Center for Life Sciences Ventures: <https://lifescienceventures.cornell.edu/>

Incubated company examples that benefit human health:

Kanvas Biosciences: a company developing precision microbiome therapeutics to enhance cancer immunotherapy outcomes. The company's lead candidate, KAN-001, has demonstrated preclinical efficacy superior to \"super-donor\" fecal microbiota transplants (FMTs) in enhancing anti-PD-1 immunotherapy response in murine models. This work directly addresses a critical barrier in oncology with low response rates to checkpoint inhibitors.

<https://www.kanvasbio.com/>

NBC story: \"His cancer treatment was failing. A fecal transplant turned it around\"

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/cancer/cancer-treatment-gut-microbiome-transplant-success-rcna193721>

TETMedical: The company is developing a rapid diagnostic test for emergency stroke triage to identify . The test fits into standard clinical practice in the Emergency Department, with the potential to provide a high sensitivity and negative predictive value to rule out ischemic strokes with significant potential payer cost savings and reduced patient risk. With \$6M in funding and validated preclinical results, TETMedical has initiated pilot studies at two clinical sites and is preparing for a pivotal trial for FDA submission in Q4 2025.

<https://tetmedical.com/>

Renerva: The company is developing a medical device called nerve cap graft device (NCGD) to reduce neuroma pain.

Abstract

Neuroma following nerve injury and/or amputation is a debilitating condition with significant impacts on quality of life. Several approaches exist to prevent or treat neuroma and/or reduce associated pain; however, these approaches are not consistently effective, facile, or widely accessible. The present study characterizes a xenogeneic nerve cap graft device (NCGD) composed of decellularized porcine nerve. The NCGD was assessed for its ability to inhibit nerve growth, neuroma formation, and pain in rodent models of sciatic neurectomy and tibial neuroma transposition. The NCGD provided a neuroinhibitory substrate that abated and interrupted nerve growth within 5 mm of the nerve stump and was progressively remodeled into healthy host-derived tissue. The NCGD also resulted in a 3.5-fold reduction in evoked pain and a decrease in pain-associated markers at the dorsal root ganglia. These results suggest that the NCGD may provide a simple and widely accessible alternative for prophylactic treatment of symptomatic neuroma.

Borcherding, S., Wood, M.D., Pinni, S.L. et al. Prevention of nerve growth and evoked pain with a nerve cap graft device. *npj Regen Med* 10, 29 (2025).

