SPARK FINLAND

Call in November 2026

Call for “SPARK Proposals” to enhance Translation in Health and Life Sciences

Are you investigating basic mechanisms of disease? Are you sitting on a new technology or potential pharmacotherapy with clinical potential, yet the developmental know-how is lacking? **SPARK Finland** supports development of **novel therapeutics, diagnostics, health technologies and health IT solutions** for unmet medical needs with its proven **two-year program**.

Any clinical indication will be considered. SPARK projects receive:

- mentorship from industry experts
- educational course materials on “How to develop a solution” and “What you need to understand about business and finance”, and
- access to the global network of SPARK programs and their affiliates.

We accept projects already in the idea phase, not only those that are more advanced. We accept applicants that don’t have funding at the moment or have their own financial resources (Research-to-Business or local innovation grants) that cover the costs of development work. SPARK is able to provide small financial travel grant. In exchange, the team commits to the program and participates in our mentoring and educational events. Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Scope of unmet need in area of life science, medicine or health
- Novelty of approach
- Feasibility (point of maturity to be achieved within the time frame)

Some examples of past projects in global SPARK programs include unmet needs in pediatric, orphan diseases, cardiovascular, oncology, inflammatory, respiratory, neurological, autoimmune indications, and infectious disease.

YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Join the **SPARK Finland** program (https://sparkfinland.fi) to *increase the maturity of your project towards practical and value creating solutions* for human health! We help you to understand what is needed to develop your project. We also connect you with the top-level mentors and integrate you and your team to leading global networks that enables building your own market understanding and getting relevant feedback from top-tier professionals. And the level of the support is evaluated to be top-notch. In March 2021 Labiotech.eu – the leading digital media covering the European Biotech industry - selected SPARK Finland as **TOP25 biotech incubators in Europe**.

OUR CONCEPT

The current success rate of translating novel scientific findings into new diagnostics, medical devices or therapies is disappointingly low at academic institutions across the globe (less than <5%). The most important factor for improving the success rate is the inventor's **aspiration in taking the responsibility** for advancing the development of the idea towards a practical solution. And that is our focal point.

The “SPARK Finland” program is designed to **support idea-owners in increasing the maturity of ideas towards a working and value creating solutions**. We enable de-risking projects with high potential impact on unmet medical needs for any indication. Program is based on the highly successful “SPARK” program developed at Stanford University, which has achieved a translational success rate of > 50%, through education, mentorship, advising and small milestone-based funding. Currently, the program is running in more than 20 countries and since 2024 SPARK Finland is associated with 12 institutions (Picture 1).



SPARK FINLAND COMMUNITY:
Aalto University
Helsinki University Hospital / HUS
Kuopio University Hospital / PSHVA
Tampere University Hospital / PIRHA
Tampere University
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Turku University Hospital / VARHA
University of Helsinki
University of Eastern Finland
University of Turku
Åbo Akademi University

Picture 1. SPARK Finland member institutions on global map.

As a SPARKee you will get:

- **Mentoring and advice** from national and international industry leaders who will help you to develop your idea towards working commercial or clinical solution
- **Support and experiences** from SPARK managers and other SPARKees
- **Access to international institutions and networks** as a member of SPARK Global network
- **Opportunities to participate and present your idea** in international industrial events such as BioEurope, Nordic Life Science Days, Bio Investor Forum etc. SPARK will support financially travels to international events
- **Education** on R&D and Business development in drug, medical device and diagnostics or health IT
- **Small financial contribution** to de-risk your project e.g. travel grants to international events.
- **Access to investors and experts** on commercialization

As a SPARKee you need to:

- **Make two-year development plan** with milestones for your idea/project
- **Meet the SPARK managers** regularly during the program (once per quarter)
- **Present your project** development 2-3 times per year in mentoring sessions
- **Participate actively in mentoring sessions** held every third Tuesday from 16:30-19:30 even if you are not presenting your own case, it is mandatory that a team member participates each time.
- Select and **participate 1-2 international business/commercial** events annually
- **Participate in the education** and follow the lectures and materials actively
- **Be committed** to take your idea to the next level

ELIGIBILITY

Any Helsinki metropolitan area, Kuopio/Joensuu, Turku or Tampere region team (faculty, health care professional, postdoctoral fellow, or graduate student team) from our affiliated institutions is welcome to apply. The application must be co-signed by the project team or research group leader. Institutions that are members and/or associated with SPARK Finland are presented above in Picture 1.

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HOW TO APPLY

Step 1: In case you have an idea, contact **the SPARK managers** for discussion as soon as possible about your idea and its suitability to the SPARK program. You can find our contacts via https://sparkfinland.fi/contact/.

Step 2: Use the **application form** available at https://sparkfinland.fi/applying/, submit a two-page application of your proposed and prepare a 5-minute presentation regarding your project. Send two-page application by **Monday 30.11.2026** in pdf format to apply@sparkfinland.fi in association with a link to your video presentation. Applications and videos will be handled as confidential. Please note: applications must be submitted by the call **deadline at 16.00 (EET).**

We propose that the video presentation could be outlined and/or raise these topics into discussion:

1. *The "problem" / unmet medical need(s)*
   - *Description of the problem*
   - *How common/large is the problem; what is the impact of it in different levels in healthcare?*
2. *Solution and value proposition*
   - *How do you solve the problem and what is "magic" behind it?*
   - *Show preliminary evidence (scientific or demo) that justifies your claims*
   - *Value proposition (a promise of value to be delivered, communicated, and acknowledged)*
3. *Uniqueness of solution and comparison with competing solutions*
   - *Could be technical, financial, efficacy, usability, time, logistic etc. differences and advantages*
   - *What kind of evidence supports your claims?*
   - *Main differentiators to known competitors / competing solutions*
4. *Market niche and size*
   - *What is the market opportunity within your category? Could be regional (Europe/US/Asia) data.*
   - *If not known, how common the problem(s) is and what is the cost of it?*
5. *Business model and go-to-market*
   - *How do you plan to make money out of this; what is their business model?*
   - *Who could be your key reference customers, and where is their main market?*
   - *How you plan to reach the customers and end users?*
6. *Team and partners/collaborators*
   - *Experience, expertise and credentials of team members and partners*
   - *What expertise is needed more?*
7. *IP and regulatory aspects*
   - *What is the status of your intellectual property? Plans for the future?*
   - *What regulatory requirements you need to follow? Plans for the future?*
8. *Current development stage*
   - *What have been achieved so far (and/or especially past few months)?*
   - *What are our future plans: near term and in longer run? Timeline for those?*
9. *Required resources and plan for next steps*

Step 3: Be selected by our SPARK Team and get an invitation to meet our international evaluation panel to discuss your project. It will be held on **Wednesday 9.12.2026 between 15.30-20.30 (EET).** The panel meeting will be under a confidentiality agreement.

Step 4: The program starts for selected projects in **mid-January 2027.** Selected projects will receive mentoring, education, guidance, access to global SPARK network and travel grants to international life science business events.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can find our contact information from our website at https://sparkfinland.fi/contact/

HELSINKI	TAMPERE	TURKU	KUOPIO & JOENSUU
My Nguyen	Helena Lähdekorpi	Janina Stauffer	Irina Lavikainen