



PATHWAY TO BUSINESS

Transform Research
into Real-World Impact



HUNGARIAN
INNOVATION
AGENCY

Entrepreneurship program for PhD students



About the program

Are you a PhD student with a groundbreaking research idea?

Do you want to see your innovation create real social or economic value?

Many great research ideas never leave the lab.

Pathway to Business is a unique entrepreneurship program designed specifically for doctoral students in Hungary. The program aims to help students turn their research findings into viable innovations and launch new business startups based on cutting-edge research results or technological solutions, through expert guidance, business training, mentorship, and financial support.

Whether your idea is scientific, technological, social or environmental, this program provides the tools, space, and funding to explore its real-world potential and bring it to life.

Program objectives

1. SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH-BASED STARTUPS

Through a competitive and guided process, selected participants receive financial support and mentorship to work on turning their research into a start-up or social innovation.

PROMOTE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND COMMERCIALIZATION

Pathway to Business aims to bridge the gap between academic research and market application. Participants will gain essential knowledge and tools to understand intellectual property, licensing, product development, and the commercialization process.

2.

3. DEMONSTRATE TECHNICAL AND SOCIAL FEASIBILITY

This program provides resources to help validate your concept technically and explore its feasibility. Whether your project leads to a product, service, social, or environmental impact initiative, the program will help you take the next step.

4.

FOSTER AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET IN ACADEMIA

The program aims to cultivate a culture of innovation and entrepreneurial thinking in the research community. Participants will be introduced to business fundamentals and start-up thinking to complement their academic expertise.

Become a venture scientist – why join the program?

ACTIVATE YOUR RESEARCH POTENTIAL



Unlock the value of your research by turning it into a viable product, service, or social innovation. This program empowers you to bridge the gap between theory and application. You'll gain the tools, mentorship, and funding needed to develop your idea beyond the lab or lecture hall, and into something that truly makes a difference.

GET SUPPORT



Receive dedicated financial assistance and professional guidance, enabling you to fully concentrate on transforming your research into a viable innovation. With access to funding, expert mentors, and essential resources, you'll be equipped to take your idea from concept to impact—without distraction.

LEARN THE FOUNDATIONS



Gain a solid grounding in the principles of entrepreneurship, commercialization, and innovation. Through structured learning modules, you'll explore how to identify opportunities, understand the tech transfer process, and translate academic research into real-world impact.

COLLABORATE WITH EXPERTS



Work alongside experienced mentors and fellow PhD innovators to refine your concept, expand your perspective, and accelerate your progress. This collaborative environment fosters interdisciplinary exchange and provides critical feedback to help turn your research into a compelling, high-impact venture.

GROW YOUR NETWORK



Gain visibility within the innovation ecosystem and expand your professional connections across academia, industry, and the startup community. Build relationships that support your journey beyond the program—opening doors to future collaborators, partners, and investors.



Who can apply?

- PhD students with an active student status currently enrolled in any Hungarian university
- PhD students who began their doctoral program after 1 September 2016, have completed their coursework (absolutorium), but have not yet obtained their degree and no longer hold active student status

A complete business plan is not required to apply — what you need is a unique and innovative research idea, firmly rooted in your own scientific discipline, with clear potential for impact.

Our program and expert mentors will guide you through the necessary steps towards turning a research result into a product or service.

Program timeline

August

Application Opens

- Submit application via online form.
- Deadline: 15 September 2025
- Attend on-site Q&A workshops at selected universities.

September – October

Learn and Explore

- Complete online modules and submit a one-pager summary of your startup idea.
- Deadline: 15 October 2025
- Evaluation and selection of projects for support.

November – January

Team Up and Build

- Work in interdisciplinary, mentored teams to refine your idea, with a 3-month scholarship to help initiate your project.
- Present your project at the mini Pitch Event.

February – July

Launch

- Focused, mentored project development
- 6-month scholarship and funding for tools and resources

July

Pitch your idea

- Present your project idea to investors, industry experts, potential partners, and other stakeholders on Demo Day

Whether you're working on a breakthrough technology, a novel research tool, or a socially impactful method, this program is your opportunity to build something meaningful out of your academic work.

What's in it for you?

You will gain access to carefully curated learning materials, mentoring and a 6-month realization phase supported by both financial and professional resources.

Financial Support:

Scholarship for Students:

First semester:

- HUF 50.000 net per month for students working on a selected project (active and passive student status alike) for 3 months from November to January.

Second semester

- HUF 150.000 net per month for students working on a selected project, maintaining active status during the spring semester (6 months)
- HUF 400.000 net per month for students working on a selected project, with passive student status for the spring semester (6 months)
- HUF 400.000 net per month for students working on a selected project, with an absolution who have not yet obtained their degree (6 months)

Project Funding:

- Up to HUF 1.000.000 in the second semester for each selected project, to cover materials, tools, or project-related development costs.

Mentorship and Expert Support:

- Ongoing, weekly access to your assigned mentor
- Regular networking opportunities with experts, fellow innovators, and potential partners

A total of 50 students will be selected to receive a scholarship. Receiving the scholarship does not prevent students from being employed.

How to apply and what do you need?

How to apply?

- Interested students can submit their applications through an online registration form
- Deadline: 15 September 2025.

What do you need?

Active Student Status or an Absolutorium

- You must be currently enrolled in a PhD program or have completed your coursework (absolutorium) but not yet obtained your degree.

B2-Level English Proficiency

- Ability to engage confidently in professional discussions and written communication, learning material will be in English. The one-pager, business plan, project presentation and all related documents must be submitted in English; however, the mentoring process will be conducted in Hungarian.

Defined PhD Research Topic

- Your idea should be rooted in your academic research or area of expertise.

Open Mindset for Entrepreneurship and Collaboration

- Willingness to explore innovation, work across disciplines, and engage with mentors and peers.

Motivation to Translate Research into Impact

- Applicants should be genuinely interested in applying their research to solve real-world problems.

Preliminary Idea or Problem Area

- Applicants are encouraged (but not required) to arrive with a challenge or early-stage idea related to their research.

What's next after Pathway to Business?

Completing the program is just the beginning! Students and teams that finish the program gain exclusive access to a widerange of support and growth opportunities to turn their research-based ideas into real-world impact.

1. Business Growth Support from the Hungarian Innovation Agency (NIÜ)



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XPAND Program

The XPAND program can help you to learn through practical examples about the process of international market entry, the challenges and the specificities of different countries.

Enterprise Horizon

The Enterprise Horizon program provides information to help innovative businesses successfully participate in Horizon Europe, the world's largest research, development and innovation program, and build international consortia.

Innovation training

The training is designed to develop participants' innovation management skills, enhancing their ability to drive change, foster innovation, and contribute to the competitiveness and growth of their organizations.

NIÜ Mentor Program

The program helps innovative businesses to develop, grow and succeed by providing access to expertise, resources and networking opportunities.

What's next after Pathway to Business?

2. Business Development Support from the National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH)



Fast Track (Gyorsítósáv)

The main objective of the Call is to support start-ups and spin-offs that plan to commercialise research results generated in higher education institutions and publicly funded research institutions, and for which significant R&D is still needed to bring them to market.

Life Sciences Catalyst Program

The calls aim to support health industry companies and researchers in addressing the most pressing healthcare challenges and accelerating the translation of laboratory results into clinical practice.

3. Participate in incubator programs supported by the Startup Factory Program



The Startup Factory Program supported the growth of around 200 startups with nearly HUF 6 billion, providing not only financial resources but also market and technological expertise. The goal is to enable these companies to succeed both in Hungary and in international markets.



Pathway to Business is your next step from research to impact.

Apply, innovate, and build something
that matters.

Contact



www.niu.hu



pathway@niu.hu

Application



NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT
AND INNOVATION OFFICE
HUNGARY

PROGRAM
FINANCED FROM
THE NRDI FUND