The UWA Pathfinder Fund provides financial support of up to $60,000 for early-stage projects with commercial potential.

The aim is to shape innovative technologies and applications into ‘investor-ready’ or licensing opportunities.

The Pathfinder Fund is typically used to:
- Evaluate the commercial potential of your project
- Carry out market research and business planning
- Develop a working prototype
- Purchase or rent equipment required for ‘proof of concept’ work
- Carry out field trials
- Fund external services (e.g., rapid prototyping; software development; laboratory analysis) required to demonstrate that all-important ‘proof of concept’

UWA’s Pathfinder Fund provides up to $250,000 per year to support early-stage commercialisation projects at the University with over $800,000 invested in over 40 projects since the scheme started.
Successful Pathfinder projects

Sensear, a Perth-based electronics company, was established on intellectual property from a research collaboration with Curtin University. The project to develop noise reduction/hearing safety technology originally accessed Pathfinder funding to develop a prototype and has since gone on to launch award-winning products that are being sold internationally.

Pathfinder funding was used to develop a business plan for the commercialisation of innovative technology for converting ‘methane to hydrogen’; this resulted in industry support from Wesfarmers Energy and a US collaborator and led to a three year APC Linkage project worth over $600,000. The project has since gone on to receive private funding with the technology being commercialised through a new UWA spin out company.

The Lectopia system for recording and broadcasting lectures was originally developed in UWA’s Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and benefitted from a Pathfinder award aimed at developing a business plan and strategy that led to international commercialisation of Lectopia.

Previously unfunded, a new chemical identified by researchers in the School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences is being characterised for anti-bacterial properties with a Pathfinder award. The project aims to assess the compounds’ suitability to be developed as a new antibiotic with a view to the technology being licensed to a biotechnology or pharmaceutical company.

Pathfinder projects have:

• Directly led to the formation of four start-up companies who have collectively raised over $6 million.
• Generated over $150,000 of licence and option fees.
• Resulted in over $500,000 of industry-funded development contracts back to UWA.

How do I submit an application and how are applications assessed?

Applications can be submitted electronically to the OII at any time. There is a simple scoring system which is used to rank applications based on clearly defined criteria. Pathfinder awards will be made on a competitive basis subject to availability of funds.

What about the intellectual property (IP) that might be developed during this work?

We actively encourage the generation of new IP. UWA must own the intellectual property that is the subject of a Pathfinder award but UWA staff can benefit financially from the University’s revenue sharing agreement once the IP is commercialised.

How easy is it to apply for funding?

The application procedure and project administration is designed to be as simple as possible, whilst satisfying UWA’s obligations in the areas of finance management and due diligence.

I’m not sure where to go for my business planning and market research advice.

OII has a network of internal and external specialists who can provide high quality advice in these areas.

It all sounds interesting but I’d like some more information.

The OII website provides detailed answers to many of the commonly asked questions, and also includes the Pathfinder application form, eligibility criteria and scoring system. We encourage you to use the website for information gathering, but if you can’t find all the answers here, please contact the OII on 6488 7172.

To apply for a Pathfinder Fund visit www.oii.uwa.edu.au

Office of Industry and Innovation
The University of Western Australia
35 Stirling Highway, Crawley WA 6009
Telephone (+61 8) 6488 7048
Fax (+61 8) 6488 2333
Email afs@admin.uwa.edu.au
Web www.oii.uwa.edu.au
CRICOS Provider Code: 00126G

Technologies currently being developed by companies such as Dimerix Bioscience, OrthoCell and iCeutica have all been awarded Pathfinder funds to assist with their commercialisation.