The HealthTECH Challenge Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the HealthTECH Challenge Series?

A. The National Football League ("NFL") and Football Research, Inc. ("FRI") have partnered with Duke Biomedical Engineering ("Duke BME") to create the HealthTECH Challenges, a series of innovation challenges intended to deepen understanding of and advance solutions in the areas of head protection, lower extremity protection, materials science, kinematic measurement, among others (the "Challenges"). This Challenge will provide funding of up to $100,000, in the aggregate, to one or more winners to spur advancements to better understand and protect against traumatic brain injury in impacts to the faceguard region. The Challenge seeks to provide funding for development of products or solutions from mature research (i.e., research that is currently in or ready for the implementation stage). The goal of this Challenge is to enable and accelerate translation of research to field-ready solutions (i.e., new company formation, license, or partnership are all encouraged).

Q. What criteria will be used to assess my application? How will Challenge winners be selected?

- Duke BME and a panel of expert judges established jointly by Duke BME and FRI ("Oversight Committee") shall assess all Proposals using the following assessment criteria, along with any other criteria determined between now and the end of this Challenge, so long as such additional criteria are consistently applied across all Proposal reviews:
  - Proposals must include a scope of work appropriate for Challenge II.
  - The submitting party must demonstrate the technical feasibility of quarterly milestones that will be achieved during the funding period.
  - Proposal must include specific plans or proposals relating to their next phase of the project plan;
  - Proposal must lay out a clear financing, licensing or go-to-market plan;
  - Proposal must include a description of resources of environment to achieve milestones; and
  - Proposal must include the relevant background of the team /organization/lab submitting the response.
  - Feasibility – Project scope of work is appropriate for the timeframe and level of funding.
  - Translation – Translational potential of the opportunity presented by the proposed activity including:
    - The project is sufficiently scientifically interesting to attract potential investors or licensors;
    - The commercial potential, either by virtue of market size or unmet need in a smaller population can command premium pricing;
    - The competitive landscape, including products in development that might impact the potential to partner or translate the innovation.

Q. What is the award for winning the HealthTECH Challenge?
A. All judging, eligibility and award decisions are at the sole discretion of FRI and are deemed final and not subject to review or explanation. One or more of the Sponsor Affiliates shall announce via the

Challenge Series website to whom FRI has made a funding award. Proposals meet the judging criteria for this Challenge, in either FRI's or the Oversight Committee's sole discretion. All potential winners will be notified by the e-mail address for the Primary Contact provided in the submission form and will be required to complete further documentation confirming their eligibility. Return of any notification as "undeliverable" will result in disqualification. After execution of such further documentation and verification of eligibility, Awards will be distributed in the form of a check addressed to the Primary Contact. The Primary Contact will have sole responsibility for further distribution of any cash Award among participants in a group Proposal or within a company or institution that has submitted a Proposal. Each list of Proposals receiving Awards for this Challenge will be made public as described on the Challenge Series website.

 All Awards are a one-time offer and there is no offer of licensure, royalty, or other financial compensation implied beyond the initial round of Awards. Each Award winner is responsible for all taxes and reporting related to any Award that such winner receives as part of this Challenge.

 This Challenge is a contest of skill. Whether or not your Proposal is determined to be the potential recipient of an Award depends on how your Proposal compares to the other Proposals submitted in the Challenge when evaluated based on the judging criteria for this Challenge.

Q. What must the award money be used for?
A. The award money may be used for further proof of concept for a design through physical testing, finite element modeling or other analytical means; translation of a design concept into a physical prototype; adaptation of an existing product for use with football helmets; translation of a prototype design into a field-ready product; or for facilitation of the manufacturing of field-ready products.

Q. How do I submit a Proposal?

a) Visit https://duke.is/DukeMRP and click on "Create New User" (or log in if already have an account). Proposals must be submitted under the Primary Contact's name.Review the step-by-step user's guide for applying via the MyResearchProposal software, which is Available in this document.

b) Enter Access Code 'NFL' then select the 'HealthTECH Challenge II (C2) funding opportunity and follow the instructions.

c) For those wishing to submit NONCONFIDENTIAL materials for guidance and advice, please send questions to HealthTECH@duke.edu.

d) Proposal entered via MyResearchProposal software to include biosketches, budget, 5 page technical description and 4 page supplemental data description (optional).

If you are having trouble accessing the system, please send an email to: MyResearchProposal@duke.edu

Q. How do I determine whether my application met the submission deadline?
A. Proposals may be submitted from February 6, 2026 (the "Launch Date") through May 28, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (unless such deadline is extended by FRI at FRI's sole discretion) (the "Submission Deadline"). Any Proposals submitted after the Submission Date shall not be considered.

Q. When will the award be received?
A. At the time that an Award is announced, a funding schedule for the payment of such Award shall also be announced.

Q. What materials or documentation must be included in my submission?
A. Applicants must submit evidence that supports mature research (i.e., research that is currently in or ready for the implementation stage). Examples of this documentation may include technical drawings of a design concept iterations of design, finite element modeling results from relevant impact scenarios, photos and description of a product, results from physical laboratory and/or field testing.

Q. Are there any finite element models of modern helmets available?
A. Biocore and Football Research Inc. (FRI), with funding support provided by the NFL, have collaborated with partners at the University of Virginia, Wake Forest, KTH Royal Institute of Technology and the University of Waterloo to develop open-source finite element (FE) models of four modern football helmets and associated impact test methods and equipment, including the Hybrid III headform and neck. These models are available subject to the licensing terms. Technical specifications and experimental validation data for the models were developed by Biocore and provided to these university partners, who created computational models using physical helmets. The models are available here.

Q. Is there any available information that might help me understand the types of impacts my design or product should attempt to mitigate?
A. The helmet test protocol, developed based on NFL impact conditions, provides test conditions and impact performance metrics should be considered in the development and/or evaluation of submitted designs. The National Operating Committee for the Standards of Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) has created standards for football helmets and facemasks which should also be considered.

Q. Are there other considerations beyond impact performance that should be considered by my design or product?
A. While the ability to attenuate impact forces is a main consideration for this Challenge, factors which may affect a player's safety, feasibility of use, or player acceptance of the design in other ways should be considered. Examples of these factors include facial protection, helmet retention, visibility, breathability, and ease of use.

Q: Are different facemask styles relevant to this challenge?

A. There are numerous styles of welded wire facemask configurations, with bars placed in various locations for stylistic or coverage purposes. Further variations on these styles are not the focus of this challenge, but rather ideas, concepts, or designs that may replace this welded-wire design or change how it interfaces with the helmet shell or other helmet components to target improved impact performance.

Q: Are different retention system styles relevant to this challenge?
A. The standard retention system in a football helmet is a chin cup and straps. Stylistic variations on existing designs are not the focus of this challenge. Design concepts, prototypes, or products that that aim to enhance the impact performance are relevant to this challenge.

General FAQs

Q. Are there any other requirements I should be aware of?
A. Yes. The complete set of the HealthTECH Challenge II Official Rules and Regulations is available [here](#).

Q. Who can I contact if I have questions that are not answered here?
A. Please address questions to HealthTECH@duke.edu

Q. If I don't attend the Webinar, am I still eligible to enter the challenge?
A. Yes. The webinar provides an additional opportunity to learn more about the challenge and its requirements. A recording of the session will be made available on the NFL website for later viewing. Participation in the webinar is not required to submit a proposal.

These FAQs may be updated from time to time in response to questions received.