



Ohio-Israel Tech Pilot Program Framework

1. Introduction & Background

The Ohio-Israel Agricultural & CleanTech Initiative (OIACI) is launching the **Ohio-Israel Tech Pilot Program** to connect Israeli innovation with Ohio communities. By supporting real-world pilots in water, agriculture, and food, the program helps local partners test advanced technologies while de-risking adoption for both sides. The program provides partial funding to support pilot projects, with the expectation that participating partners contribute additional financial or in-kind resources. Israeli companies get a U.S. market entry point, and Ohio utilities, farms, and food processors get access to cutting-edge solutions.

Israel is a global leader in clean technologies, from recycling wastewater and optimizing irrigation to advanced sensors and energy-efficient systems. Ohio, with its strong industrial base and rural footprint, is an ideal testbed for these tools. This pilot program is backed by state funding and aims to spark collaboration, solve real problems, and drive long-term investment in Ohio. Pilots are designed to be focused, real-world demonstrations that validate performance and support future scaling.

2. Program Goals

- **Eligibility & Readiness:** The program is open to Israeli companies with proven, late-stage innovations (Technology Readiness Level 7–9) and an operating prototype. Ohio hosts can include (but are not limited to) utilities, farms, and manufacturers. Applicants must demonstrate readiness for real-world deployment and data-driven evaluation.
- **Solve Real Problems:** Deploy Israeli solutions to tackle Ohio challenges — whether AI-powered crop management, advanced nutrient removal in wastewater, or novel manufacturing processes for food safety and efficiency.
- **De-risk Innovation:** Provide partial pilot funding to help local stakeholders test new tools without carrying the full cost or risk, while encouraging shared[NF3] investment from project partners. Many promising technologies struggle to get adopted simply because no one wants to be the first to try them. This program addresses that gap by helping first movers overcome market hesitation through shared risk and public support.
- **Community & Workforce Benefits:** Generate long-term value for Ohio by creating jobs, building workforce skills, and engaging students and new graduates in hands-on training opportunities.
- **Build Local Capacity:** Train Ohio engineers, operators, growers, and students — including new graduates — on advanced systems.

- **Open Market Channels:** Help Israeli companies build credibility, secure early wins, and grow in the U.S. market.
- **Drive Investment:** Help Israeli companies take their first steps into the U.S. market by building credibility through pilot results. With early validation and local partnerships in place, these companies are encouraged to set up sales offices, hire staff, and eventually manufacture or assemble their products in Ohio. The goal is to convert short-term pilots into long-term economic activity, job creation, and local supply chains. This early market entry support is key to positioning Ohio as a natural home base for Israeli innovation.

3. Project Process Overview

1. **Identify Needs:** OIACI works with Ohio stakeholders to identify problems worth solving. This can happen through multiple channels, including attending industry conferences, leveraging introductions via advisory board members, engaging faculty and researchers at The Ohio State University, hosting local workshops, and conducting direct outreach to municipalities, farms, and manufacturers.
2. **Match Solutions:** Israeli firms propose technologies that meet those needs. OIACI draws on its large database of Israeli companies and works closely with the broader Israeli innovation ecosystem to help identify the most relevant solutions and connect them with Ohio partners.
3. **Application Process:** OIACI manages a structured application process to pair Ohio hosts with Israeli innovators. By supporting real-world pilots in water, agriculture, and food, the program helps local partners test advanced technologies while de-risking adoption for both sides.

The formal selection rubric outlines how projects are evaluated and chosen for funding. Applicants will be asked to address questions, such as: Who the end user is, their operations context, and why they are interested in the Israeli technology; today's practice versus the proposed innovation (pain points, costs, and improvements); clear success criteria with 3–5 KPIs; what a full build-out would look like if successful; and roles and contributions. The application form can be found in Appendix A.

4. Applications will be reviewed by a Selection Committee composed of professionals from across Ohio, including representatives from universities, engineering firms, and industry. The committee will use the formal rubric in Appendix B to evaluate proposals and recommend projects for funding based on technical merit, readiness, and potential impact for Ohio. OIACI will coordinate the committee's review process to ensure balanced input and consistent scoring across all applications. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis while funds last. Selection criteria will consider problem/need fit, TRL and feasibility, host readiness, cost-share and leverage, measurability of KPIs, and Ohio economic impact potential.
5. **Pilot Design:** Israeli companies and Ohio hosts jointly define the site, goals, timeline, and cost-share for the pilot, with OIACI facilitating coordination. The design process is collaborative and iterative to ensure all partners are aligned and prepared for implementation.
6. **Funding Issued:** Agreements are executed, and OIACI administers funding of up to \$70,000 per pilot to support project implementation. Program funds may be applied toward Israeli technology and Ohio-based labor costs, but may not be used for auxiliary hardware or equipment not sourced from Israel. This funding is intended to supplement—not fully fund—the pilot, and applicants are expected to secure additional financial or in-kind contributions. Funding will be distributed in phases tied to agreed project milestones, as defined in the MOU.

7. **Implementation:** Equipment is installed and operated. Milestones and a clear timeline should be outlined during the pilot design stage. Progress check meetings will be held at intervals specified in the project plan to keep all partners aligned and to ensure timely adjustments as needed.
8. **Monitoring:** OIACI will engage an independent third-party partner—such as a university research group or private engineering firm—to evaluate pilot performance. The goal of this oversight is to produce a white paper that documents results, key findings, and the potential for broader adoption.
9. **Results Shared:** Case studies and lessons are published. Results will be shared through public reports, white papers, conference presentations, webinars, and site visits for interested stakeholders.
10. **Next Steps:** Following successful pilot implementation, OIACI works with project partners to identify opportunities for broader deployment and continued engagement. Israeli companies lead commercial follow-up, while Ohio hosts evaluate ongoing adoption and expansion. The ultimate goal is for Israeli innovators to grow their business footprint in the state through hiring, establishing operations or manufacturing, building distribution networks, and pursuing other activities that anchor long-term presence.

4. Budget Structure

Each pilot project will be supported through shared contributions from the State of Ohio, the Israeli technology provider, and the Ohio-based stakeholder (e.g., utility, farm, or manufacturer). OIACI funding will be capped at \$70,000 per pilot and is intended to supplement—not fully fund—project costs. Both the Israeli company and the Ohio host are expected to contribute through a combination of direct funding and in-kind support, such as staff time, site preparation, materials, or discounted technology.

State funding managed by OIACI will support key components of pilot implementation, including equipment shipping, installation, technical support, and independent evaluation. Travel and entertainment expenses (including airfare, lodging, meals, and beverages) are not eligible for reimbursement.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be required prior to project launch to document roles, responsibilities, cost-share commitments, project scope, and reporting expectations. The MOU will also define funding milestones and a process for addressing project changes or disputes. Projects will follow an agreed-upon budget and reporting schedule outlined in the MOU. Participating partners may be required to maintain appropriate insurance coverage, as specified in the MOU.

- **Administrative Costs:** A modest share of funds will support OIACI's program administration, including coordination, reporting, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Independent Evaluation:** Dedicated funding will ensure third-party evaluators can carry out monitoring and produce white papers that validate results.
- **Eligible vs. Ineligible Expenses:** Eligible expenses include Israeli technology, Ohio-based labor, training, and evaluation. Ineligible uses include auxiliary hardware or equipment not sourced from Israel, as well as travel and entertainment expenses (including airfare, lodging, meals, and beverages).
- **Leveraging Other Resources:** The program will seek to combine state funds with federal grants, local economic development resources, and private contributions to expand the impact

of each pilot. Shared investment from all partners supports collaboration, transparency, and aligned outcomes. Israeli companies are also expected to provide discounted pricing relative to standard market rates.

5. Participant Roles

This section defines the responsibilities of each group involved in the pilot program to ensure clarity, accountability, and smooth collaboration.

- **Israeli Companies:** Provide the technology, offer discounted pricing, and deploy experts for installation, training, and troubleshooting. Share relevant project data with OIACI and the independent evaluator to support performance monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Support implementation and address technical issues during the pilot period.
- **Ohio Hosts (utilities, farms, manufacturers):** Provide the pilot site, allocate staff, contribute in-kind support (e.g., labor, site prep, data sharing), and integrate the solution into day-to-day operations. Actively participate in evaluation and lessons learned. Hosts also agree to allow their names to be used in program marketing materials, and may host site visits, events, or workforce training sessions as part of the program.
- **OIACI:** Administer and coordinate the program, manage the application and selection process, handle agreements and funding, and facilitate communication among parties. Identify independent evaluators and oversee reporting.
- **Independent Evaluators:** Serve as neutral third parties (e.g., universities or engineering firms) to monitor pilots, verify outcomes, and produce white papers documenting success and lessons learned.

6. Oversight & Evaluation

OIACI will ensure that each pilot project is supported by independent oversight to validate outcomes and build trust. Neutral third parties, such as universities or engineering firms, will be engaged to design evaluation plans and carry out monitoring. OIACI and the State of Ohio act solely as program administrators and funders and are not responsible for the design, installation, operation, or performance of pilot technologies.

KPIs, set during the pilot design stage, will guide the evaluation process. Data will be collected through sensors, lab tests, and operator records, with interim check-ins allowing adjustments as needed.

To strengthen the scientific rigor and workforce relevance of pilot evaluations, OIACI will seek to partner with Ohio universities wherever possible. Academic partners may assist in data collection, analysis, and validation, while also engaging students and faculty in applied research tied to real-world challenges in water, agriculture, and food systems. These collaborations reinforce the program's dual mission of advancing technology and developing Ohio's next generation of skilled professionals.

At the conclusion of each pilot, the independent evaluator will prepare a white paper documenting performance, lessons learned, and opportunities for scaling. Summaries of findings will also be shared with stakeholders and policymakers to demonstrate value and encourage replication. Pilot completion will be defined based on agreed milestones and KPI evaluation.

7. Workforce Training

Each pilot is also a workforce development opportunity. Ohio engineers, operators, growers, students, and new graduates will receive hands-on training with advanced systems. Hosts may organize workshops, site visits, or training sessions as part of the pilot. This helps build local expertise, ensures

long-term operational capacity, and creates pathways for the next generation of talent to engage with cutting-edge water, agriculture, and food technologies.

8. Legacy and Lasting Effects

The ultimate impact of the Ohio-Israel Tech Pilot Program extends beyond individual projects. By demonstrating successful applications, pilots create a pathway for replication across other communities, farms, and manufacturers throughout Ohio. Results and case studies will inform state and local policy, supporting smarter infrastructure and economic development decisions.

Successful pilots are expected to anchor Israeli innovators in Ohio, leading to permanent offices, expanded hiring, manufacturing facilities, or distribution hubs. These outcomes strengthen local supply chains and create new jobs, positioning Ohio as a hub for international technology adoption. Successful pilot outcomes are also expected to attract continued investment and collaboration. OI-ACI will encourage transitions from pilot demonstrations into follow-on ventures, such as expanded deployments, joint ventures, or co-manufacturing partnerships. By supporting this continuity of investment, the program helps convert short-term pilots into long-term economic anchors within Ohio.

In addition, the knowledge gained through pilots will be captured in white papers and case studies, ensuring continuity and institutional learning. Over time, the program will foster deeper partnerships between Ohio and Israel, embedding innovation into the state's economy and leaving a lasting legacy of collaboration and growth. OIACI may also host replication workshops or follow-on calls after successful pilots to help other communities adopt proven solutions.

To amplify visibility and attract further participation, OIACI may also launch a public-facing "Tech Showcase Series" highlighting completed and active pilot projects. These events, site tours, and media features would celebrate the achievements of Ohio hosts and Israeli innovators, reinforce Ohio's leadership in applied innovation, and inspire new collaborations statewide.

Beyond project-specific KPIs, OIACI will also track broad indicators of program success. These may include the number of pilots funded, Ohio sites engaged, students and graduates trained, and new jobs or business expansions created through Israeli companies establishing a presence in Ohio.

9. Conclusion

The Ohio-Israel Tech Pilot Program is designed to bring world-class Israeli innovation to Ohio while helping Israeli companies enter the Ohio market. By lowering barriers to adoption, fostering collaboration, and supporting independent evaluation, the program delivers tangible benefits: new solutions for Ohio stakeholders, early market access for Israeli firms, and lasting economic growth for the state. Stakeholders are invited to participate in shaping these pilots, ensuring that Ohio remains at the forefront of solving critical challenges through international collaboration.

10. How to apply

To apply, please email OIACI Director Alain de Wolff (alain@negev.org). We will then provide the application form and guidance for submission. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis while funds last.

Appendix A

Application Form

Ohio-Israel Tech Pilot Program Application

The Ohio-Israel Tech Pilot Program helps connect Israeli innovators with Ohio partners to test solutions in real-world settings. This application form is designed to gather the key information needed to evaluate your proposed pilot. Your responses do not need to follow each question word for word, but they should address the core items listed below.

Answers should be returned to alain@negev.org

1. Company information (name, contact, website, technology focus, TRL 7–9 confirmation).
2. Who is the Ohio host/end user, and why are they interested in this technology?
3. Current practice vs. proposed innovation: what pain points exist today, and how will your solution improve them?
4. What 3–5 KPIs will define success for this pilot? How will they be monitored?
5. Provide a draft project budget: total cost, contributions from each party (cash or in-kind), and requested program support.
6. If the pilot is successful, what would a full buildout look like?
7. What is your pathway for scaling or replication in Ohio (additional customers, long-term vision)?
8. How will the pilot support workforce training or community benefits?
9. What are the main risks, and how will you mitigate them?
10. Are you willing to participate in site visits, presentations, and case study documentation?
11. Please provide a budget for the Pilot with items that are Israel-based highlighted.

Appendix B

Grading Rubric for Selecting Projects

Grading Rubric for Ohio Israel Pilot Project Application

Reviewed By -

Criterion	Score (1–5)	Reviewer Notes
Is the company's technology ready for integration into the US market / ready for the pilot?	Yes / No	
Does the project carry too much risk?	Yes / No	
Is there a good problem / need fit for Ohio? Explain in detail.		
Is the Ohio host committed to the project?		
Are the KPI impressive and seem achievable?		
Does it fit within budget, do all parties commit to a share of the project?		
Does this company have the ability for long term growth in Ohio? Or opportunity for relocation or manufacturing in the State?		
Would workforce training be easily integrable into the project?		
Does the project solve a "hot" issue in Ohio? Would the project be easily marketable? Explain in detail.		
Total Score		