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\$2 Million in NFL Funding Now Available to Help Innovators Create a New, Top-Performing Football Helmet for Submission to the NFL Helmet Challenge

Submission window open through March 23, 2020 to support NFL Helmet Challenge applicants

New York, NY (November 19, 2019) - The National Football League (NFL) today announced the submission window is now open for innovators, engineers and entrepreneurs to apply for up to \$2 million in grant funding to support the creation of a new, top-performing football helmet. Grantees will then use the funds to create helmet prototypes to be submitted as part of the previously announced [NFL Helmet Challenge, a contest with an additional prize of \\$1 million](#).

The \$2 million funding is an extension of the NFL's [HeadHealthTECH Challenge](#) funding series. [Applications for those funds are being accepted](#) through March 23, 2020, and grants will be awarded in May 2020.

Last week marked the official start of the NFL Helmet Challenge, an innovation challenge that aims to stimulate the development of a new helmet for NFL players that outperforms, in laboratory testing, all helmet models currently worn by NFL players. The NFL teamed up with [America Makes](#), a manufacturing innovation institute specializing in additive manufacturing and 3D printing, to host a symposium in Youngstown, Ohio that brought together 300 engineers, manufacturing experts and innovators from across the country for three days of information-sharing and collaboration.

The symposium provided applicants with background on the current state of the science around helmets and head injuries in the NFL and information on the challenge and available resources. Sessions included discussion of how to successfully apply for the \$2 million grant funding.

“We are energized by the participation and collaboration of the group that came together to listen, learn and make connections at the symposium,” said **Jeff Miller**, Executive Vice President of Health and Safety Innovations. “The enthusiasm and rigor with which these entrepreneurs, innovators and experts from a wide range of industries are already approaching this challenge is inspiring. We look forward to seeing how their revolutionary innovations may impact the future of the game and are proud to support them in that pursuit.”

As part of the NFL's [Engineering Roadmap](#), the league works with leading biomechanical engineers, including Dr. Jeff Crandall, head of the NFL's Engineering Committee, and Dr. Barry Myers, who manages the HeadHealthTECH Challenges. Dr. Crandall and his team of biomechanical engineers collected [comprehensive video review data](#) of player impacts to

better understand concussion-causing events. They then used this data to create a [toolkit](#) to help design modern football helmets, including impact test dummy components and test conditions simulating on-field impacts. These tools were shared with attendees at the symposium to inform their helmet submissions.

Former football coaches and players including Jim Tressel, President of Youngstown State University and former Ohio State University head football coach, and Shawn Springs, former NFL cornerback-turned-entrepreneur, discussed design aspects that make helmets comfortable and wearable for players, an important criterion by which all NFL Helmet Challenge prototype submissions will be evaluated.

The symposium concluded with a panel discussion on “How to Win the NFL Helmet Challenge – The Million Dollar Question.” A variety of speakers including past winners of NFL innovation challenges, biomechanical engineers and manufacturing and materials experts shared their expertise.

“You need to design a team, then you need to design a plan, then you need to design a helmet,” **Dr. Crandall** told the audience of innovators during the panel. “We are looking for transformational change, and we think it’s achievable.”

“By leveraging the additive manufacturing expertise of the Youngstown ecosystem and our national consortium of members, the NFL and America Makes are able to bring together multiple disciplines to drive innovation forward,” said **Erin O’Donnell**, America Makes Director of Partnerships & Community Relations. “We believe this collaboration is key in supporting the NFL’s goal of improving player health and safety. We are proud to be part of such a significant project and to bring this opportunity to our members.”

For more information about how to enter the NFL Helmet Challenge, including how to apply for a HeadHealthTECH Challenge grant to help fund an eventual prototype submission, visit playsmartplaysafe.com/nflhelmetchallenge.

About the HeadHealthTECH Challenge Series

The HeadHealthTECH Challenge series is one component of the [Engineering Roadmap](#), a \$60-million comprehensive effort – funded by the NFL and managed by FRI – to improve the understanding of the biomechanics of head injuries in professional football and to create incentives for helmet manufacturers, small businesses, entrepreneurs, universities and others to develop and commercialize new and improved protective equipment, including helmets.

FRI awards the most promising TECH Challenge proposals with monetary grants and in-kind support. A panel of expert judges selected by Duke CTSI, in collaboration with FRI, reviews and provides feedback to all proposals. Every TECH Challenge applicant is invited to reapply and receives constructive feedback from Duke CTSI biomechanical experts to help refine innovations and increase chances for success on future submissions.

The TECH Challenges have awarded more than \$1.6 million in grants to date to help advance the development of 13 new technologies.

- [Winners of TECH Challenge I](#), announced in April 2017, are [VyaTek Sports](#) for its highly efficient energy-absorbing Zorbz technology and [Guardian Innovations](#) for its Guardian Cap technology – a soft helmet cover designed to reduce the severity of impacts.
- [Winners of TECH Challenge II](#), announced in October 2018, are [2ND Skull](#), to research the effectiveness of its 2nd Skull® skull cap in reducing impact forces and developing a second-generation version; [Baytech Products](#), for its prototype HitGard® multi-component helmet system concept; and [Windpact](#), for its Crash Cloud™, an impact liner system using restricted air flow and foam in helmets and protective gear.
- [Winners of TECH Challenge III](#), announced in May 2018, are [Impressio, Inc.](#) for its ultra-dissipative padding made from liquid-crystal elastomers (LCEs); [HRL Laboratories, LLC](#), to support the development and testing of its novel impact-attenuating pads for football helmets; and [AES Research & Design](#) for the testing of its anti-rotational kinematic (ARK) helmet prototype.
- [Winners of TECH Challenge IV](#), announced in July 2018, are [FieldTurf Inc.](#) for its all-new sports surface; [Corsair Innovations, Inc.](#) for its FEAM material; and Yobel Technologies, LLC for its faceguard.
- [Winner of TECH Challenge V](#), announced in November 2018, is [Cardiff University](#), for its unique padding material for use as a helmet liner.
- [Winners of TECH Challenge VI](#), announced in March 2019, are [Windpact](#) to tailor its Crash Cloud™ technology for use in Schutt’s AirXP Pro Q10 helmet, and [Auxadyne](#), for its energy absorbing XPF material.

About the NFL’s Health and Safety Initiatives

The NFL is committed to advancing progress in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of sports-related injuries. As part of the NFL’s ongoing health and safety efforts, in September 2016, Commissioner Goodell launched *Play Smart. Play Safe.* — a league-wide health and safety initiative. At the heart of the initiative is a pledge of \$100 million in support for independent medical research and engineering advancements and a commitment to look at anything and everything in an effort to protect our players and make our game safer, including enhancements to medical protocols and improvements to how our game is taught and played. For more information about the NFL’s health and safety efforts, please visit www.PlaySmartPlaySafe.com.

About America Makes

Driven by the National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining (NCDMM), America Makes is the National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Institute. As the national accelerator for additive manufacturing (AM) based in Youngstown, Ohio, America Makes is the nation’s leading and collaborative partner in AM and 3DP technology research, discovery, creation, and innovation. Comprised of member organizations from industry, academia, government, non-government agencies, and workforce and economic development resources, the America Makes membership community is working together to innovate and accelerate AM to increase

our nation's global manufacturing competitiveness. For more information about America Makes, visit americamakes.us.

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