MEDTECH INNOVATOR

2027 Applicant Info Session #1

Tuesday, October 27, 2026 - 9 - 10:30 AM PT // 12 - 1:30 PM ET

📹 Recording
💻 Presentation

Speakers

- **Nicole Black** | Program Director at MedTech Innovator | Email |LinkedIn
- **Paul Grand** | CEO at MedTech Innovator | LinkedIn
- **Abbey Lenore Azar** | Lenneuro |LinkedIn
- **Rob Krummen** | Vektor Medical |LinkedIn

Overview

MedTech Innovator (MTI) hosted the first applicant info session for the 2027 accelerator cohort. Program Director Nicole Black walked through the program's structure and resources, two current cohort CEOs (Abbey Lenore Azar of Lenneuro, early stage, and Rob Krummen of Vektor Medical, mid stage) shared what they got out of each component, and CEO Paul Grand covered eligibility requirements and the program fee. The session closed with an extended live Q&A.

Key Takeaways

- **Applications are due December 1, 2026** through the portal at pro.innovator.org. Applying is free, and starting early means MTI can send reminders, tips and invitations to upcoming webinars.
- **Every applicant receives detailed written feedback** from a pool of 600+ expert reviewers (strategic partners, service providers, investors and clinicians), whether or not they advance.
- **MTI serves companies at every stage,** from incorporated pre-seed teams with a prototype to commercial companies with $1M+ in revenue, which go into the mid-stage cohort.
- **Selection is competitive:** 1,836 companies applied last cycle and 65 were accepted. Roughly the top 10% pitch at Radar Forum and about 3.5% of applicants make the cohort.
- **The program fee was $15,000 for 2026,** and every company received at least a 50% scholarship. Deferral and equity options exist, but MTI doesn't require equity. Specialty track companies pay no cash fee.

About MedTech Innovator

MTI is the world's largest accelerator for medtech. It is not an incubator: the program is primarily virtual (mentoring, webinars, workshops) with a few in-person events, so companies can join from anywhere. About 20–30% of each cohort comes from outside the US; the 2026 cohort included companies from New Zealand, Japan and Korea, and this year's early-stage grand prize winner is from the Middle East.

Track Record

- Nearly 1,000 companies (**957 alumni**) have gone through MTI programs since launching 14 years ago.
- Alumni account for more than **60 acquisitions** and more than **600 products** on the market.
- **90%+** of MTI companies are still in business or have been acquired.
- Portfolio companies have raised more than **$12 billion in follow-on funding**.

What Counts as MedTech

- **Medical devices:** surgical tools, implantables, wearable monitors, biomaterials (e.g., wound healing) and drug delivery mechanisms. Therapeutics on their own are out of scope.
- **Digital health:** hospital operations, diagnostic and imaging software, clinician workflow tools and consumer health. Samsung joined as a partner last year, and more consumer health companies are applying.
- **Diagnostics:** technologies that touch the patient, such as wearable monitoring or point-of-care testing. Lab-based (e.g., CLIA lab) diagnostics are often a better fit for BioTools Innovator (BTI); if unsure, apply to both, since the applications are nearly identical.

Partners

- **Strategic and investor partners** (founding tier: J&J MedTech and RCT Ventures; platinum tier includes BD, Dexcom, Edwards Lifesciences, LivaNova, Olympus, Samsung and Zimmer Biomet) mentor companies at a strategic level. Alignment with one of these partners plays a significant role in selection.
- **Service provider partners** (gold, silver and bronze tiers) are matched to companies after goals calls in May, typically 1–3 mentors in areas like product design, regulatory, quality, manufacturing and materials.
- **Professional societies** support the specialty tracks, and **ecosystem partners** (e.g., AdvaMed, MedTech Strategist) host MTI showcases at their conferences.

Specialty Tracks

Specialty tracks typically take 5–8 companies each (the 2026 cohort had 8 in the AHA track and 5 in the ASPS track). On top of standard MTI benefits, track companies get KOL mentorship, clinician introductions, and booths or presentations at the society's major conference, and both AHA and ASPS have venture funds that do further diligence on track companies. A dedicated webinar on the tracks is coming up in a couple of weeks.

- **Vantage (new, with ASPR and BARDA):** diagnostics, monitoring and point-of-care technologies relevant to biosafety threats. No program fee and no SAFE requirement.
- **American Heart Association (AHA):** heart and brain health.
- **American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS):** plastic surgery technology.

Program Components

Application & Feedback

Applications are reviewed by real people across MTI's partner, investor and clinician networks, with reviewers diversified on each application. The feedback is synthesized and sent to every applicant, including how each reviewer scored the company. MTI then works with partners to select about 200 companies to pitch.

Radar Forum — April 6–8, 2027, Washington, DC

Radar Forum is MTI's combined pitch event and conference, with 200+ judges. About 80% of invited companies pitch in person, rotating through tables of judges and receiving written feedback afterward; virtual pitch options are available for those who can't attend. The 2026 event featured speakers from FDA CDRH, CMS, the AMA and FDA's TAP program, and more government representation is expected in DC.

From the cohort

- **Abbey:** It was her first conference and first time pitching on stage. She expected "Shark Tank" but found it warm and welcoming. Constant networking doubled as pitch practice, one judge later invested in Lenneuro, and another made many introductions.
- **Rob:** Pitching dozens of times sharpened Vektor's one-minute story, which carries into fundraising. He called it a "goldfish tank" and said the connections (reimbursement consultants, investors) and the evening mixers were where some of the best conversations happened.

Mentorship

Mentorship is a core pillar of the program. Early-stage companies are typically matched with 2–5 mentors across strategic, society and service provider partners based on their milestones.

- **Abbey:** Lenneuro was mentored by a major strategic. The mentors helped solve a scope-creep problem by narrowing the device to a single design and purpose, provided test samples, had a clinical expert vet the regulatory plan, and helped size the market and shape go-to-market. Within four months the design was nearly frozen and bench-testable.

Value Program

An exclusive MTI program, led by a network of about 100 value experts. It starts with an intensive workshop on value proposition (stakeholders, decision makers, differentiation and evidence generation), followed by one-on-one value coaching matched to each company's milestones. Sessions include a mock hospital value analysis committee (VAC), health economics experts and payers.

- **Rob:** Even at roughly $5M in revenue, Vektor sharpened its differentiators. Value coaching and conversations with the AMA gave the team the confidence to apply early for a Category I CPT code (moving from Category III), which CMS approved a couple of weeks ago.
- **Abbey:** As a clinician she had focused on patients and nurses. Coaches introduced her to HEOR and to payer and health system stakeholders, revealing more than $6 billion in problems Lenneuro addresses and strengthening its story for investors.

Educational Curriculum

The five-month program includes MTI LIVE panel webinars (fundraising, regulatory strategy across geographies, sales and commercialization) SPARK (Service Provider Advisory Resource Kit) workshops, where service provider partners lead topic-focused breakout rooms (regulatory, design, manufacturing, due diligence, conference strategy), and office hours with the cohort. This cycle closes with a "founder therapy" session featuring 14 alumni.

- **Rob:** Vektor (50 employees) sent subject-matter experts from its team to many workshops — the curriculum isn't just for the CEO.
- **Abbey:** The topics lined up with Lenneuro's next steps each week. Talking to and getting quotes from service providers (e.g., NAMSA, PRIA, PDV, Andrews Cooper, Cannon Quality Group) helped her build a realistic budget, and a session with a Kaiser VAC decision maker stood out, as did learning from Medmarc what needs to be insured and when. She called it "a crash course for new MedTech CEOs."

Additional Resources

- Partner discounts and free trials.
- Rotational PitchBook licenses for investor research, comparable deals and valuations.
- Market research and payment data tools, including Nevvi (nevvi.app), built by an MTI alum.
- About 18 months of complimentary membership in AdvaMed Accel, AdvaMed's startup division.
- Project support from MTI Fellows.
- **Abbey:** Used PitchBook to target investors and pull comps, and got a significant discount on QuickVault by Veeva, an eQMS her quality lead chose to switch to.

- **Rob:** Uses Nevvi to find hospitals performing the relevant procedures most often. AdvaMed advocated for Vektor before CMS and wrote letters of support.

Funding & Investor Network

Beyond pitch competitions (more than $700K awarded to date; all prizes are non-dilutive cash this year), MTI maintains a network of about 1,000 investors who are invited to Radar Forum and other events. Open Rounds is MTI's platform for companies to post raise details, term sheet and lead status, and milestones, with weekly updates sent to investors. Abbey and Rob are both competing on stage at MedTech Strategist next week.

- **Abbey:** Her pitch, deck and economic story improved dramatically, her network roughly quadrupled, and Lenneuro is raising faster than it was four months ago. She is competing for the Execution Award.
- **Rob:** Getting into the cohort is itself a validation. Vektor closed a term sheet at the start of the program, expects 1–3 investors met through MTI in its syndicate, and is a mid-stage grand prize finalist.

Community & Leadership Pods

At Innovator Summit, companies share preferences and MTI curates peer pods of CEOs who meet throughout the program (this year the pods are also recording a podcast together).

- **Rob:** His pod met weekly and shared investor lists and vendor recommendations; some members may end up with shared investors. He expects lifelong friendships.
- **Abbey:** Her pod won "Most Valuable Pod." Members attended the Association for Vascular Access conference together, demoed each other's products and cross-promote on social media.

Innovator Summit — June 15–17, 2027, Los Angeles

The in-person kickoff for the accepted cohort (roughly the top third of Radar Forum companies). It brings together partners, alumni and experts, plus curated partner dinners. At the 2026 Summit, 40 alumni led 24 C-Suite Circle topics, and 70 partners led 26 breakout discussions and 24 Peak Expert Chats.

- **Rob:** More time for deeper conversations with strategics than other events.
- **Abbey:** Candid small-group breakouts with alumni further along, and the curated dinners made networking feel natural.

Recognition & Visibility

MTI amplifies companies through its LinkedIn and YouTube channels (including one-minute company videos produced during the program), conference showcase panels, a cohort graduation announcement on the Nasdaq Tower in Times Square, alumni showcases and competitions, and patient impact stories written by the marketing team.

Program Requirements & Fees

Eligibility

- **Stage:** early to mid stage, pre-seed through Series C funding, from a single founder to companies with 100 employees and $20–70M+ raised. MTI is looking for companies that "still have mistakes ahead of them."
- **Incorporation:** must be incorporated by the time the program starts (late May). University spinouts can apply as academic teams.
- **Prototype and evidence:** at least a prototype and some proof-of-concept evidence. Clinical data is not required; bench testing, modeling, feasibility or animal data all count.
- **Commitment:** a co-founder, CEO or senior leadership team member must commit to the program, with about 10 hours per week across the team. Founders with other full-time jobs are fine.
- **Runway:** enough capital to execute current milestones and not shut down mid-program, ideally through December 2027.
- **Too early?** Apply anyway. It puts you on reviewers' radar for future cycles.

Program Fee

- The 2026 fee was **$15,000**. Every company received at least a 50% scholarship, and MTI aims to do the same next cycle depending on sponsorship.
- Specialty track companies pay no cash fee because track sponsors cover it. The AHA and ASPS tracks require a SAFE instead; Vantage does not.
- Needs-based options include deferring payment until the next funding round, and companies can choose to swap the fee for equity. Equity is optional, and fee support decisions are known before a company must accept its spot.
- Fees are reinvested in the investor platform, events and resources. Included: Innovator Summit tickets (meals, activities, dinners) and a MedTech Conference ticket and showcase slot; additional team members get discounted conference registration. Travel is self-funded.
- Details are discussed at length with companies invited to Radar Forum.
- **Abbey on ROI:** Lenneuro has raised more than 10 times the program fee during the program, and the education and networking alone are worth a multiple of what it costs.

Key Dates

- **December 1, 2026** — Application deadline
- **April 6–8, 2027** — Radar Forum, Washington, DC
- **December 2026 – April 2027** — Application review and diligence
- **May 2027** — Cohort selection and goals calls with accepted companies
- **June – October 2027** — Accelerator program

- **June 15–17, 2027** — Innovator Summit, Los Angeles
- **October 4–6, 2027** — Finals and showcase at The MedTech Conference, San Francisco

Q&A Highlights

Eligibility & Fit

- **Can non-regulated wellness or consumer health apps apply?** Yes, including wellness apps with no FDA pathway or with one planned for later. Samsung is especially interested in consumer-facing digital health, and MTI's investor network includes consumer health investors. A software-based cardiometabolic prevention and behavior-change program would also be eligible.
- **What's the difference between MedTech Innovator and BioTools Innovator?** BioTools technologies generally enable biopharma. MedTech covers clinical diagnostics, devices, digital health and wellness. Companies that straddle both, such as lab-partnered genomic interpretation software, can apply to both or email Nicole to talk through fit.
- **Is a pre-CE mark SaMD company early or mid stage?** Likely early stage. Without revenue, companies are early stage unless they have raised significant equity (around $15M+).
- **Can we apply before incorporating, or without a company?** Yes. MTI accelerates companies, not ideas, but academic teams and spinouts apply every year. You must incorporate before the program starts (late May) so you can sign on behalf of the company.
- **Are therapeutics eligible?** Standalone therapeutics are out of scope, but combination products (a therapeutic embedded in a biomaterial or delivery mechanism) may qualify. Generally, anything CDRH-regulated or adjacent fits; ask if unsure.
- **Are AI diagnostics and surgical education technologies eligible?** AI and cancer diagnostics, yes. Surgical education is relevant if hospitals are the purchaser, and could interest the ASPS track.
- **Do cash-pay products need a reimbursement pathway?** No. You need a payment pathway (someone who will pay), not necessarily a conventional payer.
- **Does MTI only accept venture-fundable companies?** No. Selection is driven by partners and their interests, so a company with strong partner interest can be accepted regardless of venture investor interest.
- **Must the US be a near-term target market? Is a US entity required?** Neither is required. A US focus is encouraged, since most mentors are US-based, and companies headquartered outside the US participate every year.
- **Can APAC companies apply to both the US and APAC programs?** This year there is one MTI accelerator; APAC companies should apply to it. Singapore-based companies have additional sub-program options listed on the applications page.
- **Is concurrent participation in another accelerator allowed?** Yes. MTI sees itself as complementary to other programs.

Application & Evaluation

- **How are companies selected?** The "*How does selection work?*" and "*What we're looking for*" sections at medtechinnovator.org/apply explain the selection process and criteria in detail.
- **Any advice for preparing the application?** Have others review it. Abbey said she applied partly to see what the application would ask: it surfaced gaps (like team coverage) that Lenneuro filled before Radar Forum.
- **Should we apply if proof of concept won't be ready until mid-2027?** It doesn't hurt to apply. The feedback is valuable, and if reviewers find you too early you can reapply; many companies apply multiple times before being selected.
- **What progress is expected from pre-seed companies?** A prototype and a thoughtful pitch deck. It's fine to name gaps and who you'd want help from.
- **How much does an undecided FDA pathway count against us?** You don't need a confirmed pathway or pre-sub, but you should show justified thinking (e.g., 510(k) with likely predicates, or De Novo and why).
- **What level of evidence do reviewers expect pre-clearance?** Clinical evidence isn't required. Bench testing, computational modeling, feasibility studies, animal data or a literature review all count, but you should have a prototype.
- **What pitfalls sink applications?** No prototype or evidence; strong science with no commercialization or payment thinking; and, at the pitch stage, not being coachable or dismissing judges' feedback.
- **Does MTI assess whether a business is investable?** Yes. Judges, including angels and strategic investors, assess investability and novelty. Abbey added that judges will directly advise on whether to pursue angels or VC.
- **How should reapplicants use prior feedback?** Address it explicitly in the application (and even in the pitch deck) and show new traction. Copy-pasting last year's application is a red flag. About half of each cohort has applied before, including 3 of 4 early-stage finalists this year.
- **Do non-selected companies get access to partners?** Often. Partners frequently reach out to companies that weren't selected, especially those invited to pitch at Radar Forum.

Runway & Commitment

- **What does "runway" mean, and how much is expected?** Runway is how long you can operate, or which milestones you can reach, with your existing funding. MTI wants to know you won't shut down mid-program; runway through about December 2027 is ideal.
- **How much time does the program take?** About 10 hours a week across the team (webinars, workshops, mentor meetings, deliverables). Founders with other full-time jobs are fine as long as someone is committed.

Fees, Equity & Specialty Tracks

- **Does MTI take equity?** Not as a requirement. General cohort companies pay a program fee and can choose to swap it for equity instead.

- **Do the specialty tracks have a program fee?** No. Track sponsors cover the fee, so no track has a cash program fee. The AHA and ASPS tracks require a SAFE instead; the Vantage track has no SAFE requirement.
- **What are the SAFE terms?** Shared with companies invited to pitch for a SAFE-based track or that choose the equity option. They are standard terms.
- **If we're selected but can't cover the fee?** Fee support decisions are known before you must accept. You can also defer payment until your next funding round.
- **Are scholarships available to international companies?** Yes, depending on partner interest and the general scholarship pool.
- **Are prizes non-dilutive?** Yes, all prize awards are non-dilutive cash this year.
- **If we aren't selected for a track, are we still considered for the general cohort?** Yes. There is no downside to checking a track box; it just adds a look from those partners.
- **Is there a separate Vantage application?** No. Check the Vantage box in the main application and fill out the fit paragraph; you'll still be considered for the core accelerator. Vantage covers diagnostics, monitoring and point-of-care technologies relevant to biosafety threats, and the website lists examples.
- **Are travel costs covered?** No, travel is self-funded, but MTI covers registration for Innovator Summit and The MedTech Conference and recommends hotels with good rates.

IP & Confidentiality

- **How are sponsor conflicts of interest handled?** Partners see applications, so applications must be non-confidential. Strategics join to help, not to take technology, and cohorts sometimes include competing companies.
- **Does IP factor into acceptance?** MTI cares more about what the IP covers than whether a patent is issued; pending or provisional patents are fine. Freedom to operate matters.
- **What if our IP is held by a university or mid tech transfer?** That's fine, and the paperwork doesn't need to be done by the application deadline. A letter of support from the tech transfer office helps; ideally have it in place before Radar Forum in April.
- **What if our IP isn't secured yet?** Share only what you're comfortable with and consider filing a provisional; ideally file before Radar Forum.

Partners, Resources & Logistics

- **How often do strategics invest in or acquire MTI companies?** Frequently. Many have venture arms (e.g., Dexcom, Olympus, J&J), though nothing is guaranteed.
- **Will MTI help find team members, such as a sales lead?** Yes. MTI will try to connect companies with sales experts and alumni in its ecosystem.
- **What was the market research tool mentioned?** Nevvi, built by an MTI alum (Catherine Liao, CONNEQT Health, MTI 2023).
- **The website lists Radar Forum as April 7–9 in Manhattan Beach. Is that the 2027 date?** No, those were the 2026 details. Radar Forum 2027 is April 6–8 in Washington, DC.