NSF I-Corps for SBIR/STTR Phase I Awardees:
Additional Information – Application Information

How to Apply

1. Review the dates for the upcoming cohort (all times are EDT) to be sure all team members are available to attend. ALL TEAM MEMBERS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND ALL I-CORPS SESSIONS AND MEETINGS, INCLUDING THE INDUSTRY MENTOR.

   IApply for the program via the NSF I-Corps online submission portal, which requests 5 sentence bios of the team members, technology description, application/market, and current commercialization plan. The online portal may be found at: https://nsfgov.my.site.com/mywork/s/login/?ec=302&startURL=%2Fmywork%2Fs%2F.

2. You may be asked to complete a video conference interview with NSF I-Corps staff. The purpose of this call is to assess the team structure, commitment to the program, and any previous customer discovery experience. All team members must be on the interview call.

3. Have all team members review and agree to the program commitments (details below).

Team Requirements

To submit an I-Corps application, the Phase I company must first identify a team composed of three core members: Entrepreneurial Lead, Technical Lead, and an Industry Mentor.

Entrepreneurial Lead (EL): The entrepreneurial lead should have relevant knowledge of the technology and a deep commitment to investigate the commercial landscape surrounding the innovation. This person should be a C-Level Corporate Officer (i.e. Chief Executive Officer, Chief Technology Officer, Chief Operating Officer, or similar level officer). The CEO and/or CTO of the SBIR/STTR company are expected to participate as I-Corps team members. Having the key decision maker(s) on the I-Corps team ensures that the learning from the program will fully impact the business direction of the company. The Entrepreneurial Lead also should be the person to support the transition of the technology via their position in the small business. The Entrepreneurial Lead will be responsible for proceeding along a content-guided path to develop, over the course of the training, a final technology-disposition plan.

Technical Lead (TL): The SBIR/STTR PI generally serves as the Technical Lead, if the PI is not the CEO. In the scenario where the PI of the Phase I award is also the CEO of the small business, the applicant small business should designate another company member to serve as TL on the team.

Industry Mentor: The Industry Mentor may be a business advisor to the company with relevant industry experience. It is helpful if this person has entrepreneurial experience as well as experience in transitioning technologies into the marketplace. The Mentor may have an established relationship with the company (e.g., business advisor or board member), or may be associated with the company and responsible for business development. Ideally, the Mentor should have prior experience developing and commercializing other products within the broader technology space related to the specific SBIR/STTR project under development. The Mentor will

be responsible for guiding the team forward and for tracking progress through regular communication with the I-Corps teaching team.

A fourth team member, such as a co-Entrepreneurial Lead or co-Technical Lead may be added to the team with NSF approval. This team member also must be a full participant in the I-Corps cohort curriculum.

Program Requirements

I-Corps team members are required to participate in all I-Corps meetings and to conduct a minimum of 100 interviews over the course of the Program. This curriculum is a seven-week program plus the Onboarding Session, and includes the Kick-off Meeting, Weekly Sessions, and a Lessons Learned Final Presentation.

More course information will be provided by NSF's I-Corps partner, VentureWell, approximately 3-4 weeks before the Kick-off start date.

The I-Corps SBIR/STTR Curriculum provides real-world, hands-on, immersive learning to help you evaluate your commercial opportunity and determine your beachhead market. The main activity is customer discovery to evaluate potential product-market fit and your wider business model. The team's progress in customer discovery will be shared with other companies in the cohort to facilitate group learning. At the end of the curriculum, teams are expected to have performed at least 100 interviews with potential customers and potential partners from their proposed target market(s). The EL and TL will be expected to spend approximately 15 hours per week doing customer discovery activities, including attendance at the required program activities (Weekly Sessions and Office Hours). The Mentor will be required to spend approximately at least 1-3 hours per week on I-Corps activities, plus must be available to attend all meetings and sessions.