



## PROGRAM SOLICITATION

An Initiative of the Ohio Department of Higher Education

2021

### INTRODUCTION

I-Corps@Ohio is a statewide program developed to assist faculty, staff and students from Ohio universities, colleges and community colleges in validating the market potential of technologies and launching startup companies. I-Corps@Ohio is modeled after the National Science Foundation's (NSF) successful I-Corps (Innovation Corps) program, which has been proven to increase innovation, entrepreneurship, and industry collaboration. The I-Corps@Ohio program incorporates lean launch, customer discovery and business model innovation methodologies to assess technologies, enhance the business acumen of research faculty and students and expand their entrepreneurial network relationships. Two cohort tracks are offered in Science & Engineering and Medtech, with each designed to offer both common and subject matter specific content. The long-term objective of I-Corps@Ohio is to systematically build a steady and predictable pipeline of high-quality, high-growth startups from technology developed at the state's colleges, universities, and research institutions, that contribute to economic development in Ohio.

I-Corps@Ohio is offered on a competitive basis to teams comprised of research faculty or staff members, students and executive mentors that have protected institutional Intellectual Property (IP) and a commitment to the commercial advancement of that IP, especially as a technology-based startup in Ohio. Teams develop market-driven value propositions and scalable business models designed to attract the business assistance, talent and capital needed to support a high-growth enterprise.

**Estimated Number of Annual Awards and Cohorts:** I-Corps @Ohio will make a maximum of 16 awards in 2021. The duration of each award is six (6) months; no extensions permitted.

**Anticipated Funding Amount:** Awards will not exceed \$12,500 (US\$).

### **Mandatory Attendance Dates for ALL Team Members (ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

#### INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM DATES:

Program Orientation	May 7 & 8, 2021
Program Launch – Workshop 1-3	May 24 – 27, 2021
Zoom – Workshop 4	June 2, 2021
Zoom – Workshop 5	June 9, 2021
Zoom – Workshop 6	June 16, 2021
Zoom – Workshop 7	June 23, 2021
Zoom – Workshop 8	June 30, 2021
Zoom – Go/No Go Meetings	July 7, 2021
Program Finale	July 14 & 15, 2021

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The primary goals of the I-Corps@Ohio program are to: 1) advance the translation of fundamental research into innovative products and services, driving scalable business models that serve as the basis for startup companies; 2) encourage collaboration between academia and industry; and 3) train students and faculty in the practice of innovation and entrepreneurship. Teams that receive I-Corps@Ohio funding are required to complete an intensive eight-week, hands-on training program. The curriculum is designed to help aspiring entrepreneurial teams understand the market for their technology, develop a compelling commercialization strategy and attain new skills that will be very useful to a long-term career in research and development.

During the eight-week program, I-Corps@Ohio teams will:

- (1) Implement key business modeling concepts, including problem-solution fit, customer/market segments, value propositions, channels, and revenue streams;
- (2) assess core assumptions by developing and testing hypotheses about each critical aspect of the total commercial opportunity;
- (3) conduct at least 100 interviews with customers, end-users, purchasers and channel partners to develop a rich understanding about the actual needs for a proposed product or service and its overall market viability.
- (4) learn from executive mentors and program instructors with relevant industry, scientific and startup expertise.

Team outcomes will include a clear go/no go decision regarding market viability, a development and transition plan should the decision be to move forward, and a project presentation/demonstration for potential investors, collaborators and industry partners.

### A. Requirements

**ALL TEAM MEMBERS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE IN ALL ONSITE AND ZOOM SESSIONS.**

If the entire team cannot make arrangements to be available, the team will not be selected for the current cohort, but are encouraged to apply to the next available cohort.

**Teams:** An I-Corps@Ohio team should be established prior to the deadline to submit proposals and identified by team member role in the proposal. If you need assistance in completing your team, first seek aid from your institution's technology commercialization office or your regional representative listed at the end of this document. An I-Corps@Ohio team consists of at least three participants filling the following three roles:

1. The **Principal Investigator(s) (PI)** must be an employee (faculty, staff, or graduate student) at an eligible Ohio university or college with a strong passion to see his/her invention commercialized. The PI is primarily responsible for overall grant management and assisting the Entrepreneurial Lead with completing weekly team assignments. Attendance at all program workshops is required. The PI is expected to spend approximately 8-10 hours a week on I-

Corps@Ohio activities. The PI is also required to submit a final project report and complete semi-annual surveys for two years following the completion of the grant program.

2. The **Entrepreneurial Lead(s) (EL)** is typically a postdoctoral scholar or graduate, undergraduate or community college student with relevant knowledge of the underlying technology and a strong commitment to pursuing the commercial entrepreneurial opportunities. We encourage teams to utilize more than one EL to conduct the customer interviews and capture the lessons learned in the project management tool. I-Corps@Ohio also encourages teams to include graduate business students, in addition to graduate STEM students, as ELs. The EL is responsible for leading the due diligence during the customer discovery process and presenting the team's lessons learned each week during the training program. ELs learn from executive mentors and program instructors with relevant industry, scientific and startup expertise. Each EL(s) is expected to commit at least 25 hours a week to complete program assignments. The I-Corps@Ohio program highly encourages teams to select ELs that are potentially capable of commercializing the technology if the team is able to validate the commercial opportunity during the training program.
  
3. The **Executive/Entrepreneurial Mentor(s) (EM)** is typically an experienced entrepreneur or industry leader with close proximity to the research institution and experience in new venture startups, new product development and/or commercializing technology out of universities. The EM may be, but is typically not, a member of the research institution. The EM's primary responsibility is to coach, guide and mentor the team through the challenging search for a repeatable and scalable business model on which to launch a startup company around the subject technology. The EM is also expected to share contacts with the team for customer interviews and to participate in interviews as much as possible. Furthermore, the EM is expected to regularly communicate with the I-Corps@Ohio instructional team and program staff regarding the progress of the team. I-Corps@Ohio is especially interested in EMs that are passionate about the technology, have strong interests in participating in commercialization, and have relevant experience in launching new ventures or similar roles in industry. Due to the level of commitment required of the EM, each mentor can assist only one team per cohort. If the proposing team does not have an EM, the I-Corps@Ohio program staff is pleased to assist with finding a suitable person to serve in that role, including members of the national NSF I-Corps and I-Corps@Ohio networks.

**Intellectual Property:** The technology the team seeks to commercialize is typically based on concepts, patents (issued or filed), copyrights or trade secrets owned and held by the PI or by an Ohio institution of higher education, including universities, colleges and community colleges. PIs are required to discuss the stage of the technology and the commercial readiness of their project with the designated technology transfer representative at his/her university or college to determine if the proposed project is appropriate for I-Corps@Ohio funding. If you are not sure whom to contact, please reach out to Nikki Modlich at [modlich.5@osu.edu](mailto:modlich.5@osu.edu).

**No Previous I-Corps Award:** Teams that have already received funding from the I-Corps@Ohio program or NSF's national I-Corps Teams program *are not* eligible for funding from the I-Corps@Ohio program for the same technology. Teams that have participated in a comparable regional I-Corps program, any NSF I-Corps Sites program or any other university or community-based accelerator or similar training program *are* eligible for funding from the I-Corps@Ohio program for the same technology or others.

**Commitment to Course Design and Learning Objectives:** Each team must commit to following the course strategy and process. This includes coming to the training sessions fully prepared, having read the new material, watched the training videos, completed the weekly customer interviews, and prepared for the weekly team presentation against the targeted objectives each week. Teams must agree to conduct a standard hypothesis-validation approach to identify and mitigate gaps in their knowledge of the basic business model concepts, including problem-solution fit, value proposition of the proposed product or service, customer segment/customer archetype, demand creation/customer relationships, channel development and revenue model.

## **B. Program Design and Award Information**

The goal of the I-Corps@Ohio training program is for each team to find a repeatable and scalable business model for the commercialization of the proposed technology. Teams will test their core assumptions about the underlying business model and the importance of solving big problems for large markets. Teams will be required to interview at least 100 potential customers and market intermediaries to test the initial hypotheses. This is referred to as customer discovery, and it is used in I-Corps@Ohio to collect data to test the validity of the business hypotheses.

**Orientation:** The program starts with a mandatory Program Orientation. At the Program Orientation, teams will meet each other and the instructional team, develop their first business model canvas, conduct trial interviews to hone their interviewing technique, and receive the course syllabus and the instructional materials. Following the Orientation and prior to the launch of the cohort, teams will be expected to: 1) complete at least eight interviews with customer contacts in their home areas; and 2) schedule at least 15 interviews with customer contacts located in and around Central Ohio. These interviews will be conducted onsite during the week of the Program Launch in Columbus. After the orientation session and before launch week, teams will receive online instructions on LaunchPad Central (LPC), the project management tool used in the program and Zoom. One working Zoom session will be held prior to Launch Week in which the teams will report on their pre-launch customer interviews and what key insights were learned.

**Launch Week:** The Program Launch consists of a **required** opening night networking reception and a 3-day working session for all team members. This portion of the program may be delivered virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time. During the Program Launch, teams will test core assumptions about different components of the business model by making hypotheses and then completing the 15 customer interviews that were previously scheduled. The curricular instruction will focus on identifying the customer segment, validating the problem solution fit, modeling the

workflow process and clarifying the compelling value proposition.

**Weekly Zoom Workshops:** Following Launch Week, each week for five weeks, teams are required to participate in the weekly Zoom Workshops. During these online meetings, each team will report to the instructional team how many interviews were completed, what hypotheses were tested, what key insights were learned and what plans were made for the following week. All team members are required to participate in the weekly Zoom meetings. Details about what information is required from week to week will be provided in the program syllabus at the beginning of the program.

**Finale:** Following the weekly training workshops and customer discovery interviews, the teams will return to Columbus for the Program Finale (subject to COVID-19 restrictions) where teams will share a Business Concept Video and deliver their lessons learned presentations. Details about what information is required in the final presentation will be provided in the program syllabus at the beginning of the program.

**Final Reports:** The PI must submit a final project report to the I-Corps@Ohio program staff within 12 weeks following the completion of the training program. Requirements for the final report will be made available on the I-Corps@Ohio website and/or sent to PIs via email.

**Expectations From the I-Corps@Ohio Program:** Successful completion of the I-Corps@Ohio program is expected to contribute to one or more of the following outcomes: 1) license the subject technology; 2) start a new business; 3) complete a business plan suitable for review by third-party investors; 4) submit SBIR/STTR grant proposals; and 5) prepare faculty and students to be entrepreneurially competitive.

## **ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

**Organizational Limit:** Proposals may only be submitted by faculty, staff and students of any university, research institution, college or community or technical college accredited in, and having a campus located in, the State of Ohio.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per Institution:** There are no limits on the number of proposals that can be submitted or awarded from each institution.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per Principal Investigator:** A PI is limited to one I-Corps@Ohio proposal during each open solicitation.

## **PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

### **A. Registration, Application and Proposal Preparation Instructions**

The I-Corps@Ohio proposal submission process consists of five steps:

1. mandatory meeting with the appropriate TTO representative(s) at the PI's institution to discuss application to the program;
2. team selection of technology track (science and engineering or medtech);

3. registration of all team members in the online portal;
4. proposal submission through the online portal; and
5. full team interview with I-Corps@Ohio program representatives.

## **B. Mandatory Meeting with Institutional Representative(s)**

Before submitting a proposal to I-Corps@Ohio, PIs are required to discuss the stage of the technology and commercial readiness of their project with the designated technology transfer representative at their institution. Your university tech transfer representative can assist in determining if the proposed project is appropriate for I-Corps@Ohio funding. Your representative can also assist in finding team members if needed. If you are unsure whom to contact, please reach out to the I-Corps@Ohio Program Manager, Nikki Modlich, at [modlich.5@osu.edu](mailto:modlich.5@osu.edu).

## **C. Team Selection of Technology Track**

Grant funds will be made available through two technology tracks. Teams are required to select the most appropriate track during registration based on the unique characteristics of the subject technology and the specific application the team seeks to commercialize.

### ***Medtech Track:***

Teams will select Medtech Track if the subject technology is in the form of medical devices, diagnostics, medicines, vaccines, medical related software, testing procedures and systems developed to solve a health/clinical problem and improve the quality of human life.

### ***Science and Engineering (S&E) Track:***

Teams will select S&E Track if the technology does not fit into the Medtech category.

## **D. Team Registration and Submission Deadline**

Submissions will be accepted beginning November 17, 2020. All teams are required to complete the online profile and submit a proposal by answering specific questions in the online portal at <https://icorpsohio.org/apply/>. This RFP can be viewed via the same link. Registration and responses to submission questions (maximum of 375 word response for each question) are **Due February 1, 2021 at 11:59 PM**. The information requested is listed below and in the online portal. The I-Corps@Ohio Screening Committee will review each proposal submission to determine if it qualifies for I-Corps@Ohio funding.

### ***Team Profile Information***

- As part of the team profile, you will be asked to supply the name and contact info for your **Grant Program Officer/Sponsored Program Officer** at your institution.

### ***Medtech Track Questions***

1. Provide a target product definition statement. Suggested form: The target product is a (pick one: device, biomarker, pharmaceutical/biologic/cell therapy, system, information management solution) for the (diagnosis, imaging, treatment, monitoring, data analysis, management) of patients with (state the clinical condition and stage).

2. Discuss the candidate value proposition(s) for the product in terms of advantages, benefits and cost relative to currently available solutions for the patient population.
3. Define the market opportunity including target market segmentation and size of the addressable market in terms of number of patients, customer sites, and geographic territory. If known, provide information regarding target segment growth factors.
4. Briefly describe the current stage of development and performance, including achievements such as prototype development, lead compound proof of concept validation, preliminary safety and efficacy data. Describe the regulatory pathway and clinical trial requirements to get the product to market. Provide the amount of funding expended to-date, how much additional funding is available to continue development, and plans for securing follow-on funding to complete development.
5. Describe the intellectual property position and how the intellectual property strengthens or enhances the competitive position for commercial opportunity.
6. Briefly describe the experience and commitment of the team including the Entrepreneurial Lead(s), Executive Mentors (EM) and Principal Investigators. Be sure to include specific references to each member's experience with starting entrepreneurial ventures, licensing university technologies, and how the team has worked together. What goals does the team have for success in the I-Corps@Ohio program?

**Appendices:** Each submission will be permitted two (2) pages of appendices to support any of the proposal questions as an upload in PDF format.

#### **S&E Track Questions**

1. Briefly describe the technology/product/service and how it is superior to existing competitive offers already available in the commercial market.
2. Briefly describe the market opportunity including the size and growth of the total addressable market, the specific target market, the projected commercial impact and what activities you have completed in the last 24 months to exploit the commercial potential.
3. Briefly describe of the current stage of development and anticipated time and cost to prepare the technology for market entry. Be sure to include how much development funding has been allocated to date and how much additional funding is available at the time of the application.
4. Briefly describe the intellectual property position and how the intellectual property strengthens or enhances the potential commercial opportunity.
5. Briefly describe the experience and commitment of the team including the Entrepreneurial Lead(s), Executive Mentor(s), and Principal Investigator(s). Be sure to include specific references to each team member's experience with starting entrepreneurial ventures and licensing university technologies and how the team has worked together and the goals the team has for success in the I-Corps@Ohio program.

**Appendices:** Each submission will be permitted two (2) pages of appendices to support any of the proposal questions as an upload in PDF format.

**Biographical Sketches:** A biographical sketch for each team member (2 pages maximum per team member) must be provided (via upload on the portal) highlighting technical expertise and track

records in successful technology and business development (as applicable). All team bios must be compiled into one PDF document.

### **E. Funding Requirements**

**Budget Form:** A budget form with cover page will be sent directly to the PI(s) if and when the proposal is accepted to the cohort which will be used to provide a brief narrative explaining all budget line items. Funding for selected I-Corps@Ohio teams is \$12,500 per award. Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is not permitted. From the award of \$12,500, \$1,500 **per team member** must be allocated to cover expenses for mandatory attendance at the I-Corps@Ohio program sessions in Columbus. I-Corps@Ohio funds can be used to cover EL release time and stipends, mentor compensation, travel, and any other expenses **directly** related to participation in the eight-week curriculum. Compensation for the Principle Investigator is not permitted. Recovery of indirect costs (F&A) shall be limited to \$1,250.

**Funding Disbursement:** This award will be in the form of a subaward to participating institutions other than Ohio State, which will be issued by fund transfer. If attendance and other program requirements are not fulfilled by all team members, some funding may be withheld, the award amount reduced.

**Textbook Funds:** Textbooks are required and grant funds may be used to purchase them. Teams selected for the cohort will receive the textbook list via email and in the syllabus.

### **F. Team Interview**

Representatives from the I-Corps@Ohio Program staff will schedule interviews (in person or via web) with those teams that are being considered for funding and admission to the I-Corps@Ohio program. Applicants should respond timely to requests for interviews and to ensure that all team members are available to participate in the interview. **Inability to schedule an interview with the entire team will result in the team being removed from consideration. Please see interview date range below to ensure your team availability. Each team will be given the opportunity to select a date that is convenient on a first come, first served basis. Interviews to be conducted via Zoom or in person.**

### **G. Important Dates**

Though you are required to select the track to which you are applying at the time of application, the I-Corps@Ohio Program staff maintains the right to reassign a team that is accepted into the program to a different track if it is determined to be more appropriate fit based on the technology. Dates are the same for both tracks are listed below.

**(ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

**Registration and Submission Deadline**

February 1, 2021 (11:59PM)

**Team Interviews**

March 8 – 11, 2021

**Announce the 2021 I-Corps@Ohio Cohort**

March 15, 2021



### **INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM DATES:**

Program Orientation	May 7 & 8, 2021
Program Launch – Workshop 1-3	May 24 – 27, 2021
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### **PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCEDURES**

The I-Corps@Ohio Screening Committee will make final recommendations to I-Corps@Ohio staff regarding which teams should receive I-Corps@Ohio funding after review and scoring of the submissions.

Review criteria will include:

- team composition with preference given to teams that have a strong and committed Principal Investigator, Entrepreneurial Lead(s) and Executive Mentor(s);
- degree to which the intellectual property is protected and will defend the expected business model of a startup;
- level of technology validation with preference given to teams that can demonstrate proof-of-concept (i.e., preliminary data, prototype, etc.) indicating feasibility based on scientifically sound, peer-reviewed or federally-funded research;
- extent to which the technology fits with Ohio's industry base and supply chains and the team plans to remain in Ohio after the I-Corps@Ohio program;
- commercial viability, size of market and reasonable path to market;
- likelihood that the proposed project will lead to a startup company; and
- status of IP and stage of commercial development

### **AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

#### **A. Notification of the Award**

I-Corps@Ohio staff will send an email notification of the award to the submitting organization and the Principal Investigator by March 15, 2021.

#### **B. Reporting Requirements**

The PI must submit a final project report to the I-Corps@Ohio program staff by October 29, 2021. Requirements for the final report will be made available on the I-Corps@Ohio website and/or sent to PI(s) via email. PIs should examine the requirements in advance to assure availability and collection of required performance data. The PI is also required to complete semi-annual surveys for two years

following the completion of the I-Corps@Ohio curriculum. The survey is designed to help I-Corps@Ohio staff keep track of team progress in areas such as options or licenses executed, new start-ups formed, state or federal funding received, private capital raised and product introductions or sales. A summary of the quantitative information is also provided to the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the I-Corps@Ohio Governance Board as evidence of the success of the program.

### **CONTACT**

Inquiries regarding how to apply to this program, including timelines, eligibility, and proposal requirements should be directed to the I-Corps@Ohio Program Manager, Nikki Modlich, at [modlich.5@osu.edu](mailto:modlich.5@osu.edu)