

NSF INNOVATION CORPS (I-CORPS™)

\$33,000,000
+\$180,000 / 0.5%

I-Corps™ Funding
(Dollars in Millions)

	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 (TBD)	FY 2020 Request
BIO	\$0.98	-	\$1.00
CISE	11.64	-	13.80
EHR	0.20	-	-
ENG	17.20	-	15.40
GEO	0.60	-	0.60
MPS	1.70	-	1.70
SBE	0.50	-	0.50
Total	\$32.82	-	\$33.00

Overview

The NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps™) connects NSF-funded science and engineering research with the technological, entrepreneurial, and business communities, fostering a national innovation ecosystem that links scientific discovery with technology development, societal needs, and economic opportunities. The I-Corps™ program provides immersive, experiential entrepreneurial education to scientists and engineers by supporting I-Corps™ Teams and building a National Innovation Network (NIN) that works cooperatively to build, utilize, and sustain the national innovation ecosystem. NIN supports innovation research and education and enhances the development of technologies, products, and processes that benefit society. NIN components are diverse in research areas, resources, tools, programs, capabilities, and geographic locations, while the network has the flexibility to grow or reconfigure as needs evolve. These components contribute to enhancing and enlarging the NIN’s community of mentors, researchers, entrepreneurs, and investors.

The I-Corps™ program supports NSF’s strategic vision of “A Nation that is the global leader in research and innovation.” Specifically, I-Corps™ contributes directly to strategic objectives in NSF’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan including: objective 1.1, to “advance knowledge through investments in ideas, people, and infrastructure;” objective 2.1, to “support research and promote partnerships to accelerate innovation and to provide new capabilities to meet pressing societal needs;” and objective 2.2, to “foster the growth of a more capable and diverse research workforce and advance the scientific and innovation skills of the Nation.”

I-Corps™ stimulates the translation of the results of basic research to societal impact and prepares the future workforce to contribute to both use-inspired research and the commercialization of ideas enabled by fundamental research. Additionally, Section 601 of the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (AICA), signed into law in January 2017, stipulates that NSF shall carry out, further develop, and expand the I-Corps™ program and other training programs that focus on education in entrepreneurship and commercialization.

Goals

The specific goals of the I-Corps™ program are to:

1. Capitalize on NSF’s investment in fundamental research;

2. Offer academic researchers an opportunity to learn firsthand about technology-based innovation and entrepreneurship, and thereby fulfill the promise of their discoveries;
3. Foster national collaborations of academic researchers with peers conducting research and commercialization, industrial mentors, startup investors, and entrepreneurial education; and
4. Prepare students for real-world experience through curricular enhancements and provide them with opportunities to learn about and participate in the process of transforming scientific and engineering discoveries to meet societal needs.

FY 2020 Investments

The I-Corps™ program currently has three components:

- I-Corps™ Teams are funded at \$50,000 per Team with a duration of one year. NSF currently funds approximately 240 teams per year. NSF will grow the number of Teams trained through partnerships with other federal agencies and programs, states, and regional organizations, and will continue to identify and fund the best Teams emanating from fundamental, applied, and translational research funded across the Foundation.
- I-Corps™ Sites are funded at up to \$100,000 per year for two to five years. NSF currently supports 100 active Sites.
- New I-Corps™ Nodes are supported for up to five years; funded at up to \$1.20 million in year one, declining to \$300,000 in year five. Renewing Nodes are funded at up to \$900,000 in year one declining to \$300,000 in year five. NSF currently supports nine Nodes.

To build on the I-Corps™ program's success and fully realize its potential to help expand the Nation's innovation ecosystem, NSF will scale up the I-Corps™ program. This scale-up calls for a strategy to provide I-Corps™ curriculum and experience to a much larger community of technology innovators and entrepreneurs who do not have prior connections with NSF and may otherwise not have access to the I-Corps™ curriculum. The expanded target community will include local and regional entrepreneurs, university spinoffs, and awardees of other federal agencies, state governments, and non-profit organizations. By leveraging existing entrepreneurial and innovation capacities in universities and tapping into federal, state, and regional resources, the I-Corps™ NIN, currently comprising Nodes and Sites, holds significant potential to reach out to a larger number of budding and existing innovators and entrepreneurs.

In FY 2018, NSF began planning for and experimenting with scaling up the I-Corps™ program nationwide by growing the network, including increasing the numbers of I-Corps™ Sites and Nodes. To further increase the pace of scale-up, NSF is developing a new NIN model, in which responsibilities for some I-Corps™ activities are redistributed. The network is expected to continue to be diverse, inclusive, and flexible. NSF anticipates rolling out this model in FY 2019 and FY 2020, while continuing to support new Teams and existing Nodes and Sites.

NSF will also continue to build NIN partnerships with stakeholders who have access to innovators and entrepreneurs, including federal agencies, state governments, universities, and non-profit organizations.