



National Science Foundation  
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## **PRESS RELEASE** **July 18, 2012**

### **NSF I-Corps Celebrates First Year Bridging University Researchers with Entrepreneurs**

#### **Anniversary highlights accomplishments of nearly 100 teams and the announcement of the addition of two I-Corps National Innovation Network nodes**

In July 2011, the National Science Foundation (NSF) launched the Innovation Corps (*I-Corps*), a program to broaden the impact of select, NSF-funded, basic-research projects by preparing scientists and engineers to extend their focus beyond the laboratory.

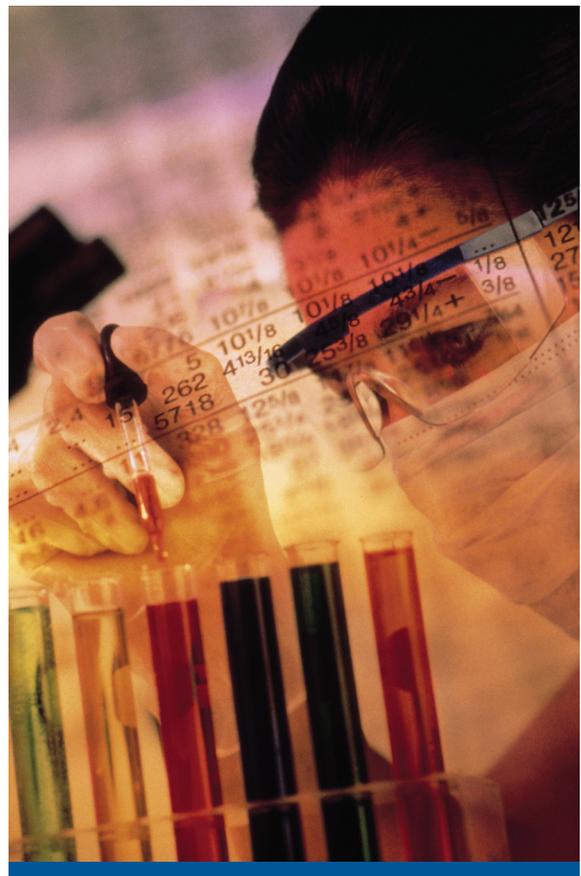
Leveraging experience and guidance from established entrepreneurs and a targeted curriculum, I-Corps grantees learn to identify valuable product opportunities that can emerge from academic research.

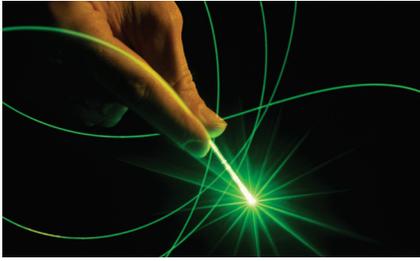
Now, one year into its three-year pilot phase, the I-Corps program has reached pivotal milestones. Several teams already are receiving public and private follow-on investment and participants have built a novel I-Corps Mentor Network that connects experts from the academic and entrepreneurial communities.

“NSF launched Innovation Corps to leverage productive public-private partnerships and extend the impact of fundamental research discoveries,” says NSF Director Subra Suresh. “I-Corps has already had an impact beyond our initial expectations and inspired the research and business communities to collaborate in new ways. It is a model that can be transferred to other areas as well, and we are grateful to all the stakeholders for their support and participation.”

Nearly **100 teams**--composed of academic researchers, student entrepreneurs (undergraduates, graduate students and post-docs) and business mentors--participated in the six-month I-Corps program.

The curriculum is a hypothesis-based approach to assessing technological readiness that combines two, site-based short courses, extensive online coaching and hands-on outreach to potential customers. I-Corps merges the structured coursework with guidance from NSF program officers and leading entrepreneurs, who committed their time to the program.





Several I-Corps teams have received NSF Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants, enabling them to develop companies based on what they have learned from the program. In the coming year, NSF hopes to expand I-Corps to an additional 200 teams of researchers and their business mentors.

“Academic researchers already have many skills valuable for success in business, such as critical thinking, teamwork and an ability to move in a new direction and learn when a hypothesis proves false,” says Errol Arkilic, NSF program director for I-Corps. “The NSF I-Corps builds upon that expertise, introducing researchers to the business community and teaching them to seek, and speak to, the needs of potential customers.”

As an extension of the I-Corps program’s success and as a mechanism to broaden the geographic reach of the effort, NSF will expand the network of nodes that serve as teaching sites for the hands-on curriculum.

The I-Corps node at Stanford University now will join one at Georgia Tech and one at the University of Michigan. Additionally, NSF is now soliciting proposals for new nodes, all of which will serve their regional community as innovation supporting resources and act as focal points for expanding the national I-Corps network.

“I-Corps is an innovation model that demonstrates the continued strength of the American entrepreneurial spirit,” says Dedric Carter, NSF senior advisor for Strategic Initiatives. “Building on NSF’s 60-plus year legacy of investing in basic research and spawning innovation, I-Corps embodies many of the key elements for entrepreneurial achievement and illustrates why our nation is still the world-leader for start-up success.”

The National Science Foundation, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Deshpande Foundation support the Innovation Corps. For more information, see NSF’s I-Corps [webpage](#).