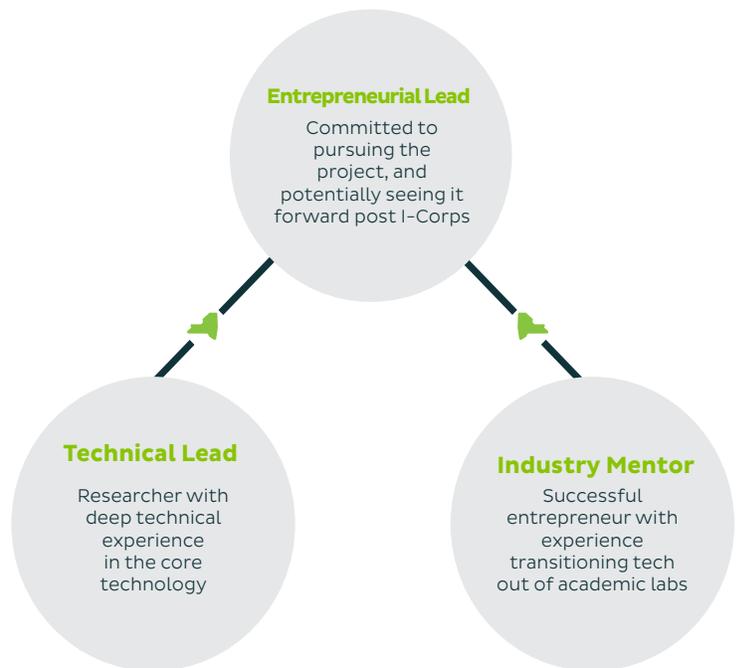# Become a NSF I-Corps Industry Mentor

Top researchers from across the US apply to the National Science Foundation's I-Corps Teams program, an intensive seven-week innovation and entrepreneurship training course with mentoring and up to $50,000 in NSF funding. Selected teams complete over 100 customer discovery interviews to collect first-hand evidence for or against product-market fit.

The entire I-Corps Team engages with industry; talking to customers, partners and competitors; and encountering the uncertainty and excitement of creating successful innovations. Getting out of the university laboratory to explore the commercial potential is what the effort is about.

I-Corps Teams have three primary members:

Entrepreneurial Lead
Committed to pursuing the project, and potentially seeing it forward post I-Corps

Technical Lead
Researcher with deep technical experience in the core technology

Industry Mentor
Successful entrepreneur with experience transitioning tech out of academic labs

Responsibilities:

- Help the team recognize and reduce confirmation bias during the customer discovery process. The IM is seen as an extension of the I-Corps Teaching Team, who helps the team absorb & apply the lessons.

- Provide some industry contacts and/or can help the team find the right people to interview, and to help the Entrepreneurial Lead (EL) make the most out of the interview process.

- Serve as a sounding board and consultant. The IM may consult, and help the EL and TL process the feedback being received. The teaching team will push, cajole, inform & coach, but cannot consult.

Time Commitment:

The IM must be able to participate in all the required meetings during the seven week cohort, including a 3-day, in person Kickoff workshop, weekly 90 minute online meetings, and a 2-day, in person Closing Workshop. The IM also supports the team in reviewing and assessing interview findings, and preparing weekly assignments.

Compensation:

The IM's customer discovery-related travel expenses are covered by the team's $50,000 I-Corps grant. Mentors volunteer their time, and are not paid.