



## 2025 Cleveland I-Corps@NCATS Program RFA

**Administrator(s):** Anna Thornton Matos, MPH

**Instructor:** Julie Collins

**Participating Organization(s):**

- Case Western Reserve University
- Cleveland Clinic Foundation
- Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center
- MetroHealth Medical Center
- Northeast Ohio Medical University
- University Hospitals Health System
- The University of Toledo

**Length:** 8 weeks (early October to end-November or early December)

**Discipline/Subject Area:** Innovations in Life Sciences

**Internal Application Submission Deadline:** Pending

**Innovation Type:** Life Sciences- therapeutics, biologics, diagnostics, devices, Health IT/Services

**Learning objectives:** Validated Problem-Solution Fit focused on Customer Segments and Value Proposition the context of biotech, 30+ Customer Discovery Interviews

**Program Goals:** Number of participants taking part, research commercialization plan that could include NSF or NIH National program

### Description

The I-Corps@ NCATS program is a 8-week short course, based upon the successful [National Science Foundation I-Corps](#) and [I-Corps at NIH](#) Entrepreneurial Training Program, which combines business model training with a customer discovery process. The short course helps prepare teams to apply to go on to a national program at NSF or NIH, and is designed to help all participants, regardless of the stage of development of their innovation.

The CCTS will enhance the process of scientific translation by taking the demonstrated lessons learned and best practices from the I-Corps@NCATS program and disseminating them across a wider network of Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) Hubs.

### Why participate

- Learn how to "get out of the building" and talk to potential customers, partners, and competitors



- Identify commercial potential for your technology
- Experience the uncertainty and excitement of creating a startup
- Receive eligibility to participate in the NSF I-Corps Teams Program
- Entrepreneurship/commercialization mentoring team
- Travel funds for those traveling from outside of local region to CWRU campus:
  - >100 miles from CWRU's campus (University of Toledo) - \$2500 budget for day/overnight travel
  - 25-99 miles from CWRU's campus (NEOMED) - \$500 budget for day travel

### Objectives

- Develop familiarity with Lean Startup concepts, methods, and tools, such as customer discovery, value proposition design, and the business model canvas.
- Increase the commercialization potential of your innovation by applying Lean Startup tools and related techniques, with the intention of understanding how to build a business case for your innovation and how you can tailor your commercialization research to support that business case.
- Ensure you "get out of the building" and conduct at least 30 interviews to understand the real-world problems customers are trying to solve and how your technology might be applied to provide a differentiated advantage from THEIR perspective.
- Build an understanding of – and connections to – the commercial ecosystem for your innovation.
- Use the in-session, hands-on activities, as well as between-session homework and meetings with potential customers and expert resources to develop a compelling commercialization plan.

### Requirements

- The expected combined team effort level is approximately 1 day per week in the I-Corps, and all members of the team are expected to be engaged.
- The program included the following major components:
  - Orientation
  - Kick-off seminar
  - Office hours with teaching team
  - Interviews/meetings with at least 30 potential customers
  - Midpoint seminar
  - Finale seminar
- Ability to attend the following components **in person**: I-Corps Kickoff and I-Corps Finale
- The following activities can be fully remote for participants traveling from off the CWRU campus, but require your attendance: Orientation, I-Corps meetings (interviews could be done locally), Office hours with the teaching team, and Midpoint.



### **Eligibility**

- 2+ team members - consisting of an Entrepreneurial Lead (undergrad, grad, Ph.D. student who will move the project forward) and a Technical Lead (typically be a faculty member, senior research scientist or postdoctoral scholar with deep and direct technical expertise in the actual core technology about which the I-Corps team is exploring commercial potential)
- Must be able to attend all 4 workshop dates (Orientation, Kickoff, Midpoint, Finale)
- Have a tech innovation in any STEM-BioMed field and want to explore its commercialization potential
- Willing to find and talk to at least 30 potential customers in eight weeks
- Interest in applying for the Nationals NSF I-Corps Teams program and \$50,000 grant
- Must have a salary or stipend paid through a CTSC affiliate and/or be supported by a training grant.
- Currently working with a PI on a CTSC affiliate-based technology that can be explored for commercialization potential.
- If an applicant does not have a project, but wants to be involved, they need to ask Anna Thornton Matos at [abt11@case.edu](mailto:abt11@case.edu) to help schedule a meeting with Drs. Steve Fening and Ofer Reizes before submitting the application.

### **To apply**

- Google Form filled out by 9/15/2025: <https://forms.gle/duZcPXB3ertCEoQc9>
- Individuals selected for participation will be notified by end-September 2025

Questions may be directed to Anna at [abt11@case.edu](mailto:abt11@case.edu).