



SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme Call 2016

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Last Updated: 18th July 2016

Q. What is the NSF Innovation Corp (I-Corps™) Programme?

A. The [NSF I-Corps™ Programme](#) was first launched in 2011 to provide entrepreneurship training for NSF-funded scientists and engineers. It is a set of activities and programmes that prepares scientists and engineers to extend their focus beyond the laboratory and broadens the impact of select research projects. It has achieved remarkable success to-date with more than 700 research teams having completed the [NSF I-Corps™ Curriculum](#) which is based on the “Lean Launchpad” model developed by serial entrepreneur Steve Blank.

Q. What is I-Corps@SFI?

A. SFI has partnered with the National Science Foundation on a collaborative agreement called I-Corps@SFI that will allow teams within SFI-funded Research Centres to undertake entrepreneurial training in the US as part of the NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps™) Curriculum on a trial basis. I-Corps@SFI is the first international collaboration of its kind for the NSF I-Corps™ Programme.

Q. What is the SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme?

A. The SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme is intended to support SFI funded researchers in developing entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to realise new opportunities for their research that will, in turn, lead to economic and societal impact. The programme will run on a pilot basis and is open to applications from researchers currently working in or associated with an SFI Research Centre. The programme will support the participation of SFI teams in the NSF I-Corps™ Curriculum.

Q. Who can apply to the SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme 2016?

A. Applications to the programme will be accepted from **SFI award holders associated with an SFI Research Centre**. These include: Director, Co-Director (including Spoke Leader), Funded Investigator, or an Academic Collaborator who themselves hold an active SFI award or have held an SFI award in the last 5 years (2011 – 2016).

Q. Is a team required for participation in the programme?

A. Yes, an application must identify a participating team that will be led by the lead applicant as Principal Investigator (PI). The team must include an Entrepreneurial Lead (EL) and an Entrepreneurial Mentor (EM). In all cases, the Lead Applicant and Entrepreneurial Lead must be:

- A member of the academic staff of an eligible Research Body (permanent or with a contract that covers the period of the award), or
- A contract researcher with a contract that covers the period of the award (contract may be subject to receipt of the award), and
- Hold a PhD or equivalent. Please consult the [SFI Policy on PhD Equivalence](#) for further information.

Q. Who submits the application?

A. An application must be submitted by the lead applicant. The application is submitted to SFI by email i-corps@sfi.ie and must use the official application templates which can be found on the SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme 2016 webpage.

Q. How many applications can I submit in this call?

A. Only one application per person is allowed. The SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme involves immersive training that must be undertaken by each team member, as such it is not permitted/possible to be involved in more than one application.

Q. How many applications can an individual team member be involved in?

A. An individual team member may only be involved in one application. See *How many applications can I submit in this call?*

Q. What is the role of each team member?

A. The **Principal Investigator (PI)** is expected to provide administrative and technical leadership on the award and oversee project management. As such, it is expected that the PI will be an established independent researcher who can demonstrate their experience in the management of awards and associated resources. The **Entrepreneurial Lead (EL)** will be a post-doctoral researcher who currently works under the supervision of the PI or who may wish to work with the PI as part of the programme. The EL is expected to have the necessary technical expertise relating to the proposed technology along with the motivation to lead the opportunity discovery/validation activities of the team during the programme and progress the commercialisation of the technology following completion of the programme. The Entrepreneurial Lead will work closely with the Entrepreneurial Mentor. The **Entrepreneurial Mentor (EM)** is expected to bring entrepreneurial experience (including relevant industry experience) to the team and will serve as the principal guide to the EL in determining the technology disposition. In addition to providing mentorship to the EL, the EM is also expected to have significant input in developing the commercial strategy based on the learnings from the programme. Ideally, the EM would be willing to continue their engagement with the EL and PI following completion of the programme. The EM will be responsible for guiding the team and tracking their progress through regular communication with SFI/NSF Programme Staff. In certain cases, it may be appropriate for the EM to have a business/commercial development role in the host research centre.

Q. Can the Entrepreneurial Mentor be an individual external to the Research Centre?

A. Yes. In fact, this is encouraged. The EM should be in a position to provide independent and objective guidance to the Principal Investigator (PI) and Entrepreneurial Lead (EL). In cases where the EM is external to the Research Centre, the complementarity and motivation for participation of the EM will be closely examined during the proposal review process.

Q. What is the award size and what can funding be used for?

A. Applications may be submitted for up to a maximum of €35k direct costs for a period of 6-months (see *How is the training structured?*). Eligible costs under the programme are limited to:

- Entrepreneurial training programme for team
- Travel (e.g. travel and accommodation costs for team to attend initial bootcamp and final workshop, opportunity discovery/validation)
- Materials and Consumables (e.g. small scale prototyping/demonstration)

NOTE: Under the SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme, no indirect or overhead contribution will be provided to the Host Research Body.

Q. How is the training structured?

A. The SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme comprises an intensive 3-day bootcamp undertaken at an NSF I-Corps™ affiliated location in the United States, followed by an immersive 6-week period of opportunity discovery/validation during which teams are mentored by NSF I-Corps™ trainers. Participants will be based at their Host Research Bodies for the duration of this 6-week period but will be able to use their award to undertake opportunity discovery activities that requires them to travel. During this period, teams must participate in on-line webinars where they will engage with NSF mentors and other programme participants. At the end of the 6-week mentored period, the formal training component of the programme is completed by attendance at a 2-day “lessons learned” workshop at an I-Corps™ affiliated location in the United States.



While the training component of the award consists of the 3-day bootcamp, 6-week period of opportunity discovery/validation and 2-day “lessons learned” workshop, the remaining period of the award may be used to undertake further opportunity discovery/validation activities in relation to the proposed technology.

NOTE: All team members must attend the initial bootcamp and participate in web-based lectures during the programme. Finally, all team members must attend the final “lessons learned” workshop where they will present their findings and business pitches.

Q. Is the programme open to TIDA awardees?

A. TIDA awardees can apply to the programme provided they meet all eligibility criteria associated with the call (see Call Document and *Who can apply to the SFI/NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme 2016? and Is a team required for participation in the programme?*). Postdoctoral researchers who worked on a TIDA or who held a TIDA award having applied under Category (C) are particularly encouraged to consider participation in the programme.

NOTE: Applications based on technologies being developed as part of a TIDA 2015 award will not be accepted. Applications from individuals who are currently under review in the TIDA 2016 programme call will not be accepted.

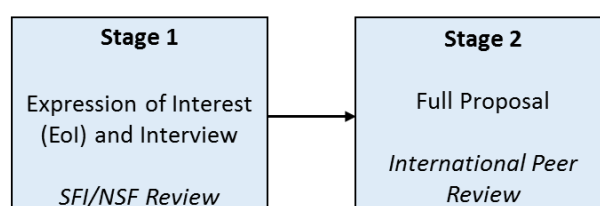
Q. What is the review process?

A. Application to the programme consists of a 2-stage process:

- **Stage 1:** Evaluation involves the submission of an Expression of Interest and interview. The Eol should provide high level information on the team, technology and commercial opportunity. Following the submission of an Eol to the programme, teams will be invited to participate in a telephone interview with SFI and NSF programme staff. The purpose of this telephone interview will be to assess the team's capabilities and commitment to the programme.

Based on the outcome of this review stage, SFI will select teams who will be invited to submit a full proposal to Stage 2 of the review process.

- **Stage 2:** The review of applications submitted to Stage 2 of the programme is undertaken by a panel of international experts engaged by SFI. Only proposals deemed to demonstrate both excellent technical quality and strong commercial or societal impact potential are recommended for funding by the panel.



Q. When and where is training undertaken?

A. Successful applicants to the programme will be able to participate in training in the United States during Q1 of 2017. A detailed schedule will be made available to all applicants invited to submit full proposals to the programme.

Q. Who can I contact for further information/assistance?

A. For further information/assistance, please contact i-corps@sfi.ie