The Milwaukee NSF I-Corps Site Program (http://icorpsmilwaukee.org/) helps researchers and academic entrepreneurs explore viability of their technologies and ventures through the “Lean Startup” or “Lean Launch” process of direct engagement with the potential markets.

In addition to exploring markets and the “problem-solution fit” participants will also gain important professional development skills and industry contacts.

So far, 166 teams and more than 600 participants have completed the program and discovered insights about markets through a rigorous process of “customer discovery.” Here’s what some of them had to say:

**JOHN BURFEIND, MD**
Staff Physician, Medical College of Wisconsin, Division of Hematology and Oncology

*The Milwaukee local I-Corps site experience is simply outstanding. ... the ... program has given each of my student teams the tools - and mindset - needed to effectively determine whether our technologies truly are worth the effort and research dollars.*

**ROBERT A. SCHEIDT, PhD**
Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Marquette University

*The Milwaukee NSF I-Corps program really got the ball rolling for our biotech startup, Essential Biotechnology LLC. ...*

**MICHAEL JAMES, PhD**
Assistant Professor, Medical College of Wisconsin, Division of Surgical Oncology

*My participation in I-Corps was enlightening. ... the customer discovery process leveraged my research which will be an asset as I move forward in my tenure track position.*

**MICHELE POLFUSS, PhD, RN, CPNP-AC/PC**
Assistant Professor, College of Nursing, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Team ideas or projects eligible for NSF I-Corps program can originate from student work, research (funded or unfunded), institutional- or industrial projects. The program encourages projects with a focus in an area(s) of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics. However, all types of projects will be considered.
The Lean Launch methodology is the best-in-class approach to venture creation employed by leading incubators around the country. It consists of three elements: (1) the business model canvas, (2) the customer discovery process and (3) the minimum viable product (MVP). The business model canvas is a shorthand way to frame the key elements of your business. Based on the canvas the teams will design questions (or hypotheses) to test during the customer discovery process.

Customer discovery is a central element of the Lean Launch. In the course of this four-week program teams will be challenged to schedule and conduct 40, face-to-face (zoom/webex/skype or in-person) customer interviews employing questioning techniques learned in this course. NSF I-Corps Site program will help participants to develop a new mindset (hypothesis-driven entrepreneurship) and to learn the art of business model iterative development through customer interviews and data analysis.

The program consists of one pre-meeting with your team and five synchronous group workshops conducted virtually online on Monday evenings. Group workshops will provide a mix of short format instruction, team exercises and report outs. Teams will conduct stakeholder interviews, complete exercises and other materials outside of the Monday night sessions. Teams must commit to attending each of the five synchronous/virtual workshops on:

- Team pre-meeting week of 10/11 – Business Model Canvas and Tech Check (*)
- Monday, 10/18 – 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM (Zoom session)
- Monday, 10/25 – 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM (Zoom session)
- Monday, 11/1 – 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM (Zoom session)
- Monday, 11/8 – 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM (Zoom session)
- Monday, 11/15 – 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM - Final Lessons Learned Presentation (*)

* These sessions may be conducted via Zoom or in person.

Teams are composed of three members who can be students, post-docs, staff, faculty, alumni, or members of the local entrepreneurial community. Applicants should apply as a team and identify at least two members who will commit to the customer discovery process as the Entrepreneurial Lead (EL) and the Academic Lead (AL). Teams will be matched with the Mentor (M) who will guide them through customer discovery (or they can identify their own mentor).

The I-Corps Site will provide:

- **Workshops on Customer Discovery** – providing practical tips on reaching customers, asking good question and gaining insights relevant to your business model
- **Mentoring and Networks** – connections to I-Corps mentors and a growing network of support for entrepreneurs in the Milwaukee region
- **Monetary support** – academic teams will be eligible to request small grants (up to $1,000) to support business model development and/or customer discovery activities after successful completion of the program.
- **Leveraging Other Funding** – developing materials needed for strong application to the National NSF I-Corps program and related SBIR grant programs

**Application Deadline:** Currently accepting applications for the Fall 2021.

For additional information and to download an application form, go to: [http://icorpsmilwaukee.org](http://icorpsmilwaukee.org)

If you do not receive a confirmation of your application in 24 hours, please contact organizers.

Contacts: Ilya Avdeev, avdeev@uwm.edu; Brian Thompson, briant@uwmrf.org