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## Invent Penn State NSF I-Corps Site Program Background and Eligibility Criteria 2020-21

### **About NSF I-Corps**

NSF I-Corps is a public-private partnership program that teaches university and community entrepreneurs with a targeted Lean Launchpad curriculum to identify valuable product opportunities that can emerge from academic research and the innovation ecosystems surrounding our university communities.

The *Invent Penn State* I-Corps Site provides mini-grants, commercialization training and mentorship for up to 30 potential startup teams per year. The commercialization training sessions, offered through a number of boot camp programs, help inventors begin customer discovery, learn about the commercialization process, network with experienced entrepreneurs, and determine if a market exists for their innovation.

Invent Penn State I-Corps Site boot camps were piloted at Penn State University Park and Penn State Altoona in 2017/18, but the bootcamps have now spread across the Commonwealth. Selected teams will:

- receive a mini-grant of up to \$3,000, which can be used to attend industry trade shows, visit potential customers, and cover customer discovery expenses
- have a dedicated mentor who meets with teams to provide business expertise, advice on pitch development, funding strategies, and help grow a network of contacts
- perform 30 structured customer interviews to gain insights into the market for your innovation
- have opportunities to showcase their new venture at the annual Invent Penn State Venture & IP Conference (more details at [www.pennstatevip.com](http://www.pennstatevip.com))
- become eligible to apply for an I-Corps National Teams \$50,000 grant award (This is an alternate National Teams eligibility path for PI's who have not previously received NSF funding) and
- qualify for an increasing number of NSF grant awards that require NSF I-Corps training as a criteria for eligibility.

### **Eligibility**

- Eligible projects must be in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) discipline.
- Teams should have a minimum of three persons:
  - **An academic lead** who will serve as principal investigator (PI) — typically a Penn State faculty or staff member
  - **An entrepreneurial lead** — a student, faculty/staff, recent alumni or community member
  - **A business mentor** — to provide experienced perspectives to the team; mentors will be assigned if needed.
- Teams must commit to attending required workshops and cohort meetings. Check program details for more information on the associated time commitment.
- Teams must perform a minimum of 30 customer interviews by the end of the program.

## How To Apply

Eligible teams can apply to any one of a number of established boot camps based on the lean startup and customer discovery methods endorsed by NSF I-Corps:

Ben Franklin Technology Partner's TechCelerator <https://cnp.benfranklin.org/are-ben-franklins-techcelerator-boot-camps-right-for-you/>

Located across central PA, TechCelerator specializes in commercialization support for research-derived technologies in complex, often regulated, markets.

Happy Valley LaunchBox FastTrack / Idea TestLab <http://launchbox.psu.edu/>

Located on Allen Street in downtown State College, Happy Valley LaunchBox specializes in support for early-stage, scalable startups focused on emerging markets, digital or hardware innovations or novel business models.

Penn State Berks Idea TestLab <https://sites.psu.edu/ceed>

Located at Penn State Berks in Reading, PA, Idea TestLab will engage aspiring entrepreneurs with industry, potential customers, partners and competitors and help teams encounter the uncertainty and excitement of creating successful innovations.

Penn State New Kensington Idea TestLab <https://newkensington.psu.edu/event/idea-testlab-0>

Located in the Corridor of Innovation in downtown New Kensington, the 4-session Idea TestLab helps you get a better handle on what problem your customer really has, where they hang out, and what value you can provide that others can't.

Penn State Harrisburg Idea TestLab <https://harrisburg.psu.edu/invent/events/idea-testlab>

Located in the Eastgate Center, the 6-session Idea TestLab helps you get a better handle on what problem your customer really has, where they hang out, and what value you can provide that others can't.

Penn State Altoona LaunchBox 8-week Training Program <https://sites.psu.edu/altoonalaunchbox/>

Located in the heart of downtown Altoona, LaunchBox engages future business owners and local entrepreneurs to explore their startup business ideas and get feedback on challenges they face.

Summer Founder's Program <http://summerfounders.psu.edu>

The Summer Founders Program provides Penn State teams \$10,000 each to work on their startup, social good, or non-profit idea for the summer. The 2020 Summer Founders program, in partnership with Happy Valley LaunchBox, will provide the funding, mentorship and resources you need to scale your new venture.

**After you are accepted to one of these programs, please fill out the *Invent Penn State* NSF I-Corps Site Application and send it to [ICorps@psu.edu](mailto:ICorps@psu.edu).**

#### **Other Opportunities to Explore I-Corps**

At the Penn State College of Medicine, inventors interested in exploring the commercial potential of their biomedical invention should explore the Innovations Program, an initiative of Penn State's Clinical + Translational Science Institute sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS). By utilizing the iCorps@NCATS customer discovery methodology, the program focuses on helping faculty, staff and students discover the potential and accelerate the impact of biomedical research on human health. <http://sites.psu.edu/innovations/>

## **Frequently Asked Questions 6.6.18**

### **Q: Can I-Corps reimburse company expenses?**

*A: No, I-Corps funds reimburse individual expenses aimed at customer discovery, not company expenses.*

### **Q: What can I-Corps Funds be used for? What are eligible expenses?**

*A: I-Corps funding is designed to assist teams in performing customer discovery. This generally includes interacting 1-on-1, in person, with potential customers to better understand their needs and challenges, and to validate assumptions about your target market.*

*Allowed expenses include:*

- *Travel expenses, trade shows and conference registrations or other meetings designed to directly interact with potential clients or experts in your market*
- *Modest amounts of equipment or materials (no more than 50% of your total expenses) needed to fabricate physical prototypes to be tested with real customers. Prototypes are defined as first, or preliminary-stage models, built to test a concept or process after your first 30 customer interviews are complete*
- *Modest digital prototyping infrastructure (no more than 50% of your total expenses) such as AWS subscriptions after your first 30 customer interviews are complete needed to test prototypes with real customers.*

*Expenses that are not allowed:*

- *Marketing or branding items such as development of logos, naming, business cards, web sites, or any branded items*
- *Office equipment such as PCs, tablets, printers, or furnishings*
- *Compensation for team members, advisors, or mentors*
- *Incentives for customers to meet with you including gift cards or give-aways*
- *Applications or subscriptions for advertising or customer relationship programs (e.g., MailChimp, Salesforce, Taboola, Google AdWords)*

### **Q: Is there a timeframe for expending my funding?**

*A: We strongly recommend completing your customer discovery and finalizing all expenses within 6 months of entering your I-Corps-affiliated boot camp. This ensures that you are keeping momentum and applying the customer discovery principles you have learned in the boot camp. If you anticipate needing more time, please note so and explain why on your I-Corps application.*

### **Q: I really want to spend the funds on equipment and prototyping. Can I?**

*A: The goal of the I-Corps program is to get teams 'out of the building' interacting with potential customers for customer discovery - not to buy equipment. We do, however, understand that prototypes (both physical and digital) are useful for eliciting customer feedback. So our policy is to permit up to 50% of the team's expenses to go towards*

*prototyping (physical or digital) and other materials after the team has conducted 30 customer interviews. The teams should then do additional customer interviews after the prototyping is complete.*

**Q: Do I need to document my customer interviews?**

*A: Yes. Consult your program director for tips on the customer discovery interviews.*

**Q: Can our team have more than one entrepreneurial lead?**

*A: Yes, but only one entrepreneurial lead needs to be on the application form.*

**Q: I am an entrepreneur and am interested in participating, but do not yet have an academic lead or business mentor. Can you help?**

*A: Yes, the I-Corps Site team will do our best to help identify potential I-Corps team members. Please indicate this on your application.*

**Q: If I am the entrepreneurial lead with my own technology idea and I team up with a faculty member to explore the market potential of that idea, what happens if we co-invent something new?**

*A: If the faculty member makes an inventive contribution to your technology or solution, the new invention would then be jointly owned by the entrepreneurial lead and the university. Please have the faculty member contact the Office of Technology Management if you think you have jointly invented something new.*

*Penn State Office of Technology Management  
<https://www.research.psu.edu/otm>  
814-865-6277  
[otminfo@psu.edu](mailto:otminfo@psu.edu)*

**Q: The technology I am interested in was not funded by the NSF or other agencies. Can I still participate?**

*A: Yes. Any STEM-related business idea is eligible.*

**Q: I understand that there is a I-Corps National Teams Program offered by NSF that provides additional funding. What is required to participate in that program?**

*A: By completing in the I-Corps Site program, you will establish an NSF funding lineage for your project, making it eligible for other sources of commercialization-focused funding from NSF. For more information, please visit [https://www.nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/i-corps/teams.jsp](https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/i-corps/teams.jsp)*

**Other Questions? Contact James Delattre at [jld141@psu.edu](mailto:jld141@psu.edu) for questions on team eligibility, award details or starting an I-Corps boot camp at your Penn State campus.**

## Invent Penn State NSF I-Corps Site Team Application

The Invent Penn State I-Corps Site provides \$3000 mini-grants, commercialization training and mentorship for up to 30 startup teams per years. The commercialization training sessions, offered through a number of I-Corps affiliated boot camp programs, help inventors begin customer discovery, learn about the commercialization process, network with experienced entrepreneurs, and determine if a market exists for their innovation.

**Eligible applicants for the I-Corps Site grant program must first be selected for one of the I-Corps affiliated programs. Links with more information about each I-Corps affiliated program are below.**

### Applicant Information

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Team / Startup Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

**I have been accepted into the following I-Corps affiliated training program**

Ben Franklin Technology Partner's TechCelerator - any location

Happy Valley LaunchBox FastTrack / Hedy's

Idea TestLab - any location

Penn State Altoona, Altoona LaunchBox 8-week Training Program

Summer Founders Program

NFS I-Corps Short Course @ Penn State

### Contact Information

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#### **Academic Team Lead (Faculty/Staff Member)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Academic Unit: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Entrepreneurial Team Lead (Student, Staff, Community Member)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Affiliation (student, alum, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Academic Background: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Business Mentor**

Have you identified a business mentor that you would like to work with on this project?

No, please assign me a business mentor

Yes (please fill out contact information on business mentor below)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Relevant Business Experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Budget Narrative**

Please describe how you intend to spend your award funds.

Please provide a budget estimate. We recognize that the actual expenses will differ.

<b>TOTAL</b>	

Please email this application to: [ICorps@psu.edu](mailto:ICorps@psu.edu).

Questions: Please contact the director of your I-Corps affiliated training program  
 or email [ICorps@psu.edu](mailto:ICorps@psu.edu)



## NSF I-Corps Reporting Requirements

Penn State and the National Science Foundation are very interested in tracking your success.

Teams awarded NSF I-Corps grants will be asked to respond to an annual survey that captures your progress. The annual surveys, which will be distributed beginning in Fall 2020, will ask:

- Did you start a company based on the innovation explored during I-Corps?
- Did you apply for the NSF National I-Corps Teams program?
- Did you apply for SBIR, Fund for Innovation or other funding?
- Did you participate in any investor events or showcases?
- Did you receive any awards or startup pitch prizes?
- Did you receive any seed or angel investment?
- Were any licensing agreements issued or new patents filed?
- Has the company generated any revenue?
- Did your work result in any new publications or conference papers?

Please track these success metrics during the year so that you can respond accurately and promptly to the annual survey.

**Thank you!**

## Invent Penn State I-Corps Teams

# Travel and General Reimbursement Guide

Teams selected to participate in the Invent Penn State I-Corps Site Program receive a mini-grant of up to \$3,000 to cover customer discovery expenses. This grant comes in the form of reimbursement on allowable expenses **for individuals (not established companies)** which includes travel to industry trade shows, conferences or potential customers. Funds can also be used to reimburse expenses related to prototype develop after a minimum of 30 customer interviews have been completed and documented.

When submitting items for reimbursement, you will need to obtain a receipt for ALL expenses, except meals. Meals will be entered under your daily meal per diem (General Services Administration (GSA) rate applies to area of travel). **Please consult your I-Corps training program director if you have questions on allowable expenses. Or contact [ICorps@psu.edu](mailto:ICorps@psu.edu) with any other questions.**

**Penn State's Strategic Interdisciplinary Research Office (SIRO) is the financial administer for the NSF I-Corps award. Please directly submit your receipts and documentation to the SIRO Contacts listed at the end of this document.**

## REIMBURSEMENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR PENN STATE EMPLOYEES

### Lodging

- Receipts must show the amount of the charge, the date and the name and location of the establishment.
- Lodging at a private residence is allowable, and the traveler will be reimbursed a maximum of \$25.00/day. The traveler is required to list the name and address of the residence.

### Transportation

- Transportation must be arranged at the least possible cost to meet the business purpose of the trip.
- The choice of flying verses driving is influenced by distance, time, cost and the traveler's preference.
- If an outside agency is used for airfare (Expedia, Travelocity, etc.), a flight comparison is needed by Penn State's Travel Agency to show the cost is cheaper. It's preferred to make all travel arrangements through Penn State's Travel Agency.
- Bag check fees are eligible for reimbursement with receipt.
- If a taxi, bus, train, uber/lyft is used, please obtain a receipt for reimbursement.
- It is preferred you book a Penn State Fleet Vehicle for business travel. <https://transportation.psu.edu/fleet>. You may rent a car from an approved dealer. Fuel may be reimbursed for rental cars only.
- Toll fees (NO receipts required) and parking (receipts required) are eligible for reimbursement.

## **Mileage**

- If a personal vehicle is used for travel, you may be reimbursed for your mileage at \$0.54 per mile. If total roundtrip mileage is more than 750 miles, a flight comparison is needed to show mileage cost is cheaper than airfare and justification is needed to explain why driving was needed verses flying.

## **Penn State Travel**

- PSU employees are encouraged to use the Penn State Travel Agency, but may book through another vendor if it is cheaper or better meets your travel needs. Please document why you chose another vendor and provide a cost comparison.

Anthony Travel

(814) 258-6111 or 833-827-3331

[pennstate@anthonytravel.com](mailto:pennstate@anthonytravel.com)

Penn State Travel Policy - <https://policy.psu.edu/policies/tr02>

## **Travel Reimbursement Form**

- Employee Reimbursement is managed through Penn State's Employee Reimbursement System -<https://ers.psu.edu/>
- ERS Delegation. Instructions to assign ERS delegation are attached at the end of this document. To facilitate the reimbursement process, please assign Alyssa Garbrick [alg35@psu.edu](mailto:alg35@psu.edu) as an Expense Delegate in ERS. An Employee Travelers Reimbursement Worksheet is available from Alyssa if needed.
- Please note your team name on receipts submitted through the ERS. Reimbursement will be directly deposited into the bank account you have on file with the university.
- Students on Wage Payroll are employees and should complete the Employee Travelers Reimbursement Worksheet available from SIRO.
- International Residents. The Non-Employee Information Form may also need to be completed if residency status is anything other than United State Resident/Citizen. Please contact SIRO with questions if you are a Penn State Employee but non-US Resident/Citizen seeking reimbursement.

## **Charging Travel Expenses**

- Penn State Employees with Penn State Purchasing Cards may use them for travel expenses. If you use a Penn State Purchasing Card, your reimbursement report cannot be submitted to the ERS until all charges have posted to your purchasing card. If you book travel or pay for expenses for others traveling with you, those items will need to be included on your reimbursement report, not the reimbursement report other travelers.

- If an employee is not using a Penn State Purchasing Card, you will be reimbursed for cash expenses (accompanied by a receipt) or approved expenses on your personal credit card.

### **Supplies & Materials Reimbursement**

- Please note that no more than 50% of your total expenses can be for Supplies & Materials.
- A Penn State Purchasing Card may be used for supplies/office material for use on research. Signed receipts and a Purchasing Card Support Form will need to be submitted to your area's appointed staff members for reconciliation.
- If you are using your own funds, please submit receipts for reimbursement.

### **SIRO Contacts**

Allison Eisenhower – Post Award Manager – [alm25@psu.edu](mailto:alm25@psu.edu) – (814) 865-1578

Alyssa Garbrick – Travel Coordinator – [alg35@psu.edu](mailto:alg35@psu.edu) – (814)-863-3533

## **REIMBURSEMENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR NON-PENN STATE EMPLOYEES**

### **Lodging**

- Receipts must show the amount of the charge, the date and the name and location of the establishment.
- Lodging at a private residence is allowable, and the traveler will be reimbursed a maximum of \$25.00/day. The traveler is required to list the name and address of the residence.

### **Transportation**

- Transportation must be arranged at the least possible cost to meet the business purpose of the trip.
- The choice of flying verses driving is influenced by distance, time, cost and the traveler's preference.
- Bag check fees are eligible for reimbursement with receipt.
- If a taxi, bus, train, uber/lyft is used, please obtain a receipt for reimbursement.
- Toll fees (NO receipts required) and parking (receipts required) are eligible for reimbursement.

### **Mileage**

- You may be reimbursed for your mileage at \$0.54 per mile. If total roundtrip mileage is more than 750 miles, a flight comparison is needed to show mileage cost is cheaper than airfare and justification is needed to explain why driving was needed verses flying.

## **Travel Reimbursement Form**

- Undergraduate Students and Non-Penn State Employees will complete the Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement Form.  
<https://guru.psu.edu/forms/public/non-employee-travel-reimbursement-request.html>
- A reimbursement check will be mailed to the address provided by you on the form. If the student is on any type of wage or employee appointment, then the Employee Reimbursement Form would be completed.
- Please send receipts, and the completed Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement Form with your Team name noted near the budget box to the SIRO Contacts listed at the end of this document.

## **Charging Travel Expenses**

- Travel expenses should be charged to a personal credit card. Please submit receipts for reimbursement.

## **Supplies & Materials Reimbursement**

- Please note that no more than 50% of your total expenses can be for Supplies & Materials.
- Please send receipts, and the completed Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement Form with your Team name noted near the budget box to the SIRO Contacts listed at the end of this document.

## **SIRO Contacts**

Allison Eisenhower – Post Award Manager – [alm25@psu.edu](mailto:alm25@psu.edu) – (814) 865-1578

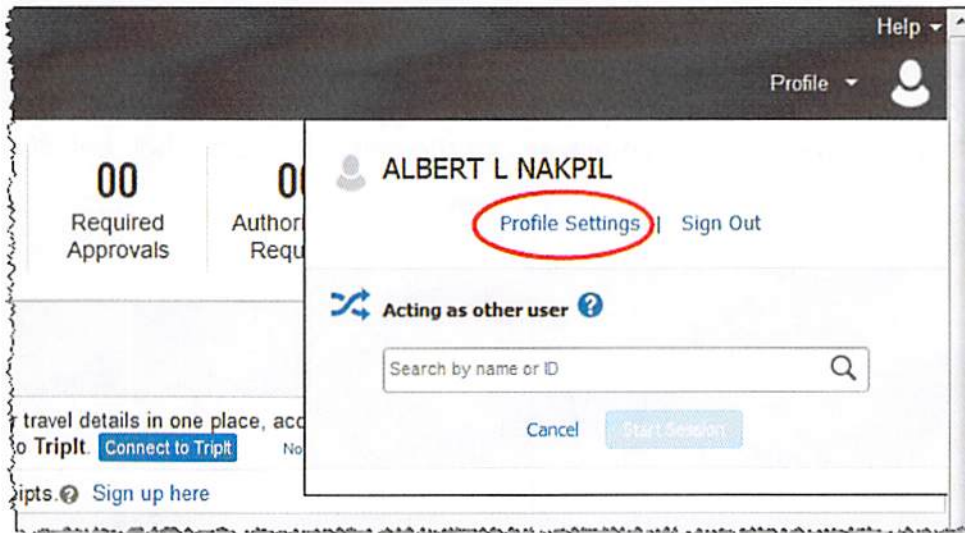
Alyssa Garbrick – Travel Coordinator – [alg35@psu.edu](mailto:alg35@psu.edu) – (814) 863-3533

To facilitate the reimbursement process, please assign Alyssa Garbrick alg35@psu.edu as an Expense Delegate in ERS using the instructions below.

## How to Assign Delegates in ERS

Delegates can be assigned to create Expense Reports in ERS for employees. The traveler (employee) can designate their own delegates using the following instructions.

- Go to **ers.psu.edu** and click on **Login to Concur**.
- In the ERS website, click on **Profile** in the Concur Menu bar (upper right corner of screen) and select **Profile Settings** in the dropdown window.



- In the Profile Options screen, click on **Expense Delegates**

### Profile Options

Select one of the following to customize your user profile.

- Personal Information**  
Your home address and emergency contact information.
- Company Information**  
Your company name and business address or your remote location address.
- Credit Card Information**  
You can store your credit card information here so you don't have to re-enter it each time you purchase an item or service.
- E-Receipt Activation**  
Enable e-receipts to automatically receive electronic receipts from participating vendors.
- Travel Vacation Reassignment**  
Going to be out of the office? Configure your backup travel manager.
- Expense Preferences**  
Select the options that define when you receive email notifications. Prompts are pages that appear when you select a certain action, such as Submit or Print.
- System Settings**  
Which time zone are you in? Do you prefer to use a 12 or 24-hour clock? When does your workday start/end?
- Contact Information**  
How can we contact you about your travel arrangements?
- Setup Travel Assistants**  
You can allow other people within your companies to book trips and enter expenses for you.
- Travel Profile Options**  
Carrier, Hotel, Rental Car and other travel-related preferences.
- Expense Delegates** (circled in red)  
Delegates are employees who are allowed to perform work on behalf of other employees.
- Mobile Registration**  
Set up access to Concur on your mobile device

- The Expense Delegates screen will list your delegates. Click on the **Add** button and type the name of the person that you would like to add as your delegate in the search field. As you type information into the field, names will pop in. Select the name you would like to be your delegate and the name will be appear in your list of delegates. (You aren't done yet!)
- Click in the **Can Prepare** box and a check with appear in it and the **Can View Receipts** box. You can also choose for this delegate to receive copies of the emails you receive from ERS.
- Select **Save** before you leave this window to finish the process.

**Note:** The employee must add their delegates. Someone who needs to act as a delegate is not able to initiate the process of becoming a delegate. Only after the delegation has been made by the employee can the delegate act on their behalf.