

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 539

AN ACT

To require the Director of the National Science Foundation to develop an I-Corps course to support commercialization-ready innovation companies, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Innovators to Entre-
3 preneurs Act of 2019”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) The National Science Foundation Innova-
7 tion Corps Program (hereinafter referred to as “I-
8 Corps”), created administratively by the Foundation
9 in 2011 and statutorily authorized in the American
10 Innovation and Competitiveness Act, has succeeded
11 in increasing the commercialization of Government-
12 funded research.

13 (2) I-Corps provides valuable entrepreneurial
14 education to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows,
15 and other researchers, providing formal training for
16 scientists and engineers to pursue careers in busi-
17 ness, an increasingly common path for advanced de-
18 gree holders.

19 (3) The I-Corps Teams program is successful in
20 part due to its focus on providing the specific types
21 of education and mentoring entrepreneurs need
22 based on the early stage of their companies, however
23 the program does not provide similar support to
24 them at later stages.

25 (4) The success of I-Corps in the very early
26 stages of the innovation continuum should be ex-

1 panded upon by offering additional entrepreneurship
2 training to small businesses as they advance toward
3 commercialization.

4 (5) The excellent training made available to
5 grantees of participating agencies through the I-
6 Corps Program should be made available to all Fed-
7 eral grantees as well as other businesses willing to
8 pay the cost of attending such training.

9 (6) The success of the I-Corps Program at pro-
10 moting entrepreneurship within research institutions
11 and encouraging research commercialization has
12 been due in part to the National Science Founda-
13 tion's efforts to date on building a national network
14 of science entrepreneurs, including convening stake-
15 holders, promoting national I-Corps courses, cata-
16 loguing best practices and encourage sharing be-
17 tween sites and institutions, and developing a men-
18 tor network.

19 (7) As the I-Corps Program continues to grow
20 and expand, the National Science Foundation should
21 maintain its focus on networking and information
22 sharing to ensure that innovators across the country
23 can learn from their peers and remain competitive.

1 **SEC. 3. EXPANDED PARTICIPATION IN I-CORPS.**

2 Section 601(c)(2) of the American Innovation and
3 Competitiveness Act (42 U.S.C. 1862s–8(c)(2)) is amend-
4 ed by adding at the end the following:

5 “(C) **ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS.**—

6 “(i) **ELIGIBILITY.**—The Director, in
7 consultation with relevant stakeholders, as
8 determined by the Director, which may in-
9 clude Federal agencies, I-Corps regional
10 nodes, universities, and public and private
11 entities engaged in technology transfer or
12 commercialization of technologies, shall
13 provide an option for participation in an I-
14 Corps Teams course by—

15 “(I) Small Business Innovation
16 Research Program grantees; and

17 “(II) other entities, as deter-
18 mined appropriate by the Director.

19 “(ii) **COST OF PARTICIPATION.**—The
20 cost of participation by a Small Business
21 Innovation Research Program grantee in
22 such course may be provided—

23 “(I) through I-Corps Teams
24 grants;

25 “(II) through funds awarded to
26 grantees under the Small Business In-

novation Research Program or the
Small Business Technology Transfer
Program;

“(III) by the grantor Federal
agency of the grantee using funds set
aside for the Small Business Innova-
tion Research Program under section
9(f)(1) of the Small Business Act (15
U.S.C. 638(f)(1));

“(IV) by the grantor Federal
agency of the grantee using funds set
aside for the Small Business Tech-
nology Transfer Program under sec-
tion 9(n)(1) of the Small Business
Act (15 U.S.C. 638(n)(1)); or

“(V) by the participating
teams.”.

**SEC. 4. I-CORPS COURSE FOR COMMERCIALIZATION-READY
PARTICIPANTS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the I-Corps pro-
gram described in section 601(c) of the American Innova-
tion and Competitiveness Act (42 U.S.C. 1862s–8(c)), the
Director shall develop an I-Corps course offered by I-
Corps regional nodes to support commercialization-ready
participants. Such course shall include skills such as at-

1 tracting investors, scaling up a company, and building a
2 brand.

3 (b) ENGAGEMENT WITH RELEVANT STAKE-
4 HOLDERS.—In developing the course under subsection (a),
5 the Director may consult with the heads of such Federal
6 agencies, universities, and public and private entities as
7 the Director determines to be appropriate.

8 (c) ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS.—The course developed
9 under subsection (a) shall—

10 (1) support participants that have completed an
11 I-Corps Teams course;

12 (2) support participants that have made the de-
13 cision to take an innovation to market.

14 **SEC. 5. REPORT.**

15 Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment
16 of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States
17 shall submit to Congress a report containing an evaluation
18 of the I-Corps program described in section 601(c) of the
19 American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (42 U.S.C.
20 1862s–8(c)). Such evaluation shall include an assessment
21 of the effects of I-Corps on—

22 (1) the commercialization of Federally funded
23 research and development;

24 (2) the higher education system; and

1 (3) regional economies and the national econ-
2 omy.

3 **SEC. 6. FUNDING.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Out of amounts otherwise author-
5 ized for the National Science Foundation, there is author-
6 ized to be appropriated a total of \$5,000,000 for fiscal
7 years 2020 and 2021 to carry out the activities described
8 in section 4 and the amendment made by section 3.

9 (b) LIMITATION.—No additional funds are authorized
10 to be appropriated to carry out this Act and the amend-
11 ments made by this Act, and this Act and such amend-
12 ments shall be carried out using amounts otherwise avail-
13 able for such purpose.

Passed the House of Representatives February 25,
2019.

Attest:

Clerk.

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