

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3253

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.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 4, 2020

Mr. COONS (for himself and Mr. YOUNG) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Innovators to Entre-
5 preneurs Act of 2020”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The National Science Foundation Innova-
9 tion Corps Program (hereinafter referred to as “I-

1 Corps”), created administratively by the Foundation
2 in 2011 and statutorily authorized in the American
3 Innovation and Competitiveness Act, has succeeded
4 in increasing the commercialization of Government-
5 funded research.

6 (2) I-Corps provides valuable entrepreneurial
7 education to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows,
8 and other researchers, providing formal training for
9 scientists and engineers to pursue careers in busi-
10 ness, an increasingly common path for advanced de-
11 gree holders.

12 (3) The I-Corps Teams program is successful in
13 part due to its focus on providing the specific types
14 of education and mentoring entrepreneurs need
15 based on the early stage of their companies, however
16 the program does not provide similar support to
17 them at later stages.

18 (4) The success of I-Corps in the very early
19 stages of the innovation continuum should be ex-
20 panded upon by offering additional entrepreneurship
21 training to small businesses as they advance toward
22 commercialization.

23 (5) The excellent training made available to
24 grantees of participating agencies through the I-
25 Corps Program should be made available to all Fed-

1 eral grantees as well as other businesses willing to
 2 pay the cost of attending such training.

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

13 (7) As the I-Corps Program continues to grow
 14 and expand, the National Science Foundation should
 15 maintain its focus on networking and information
 16 sharing to ensure that innovators across the country
 17 can learn from their peers and remain competitive.

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

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

22 “(C) ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS.—

23 “(i) ELIGIBILITY.—The Director, in
 24 consultation with relevant stakeholders, as
 25 determined by the Director, which may in-

1 clude Federal agencies, I-Corps regional
 2 nodes, universities, and public and private
 3 entities engaged in technology transfer or
 4 commercialization of technologies, shall
 5 provide an option for participation in an I-
 6 Corps Teams course by—

7 “(I) Small Business Innovation
 8 Research Program grantees; and

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

11 “(ii) COST OF PARTICIPATION.—The
 12 cost of participation by a Small Business
 13 Innovation Research Program grantee in
 14 such course may be provided—

15 “(I) through I-Corps Teams
 16 grants;

17 “(II) through funds awarded to
 18 grantees under the Small Business In-
 19 novation Research Program or the
 20 Small Business Technology Transfer
 21 Program;

22 “(III) by the grantor Federal
 23 agency of the grantee using funds set
 24 aside for the Small Business Innova-
 25 tion Research Program under section

1 9(f)(1) of the Small Business Act (15
 2 U.S.C. 638(f)(1));

3 “(IV) by the grantor Federal
 4 agency of the grantee using funds set
 5 aside for the Small Business Tech-
 6 nology Transfer Program under sec-
 7 tion 9(n)(1) of the Small Business
 8 Act (15 U.S.C. 638(n)(1)); or
 9 “(V) by the participating
 10 teams.”.

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

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the I-Corps pro-
 14 gram described in section 601(c) of the American Innova-
 15 tion and Competitiveness Act (42 U.S.C. 1862s–8(c)), the
 16 Director shall develop an I-Corps course offered by I-
 17 Corps regional nodes to support commercialization-ready
 18 participants. Such course shall include skills such as at-
 19 tracting investors, scaling up a company, and building a
 20 brand.

21 (b) ENGAGEMENT WITH RELEVANT STAKE-
 22 HOLDERS.—In developing the course under subsection (a),
 23 the Director may consult with the heads of such Federal
 24 agencies, universities, and public and private entities as
 25 the Director determines to be appropriate.

1 (c) ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS.—The course developed
2 under subsection (a) shall—

3 (1) support participants that have completed an
4 I-Corps Teams course; and

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

7 **SEC. 5. REPORT.**

8 Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment
9 of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States
10 shall submit to Congress a report containing an evaluation
11 of the I-Corps program described in section 601(c) of the
12 American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (42 U.S.C.
13 1862s–8(c)). Such evaluation shall include an assessment
14 of the effects of I-Corps on—

15 (1) the commercialization of federally funded
16 research and development;

17 (2) the higher education system; and

18 (3) regional economies and the national econ-
19 omy.

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