

# REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

## Training for Tech Focused Smart City Startups

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### US Ignite and RFI Background

Based in Washington, DC, US Ignite builds programs that reach across the public-private divide and unite interests throughout the smart city ecosystem. We collaborate across a network of partners that draws from our experience working with large communications and technology organizations in the \$100 million Platforms for Advanced Wireless Research (PAWR) program and across more than 30 of our NSF-funded Smart Gigabit Communities (SGCs).

As a high-tech non-profit, US Ignite receives support from Federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, Department of Defense, and National Institute of Standards and Technology. We are proud to have support from the Knight and Mott Foundations, along with over 35 corporate partners.

This RFI is a request for interested parties to describe their processes, technical capabilities and demonstrated experience with services and support necessary to plan and execute training services. US Ignite will use information collected to identify a training model that best supports local tech-focused startups that develop products and services to drive smart city efforts.

A response to this RFI is necessary to assist US Ignite in determining the potential levels of interest, adequate competition, and technical capability within the Startup/Entrepreneur training and Accelerator/Incubator Community to provide the required services. In addition, this information will also be used to assist US Ignite in establishing a basis for developing any subsequent potential subcontract.

This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a solicitation. All information received in response to this RFI marked "Proprietary" will be handled accordingly. Responses to the RFI will not be returned.



## RFI Overview

US Ignite is seeking qualified firms to provide training for startup/entrepreneurs selected through reverse pitch, hackathons, and prize competition activities, within the high-tech sector. The goals of the training effort are to:

- Help teams develop their initial business idea into a Minimal Viable Product/Service (MVP).
- Mentor teams in the early phase of product development to define milestones, time and funding commitments, and deliver a validated solution with a defined product/market fit. This includes developing related educational resources for participating startups.
- Work with select startup teams to scale up their businesses, including growth in users, customers and revenue as well as grow their capacity to attract significant funding.

These activities are anticipated to run between 3 -12 months, with cohorts of between 5 - 7 startup teams each year for 3 years. Recognizing that there may be many potential processes and solutions that address one or more of the goals outlined above, US Ignite is open to suggestions of models that include partnerships among submitters.

## Project Overview

US Ignite seeks training services for efforts under several active programs. These training services will aid US Ignite in transitioning startup teams from the Ideation phase and through startup growth stages (see image below), driving them to the growth and funding attraction level.

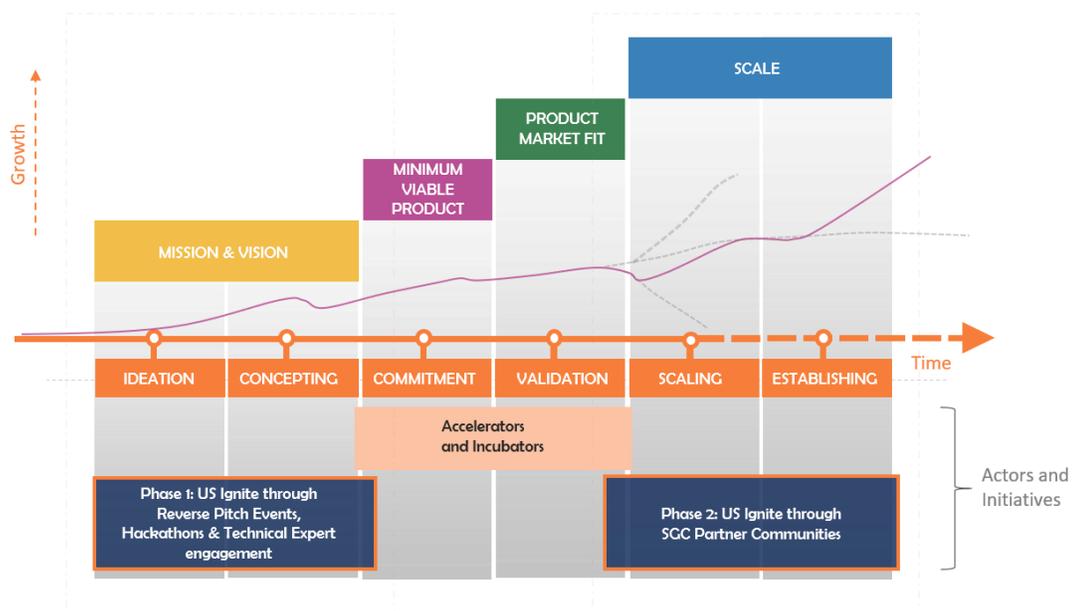
US Ignite supports building successful programs across communities and local industries that create new high-tech startups, high-skill jobs, and generate outside investment. To date, over 60 startup teams from our 30 partner communities have received app development, fundraising, and startup expansion training from our NSF-funded Smart Gigabit Communities (SGC) program and other programs. Built on those US Ignite experiences, this RFI has been designed to help us meet the following activities:

- **Startup application process:** Help local communities identify potential teams with a smart city idea to participate in funded program activities. This work is currently being done through reverse pitch, hackathon, and prize challenges in communities led by US Ignite. US Ignite has a solid track record of engaging with community partners and delivering successful reverse pitch events that have yielded innovative solutions/startups.



- **Target startups moving beyond the idea phase:** These are startups that have identified a gap in the smart city space through the reverse pitch or hackathon events and are planning to build a pilot effort to prove out their approach. US Ignite puts these teams through a startup training curriculum that helps them develop a business plan while further refining their solution, which they then competitively pitch to communities, sponsors, and VCs.
- **Identify targeted follow-on mentoring options:** US Ignite would like to increase its capacity to assess the growth stage and the needs of startups. Activities/processes being considered include linking startup teams with accelerators, SBIR, VC, local state, and other funding and mentoring options.
- **Address both technical and business challenges at the seed stage:** US Ignite will connect teams to our smart city experts/network nationally, while profiling potential customer bases. US Ignite has an extensive network of partners representing government, corporate, and research interests, in addition to the 30 strong SGC partner communities looking for high-tech solutions, they can leverage to drive economic development and opportunities.

### US Ignite Startup growth phases



1. **Phase 1 Ideation and Concepting:** Through its community engagement activities like reverse pitch events and hackathons, US Ignite helps identify key issues that communities are focused on solving. Solutions to these issues are developed by startup teams that graduate to incubators and accelerators for additional assistance in the launch of each business. This phase typically takes 3-9 months.
2. **Phase 2 Post-Accelerator Scale-up:** Once a startup has completed its accelerator training, US Ignite ensures that startups are matched with global industry leaders and

communities to develop their products around the existing smart city market and give them access to communities that will use their solutions, helping to drive new jobs as the companies grow. This phase typically takes 6-12 months, depending on the product and the amount of scaling required.

### Response Content

Submitters should upload as a Response Attachment a document containing the information below. The document should be provided in pdf or Microsoft Office compatible format and should not be protected to the extent that printing, assembling and separating sections of the document are prohibited. Documents should not exceed 5 pages.

### Cover Letter/Email body Include the following information:

- Company name
- Name, title, phone number(s), and email address of a contact individual
- Summary of Response

### Response document

The response document should include the clear descriptions of:

- Submitters qualifications and experience
- Submitters approach including examples of previous work, possible timelines
- Required assets, staffing support, and/or resources from US Ignite for process implementation
- Anticipated pricing, fee structure or costs that may be encountered in implementing the approach

### RFI Submission

All RFI responses must be received by September 28th, 2020 8:00 pm Eastern. All responses will be reviewed and evaluated in private. Any response received after the time stipulated may not be considered.

Responses should be submitted via email to: [arnold.liyai@us-ignite.org](mailto:arnold.liyai@us-ignite.org) and shall be in the format as described in this RFI. Proposers will receive an email from US Ignite confirming receipt of the response. The Evaluation Committee reserves the right to reject any and all responses and accept any responses as submitted or as modified, which in the opinion of the Committee, will be in the best interest of US Ignite.



## DISCLAIMERS

US Ignite reserves the right to withdraw this RFI at any time and for any reason, to issue clarifications, modifications and/or amendments. Receipt of materials by US Ignite or submission of any materials confers no right upon the proposer nor obligates US Ignite in any manner. US Ignite reserves the right to waive minor irregularities in materials presented, if such action is in the best interests of US Ignite. Any such waiver shall not modify the remaining RFI requirements or excuse the proposer from full compliance with the RFI requirements or excuse the proposer from full compliance with the RFI specifications and other contract requirements if the proposer is awarded a contract.

## Additional US Ignite Background

US Ignite is a national nonprofit, a 501(c)(3), that is accelerating the smart city movement – and creating value for an entire ecosystem – by guiding communities into the connected future, creating a path for private sector growth, and advancing technology research that’s at the heart of smart city development. Why is this important? Because local governments need to improve quality of life and ensure economic development in their communities, particularly during a time of rapid technological change. Businesses recognize the importance of the emerging market around smart communities and find commercial strategies that are repeatable, scalable, and sustainable. And foundations and federal agencies need to channel their institutional aims into efforts ranging from cutting-edge research to practical economic development initiatives that deliver measurable benefits.

As a trusted partner, US Ignite brings this entire smart city ecosystem together, successfully pairing financial investment with technical and organizational expertise. Through the public-private partnership programs we run, US Ignite is a catalyst for communications network advancement and innovation in smart city services powered by a new generation of technologies.

