



ASSOCIATION OF
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UNIVERSITIES



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND



CECE

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AWARDS PROGRAM

IEP CATEGORY - INNOVATION

University of Maryland, College Park

Maryland Innovation Extension: Expanding Entrepreneurial Access Across the State

2025
CASE
STUDY

OVERVIEW OF THE MARYLAND INNOVATION EXTENSION

The Maryland Innovation Extension is a statewide initiative led by the University of Maryland (UMD) and is a U.S. Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) University Center. Its mission is to expand access to entrepreneurial training and resources by partnering with HBCUs—Bowie State University, Morgan State University, Coppin State University—and the University of Baltimore, a Minority-Serving Institution (MSI). The initiative extends the NSF I-Corps program to communities and institutions previously underserved in Maryland’s innovation ecosystem.



Group image of members of the Maryland Innovation Extension team, university partners and entrepreneurs at Bowie State University

Launched in 2021, the Extension leverages over \$750,000 in matching funds from critical ecosystem partners: TEDCO, including its Maryland Innovation Initiative (MII), Urban Business Innovation Initiative, and Rural Business Innovation Initiative; the UM Ventures Baltimore Fund; and the University System of Maryland (USM).

LEVERAGING UMD’S I-CORPS EXPERTISE

UMD’s I-Corps team brings over a decade of experience supporting faculty innovators and entrepreneurs. The University had already collaborated with institutions across the East Coast before launching this initiative, and saw an opportunity to share its proven training model with universities closer to home. Partnering with HBCUs provided a valuable avenue for new collaborations and the expansion of I-Corps into more diverse entrepreneurial communities.

Core Offerings

The Maryland Innovation Extension provides three primary free resources to Maryland-based entrepreneurs: Startup Fundamentals Workshops, Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIRs), and I-Corps Customer Discovery Short Courses.



1. **Startup Fundamentals Workshops** offer high-quality entrepreneurship training on topics from accounting to pitching investors. Most are held on Zoom, with some in person, and recordings are available on the Startup UMD YouTube channel.
2. **Entrepreneurs-in-Residence** are experienced startup founders who mentor faculty, staff, students, and innovators at partner institutions at any stage of their journey. Trained by UM Ventures, they offer practical guidance, stay connected with UMD's innovation team, and use internal systems to track mentorship and support.
3. **I-Corps Customer Discovery Short Courses** provide structured training in lean startup methodology and customer validation. Courses are offered multiple times a year and rotated across regions to maximize accessibility. Partner institutions receive weekly email updates about these and other resources to share internally, helping foster institutional collaboration and increase awareness.

BUILDING MARYLAND'S ENTREPRENEURIAL PIPELINE

The Extension's outreach, training, and mentoring efforts work in tandem to build a pipeline of entrepreneurs and prepare them for participation in I-Corps cohorts. To maintain momentum and coordination, the Extension team holds quarterly meetings with all partner institutions and meets individually as needed for planning events, workshops, and information sessions.

These efforts aim to strengthen the broader ecosystem by engaging students, faculty, alumni, and community entrepreneurs—especially from underrepresented groups—through events that raise awareness of resources and celebrate diverse founder success stories. Examples include:

- Collaborated with partner universities at Morgan State University (2024) and Bowie State University (2025) for the annual Black Founders in I-Corps during Black History Month.
- Hosted a session with the Maryland Innovation Initiative (MII) to share insights on accelerating university innovations into the commercial sector.
- Presented at local and national events to engage prospective entrepreneurs and promote the I-Corps rolling cohort program, including:
 - White House Initiative on HBCUs in Washington, D.C. (2022)
 - Voices from the Field by GEMi4 in collaboration with AfroTech Conference, Houston, TX (2024)

Such outreach not only builds awareness of resources but also cultivates a stronger, more inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem across the state.



ADDRESSING EARLY CHALLENGES

Launching the Extension-UC faced some early challenges, including identifying coordinators, technical leads, and EIRs at each partner institution. While the grant included staff funding, one partner still lacks a full-time staff member for the initiative. Despite this, the institution has actively contributed by offering workshops, attending meetings, and hosting sessions for its entrepreneurship community.

A more systemic challenge has been delays in invoicing and fund disbursement from sub-awardee partner institutions. Many HBCU partners have entrepreneurship and research support offices still in early stages of development and lack infrastructure to handle sub-awards efficiently. Continued efforts by leadership have led to steady progress, and added system-level support has helped improve coordination with the partner facing staffing gaps.

MEASURING RESULTS

To assess and track its progress, the Extension employs tools such as Salesforce, Airtable, and Slack:

- Salesforce is used for tracking participant numbers, applications, affiliations, team evaluations, attendance, follow-on funding, and more.
- Airtable and Slack supports meeting registrations, team monitoring, and EIR notes and feedback, which is then synced to Salesforce.
- Slack channels are created for each cohort to facilitate communication between teams, instructors, and mentors.

The team also collects cohort survey data to assess and report on economic impact. These systems provide real-time feedback and long-term data, allowing the team to monitor growth and evaluate the economic and educational impact.

NOTABLE OUTCOMES AND LASTING IMPACT

Since its launch, the Extension has helped create new ventures, hosted hundreds of workshops, and developed a stronger, more interconnected statewide innovation infrastructure. Internal capacity at partner institutions has grown significantly, and entrepreneurial programming has become more deeply embedded within Maryland's educational and economic development landscape.

One major innovation was the Rolling I-Corps Program, launched in July 2024. This flexible format



addresses the biggest barrier to participation among aspiring entrepreneurs whose schedules include full-time jobs, family commitments, and other difficult time constraints.

Participants can take as long as they need to complete three Customer Discovery workshops on their own schedule and at their own pace, offering the same rigorous content as traditional cohorts but with asynchronous support. This design accommodates even the busiest of schedules among faculty, students, and community entrepreneurs.

Highlights

- Overall Number of Cohorts: 23
- Overall Number of Teams participating in the I-Corps short course: 64
- Overall Number of Team invited to participate in National I-Corps: 3
- Morgan State received its first-ever NSF National I-Corps Team grant
- Overall I-Corps Information Sessions: 44
- Overall Number of Trainers Trained 14
- The Rolling Program supported 22 teams and 36 participants from Bowie State, Morgan State, the University of Baltimore, TEDCO, SBDC, BWTech, and local community entrepreneurs.



LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Supporting Information:

- [UMD I-Corps; Maryland Innovation Extension](#)
- [EDA University Centers Program](#)
- [I-Corps at Bowie State](#)
- [Morgan State University; Office of Technology Transfer](#)
- [Coppin State University; Center for Strategic Entrepreneurship](#)
- [University of Baltimore; Merrick School of Business](#)
- [UM Ventures; The Baltimore Fund](#)
- [University System of Maryland](#)
- Tedco
 - [Maryland Innovation Initiative](#)
 - [Rural Business Innovation Initiative](#)
 - [Urban Business Innovation Initiative](#)
- [Black Founders in Innovation Event](#)
 - [Images from Black Founders in Innovation Event](#)
- [Startup UMD Business Fundamentals](#)

Articles:

- [UMD launches new \\$1.4 million Maryland Innovation Extension](#)
- [Maryland Innovation Extension Hosts First I-Corps NEXT Cohort](#)
- [Bowie State University Rolls Out Entrepreneur in Residence Program](#)



ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP PROGRAM

APLU and its [Commission on Economic and Community Engagement \(CECE\)](#) established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP Program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP Awards Program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- Talent and workforce development
- Innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- Place development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: www.APLU.org/IEP

