

CDC Ideation Catalyst (I-Catalyst)

After witnessing the success of the [HHS Ignite Accelerator](#), CDC's Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI) has partnered with the [Georgia Institute of Technology's VentureLab](#) to design and launch the CDC Ideation Catalyst (I-Catalyst) program at the agency's headquarters in Atlanta. **I-Catalyst is designed to help CDC employees get their ideas out of the starting blocks and down the track through a discovery, ideation, and prototyping process.** The program kicked off March 2016 and included HHS IDEA Lab staff Read Holman and Will Yang who helped welcome 9 teams to the program for the initial three days of training.

A Brief History

The launch of I-Catalyst comes after a yearlong collaboration with the Georgia Tech VentureLab. After participating in the 3rd round of Ignite in the winter of 2015, we were inspired to seek out a partnership that could help us deliver an experiential innovation curriculum to CDC staff. At about the same time, we were introduced to Dr. Keith McGregor, Director of Georgia Tech's VentureLab and the NSF funded I-Corps South Node. Over the next year we worked with VentureLab staff to pilot the I-Corps curriculum with our 2015 CDC iFund teams. After some tweaking, refining, and input from participants, the I-Catalyst program was set in motion.

What is I-Catalyst?

The I-Catalyst program helps teams nurture and transform ideas through a structured customer/stakeholder discovery process. The program was created with the belief that innovation should be customer driven, be based on user research, and is something people at all levels of an organization can engage in. Based on the [National Science Foundation's Innovation Corps \(I-Corps\)](#) and [Lean LaunchPad](#) principles and methods, the I-Catalyst program spans approximately 6 weeks and is delivered in two phases. The first phase of the program guides teams and individuals through a series of workshops that help participants articulate a problem statement, and create an evidence-based plan for assessment of that problem space. The second phase of the program takes those problems that have been initially vetted, and teaches teams how to tell the story of their journey including what they learned from conversations with their customers/stakeholders.

What we like about this approach is its focus on methodology, skill building, and evidence gathering. It presents a scientific method for entrepreneurship and knowing something about our organizational culture and customers we felt this would be the right approach – for now.

What's next?

The Internal Innovation Pipeline is growing at CDC! The CDC I-Catalyst program will be offered again this fall (August-October 2016 timeframe) and again in 2017. We hope and expect that our teams will be better prepared to take on other innovation opportunities such as [HHS Ignite](#), [HHS Ventures](#), and the [CDC Innovation Fund \(iFund\)](#).

For additional information, please contact [OTI](#).