



RE: Letter of Support for NSF Innovation Corps Site Program (I-CORPS Site) Proposal

Dear Dr. Clarke,

Please accept this letter as an expression of TIE-Houston's support for your proposal entitled "**STEM-Business (STEM-B) – The Fifth Element of Innovation**" that seeks to establish an NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps) Site at the University of Houston (UH).

The Indus Entrepreneurs (TIE) fosters entrepreneurship globally through mentoring, networking, and education. Dedicated to the virtuous cycle of wealth creation and giving back to the community, TIE's focus is on generating and nurturing our next generation of entrepreneurs. With 13,000 members, including over 2,500 charter members in 57 chapters across 14 countries, TIE hosts a wide range of programs and events, including TiEcon, the largest professional and networking conference for entrepreneurs.

As a chapter of TIE, TIE-Houston hosts several entrepreneurial events annually including workshops, networking socials, mentoring breakfasts, and its marquis event, the Funding Forum that coaches and mentors startups before putting them in front of angel investors and venture capital firms. We are entrepreneurs, mentors and volunteers who collaborate to promote entrepreneurship while giving back to the community.

The establishment of an I-Corps Site anchored at UH with strong links to the local entrepreneurial community can only help strengthen and expand UH's efforts to create a sustainable innovation ecosystem. A UH I-Corps Site will also serve to strengthen existing relationships with the local and regional ecosystem by providing formal bi-directional partnering mechanisms for technology commercialization that takes advantage of the burgeoning UH entrepreneurial workforce. It will also augment the number of STEM-qualified entrepreneurs available to enter the local innovation workforce, while also helping to address the national "innovation gap".

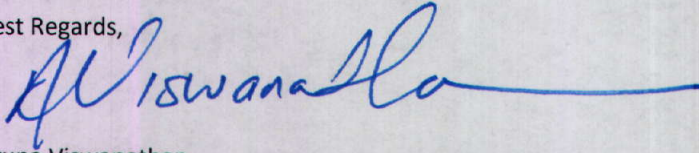
We are particularly excited about the opportunity to be involved in the proposed cross-disciplinary training program, designated **STEM-B**, which is designed to provide entrepreneurial education and training to students drawn from the University of Houston's STEM colleges (Natural Sciences & Mathematics, Engineering, Optometry and Pharmacy). The **STEM-B** program, combining an academic class based on the fundamentals of the *lean start-up model* utilizing case studies based on "live" IP from both UH and external IP portfolio's delivered by the UH Bauer College of Business, and a follow-on capstone experience involving one of three possible "hands-on" entrepreneurial activities already successfully underway at UH (i.e. Wolff Center for Entrepreneurship business plan competition, Bauer 3-Day Start-Up or UH Red-Labs Accelerator program) is an innovative approach to creating a cadre of young entrepreneurs that will be well prepared to join the larger innovation workforce in Houston and the region.

TIE Houston would be happy to provide support for this initiative both formally through the UH I-Corps Site Advisory Board and informally by encouraging our already experienced entrepreneurs to become involved in the activities of the UH I-Corps Site program. Such activities could include mentoring of entrepreneurial teams created as part of the **STEM-B** program as we have already done for similar university programs in the Greater Houston area, as well as bringing speakers to the University to speak on targeted topics such as our "How to Pitch to Investors" workshop series.

On behalf of TiE-Houston, I am happy to pledge our support and commitment to working with you on this exciting project. We believe that establishing an I-Corps Site program at the University of Houston will provide a multitude of opportunities for us to leverage our collective strengths to enhance our local, regional and national innovation ecosystems.

We very much look forward to working with you to make this project a long-term success.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Aruna Viswanathan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Aruna Viswanathan
President, TiE-Houston