FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The National GEM Consortium Receives NSF Award to Support Diversity & Inclusion in Innovation and Entrepreneurship

ALEXANDRIA, VA – September 12, 2019 – The National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded the National GEM Consortium $3.5 million to develop national diversity and inclusion infrastructure for the NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps™) Program.

With the support of NSF, GEM is piloting a three-year initiative highlighting innovation pathways for underrepresented researchers. GEM will leverage their extensive network of universities, companies, students, and alumni through innovative local outreach activities illuminating pathways within the I-Corps National Innovation Network to increase participation of underrepresented groups in the I-Corps entrepreneurial training and innovation activities. GEM has also partnered with researchers to evaluate the experiences and challenges faced by underrepresented tech entrepreneurs toward augmenting the I-Corps infrastructure to support a more diverse population. The initiative has the potential to transform diversity in the NSF I-Corps program and enhance underrepresented minority involvement in other NSF startup and innovation activities.

“It is a great honor to be given the opportunity to work with the National Science Foundation in this capacity,” said GEM CEO, Brennon Marcano. “The I-Corps program is very well-known nationally in the entrepreneurial space and so to be able to work within that infrastructure and with the distinguished individuals within that program is a process that we at GEM are definitely looking forward to.”

Only about 8% of “U.S. innovators” are members of U.S. minority groups (including Asians, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and others), and much of the scientific workforce lacks diversity. With considerable talent being left out of the innovation ecosystem, one may ask, “What technology innovations are we leaving on the table with these barriers to entrepreneurship?” With a greater focus on broadening participation and inclusion, the NSF I-Corps program can help address the real need to increase diversity in U.S. entrepreneurship.

NSF I-Corps prepares scientists and engineers to extend their focus beyond the university laboratory and accelerates the economic and societal benefits of NSF-funded, basic-research projects. Through I-Corps, researchers learn to identify valuable product opportunities that can emerge from academic research and gain skills in entrepreneurship to support tech commercialization through training in customer discovery and guidance from established entrepreneurs.

The three-year agreement will run from September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2022.

About NSF
The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent federal agency that supports fundamental research and education across all fields of science and engineering. In fiscal year (FY) 2019, its budget is $8.1 billion. NSF funds reach all 50 states through grants to nearly 2,000 colleges, universities and other institutions. Each
year, NSF receives more than 50,000 competitive proposals for funding and makes about 12,000 new funding awards.

The NSF I-Corps program was established in 2011, and connects scientific research with the technological, entrepreneurial, and business communities to help create a stronger national ecosystem for innovation that couples scientific discovery with technology development and societal needs. In 2017, its expansion was formally authorized under the AICA American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (AICA, Public Law 114-329, Sec. 601). Visit www.nsf.gov/icorps for more information.

About The National GEM Consortium
The mission of the National GEM Consortium is to enhance the value of the nation’s human capital by increasing the participation of underrepresented groups (African Americans, American Indians and Hispanic Americans) at the master's and doctoral levels in engineering and science. We are a unique and powerful connection to a national network of universities and employers. This partnership promotes the participation of underrepresented groups in post-graduate STEM education and the technical workforce. The employees shaping our nation’s ability to remain a global leader in innovation and economic prosperity must fully utilize the talents of all Americans and reflect the country’s changing demographics.

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