

Interview Questions: i2E and the Oklahoma Commercialization Network

1. Can you describe i2E's core mission and how it aligns with the goals of the Oklahoma Commercialization Network?

i2E, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that specializes in supporting and advancing the growth of Oklahoma startups and entrepreneurs. Our mission is to invest in and support Oklahoma-based innovation by helping entrepreneurs take their technologies and ideas from concept to commercialization. We do this through programmatic support with specific business-building programs, hands-on advisory services, and facilitating access to capital. By leveraging our extensive network and resources, i2E is dedicated to supporting innovation, driving economic growth, and fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial community.

The Oklahoma Commercialization Network (OCN), powered by the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST), shares this mission by bringing together resources statewide to help entrepreneurs and researchers turn ideas into successful businesses. OCN serves as the front door for entrepreneurs across Oklahoma, offering an approachable entry point into the state's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem. Together, we're creating a more connected, accessible, and impactful support system for innovators at every stage of their journey.

2. How did i2E become involved with the Oklahoma Commercialization Network, and what role does it play in this statewide partnership?

i2E has worked closely with OCAST and other partners for years to strengthen Oklahoma's innovation ecosystem, so joining and subsequently managing the Oklahoma Commercialization Network (OCN) alongside our OCN partners was a natural evolution of that collaboration. Powered by OCAST, OCN is a statewide partnership that brings together the strengths of Oklahoma's leading entrepreneurial support organizations, including i2E, Gradient, The Verge OKC, and REI Oklahoma, alongside more than 25 collaborating organizations.

As a lead partner, i2E serves as a central resource within the Network, helping founders access mentorship, early-stage capital, business development support, and commercialization expertise. We also work closely with regional partners to ensure that entrepreneurs across Oklahoma – urban and rural alike – have access to the tools and guidance they need to succeed.

3. What makes the partnership between i2E, OCAST, and other organizations unique in Oklahoma's entrepreneurial ecosystem?

What sets this partnership apart is its statewide, collaborative approach. Rather than operating in silos, i2E, OCAST, and partners like Gradient, The Verge OKC, and REI Oklahoma have come together to form an interconnected network. Each organization brings different strengths, whether it's funding, research translation, rural outreach, entrepreneurial focused programs or founder support, and together, we provide a more robust and cohesive experience for entrepreneurs across Oklahoma.

4. What types of resources and support does i2E provide to Oklahoma-based startups through the Oklahoma Commercialization Network?

Through the OCN, i2E offers a range of high-impact services: one-on-one business coaching, investor-readiness preparation, capital access, market validation support, and technology commercialization guidance. Programs like our Bridge2 Pre-Accelerator and E3 Bootcamp help early-stage startups and university spinouts navigate the complex path from idea to market. Additionally, i2E and its partners have cultivated a mentor network aligned with startup's specific business stage and industry that supports expert and mentor matching service where OCN partners curate connections between startups and subject matter experts & mentors.

5. Can you highlight a specific program or service within OCN that has made a significant impact on local entrepreneurs?

One standout is our E3 Bootcamp, a hands-on, intensive workshop designed to help entrepreneurs explore product/market fit, refine their business model, and identify growth opportunities. E3 is especially impactful for early-stage startups validating a new concept and for existing businesses looking to scale or reach new customers.

Entrepreneurs leave the program with a deeper understanding of their market, a clearer value proposition, and actionable strategies to move their business forward. For many, it's a pivotal step toward building long-term traction and sustainability.

6. How does i2E help entrepreneurs navigate the challenges of launching and scaling a business in Oklahoma, especially in rural areas?

We recognize that geography shouldn't limit opportunity. That's why we work closely with statewide partners and resources to meet founders where they are. Whether it's virtual mentoring, rural outreach through REI Oklahoma, or helping a

founder refine a pitch deck in Woodward or Idabel, we're focused on building a pipeline of scalable companies statewide, not just in metro hubs.

7. How does the collaboration between i2E, OCAST, and other partners enhance the support available to startups compared to what each could offer individually?

Each organization plays a unique and complementary role, but when we combine efforts, the impact is far greater. OCAST brings deep expertise in research and commercialization funding, while REI Oklahoma expands our reach into rural communities by connecting with entrepreneurs across the state. i2E contributes access to capital, hands-on business development support, and a proven track record of scaling startups.

Gradient and The Verge create vital communities for founders by offering co-working space, curated programming, and an environment where entrepreneurs can learn, collaborate, and grow. Together, we provide a seamless, end-to-end support system that combines funding, mentorship, space, education, and statewide access, something no single organization could deliver alone.

8. How does i2E plan to address emerging needs or trends in Oklahoma's entrepreneurial landscape through OCN?

i2E is constantly adapting to meet the evolving needs of Oklahoma's innovation economy. Through OCN, we're focused on expanding access to resources that address real-world challenges founders face, such as entering regulated industries, navigating supply chain issues, or integrating emerging technologies like AI. By staying connected with entrepreneurs, investors, and industry leaders across the state, we're able to evolve our programming, strengthen partnerships, and align our services with the most pressing trends in the entrepreneurial landscape.

9. What advice would i2E give to aspiring entrepreneurs looking to leverage the resources of the Oklahoma Commercialization Network?

Start by reaching out. Whether you're exploring a new business idea or growing an existing startup, there's a place for you within the OCN. OCN is designed to be approachable and easy to navigate, connecting you to the right resources at the right time. Tap into the expertise, mentorship, and tools available through i2E and our partners. The earlier you engage, the faster you can validate your concept and build momentum. To learn more about i2E and the OCN, visit i2e.org/network.

10. How does i2E foster a sense of community among Oklahoma's entrepreneurs through its programs and partnerships?

We believe that community is the foundation of a thriving startup ecosystem. Through programs like the E3 Bootcamp, the Bridge2 Pre-Accelerator, and events hosted in collaboration with partners like Gradient and The Verge, we create opportunities for entrepreneurs to connect, share ideas, and support one another. Our partnerships with co-working spaces, accelerators, and regional organizations make it easier for founders to find peers, mentors, and collaborators, regardless of where they're located in Oklahoma.

11. What role does innovation play in i2E's strategy for supporting startups, and how is this reflected in the Oklahoma Commercialization Network's offerings?

Innovation is at the core of everything we do. i2E is committed to helping founders turn novel ideas into scalable businesses that solve real problems. Through OCN, we support technology-driven ventures by providing commercialization guidance, connecting entrepreneurs with research institutions, and helping navigate funding opportunities like SSBCI. Whether a company is developing new software, medical devices, or clean energy solutions, we work to ensure that innovative ideas are matched with the right resources to bring them to market.

12. How can entrepreneurs stay informed about upcoming opportunities and events through i2E and OCN?

Entrepreneurs can stay connected by subscribing to i2E's newsletter, following us and our OCN partners on social media, and visiting our websites for the latest updates. We regularly share information about workshops, funding opportunities, application deadlines, and networking events. Whether online or in person, our goal is to keep founders informed and engaged with what's happening across Oklahoma's innovation ecosystem. To learn more about the OCN, visit i2e.org/network.