



Startup Team FAQs

What is a “Startup Team”?

A Startup Team consists of the Startup Team Leader, any additional team members designated by the Team Leader, plus Energy-Executives-In-Residence (EEIRs) provided by MEIA. The Startup Team Leader and EEIRs roles are further defined below.

What are the eligibility criteria for MEIA’s cohort?

MEIA accepts applications from a Startup Team Leader, which is a person, not a business. The leader applies for acceptance into an MEIA cohort. A leader is:

- An individual who is an inventor or co-inventor of the intellectual property that provides the technological basis for commercialization.
- Has built a prototype of the technology that is working in a laboratory setting (Technology Readiness Level 3, 4 or 5).
- The intellectual property belongs to a research university or federal laboratory located in Maryland.
- Must declare an intention to start a new business in the State of Maryland. If the leader has already started a business, it must be physically located in Maryland.
- The Intellectual Property / Technology Commercialization office that owns the IP must indicate a desire to license the invention to a company that includes the Startup Team Leader.
- A Startup Team Leader does not need to commit to working at the company after the Startup Team graduates from MEIA. The goal of MEIA’s program is to assemble a founding team that may or may not include the inventor.
- In the case where a company has already been formed, a Startup Team Leader who is a principal owner of the business and otherwise meets the criteria above is eligible.

How does a Startup Team Leader gain admission to a cohort?

Admission requires the following steps:

1. Startup Team Leaders express an interest to apply on the MEIA website (<https://mdeia.org/inventors>).
2. The expression of interest will be reviewed by MEIA, and an interview will be scheduled.
3. If the concept is eligible, MEIA will request a formal application from the Startup Team Leader.

4. After the Startup Team Leader completes an application, the application will be provided to potential Strategic Partners to determine if there is a match.
5. Potential Strategic Partners may decline the application, may ask to interview the Team Leader, or may make a sponsorship offer to the Team Leader.
6. Once a Strategic Partner makes an offer, the Team Leader must then decide to accept or decline the offer.

In order to gain admission to a cohort, the Startup Team Leader must agree to an offer from a Strategic Partner. Cohorts are admitted on a first come first served basis. The Accelerator currently accepts 6 teams per cohort, so the first six Team Leaders who reach agreement with Strategic Partners will be accepted into the first cohort.

Who are Energy-Executives-In-Residence (EEIRs) and how do they participate?

An EEIR is a consultant who joins a Startup Team in a functional role. An EEIR has at least 10 years of work experience and has significant functional experience. EEIRs take on the supporting executive roles that you would expect to see in an investible clean energy company. These roles might include Chief Executive Officer, Chief Marketing Officer, Chief Sales Officer, Chief Development Officer, Chief Financial Officer, or Chief Operations Officer. EEIRs create work product for the company, develop plans, and can represent the Startup Team in public settings. An EEIR can slot into the Startup Team as a subject matter expert. While most EEIRs will have managerial experience, an EEIR will not be asked to manage people. The EEIR FAQ has more information about EEIRs.

How are EEIRs assigned to a Startup Team?

MEIA maintains a “job board” where Startup Teams can post positions, and EEIRs can respond to positions. EEIRs have established rates (\$/hour). Some EEIRs will be volunteers (\$0/hour). All EEIRs will be lightly vetted by MEIA staff to ensure that EEIRs meet eligibility standards. Startup Team leaders are ultimately responsible for selecting from among the EEIRs that apply for a position on the Startup Team. Once an EEIR is selected, he/she will be hired by MEIA as an independent contractor. EEIRs work for MEIA by contract, and thus EEIRs do not own any of their work product. When the services of an EEIR are not a good match or are not acceptable to the Startup Team, the Startup Team Leader may remove the EEIR from the Startup Team by notifying the MEIA Program Manager. MEIA will then release the EEIR from the engagement for that team.

Do Startup Teams have funding? Who pays for EEIRs?

MEIA will provide an operating budget to each Startup Team to use for hiring EEIRs, for travel, and other approved business expenses. The Startup Team Leader is responsible for managing the budget. All expenses (reimbursements, contractor compensation) run through MEIA billing processes and are administered by MCEC. Operating budgets will be provided by the Startup Team’s Strategic Partner.

How much time do Startup Team Leaders and Members need to dedicate?

Over the 6-month cohort, all team members will be working part time to achieve milestones based on the cohort curriculum and a calendar developed in the beginning of the cohort by the Startup Team and the Project Manager. There will be monthly seminars and weekly check-ins with your project manager. The work required to achieve milestones will be split amongst all team members. MEIA expects the Startup Team Leader will need to work about 5 hours per week on average, with much of this time spent teaching and assisting EEIRs with technology and technical issues. Startup Team Members should also plan to work about 5 hours per week attending meetings and performing work product. The curriculum also includes a two-week NSF I-Corps which will be more intensive.

Does MEIA/MCEC/EEIRs/Strategic Partners have a claim to any intellectual property developed by a Startup Team?

No. MEIA/MCEC explicitly waives all claims to intellectual property. EEIRs are subcontractors hired by MEIA/MCEC, and thus, EEIRs waived claims in their subcontractor agreements. Strategic Partners waived claims in their Strategic Partner MOUs.

Do Startup Team Leaders need to pay MEIA or MCEC to participate?

No. Startup Teams will be sponsored by a Strategic Partner that has made a financial contribution to enable the Startup Team to participate in the Cohort.

Do EEIRs or Strategic Partners get equity?

No. For work provided prior to company formation, EEIRs are subcontractors to MEIA/MCEC, and are being compensated for their work on the Startup Team. They are not entitled to any additional equity for work performed while in an EEIR role. Strategic Partners are funding Startup Teams and providing mentorship in exchange for the opportunity to develop a closer relationship with the emerging company. Strategic Partners do not receive equity.

How does a Startup Team graduate from the Accelerator?

Graduation represents the end of the formal relationship between MEIA and the Startup Team Leader and the Startup Team. In Month 6 of the accelerator program, immediately after the Cohort Finale Pitch event, the Program Manager will lead the Startup Team through an exercise to determine if a company should be formed to support commercializing the technology. If the Startup Team decides not to pursue a company, the Team graduates, all expenditures will be settled, and the Startup Team forfeits the remainder of its budget. If the Startup Team decides to form a company, it may retain access to its remaining budget to use for eligible business expenses for up to 3 months, after which the budget is forfeit. The Startup Team graduates when the budget is used up 3 months after the official cohort end date, whichever is sooner.

What if a Startup Team Leader does not want to be in charge? What if the original Startup Team Leader quits?

It is possible for a Startup Team Leader to hire an EEIR to work in the CEO/Leader role for the team, which would enable the EEIR to become the manager of the team's budget and EEIR selection/de-selection. If the original Startup Team Leader decides to leave the team, then both the original Startup Team Leader and the Intellectual Property holder would need to agree to allow commercialization to continue. The MEIA project manager is available to assist with the transition process.

Are there any future obligation to MCEC after the accelerator program ends?

Yes. A Startup Team that forms a company will be required to provide general information on an annual basis that described employment, revenue, funds raised, and potentially other metrics that will enable MCEC/MEIA to describe the benefits of the Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator to its public and private stakeholders. The information collected will be aggregated and shared anonymously in our reports to stakeholders unless the company explicitly allows MCEC/MEIA to use the information to create a case study or other use.