**New Jersey Innovation Fellows (NJIF)**

**AI Cohort - Frequently Asked Questions**

**Background:**

New Jersey Innovation Fellows (NJIF) is a competitive grant program, funded by a $10 million appropriation and governed by P.L. 2021, c.160, that supports first-time entrepreneurs with income replacement grants to help turn early-stage business ideas into successful businesses within New Jersey's innovation ecosystem. An additional $2 million, allocated through the FY25 Appropriations Act, extends the program to support AI-focused startups. The attached FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) are designed to provide quick, clear, and concise answers to common questions that applicants or stakeholders might have about the NJIF AI Cohort. It does not purport to summarize the entire NJIF statute, rules, polices, or agreements.

Please visit www.njeda.gov/new-jersey-innovation-fellows-program/ to review detailed information regarding all eligibility criteria, and application guidelines. Questions concerning the NJIF AI Cohort Notice of Funding Availability should be submitted to NJInnovationFellows@njeda.gov

**1. What are the AI technologies that our solution must focus on?**

Submissions for the **NJIF AI cohort** should focus on presenting proposed business solutions in one or more targeted industries that leverage one or more of the following **AI technologies**:

- Learning and Adaptation (e.g., machine learning, deep learning, predictive maintenance)
- Autonomous Decision-Making (e.g., autonomous vehicles, automated inventory systems)
- Data-Driven Insights (e.g., AI-driven analytics, predictive analytics)
- Natural Language Processing (e.g., chatbots, customer service automation)
- Perception and Interaction (e.g., computer vision, speech recognition)
- Generative AI (e.g., AI-driven product design, AI-generated content)

**2. Can our proposed business focus on a non-AI-based solution?**

No, the NJIF AI cohort is specifically focused on the utilization of AI technologies. The proposed business solution must utilize one or more of the AI technologies outlined in the eligibility criteria. Non-AI-based solutions are not eligible for the AI cohort.

The AI solution must focus on one or more of the six eligible AI technologies (as listed in the program's criteria) and aim to achieve either improved efficiency or the creation of a novel product or service. Solutions that do not align with these areas or focus on non-AI technologies will not be eligible.

**3. What do we need to include in our well written business plan?**

Applicants to the AI cohort must submit business plans that clearly outline the AI technology the proposed solution leverages, the innovative outcomes the solution aims to achieve (Improved Efficiency and/or Novel Product or Service); and a Code of Conduct that demonstrates the startup's commitment to addressing bias, fairness, and transparency in the AI solution. Failure to include these elements will result in the application being declined.

**4. What is the "Code of Conduct" requirement?**

Applicants are required to submit a Code of Conduct outlining their commitment to mitigating bias, ensuring fairness, and maintaining transparency in their proposed AI solution. This document should clearly demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the ethical challenges associated with AI technologies and their commitment to addressing these challenges. The submission should be limited to one page.

**Key Components of the Code of Conduct**

Applicants must include the following elements in their Code of Conduct to demonstrate ethical responsibility in their AI solution:

**A. Commitment to Fairness**

- Explain how the proposed AI promotes fairness throughout its design, training, and operations.
- Describe how the AI will be developed to serve all groups equitably, taking into account diverse needs and contexts.

**B. Bias Mitigation**

- Outline how the proposed AI will address and minimize bias.
- Describe any strategies for using diverse and representative data, regularly testing for potential biases, and making necessary adjustments to ensure fair operation for all users.

**C. Commitment to Transparency**

- Explain how the proposed AI system operates transparently.
- Provide explanations of how the system works, how decisions are made, and offer insights into the data and algorithms used.

**5. Can our proposed business focus on multiple AI technologies?**

Yes, the proposed solution can focus on multiple AI technologies the application must clearly explain how each technology contributes to the innovation outcomes.

**6. How should we demonstrate the innovation outcomes in our business plan if the proposed business is in ideation?**

Applicants to the NJIF AI Cohort should clearly articulate within the business plan how the transformative potential of the AI solution. Even at the ideation stage, applicants should convey a clear vision of how the solution can drive efficiency improvements or introduce novel products or services.

**7. Can we apply if our team is still developing our AI focused idea and has no market research yet?**

Yes, you can apply even if the idea is still in development, and you have limited market research. However, the application should demonstrate that you have a clear understanding of the potential market for the AI solution.

**8. How does the mentorship program help with AI commercialization?**

The mentorship program will provide entrepreneur teams with the tools and strategies needed to successfully **commercialize AI technologies**. These tools and strategies include guidance on understanding market

demand, product development, business model creation, and creating a sustainable go-to-market strategy for AI-driven solutions.

**9. Will we be matched with a mentor based on our AI technology focus?**

Yes, a mentor will be assigned based on the specific AI technologies you are working with. Whether the focus is on machine learning, robotics, data-driven insights, or another AI discipline, the mentor will have expertise aligned with the needs of the proposed business. Mentors may provide technical guidance on developing and refining AI solutions, helping you navigate challenges related to AI algorithms, model development, data processing, and the integration of AI into real-world applications.