

NASA and Houston's Ion Partner to Create Opportunities for Startup Community

Collaboration builds events, new resources, and programming for aerospace focused startups

HOUSTON, July 14, 2022 - [The Ion](#), Houston's innovation hub, has announced its collaboration with NASA's Johnson Space Center. NASA and the Ion are establishing a technology transfer center at the Ion to empower the Houston-Galveston region's aerospace innovation ecosystem by extending opportunities to local entrepreneurs and startups to share their ideas and intellectual property with NASA and vice versa.

NASA and the Ion's partnership is an example of private-public partnerships aimed at creating events, programming, and initiatives to promote and diversify the new commercial space economy and the use of NASA technologies in the broader economy. Alongside Rice University, the Ion's owner, the organizations are pioneering a platform to accelerate the formation of space entrepreneurs to grow commercial space supply chains, seek solutions to address space technology challenges, and license NASA technology for commercial applications.

"We're eager and excited to work with Rice University and the Ion to help NASA solve challenges, develop spinoff technologies, grow minority entrepreneurs and accelerate innovative and tech-forward solutions in Houston," said Vanessa Wyche, director of NASA's Johnson Space Center. "This partnership will allow us to increase startups through our aerospace accelerator targeting minority businesses and help achieve NASA's goals to enhance scientific and technological knowledge to benefit all of humankind, as we propel commercialization of space and work to land the first woman and first person of color on the Moon under Artemis."

The organizations will also focus part of their efforts on minority businesses and entrepreneurs in the aerospace and technology fields, including the Ion's Aerospace Innovation Accelerator for Minority Business Enterprises ([AIA for MBEs](#)), which develops businesses tackling aerospace-related challenges. NASA has supported the AIA for MBEs since its inception and initial grant process. NASA will continue to support the accelerator and its participants through its provision of mentors and subject matter experts and ongoing input and advice at the Ion's monthly startup competitions and showcases in addition to the below.

As part of the new collaboration, NASA and the Ion will open an application process for interested startups and entrepreneurs to become connected with NASA in Fall 2022. Programming will run through mid-2023. Together, NASA, the Ion and the startup community will work to:

- Develop spin-off technologies in support of commercial space and for potential use in future NASA and private space missions;
- Provide access to intellectual property (IP). The Ion community will have once-in-a-lifetime access to NASA's IP portfolio, for potential use in commercial applications;

- Create more onramps for Houston's small business communities through NASA's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) & Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs;
- Build a private sector skilled local workforce to support the development of space technologies

"NASA's Johnson Space Center has led the US and the world on an ongoing journey of human exploration and the Ion is here to accelerate tomorrow's space endeavors," said Jan E. Odegard, Executive Director of the Ion. "Together our Ion community of startups, entrepreneurs and academic institutions, across industries and disciplines - from health care to sports, to ecommerce to resiliency - is the perfect place for human performance and for NASA to derive talent. Just as NASA is the perfect team to inspire our Ion community to reach for the stars. Together we will safeguard Houston's title as 'Space City' and advance the global space industry for future missions."

About the Ion: The Ion anchors a 16-acre innovation district, the epicenter for Houston's innovation ecosystem, as an inclusive, dynamic, vibrant, and dense hub focusing on quality collaborations between entrepreneurs, incubators, accelerators, corporations, academics, and the Houston community. The 266,000-square-foot building accommodates multiple uses, including class-A office space, shared workspace, prototyping and maker resources, event space, classrooms, food and beverage offerings, as well as indoor/outdoor communal areas with shared amenities. For more information, please visit ionhouston.com.

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