

In the **Q**: MedQuarter Collaborates with NewBoCo to Add Mentors to Iowa Startup Accelerator's Qualified Mentor Network



Phil Wasta
MedQuarter
Executive Director

One of the MedQuarter's core goals is to collaborate on economic development initiatives happening in Cedar Rapids to promote investment and creation of new businesses and to become active, engaged participants in innovation. To this end, the MedQuarter's Economic Development Committee, led by Tim Charles, Medical SSMID Commission Member and President & CEO of Mercy Medical Center, and I set out to uncover opportunities for collaboration in the start-up space that would be impactful without being duplicative of existing efforts. After many conversations with many different organizations, we started having focused discussions with representatives from NewBoCo in early 2017 about how we could support the Iowa Startup Accelerator (ISA) program. We learned that the ISA is a mentor-driven accelerator and that adding mentors with experience in health-related fields would be very helpful in their recruiting efforts.

Fast forward to January 2018 when I started to recruit potential mentors from within the District who have the skills, passion and personal networks to be good mentors. On February 9 we had five MedQ business leaders attend a half-day professional development training session including Tim Sieck, Mercy Medical Center; Annette Stanton, Mercy Medical Center; John Albert, Citywide Cleaners; Brent Bormann, CarePro Health Services; Rose Hedges, UnityPoint Health St. Luke's, and myself to make six! These individuals are now part of the ISA's Qualified Mentor Network. While the Qualified Mentor Network has always been part of ISA, this training to prepare mentors is the first of its kind.

There are two ISA "batches" a year, with the Spring batch program beginning on March 19. This month, David Tominsky, Managing Director of the ISA, and the NewBoCo staff will review applications from startups around the world vying to be one of the 10 teams selected to go through the Accelerator. Once the program participants are selected and their 12-month, intensive, structured journey begins, the ISA staff will go about the process of pairing start-ups with mentors, always seeking the right 'fit' for both. The mentors are engaged early and are considered one of the keys to the success of the program.

As David Tominsky puts it, the very reason that the program is called an "accelerator" is because it can quickly determine if a business is viable, or disprove the business's viability and scratch it from the program. This may seem harsh, but it is really a service to all concerned so that time, money and effort are not wasted on a venture that cannot survive in the long run.

I am excited about this partnership and hope that our newly trained mentors can be a resource for this Spring's batch of startups or for future batches. Helping attract start-ups to Cedar Rapids will do nothing but help our city's trajectory. The MedQuarter plans to find other ways to become active, engaged participants in innovation so that we can continue to pursue our goal of adding to the local and regional economy.

Visit these websites if you would like more information about [NewBoCo](#), [Iowa Startup Accelerator](#), or the [MedQuarter](#).