

# Manufacturing Experts-In-Residence & Innovation Advisors



Many innovators are manufacturing and sourcing supply chains for the first time and lack the experience needed to do it in a scalable and cost effective way, or to even identify the gaps and barriers they face. **FORGE provides manufacturing readiness assistance and education as well as right fit introductions to manufacturers and suppliers.**

Since 2015, we have multiplied our impact in terms of startups served annually from 38 in 2015 to 300+ served in 2022 - an increase of nearly 700% in just 7 years. FORGE currently finds itself at a critical juncture to grow the depth and reach of impactful manufacturing-focused support to meet accelerating demand while ensuring further continuous improvement of depth of programming, and future scalability.

The *Design It!* award enabled us to pursue critical research and discovery to understand how to best build out an on-call expert program to serve the needs of our more highly technical and complex hardware startups. Our main objective was to dedicate the time to uncover and structure best practices. FORGE conducted research, held interviews with over ten potential candidates and experts, and discussed lessons learned from collaborators in the ecosystem who had built out closest comparable, mentorship-adjacent programming.

## Top lessons learned include:

1. Dedicating time to strong and thoughtful upfront infrastructure development and clarity is key to a potential candidate's ability to assess willingness to participate, as well as quality control and scalability
2. Selecting and qualifying candidates should be holistic - weighing expertise, stage and sector interest, personal network, mission alignment, and mirroring diversity of our innovators
3. Additional testing is necessary to determine whether financial incentives for experts will be key to success within the context of our unique focus and network
4. Hiring a dedicated person to serve as a point of contact for program participants and own moving the program forward will be essential to further growing this program at desired pace and maximum impact