

**NEWS UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT AT
February 3, 2026, RIoT State of the Region Event**

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**NC IDEA Foundation and The Wireless Research Center Announce Joint Venture
at February 3rd RIoT State of the Region Event**
WRC Launches RIoT Labs as RAP Team Joins NC IDEA

DURHAM, NC – February 4, 2026 – NC IDEA, a private foundation committed to supporting entrepreneurial ambition and economic empowerment in North Carolina, along with The Wireless Research Center of North Carolina (WRC), an independent, private nonprofit research center dedicated to applied research and engineering, announced at last evening's RIoT State of the Region event, that the organizations have formed a joint venture and transitioned the RIoT Accelerator Program (RAP), associated entrepreneurial programming, and key team members, Tom Snyder and Rachael Newberry, to the Foundation. In conjunction with this joint venture, WRC launched a new business unit, RIoT Labs, focused on dual-use and defensive technology acceleration and entrepreneurial support.

"The Wireless Research Center has been a valued partner of the Foundation for many years, with RIoT serving as an ECOSYSTEM partner since our very first cohort in 2016," said Thom Ruhe, President and CEO of NC IDEA. "Today marks an exciting new chapter in our partnership -- bringing RIoT's core programs under the auspice of NC IDEA and welcoming Tom and Rachael, longtime friends and collaborators, as colleagues on our team. Going forward, we see meaningful opportunities to collaborate with WRC to advance defense technology innovation and impact across North Carolina," Ruhe added.

"WRC has long been a pioneer in fostering innovation in North Carolina," said Dr. Gerry Hayes, Founder and President of WRC. "By transitioning RAP and key team members to NC IDEA, we're ensuring that RAP continues to scale its impact with a mission-aligned partner, while allowing WRC to sharpen its focus through the launch of RIoT Labs. RIoT Labs positions us to accelerate dual-use and defensive technologies that matter for national security, economic growth, and applied innovation, while continuing to support entrepreneurs building real-world solutions," Hayes added.

This partnership, supported by the RIoT team's deep expertise, enables NC IDEA to expand its acceleration services for entrepreneurs across North Carolina and the broader statewide entrepreneurial support ecosystem. The first program NC IDEA will roll out under this collaboration will be the Spring 2026 cohort of RAP, a 12-week, high-touch accelerator, running March through June. [Applications are currently being accepted](#) and are due February 20, 2026.

RIoT Labs aims to break down barriers between innovators, resources, and markets, providing mentorship, prototyping support, and strategic connections that accelerate the commercialization of cutting-edge technologies.

Through this strategic realignment, WRC reinforces its role as a catalyst for technology innovation in North Carolina, while NC IDEA expands its entrepreneurial acceleration services statewide. Together, the organizations are building a stronger, more connected ecosystem that fosters groundbreaking innovation, commercial success, and national impact.

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About NC IDEA Foundation

NC IDEA is an independent private foundation committed to equitably empowering North Carolinians to achieve their entrepreneurial potential. Through a powerful combination of competitive grants and programs and a network of strategic partners, the organization helps entrepreneurs when they need it most. NC IDEA's resources are highly competitive, enabling the Foundation to support North Carolina's most ambitious entrepreneurs. NC IDEA believes entrepreneurs transform communities and views their work as a catalyst for positive change. Learn more at www.ncidea.org.

About The Wireless Research Center

The Wireless Research Center (WRC) is an independent nonprofit that bridges the gap between research and commercialization, bringing the next generation of products and services to market. WRC supports wireless innovation and applied research, accelerating development, simulation, testing, and certification of antenna and wireless technologies from network infrastructure to connected devices and sensors. Visit www.wrc-nc.org.

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