INVENTOR RESOURCES SERIES · PART 1

AI Can Find Your Inventor Resources — Here's Where to Start

A practical guide to the local and national programs that help inventors turn ideas into companies — and how to use AI to find the ones near you.

Entrepreneurship opportunities are everywhere. Maybe you're drawn to the service sector, maybe finance, or maybe you've got an idea for a product — something in an existing niche, or something nobody's built yet. If you're new to inventing, one of the first problems you'll run into isn't your idea. It's figuring out where to find help.

Maybe you need to know how to structure your business as a corporation. Maybe you need financing to turn an idea into a prototype. Maybe you just need someone to tell you how to build the thing, test it, and eventually manufacture it at scale.

The good news: none of this requires you to figure it out alone. There are local agencies, clubs, city and state programs, federal agencies, and college-based centers built specifically to help inventors and entrepreneurs. The hard part has always been finding them. That's where AI comes in — we can use it to do a lot of that searching for us.

This is the first in a series of articles exploring how to put AI to work finding inventor resources. Along the way, we'll hand you ready-made prompts you can copy, edit, and reuse. This first article covers local and national resources for establishing and building your business entity. Future articles will cover patents and what's patentable, resources for building your technical skills, and — when you're ready to scale — resources for financing your invention.

A Word of Caution Before You Start Reaching Out

Before you start emailing organizations, posting in forums, or searching for people to talk to, a few words of warning.

Be careful what you share — especially on social media. Not every invention is patentable, and you may not need a patent to move your idea forward. But if you *do* plan to seek one, know this: in the United States, a public disclosure starts a one-year clock. Once your idea is out there in a form that's indexed and findable — and that includes sketches, rough plans, or outlines of a business idea posted somewhere like Reddit — that clock starts running, whether you meant to start it or not.

It's worse if you're planning to seek protection outside the U.S. Many foreign patent systems offer no grace period at all. Any public disclosure, anywhere, can permanently bar you from getting IP protection in those countries.

> The rule of thumb: don't discuss the specifics of your idea or technology with an individual or group unless you have a signed non-disclosure agreement in place first. NDA templates are easy to find online and simple to edit for your own use. Protect yourself before you start networking, not after.

With that out of the way, let's get into the resources.

"I Have an Invention. How Do I Turn It Into a Company?"

Start by looking for a technology or business incubator near you. Depending on the program, you may get mentoring, lab access, equipment, business development support, investor introductions, grant guidance, university partnerships, and other commercialization help — often at little or no cost.

Here's what that looks like in a handful of states that do it particularly well.

Florida. Florida is a strong example because help comes from multiple directions at once. The Florida SBDC Network offers free consulting and training in all 67 counties through regional, university-based centers. Florida also has USPTO-designated Patent and Trademark Resource Centers, and qualifying Florida inventors can get pro-bono patent help through the Arts and Business Council of Miami. Once your invention starts turning into a business, the SBDC becomes especially valuable, since patenting is only one piece of commercialization.

Utah. Utah's Startup State Initiative built a centralized, statewide portal connecting entrepreneurs to resources for starting and growing a business. For technology inventors specifically, the Utah Innovation Center helps companies pursue federal SBIR/STTR research and development funding. Utah also has a PTRC network, the ProBoPat patent pro-bono program, and an independent organization called Utah Inventors.

Texas. Texas has an unusually extensive ecosystem: PTRCs, the USPTO Southwest Regional Outreach Office, TALA Patent Pro Bono for Inventors, and patent and IP clinics at Texas A&M, Baylor, SMU, and South Texas College of Law, plus several independent inventor organizations around the state.

Michigan. Michigan hosts the USPTO's Midwest Elijah J. McCoy Regional Outreach Office, in addition to its own PTRCs, a Patent Pro Bono Project, and several participating university law-school clinics.

California. California rounds this out with the Western Regional Outreach Office, PTRCs, the California Inventors Assistance Program, and several participating law-school clinics.

Rather than cataloging all 50 states, the better move is to search the USPTO's own state-resources listings for what's available where you live.

Inventor Organizations Fill a Different Gap

Beyond formal business-development agencies, inventor-specific organizations offer something incubators often can't: a room full of people who've been exactly where you are.

The **Inventors Council of Central Florida (ICCF)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on education, networking, brainstorming, and helping inventors move ideas toward market. Its quarterly workshops are closed to the public, require membership and a signed NDA, and are specifically designed so inventors can discuss their projects in confidence.

The **United Inventors Association** is a national nonprofit that says it supports nearly 100 affiliated inventor associations across the country — a good starting point for finding a group near you.

And the **Inventors Network of Minnesota** is a solid regional example: meetings, educational programming, and networking for inventors and product developers.

Technology Incubators: More Than Cheap Office Space

If your invention is technology-based, a specialized incubator can outperform a general business-development office by a wide margin. The good ones give you lab access, equipment, experienced entrepreneurs as mentors, investor connections, grant expertise, university researchers, and sometimes specialized regulatory or manufacturing knowledge you'd otherwise have to pay dearly for.

Florida's standout example is **UF Innovate | Sid Martin Biotech**, near Gainesville — built specifically for biotech companies working in therapeutics, diagnostics, medical devices, agricultural biotech, clean energy, and biopharma. It offers 25 wet labs, specialized equipment, office space, and a network of mentors and advisers. UF Innovate runs two incubators total (The Hub and Sid Martin Biotech), and Gainesville rounds things out with the Santa Fe College Center for Innovation and Economic Development and the Gainesville Technology Entrepreneurship Center for broader startup and light-manufacturing support.

Look beyond organizations with "inventor" in the name — a university technology incubator can offer lab space, instrumentation, and commercialization resources that would be prohibitively expensive to assemble on your own.

Other strong examples:

- **North Carolina** — First Flight Venture Center in Research Triangle Park, a nonprofit science and technology incubator that's supported more than 400 early-stage companies since 1991, with help on idea development, prototyping, grants, and commercialization.
- **Georgia** — Georgia Tech's Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC), a statewide incubator open to entrepreneurs across Georgia, not just Georgia Tech affiliates. ATDC-supported companies span health tech, robotics, AI, sustainability, and advanced manufacturing.

Search your own state and nearby universities for terms like "technology incubator," "innovation center," "startup accelerator," "technology commercialization," or "[your technology] incubator." An inventor building a medical diagnostic needs a very different incubator than one building a new woodworking machine — so be specific in your search.

The Resource Most Inventors Have Never Heard Of

The **National Coalition of Advanced Technology Centers (NCATC)**, affiliated with the American Association of Community Colleges, connects advanced-technology centers tied to higher education and industry — currently more than 140 college members and 45-plus industry partners across 34 states.

These centers lean toward education, workforce development, and advanced technical training rather than "inventor services" in the traditional sense — which is exactly why they're useful for a different problem: *I know what I want to invent, but I don't know how to do part of it.*

Say you need to understand CNC machining, CAD/CAM, robotics, industrial automation, 3D printing, electronics, welding, advanced materials, or cybersecurity. Rather than teaching yourself from YouTube or hiring an expensive consultant on day one, check the advanced-technology programs at your nearby community colleges and technical institutions first.

The Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology also runs the **Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network** — a massive resource, with state-designated MEP centers in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, roughly 1,400 advisers, and more

than 450 service locations. Unlike the advanced-technology-center network, MEP is directly focused on helping American companies manufacture things: new-product development, technology adoption, workforce training, supply chains, process improvement, and connections to universities, research labs, and other technical resources. NIST explicitly notes that the network can help an entrepreneur turn a manufacturing vision into reality.

Examples by state: Florida has **FloridaMakes**; Georgia has the **Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership** at Georgia Tech; North Carolina has **NCMEP**; and Utah has the **University of Utah MEP Center**. NIST maintains the full national directory.

Where to Go From Here

If you take one thing away from this article, let it be this: whatever stage you're at — forming a company, patenting an idea, learning a new technical skill, or finding funding — there's very likely a resource built for exactly that problem, often for free, somewhere near you. The challenge has never been that the resources don't exist. It's that they're scattered across state agencies, universities, nonprofits, and federal programs with no single directory.

That's exactly the gap AI is good at closing. The free prompts that go with this article are now available: Free AI Prompts to Find Inventor Resources and Technical Training. Plug them into your AI assistant of choice to find the local and national resources relevant to *your* state and *your* specific invention — no manual digging required.