

The logo for 'ignite' features the word in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. A small orange flame icon is positioned above the letter 'i'. The logo is set against a dark, curved background element.

ignite

LAUNCH PITCH DAY



2025 Pitch Day Takeaways



In August 2025, Launch Innovation Accelerator gathered at the RTI office in Washington, DC for the 2025 Ignite: Launch Pitch Day. The day featured the first cohort of the innovation accelerator demoing their innovations, keynote speakers, panels about innovation and entering the market, and an awards ceremony.



Keynote Speakers

Carli Sapir, Founding Partner, Amboy Street Ventures

Carli founded Amboy Street Ventures to disrupt a funding system that historically overlooked vital sectors in women's health, redefining what innovation looks like in healthcare. Carli invests in early-stage, high-growth companies addressing critical gaps in care—what she has coined the “\$360B ghost market”—across areas such as menopause, contraception, and sexual health.

Under Carli's leadership, Amboy St. has backed startups such as: [Alloy](#), [Granata Bio](#), [Hey Jane](#), [Evvy](#), and [Contraline](#).

“I think there's a lot of pressure from VCs to change into these different categories that the VCs see as bigger or more fundable... **This category is fundable**, and I really want to encourage the people in this room to stay grounded in the purpose of **making healthcare solutions more widely accessible**.”



Tony Ma, Co-Founder and President, Benten Technologies

Tony is a recovering management consultant with extensive experience in Program and Project Management in the Telecommunications and Healthcare field. With nearly 10 years of experience in the industry, he has leveraged his system thinking and entrepreneurial spirit to address needs in the federal, state, and commercial sectors working with leadership to shape strategy and deliver impactful solutions.

“If you look at all **great leaders**, it's about the ability to **communicate your message and vision succinctly**.”



Panelists

Heather Duvall, Executive Director, Amplify Tulsa

Cristina Leos, Cofounder and President, My Health Ed

Nicky Charles, Senior Officer at The Pew Charitable Trusts

Moderated by **Elise Schuster**, Co-Founder and Executive Director, okayso

Judges

Carli Sapir, Founding Partner at Amboy Street Ventures

Tony Ma, Co-Founder and President at Benten Technologies

Nicky Charles, Senior Officer at The Pew Charitable Trusts

Makayla Dawkins, Youth Judge from Youth Collaboratory

Amara Santos, Youth Judge from Youth Collaboratory



Panelists' advice for entrepreneurs included:

- There are multiple ways to **show impact beyond clinical trials** or other rigorous evaluations. It can be difficult to think outside being a researcher, but consider how you're telling **the story of your innovation's impact**.
- **Be open to feedback** and make changes as needed, but don't change completely to fit a vendor's strategy or vision. **Be strong in knowing what you do.**
- Make plans for your innovation, but hold them loosely and **understand that plans will change**. Funders want to see that you've thought through your next steps and **have a strategy** that makes sense for your innovation—but since you're pitching an idea that doesn't fully exist yet, plans will change.
- Funders don't only fund ideas—**they also fund leaders**. They want to know they can trust you.
- Although feedback from the end user is critically important, launching an innovation also comes with additional feedback and asks from other players in the ecosystem around the end user (such as parents or teachers). A key challenge for innovators is to **evaluate and prioritize these opportunities**—and to realize that **some asks won't align with your purpose and focus**.
- To scale effectively, you have to **standardized processes**—and this will take you further away from the center of the work. Realize you can't do everything on your own, and **your role will have to adjust as your organization grows**.
- Understand what questions you need to continuously answer to **measure growth and success**, and make sure you have **feedback loops** in place to **collect data** to answer these questions.

Launch Teams

Empowering K.I.N.G.S. (Knowledge Instills Next Generational Success)

Powered by *Fact Forward*

EmPOWERing K.I.N.G.S (Knowledge Instills Next Generational Success) is a ten-session education curriculum and mentoring program designed to prioritize the health education of Black high school and college-aged young men.

An EmPOWERing K.I.N.G.S participant shared:

“I think that the best thing was that **I had someone I could rely on**, and I knew they cared about me. Also, that I have someone outside of family that I am **comfortable talking with**.”



Teen Talk Foster Youth

Powered by the *Reproductive Health Equity Project for Foster Youth*

Teen Talk Foster Youth is a virtual, community-based health education series developed for youth in California foster care.

A foster youth who went through the program shared:

“I loved the **multifaceted** and **inclusive** approach. I was so glad to see that the series was composed of more than just anatomy and hormones and sexual relationships.”

Let's Talk

Powered by *Teen Health Research*

Let's Talk is an app to support communication between parents and the young people in their lives about health topics.

A young person who tested the Let's Talk content gave the following feedback:

“I love that I know what to expect when I hit puberty.”



selfsea

Powered by Peer Health Exchange

Selfsea is an online platform co-designed with young people to provide youth with safe, evidence-based health resources and information.

A selfsea user said:

“My favorite thing about selfsea is the amount of **articles** and the **variety of topics** that are available. It is very easy to find something related to what you are looking for.”



Media Aware

Powered by innovation Research & Training

iRT is developing a new online library and curriculum support technology to complement the evidence-based health and media literacy program, Media Aware.

The Journey Ahead

Congratulations again to our Cohort 1 teams for completing the Launch Innovation Accelerator program! After a year of workshops and trainings, coaching, youth engagement, and building connections, their work has paid off and is already making a meaningful impact in adolescent health. This inaugural cohort has shown what's possible when innovation, empathy, and youth-centered design come together to solve real-world challenges.



About Launch

Launch Innovation Accelerator is an accelerator for innovations in adolescent health. By providing funding, connections to deep networks, and other support through a cohort model, Launch enables innovators to rapidly build and test their solutions. For more information on future cohorts, visit www.launchinnovation.org

