



News Release

Montana Technology
Enterprise Center

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MonTEC Secures One of Seven National Awards

MISSOULA – The US Small Business Administration has announced that Montana Technology Enterprise Center (MonTEC) was one of seven entities across the United States selected to receive contract awards for innovation cluster development.

“The Montana Bioscience Cluster Initiative is a multidimensional program with seasoned stakeholders from the private sector, university, economic development, trade associations and others who already have boots on the ground providing technical assistance as well as support, training, and mentoring to new and established life science businesses, entrepreneurs and students,” said Scott Whittenburg MonTEC president who also serves as UM vice president of research and creative scholarship.

The initiative which partners MonTEC, Montana Bioscience Alliance, Montana World Trade Center, the University of Montana, Missoula Economic Partnership, and Swan Valley Medical, will consist of four key components.

- A platform to facilitate peer to peer engagement and messaging to the world about Montana's strengths in meeting critical location factors and providing intellectual capital for the bioscience industry.
- Workforce development programs that align precisely with existing and anticipated industry need.
- Ongoing technical assistance to create a holistic continuum of support from startup ideation to export assistance.
- A gap fund to provide direct assistance to bioscience entrepreneurs.

Grant Kier, executive director of Missoula Economic Partnership, commented, "Here in Missoula, we recognize that ongoing talent development is crucial for our community and economy to thrive. This initiative affords us the opportunity to develop a talent program using bioscience as a model, and we look forward to working collaboratively with industry leaders in order to do so."

Brigitta Miranda-Freer who serves as Montana World Trade Center executive director and also oversees MonTEC operations noted, "Early stage research and development for drug discovery? We've got it. Cutting-edge cancer research? Yes. Pain treatment without opioids? That too. Big data analysis paired with genetics? Check. The list goes on. But it's how we leverage these building blocks in a manner that helps more companies to grow domestically and internationally that's at the heart of this initiative."

Sharon Peterson, executive director of Montana Bioscience Alliance carries this theme forward noting, "This initiative helps make the case for bioscience firms that may be looking for vertical integration of their supply chains, an educated workforce, infrastructure – lab space or for research and development partners to look at Montana."

Ron Zook, CEO Swan Valley Medical and serial entrepreneur maintains, "This contract will allow us to build out requisite ecosystem and pathways to engender the formation of more

bioscience activity while bringing this momentum to greater degree to more rural Montana communities and entrepreneurs that wish to participate in this space. In particular, we have a focus on medical device technologies with accompanying manufacturing for local job creation, including expanding exports to global markets.”

Governor Bullock weighed in with, “I’m delighted. But I’m not surprised that this coalition of Montana entities was successful in securing this highly competitive contract. This just further illustrates that the rest of the country is keying into what we already know about our state. Montana is a place where people recognize opportunity and feel empowered to go after it. Entrepreneurs from all industries tap into the support networks that are here to help them succeed. We look forward to furthering the growth of the bioscience cluster in Montana and appreciate what that means in terms of high-paying jobs for Montanans.”

Senator Tester commented, “Through smart cooperation, the Montana Bioscience Cluster fosters growth in our life sciences community and helps boost our state’s economy,” Tester said. “So it comes as no surprise that it was one of seven initiatives chosen for additional resources and opportunities by the Small Business Administration.”

Senator Daines added, “Montana Bioscience Cluster Initiative will have a great impact in our state by creating countless high-paying jobs. With this contract award, Montana will have the support we need to engage bioscience entrepreneurs and offer support and develop partnerships to showcase what Montana can accomplish in the bioscience space.”

For more information, call or email any of the contacts noted above.

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