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Small Business Administration Recognizes BioSTL and St. Louis Bioscience Cluster

\$500,000 award to support growth of small businesses

ST. LOUIS—October 16, 2015 – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) today announced that BioSTL and a group of regional partners are recipients of a Regional Innovation Cluster Initiative grant. The grant represents the fourth national, competitive federal award for BioSTL and St. Louis since 2010.

BioSTL received a one-year \$500,000 Clusters Initiative service contract, with four option years for up to a total of \$2.5 million over five years. The award was one of only three nationally and the only one open to competition from any type of organization in any region. Through the contract, BioSTL and its subsidiary BioGenerator – along with a number of regional collaborators – will provide support to entrepreneurs and small businesses in the region’s bioscience cluster, helping to position the cluster and the region for further growth and success.

“It is a huge vote of confidence in St. Louis’ progress as a thriving bioscience community to be singled out for this SBA award,” said Donn Rubin, president and CEO of BioSTL. “It demonstrates that we stand out at the national level when we come together to capitalize on our great assets and collaborate to tell the story of St. Louis as a supportive region for the growth of startups and small businesses.”

The SBA’s Regional Innovation Cluster Initiative invests in regional innovation clusters throughout the U.S. that span a variety of industries. The SBA’s funding is provided to each cluster’s organizing entity in order to connect and enhance innovation assets so that small businesses can effectively leverage them to commercialize new technologies and expand into new markets, thereby positioning themselves and their regional economies for growth.

“Clusters are public-private partnerships that are driving innovation and job creation in our most promising regional hubs,” Deputy Administrator of the SBA, Douglas Kramer explained. “We’re unleashing the full potential of entrepreneurs who are developing cutting-edge products and processes that will help ensure American global competitiveness, creating supportive environments for small businesses in regions with the most need.”

The contract award will allow BioSTL and it’s partners to support the growth of companies through three strategic objectives:

- I. Accelerate business growth through systematic business counseling and training and increased linkages between businesses in the cluster.
- II. Build regional capacity in capital formation by strengthening relationships with investors and counseling small businesses on raising capital.
- III. Strengthen the region’s bioscience ecosystem by engaging women and minority entrepreneurs and existing woman- and minority-led businesses and linking them with support to create and grow their ventures.

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BioSTL's successful proposal reflected the unique collaborative nature of the St. Louis bioscience cluster and the region's innovation ecosystem. In executing these objectives, BioGenerator will lead the region's small business counseling and support activities and BioSTL will subcontract with a number of partners, including:

- Cortex – to support the Square One entrepreneur training program and Tech Shop;
- Family and Workforce Centers of America (MET Center) – to link their lab technician training program with entrepreneurial training;
- ITEN – to support an Entrepreneur in Residence focused on healthcare IT;
- St. Louis Makes – to help host Product Camp and to support biomanufacturing businesses; and
- Venture Café – to help link small businesses with large corporations through showcasing opportunities and networking.

Additionally, BioSTL and its partners will coordinate with other SBA resources in the region like the SBA's St. Louis District office, St. Louis SBDTC, Veterans Business Resource Center and Grace Hill Women's Business Center, among others. Further, the award will also promote increased connectivity between the region's bioscience cluster and other emerging innovation clusters, like information technology and advanced manufacturing.

Through Objective III, BioSTL will extend the work of its St. Louis Bioscience Inclusion Initiative, connecting underserved communities in the region to the bioscience cluster. In particular, the collaboration with the MET Center in Wellston will bring bioscience career and entrepreneurship opportunities into the communities of St. Louis' federally designated Promise Zone.

"We are absolutely thrilled for BioSTL because of the impressive ways they are creating new jobs in the biosciences," said Sheila Sweeney, CEO of the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership. "It was a team effort including many organizations in the Promise Zone, working together to increase opportunities and strengthen the regional economy."

About BioSTL

BioSTL advances St. Louis' economic vitality by cultivating a strong bioscience and innovation ecosystem. BioSTL organizes business, university, and philanthropic leaders around a set of deliberate strategies that capitalize on St. Louis' strengths in medical and plant sciences. Focus areas include: building and investing in startups through our venture development arm, BioGenerator; improving access to investment capital; ensuring appropriate physical infrastructure; promoting science- and innovation-friendly public policy; fostering a more inclusive entrepreneurial talent pool in the region; attracting the U.S. presence of international companies; and communicating St. Louis' strengths. Please visit www.biostl.org for additional information. Follow BioSTL on twitter [@BioSTL](https://twitter.com/BioSTL).

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