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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | September 14, 2017**

## **BioSTL's Ben Johnson to Lead National Innovation Advocacy Council**

*This Week in Washington: Advocating for Strong Federal Policies to Support Innovation*

ST. LOUIS – BioSTL's VP of Programs Ben Johnson has been tapped to chair the Innovation Advocacy Council (IAC), a national group educating and advocating for strong federal policies that support the growth of our national economy through innovation and entrepreneurship.

BioSTL is a co-founder of the IAC, whose members represent more than two dozen innovation centers around the United States working together to educate policymakers and elected officials on issues related to innovation, economic development, entrepreneurship and technology. IAC aims to grow the innovation economy through federal legislation, programs and funding that support innovators and entrepreneurs on the ground.

The IAC's [policy agenda](#) is focused around seven principles for providing solutions for job creation and economic growth that include:

- Advancing federal government partnerships for locally-designed strategies to increase prosperity
- Modernizing our nation's infrastructure to include and support new technologies
- Growing good-paying jobs by increasing the velocity of innovation into new product lines and businesses
- Supporting and improving capital access for high-growth small businesses and increasing entrepreneurship
- Ensuring the workforce is trained for the jobs of the future
- Empowering national institutions to better support the innovation economy
- Enhancing America's global competitiveness through increased funding for targeted research and development

IAC is an initiative of SSTI , a national non-profit resource for those involved in technology-based economic development. During [this week's SSTI Conference](#) in Washington, D.C., Ben and other members of the IAC will meet with policymakers to support sustained federal investment in education and entrepreneurship as Congress completes the FY 2018 budget before October.

“Ben will be the primary driver and leader of our policy work in Washington, which will impact the nation,” said Dan Berglund, President & CEO of SSTI. “Bolstering the innovation economy will keep us globally competitive, and it will help address some of our most serious problems at

home: by creating more good, high-paying jobs and expanding access to the kinds of products and cures that improve all Americans' quality of life."

"During the past four years on the Innovation Advocacy Council, Ben has proven to be an influential thought leader driven by a passion to support entrepreneurs and grow the innovation economy," said Mike Cassidy, President & CEO of the Georgia Research Alliance and outgoing IAC chair. "Over the coming months, Ben and I will work together to sustain the IAC's momentum and engage additional partners from coast to coast."

"The goal is to turn ideas into products and jobs that boost our collective quality of life, and supportive federal policies and partnerships are critical to making that a reality," Johnson said. "I am honored to take on this role to carry forth the efforts of my colleagues around the country. Helping our nation capitalize on the innovations of our scientists and the ideas of our entrepreneurs to create economic opportunity is a bipartisan issue that connects rural and urban communities across the U.S."

Coming on the heels of [BioSTL's national recognition](#) as a top bioscience cluster and model for other cities, Ben will leverage BioSTL's thought leadership and national network around growing the innovation economy from St. Louis to Washington, D.C.

Through the Innovation Advocacy Council, SSTI and its member organizations have helped shape multiple bills and policy proposals, and have secured \$52 million in funding for the [Regional Innovation Strategies program](#), which was not previously funded before the IAC began its advocacy. The Regional Innovation Strategies program, under the Economic Development Administration, awards grants that build regional capacity to translate innovation into jobs.

St. Louis directly benefited from this advocacy: BioSTL received an award to provide grants to new entrepreneurs, resulting in the creation of more than 40 companies that attracted more than \$10M in add-on capital, and the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership received an award to develop the master plan for 39 North.

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### **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, especially in medical and plant sciences. The BioSTL mission is accomplished by deploying both human and financial capital to establish and execute effective strategies to grow the innovation economy. Focus areas include: building and investing in startups through its venture development arm, BioGenerator; improving access to investment capital; ensuring appropriate physical infrastructure such as labs, incubators and research districts; promoting science- and innovation-friendly public policy; fostering a more diverse and inclusive entrepreneurial talent pool in the region; and attracting the U.S. presence of international companies through GlobalSTL.