

## The 2012 FLC Far West Region Awards

### Nomination Form

**Select only 1 category:**

- Outstanding Technology Development
- Outstanding Partnership**
- Outstanding Commercialization Success
- Laboratory Representative of the Year
- Technology Transfer Professional of the Year

**Nominee Name(s):** Bruce Balfour, Partnerships & Technical Business Development and i-GATE President, Sandia National Laboratories; Rob White, City of Livermore Economic Development Director and CEO i-GATE; Louis Stewart, Deputy Director, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development; Buck Koonce, Director of Economic Development, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Title of Nomination: i-GATE Innovation Hub

Organization(s): Sandia National Laboratories

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#### **Basis for nomination-Outstanding Partnership**

#### **i-GATE Overview**

The i-GATE (Innovation for Green Advanced Transportation Excellence) regional public-private partnership (501c3 nonprofit) is designed to support small businesses and maximize the economic potential of green transportation and clean-energy technologies. i-GATE creates a proactive, two-way link between national laboratories and entrepreneurs, industry, innovation networks, venture capital, universities, business support services, and economic development resources for accelerating the commercialization of innovative energy technologies and growing a cohesive innovation ecosystem.

The i-GATE National Energy Systems Technology (NEST) incubator opened in June 2011 and continues to add clients, typically small companies working with advanced transportation or renewable energy technologies that can leverage technical assistance or connectivity with SNL or LLNL user facilities, R&D programs, or technology transfer. After its first year of operation, the i-GATE NEST has helped to create 62 direct and 118 indirect jobs.



Innovation for Green Advanced Transportation Excellence



### **Explanation of the partnership and innovative approach**

The i-GATE (Innovation for Green Advanced Transportation Excellence) nonprofit partnership has become a prominent focal point for the regional innovation system anchored by Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) in Livermore, California. i-GATE is a regional public-private partnership (501c3 nonprofit) designed to support small businesses and maximize the economic potential of green transportation and clean-energy technologies. i-GATE creates a proactive, two-way link between national laboratories and entrepreneurs, industry, innovation networks, venture capital, universities, business support services, and economic development resources to accelerate the commercialization of innovative energy technologies and grow a cohesive innovation ecosystem. The State of California awarded i-GATE its formal designation as one of the first six regional innovation hubs (iHubs) in February 2010, and i-GATE's organizational structure became the state's suggested model for an additional six iHubs. i-GATE opened its National Energy Systems Technology (NEST) incubator facility in June 2011.

The i-GATE NEST program provides business and technical mentoring, entrepreneurial education and assistance, collaboration opportunities, an Academic Alliance, internships, access to venture and angel investment, networking events and seminars, and the NEST facility for development of young technology companies with high growth potential. In 2011, i-GATE was recognized by the International Economic Development Council with its "Partnership Award for Regionalism and Cross-Border Collaboration." In 2012, i-GATE received the top national award for "Excellence in Local Government" from the Alliance for Innovation.



**Figure 1 Bruce Balfour rides a Trikke developed by i-GATE client.**

### **Context on the initiative, why it was created, and the geographic area**

i-GATE and its NEST Commercialization Center were created in response to a proposal solicitation from the State of California in 2009. The State needed to identify hubs of regional technology innovation. SNL initiated the proposal as lead laboratory with the City of Livermore as administrator, and the initial partnership quickly grew to 26 partners including ten cities, county and state government, federal agencies, universities, industry, and venture capital in the San Francisco East Bay region. There are now over 40 i-GATE partners. The City of Livermore also helped i-GATE to lease 14,000 SF of lab/office space close to SNL and LLNL.

The i-GATE region has a range of issues that must be addressed to build up a strong entrepreneurial climate and increase technology commercialization from the area's two national laboratories. These challenges include a lack of: entrepreneurial support services, growth capital, networking, and academic interactions. The regionally focused i-GATE program was designed to address these gaps in the research-to-commercialization continuum, increasing local capacity for technology transfer. i-GATE also partners with federal agencies such as the US Commercial Service, Small Business Development Centers, USDA, and MANEX/NIST to increase client access to services without duplicating other programs.

## **The roles and contributions of each nominee**

Bruce Balfour, President of i-GATE, works for SNL-California in Partnerships and Technical Business Development. He wrote the original proposal, and his ongoing role is in joint leadership and development of the i-GATE programs, partnerships, operations, client recruiting, mentoring, and facilitating interactions between the Labs and the regional community.

Rob White, CEO of i-GATE as of February 2012, is the City of Livermore Economic Development Director. From the beginning, Rob has coordinated the links between i-GATE and other government entities, as well as raising funds, recruiting clients and partners, fundraising, and jointly managing the development of i-GATE and its daily operations.

Louis Stewart, Deputy Director for Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, manages the innovation hub (iHub) program for the State of California. As liaison between i-GATE, the other iHubs, and the Governor's Office, Louis provides leadership and networking activities in support of i-GATE.

Buck Koonce, Director of Economic Development for LLNL, serves on the i-GATE Board of Directors and coordinates activity between i-GATE, LLNL, and the Livermore Valley Open Campus. Buck assists in recruiting clients, consults on planning, and provides leadership and networking activities in support of i-GATE.



**Figure 2 i-GATE client CyberTran's prototype.**

## **i-GATE impact to date**

The i-GATE program, which allows for increased Lab access and collaboration with business partners, is helping to accelerate the flow of clean technologies from the Labs to the marketplace. The i-GATE NEST program typically looks for small companies working with advanced transportation or renewable energy technologies that can leverage technical assistance or connectivity with SNL or LLNL user

facilities, R&D programs, or technology transfer. i-GATE NEST services are based on best practices established by the National Business Incubator Association and the MIT Venture Forum.

After its first year of operation, i-GATE NEST currently has 10 client companies with a total of 62 direct jobs created by these entities, and an additional 118 indirect jobs created in the region as a result of these efforts. Clients range from fuel cell and battery companies to ultra-light commuter rail (automation licensed from Idaho National Laboratories) and solid-state energy harvesters. i-GATE has three University of Oklahoma interns working on commercialization plans with the LLNL Industrial Partnerships Office. The University of California, Davis Graduate School of Management has a student team working on go-to-market plans with one of our fuel cell companies. i-GATE also hosts a variety of community-building seminars and events, such as the “Get to Know Your Labs” series, most recently held at the opening of the Cybersecurity Technologies Research Laboratory (CTRL) facility at SNL.



**Figure 3 California Energy Commissioner Carla Peterman and James Bartridge (CEC) discuss electric vehicle technologies with Fraser Murison Smith (right) of i-GATE NEST client, ElectraDrive.**



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