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For Immediate Release

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Big Ideas Needed for 48-Hour Launch Competition

Knoxville, Tenn., – The Development Corporation of Knox County, the Knoxville Chamber, and the Knoxville Entrepreneur Center have joined forces to revamp the What's the Big Idea business plan competition, making it an edgy 48-hour launch business startup summit. Six "big ideas" will be selected through an application process to participate in the entrepreneurial boot camp, which will lead contestants through prototyping, planning, incubation, and launching stages over a weekend.

"Change is the only constant, especially when you are around entrepreneurs who are always looking for ways to do things bigger and better," said Todd Napier, president and CEO of The Development Corporation of Knox County. "In 2009 when we launched the Fairview Business Plan Competition, which became What's the Big Idea in 2012, there were very few entrepreneur-focused competitions. Now there are several similar opportunities, so we wanted to differentiate What's the Big Idea and keep it relevant."

Anyone with a business concept or new enterprise in the seed-capital, start-up, or early-growth/pre-profit stage is eligible to apply for the competition, which will take place Jan. 23-25 at the Knoxville Entrepreneur Center.

"The great thing about What's the Big Idea is that it is open to any and all business concepts," said Mark Field, senior vice president of membership for the Knoxville Chamber. "A lot of the existing competitions have limiters like industry-specific concepts or audience-specific applicant pools. We think What's the Big Idea fills a void in the current landscape by attracting a wide variety of participants with diverse ideas."

The six participants selected for What's the Big Idea 48-Hour Launch will have access to mentors, as well as branding, design, and development specialists to help them move their idea from concept to ready to launch. They will then pitch their ideas to a panel of judges during a finale event on Jan. 25. The winner will have access to a \$10,000 grant to apply to reimbursable business start-up expenses, but must complete the Knoxville Entrepreneur Center's CO.STARTER Program before tapping into the winnings.

"Our hope is that What's the Big Idea will extend the Knoxville Entrepreneur Center's reach beyond our current client base," said Jim Biggs, the center's executive director. "We have a lot of resources and relationships to help transition good concepts into good businesses and we are excited to showcase what we have to offer in this progressive weekend-long format."

The application period for What's the Big Idea 48-Hour Launch begins Nov. 20 and continues through Jan. 7, 2015. The online application is available at www.bigideaknox.com, or by visiting the events calendar on www.knoxvillechamber.com.