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ORNL launches new accelerator for energy tech entrepreneurs

OAK RIDGE, Tenn., Sept. 20, 2016—The nation's top innovators will soon have the opportunity to advance their promising energy technology ideas at the Department of Energy's (DOE's) Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) in a new program called Innovation Crossroads. Up to five entrepreneurs will receive a fellowship that covers living costs, benefits and a travel stipend for up to two years, plus up to \$350,000 to use on collaborative research and development at ORNL. The first cohort is expected to start the program in early 2017.

A growing global population and increased industrialization require new approaches to energy that are reliable, affordable and carbon neutral. While important progress has been made in cost reduction and deployment of clean energy technologies, a new program at DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) will invest in the next generation of first-time clean energy entrepreneurs to accelerate the pace of innovation.

Innovation Crossroads is the most recent clean energy accelerator to launch at a DOE national laboratory and the first located in the Southeast. ORNL is the nation's largest science and energy laboratory, with expertise and resources in clean energy, computing, neutron science, advanced materials, and nuclear science.

"There is a huge opportunity and need to develop an emerging American energy ecosystem where cleantech entrepreneurs can thrive," said Mark Johnson, director of EERE's Advanced Manufacturing Office (AMO). "This program gives the next generation of clean energy innovators a chance to make a transformative impact on the way we generate, process and use our energy resources. Innovation Crossroads will play an important role in strengthening the Southeast region's entrepreneurial ecosystem."

Located on ORNL's main campus, Innovation Crossroads entrepreneurs will have access to ORNL's world-class research talent and DOE facilities including the Manufacturing Demonstration Facility, the National Transportation Research Center, the Oak Ridge Leadership Computing Facility and the Spallation Neutron Source. Through a partnership with mentor organizations in the Southeast, participants will also receive assistance with developing business strategies, conducting market research, and finding long-term financing and commercial partners.

"ORNL has an excellent reputation for collaborating with industry and moving innovation to the commercial marketplace," said ORNL Director Thom Mason. "We look forward to expanding our focus to include clean energy entrepreneurship. We recognize that growing new energy technology companies is not easy: entrepreneurs need to develop and validate technologies, build prototypes, secure customers, and raise several rounds of capital. Support from Innovation Crossroads can significantly improve the prospects for promising new energy ventures."

Innovation Crossroads is part of EERE's Lab-Embedded Entrepreneurship Program (LEEP), sponsored by EERE's Advanced Manufacturing Office (AMO) and co-managed by EERE's Technology-to-Market Program. LEEP includes Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's Cyclotron Road and Chain Reaction Innovations, which launched at Argonne National Laboratory earlier this year. Innovation Crossroads will be led by Tom Rogers, ORNL Director of Industrial Partnerships and Economic Development.

"LEEP is a new model for energy R&D," said Johanna Wolfson, director of EERE's Technology-to-Market Program. "The combination of having top technical talent embedded in a world-class R&D facility, and maintaining a laser focus on entrepreneurial endeavors is creating a new generation of energy entrepreneurs working to bring really challenging solutions to fruition."

Interested entrepreneurs can learn about the Innovation Crossroads at innovationcrossroads.ornl.gov and submit a pre-application.

UT-Battelle manages ORNL for the DOE's Office of Science. The DOE Office of Science is the single largest supporter of basic research in the physical sciences in the United States and is working to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time. For more information, visit the [Office of Science website](#).

The U.S. Energy Department's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy accelerates development and facilitates deployment of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies and market-based solutions that strengthen U.S. energy security, environmental quality, and economic vitality.

EERE's Advanced Manufacturing Office (AMO) supports applied research, development, and demonstration of new materials, information, and processes that improve American manufacturing's energy efficiency, as well as platform technologies for manufacturing clean energy products. AMO works closely with EERE's Technology-to-Market Program on initiatives that accelerate clean energy technology innovation and commercialization.