

Economic Development

PNNL Mentor-Protégé Program

Making strategic connections to help small technology businesses thrive

Mentor-Protégé Program at-a-glance

A primary objective of the Economic Development Office at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) is to encourage the expansion of technology businesses. The Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP) leverages the Laboratory's extensive network of business contacts and other regional economic development resources.

The program's goal is to assist in the creation, stabilization, and growth of regional technology-based businesses by providing a network of individuals experienced in business (mentors) able and willing to provide guidance to regional companies/individuals (protégés).



How it works

Potential protégés initiate the process by requesting a mentor for a specific business challenge. Through the MPP, protégés are introduced to one or more qualified mentors, who will assist them for an agreed upon period (typically 6-24 months). Mentors and protégés may continue their relationship independent of the MPP following completion of the formal mentoring engagement.

Benefits to Protégés

In general, protégés receive the obvious benefit of learning from a mentor's experience. They may also receive specific assistance in:

- » writing business and sales plans,
- » uncovering new market opportunities for products and services,
- » preparing financial projections,
- » evaluating the competition,
- » negotiating business agreements,
- » building a management team and a board of directors, and
- » increasing revenues and long-term profitability.

Becoming a Protégé

If you are interested in becoming a protégé, visit the MPP website: <http://www.pnnl.gov/edo/mentor/>, and submit a "request for mentoring" application. The application will be evaluated and you will receive a response regarding your eligibility.



Mentorship yields tangible results for Ag-focused business

UNIBEST Corporation provides farmers, agribusinesses, and environmental managers with monitoring products to optimize crop management and evaluate environmental contamination. In 2010, the company's president contacted the Economic Development Office for assistance—through the Laboratory's Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP)—with better aligning UNIBEST to meet customer demands and respond to new markets.

A review of the company's business plan and refinement of its strategies helped determine that a commercial approach would be more lucrative, especially when introducing new patents, a decision that resulted in additional marketing and commercialization partners. UNIBEST credits advice received through the MPP for its success over the past year. Income from 2010 to 2011 increased by over 800%, growth UNIBEST attributes to the down-selection of target markets and a fresh, focused approach to its business plan.

For more information, contact:

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