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NHIRC Awards Grants For Research Partnerships

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DURHAM, N.H. — The New Hampshire Innovation Research Center (NHIRC) recently awarded eight grants totaling more than \$506,000. These grants underwrite research partnerships for New Hampshire companies with scientists and engineers at the University of New Hampshire and Dartmouth College for the purpose of advancing new technologies under development in the private sector.

The NHIRC's Granite State Technology Innovation Grant leverages an investment by the state of New Hampshire with federal dollars from the National Science Foundation's EPSCoR program (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research). Companies applying for the grant are required to provide matching funds or services, thereby increasing the value of the project. Grants range from \$20,000 to \$150,000, with an average around \$60,000. Projects vary from proof-of-concept to a substantial investment in engineering or process design.

"The NHIRC helps companies improve their competitive edge by bringing new technologies to the marketplace," said Robert Dalton, director of the NHIRC. "In this latest round of funding, these research projects total more than one million dollars when we combine the investments by all three parties—the state, the federal government, and the private sector.

"That's the short-term investment. The long-term gain will be measured in technological advancement which allows these companies to grow, to create new high-paying jobs, and contribute to the state's economy. We call this technology-based economic development, and it's a guiding principle for both the NHIRC and the New Hampshire EPSCoR program," said Dalton.

Since the NHIRC was established by the legislature in 1991, it has distributed more than \$5 million in grants to 116 companies. New Hampshire became an EPSCoR state in 2004, which has brought in nearly \$12.5 million for new research projects at universities, colleges, and companies across the state. Last August, an NSF EPSCoR grant doubled the state investment in the NHIRC's research and commercialization partnerships.

"The payoff for the state of New Hampshire is that these companies are better able to expand their product line and their bottom line," said Michael Vlacich, director of the state Division of Economic Development in the Department of Resources and Economic Development, which administers the state funds directed to the NHIRC. "Companies that grow are able to hire new workers who tend to spend their money in their home communities. That's sustainable economic impact."

The Granite State Technology Innovation Grant is a competitive process, with oversight by a 14-member committee composed of representatives from industry, government and academic institutions. The next request for proposals will be issued in January, with an award date in May. Companies are encouraged to contact the NHIRC office for guidance in advance of filing a proposal. More information is posted on the NHIRC website, www.nhirc.unh.edu.

The NHIRC and the New Hampshire EPSCoR program are administered by the Office for Research Partnerships and Commercialization at UNH.