



Public-private partnership including Berkeley Lab connects clean energy entrepreneurs with testing facilities

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Clean energy entrepreneurs in California now have access to more than 60 world-class testing facilities, thanks to CalTestBed, a voucher program led by New Energy Nexus (NEX), in partnership with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) and the University of California Office of the President (UCOP).

The CalTestBed Initiative is providing \$8.8 million in voucher funding to clean energy entrepreneurs to access testing facilities located at nine University of California campuses and LBNL. Voucher recipients are also connected to NEX’s global network of climate-focused technology accelerators, and they are featured in the Entrepreneur Directory and during the National CalTestBed Symposium. These connections to scientific and technical resources and next-level partners—such as customers, investors, corporations, and utilities—help facilitate commercialization of clean energy innovations and allow companies to take their businesses to the next level.

The program “gives clean energy entrepreneurs a greater chance at success, which helps California further its nation-leading energy and climate goals,” according to David Hochschild, chair of the California Energy Commission, which funds the initiative.

Forming a partnership among multiple public and private institutions was logistically complex. NEX worked with UCOP to create a custom agreement framework for the program that included agreements between NEX and UCOP, NEX and each UC campus, entrepreneurs and their associated campus testing facilities, and between NEX and each entrepreneur.

For LBNL, the partnership vehicle to secure project funds is a Master Strategic Partnership Projects (SPP) agreement with NEX. Each CalTestBed project is then funded under a task order to the Master SPP. The actual testing scope is performed under a cooperative research and development agreement (CRADA) between the



Above: The Materials Project. 1: National Energy research Scientific Computing Center. 2: Photo credit: California Electric Transportation Coalition.

entrepreneur and LBNL. LBNL’s effort under the CRADA is funded from the task order (the “voucher” amount); the entrepreneur funds its own time and effort, which is quantified in the CRADA as the in-kind contribution.

After an initial round of more than 100 entrepreneur applicants, nearly \$6 million in testing vouchers were awarded to 25 clean energy entrepreneurs in December 2020; 27% of voucher recipients were minority-owned and/or women-owned. That inaugural class of entrepreneurs was showcased at the first annual CalTestBed symposium, which was attended by more than 500 prospective partners from industry.

The second solicitation for CalTestBed submissions has been completed, and recommended applications are currently conducting laboratory consultations. Planning for the December 2021 symposium is under way.

“From several perspectives, this [CalTestBed] is already successful,” said Sandra Brown, Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of California San Diego. “It is a new model of an integrated, statewide ecosystem for commercial acceleration; it is widely known in the clean-energy arena, and it is widely appreciated across the state.”