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<https://www.northernkentuckyusa.com/news/federal-grant-allows-northern-kentucky-partners-to-build-health-innovation-initiative>

(Ft. Mitchell, KY; Dec. 18, 2018) – The Northern Kentucky Tri-County Economic Development Corporation's Entrepreneurship Council (NKYEC), in partnership with the Northern Kentucky University's Institute of Health Innovation and St. Elizabeth Healthcare, was awarded a \$731,250 grant to build the Northern Kentucky Health Innovation Initiative (NKY-HII) by the Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.

This is the first time funds from the i6 Challenge have been awarded in Kentucky. The grant will also be matched by local funds, bringing the total benefit to over \$1.4 million. The recently announced [RISE grant](#), combined with this i6 Challenge grant, will put over \$2.8 million to work in the Northern Kentucky region for entrepreneurship.

NKY-HII would create jobs and attract companies and talent in the health innovation sector to the eight-county Northern Kentucky Region. By aligning the region's top economic development, healthcare, university and startup accelerator assets, the NKY-HII will stimulate and commercialize health innovation.

The grant is one of 40 that were announced by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross as part of the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) program. The funding was awarded through the 2018 i6 Challenge, a leading national initiative designed to support the creation of centers of innovation and entrepreneurship.

"The awarding of these funds supports our commitment to build a health innovation cluster in Northern Kentucky," said Gary Moore, Boone County Judge-Executive, and current board chair of Tri-ED. "We are just getting started – the funding we've received to date with our partners will allow us to continue work on building companies and increasing jobs and investment in the region, while uniquely solving health issues."

Tri-ED Senior Vice President Casey Barach, who spearheaded the grant submission, praised the efforts in the region. "The power of the Initiative's partnership will allow the region to build a world-class health innovation initiative and is the primary reason we were awarded these funds. This investment will allow our partners to continue the hard work to aggressively address health issues in the region, so we can improve and save lives."

NKYEC has a strong foundation to build the NKY-HII, leveraging NKU and St. Elizabeth's existing health innovation programs.

"We're proud of the partnership that were awarded these dollars," said Garren Colvin, President and CEO of St. Elizabeth Healthcare. "It's a perfect partnership for an organization like ours, which strives to bring innovative health solutions to our patients. We're excited to use our expertise to invest in the community around us and grow a health innovation cluster here."

"We look forward to working with our regional partners to develop new and innovative health solutions," said Ashish Vaidya, President of NKU. "Our newly established Institute for Health Innovation is perfectly positioned to guide the NKY-HII. We all have a role in addressing the urgent population health concerns our region faces, and this collaboration brings everyone to the table."

The RIS program awards grants that build regional capacity to translate innovations into jobs (1) through proof-of-concept and commercialization assistance to innovators and entrepreneurs and (2) through operational support for organizations that provide essential early-stage risk capital to innovators and entrepreneurs.

Normand Desmarais, chair of the NKYE, Secretary of the NKU Board of Regents, and Co-founder of TiER1 Performance Solutions, also praised the additional funding. "We are working to deliver new resources and accelerate business success for local entrepreneurs," he said. "Health innovation is one the areas we are focusing on, and this additional funding will be a big driver to improving our success in this sector."

Within the next three years, NKY-HII is anticipated to create 27 health innovation focused companies and add 44 full-time and 59 part-time jobs to the region.

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The NKYEC consists of:

Aaron Blutworth	CEO – FERN
Rich Boehne	Chairman – Scripps/ NKU Board of Regents
Craig Carlson	Regional Director – BB&T
Karen Cheser	Superintendent – Ft. Thomas Independent Schools
Norm Desmarais	Founder & Chair – TiER1 Performance Solutions / NKU Regent
Nigel Ferrey	Chairman & CEO – SIDIS Corp.
Kay Geiger	Regional President – PNC Bank
Sarah Giolando	Chief Strategy Officer – St. E Healthcare
John Hawkins	CEO – MPI/Pathfinder
David Heidrich	CEO – Zalla Companies / Northern Kentucky Growth Fund
John Hengelbrok	CEO – Baker Stamping Co.
Matt Hollenkamp	Vice President, Marketing & Communications – St. E Healthcare
Dave Knox	Founder & Managing Partner – Vine Street Ventures
Tony Lamb	Founder & CEO – Kona Ice
MaryAnn Pietromonaco	VP – Morgan Stanley / Chair of Aviatra Accelerators
Tom Prewitt	Chair – Graydon / Chair of UpTech Accelerator
Tim Schroeder	CEO – CTI Clinical Trial & Consulting Services
Chad Summe	Sr. VP – Quotient Technology
Vincent Williams	Co-Founder / Partner – Orchestrate Technologies
Brad Zapp	Founder & Managing Partner – CONNETIC Ventures