Welcome Address: NIH's Role in Facilitating Academic Technology Development

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

Session Transcript:

>>Matt McMahon: Hi folks um let's get things started I'd like to welcome everyone to the annual Proof of Concept network meeting my name is Matt McMahon and I'm the director of the seed office at NIH. Many of you might know about the SEED office, we're a trans-NIH coordinating office within the office of the director and the mission of SEED is to help scientists and researchers turn their laboratory discoveries into actual products that can improve health and save lives. This meeting is a meeting of NIH's national network of Proof Of Concept Centers I see lots of familiar faces of people who are in the meeting and have joined us but there's lots of new people here too so I wanted to just go through a few of the kind of basics of the network like what are the problems that this network is designed to solve the first one is that we want to enable researchers and scientists to validate the potential Health impacts of their discoveries that they're making in the laboratory we also want to improve the likelihood that promising technologies will transition from academic product development into small businesses or other private sector development. We want to educate innovators about entrepreneurship and product development. And most importantly, we want to identify and scale the approaches that work best based on the evidence that we gather as we run these programs, so the centers and the hubs address these problems by providing innovators with access to funding and access to product development experts to help them accelerate that transition of their scientific discoveries into products and into early-stage product development. But those centers and hubs they also contribute to the local Innovation ecosystems by improving small business development by developing an entrepreneurial culture and by really creating a diverse Workforce that understands those aspects of technology development and product development and kind of the business side of the science.

Also, so through the three NIH centers for accelerated innovation and the eight research evaluation commercialization hubs the reach hubs NIH has supported Innovation at 79 academic and non-profit research institutions across 16 States. So this is a really, we're reaching kind of a critical mass now we're really supporting a vibrant life science ecosystem and we're doing that by supporting local Innovation ecosystems all around the country and I'm really excited for Ian McClure's keynote on this topic which is right after this introduction. Ian is a perfect person to talk about this stuff because in addition to his day jobs at the University of Kentucky, Ian's is the Chair-Elect at AUTM. AUTM is the association of University technology

managers so they're really a critical stakeholder a critical partner in this this joint mission that we've undertaken.

So, I want to just provide a little bit of historical context about the network. The NIH Centers for Accelerated Innovations, the NCAI, they were launched in 2013 as a public-private partnership and that was done with a seven-year commitment of 42 million dollars by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute together with matching funds from non-federal partners. And, based on the success of these centers. that really led to an expansion in 2015 to cover the entire NIH mission space with a three-year 9-million-dollar commitment to fund three reach hubs and the, excuse me, the initial success of that ecosystem led to another round of five reach hubs that were funded with 20 million dollars in 2019. So, we're always trying to expand this network, we're trying to cover the country with this model, but we're also trying to improve the network and improve the functionality of these centers and hubs and figure out how to squeeze the most benefit out of them that we can.

Tomorrow you'll hear from RTI's Alan O'Connor, and Alan and his team have provided ongoing evaluation of the program that's really enabled us to improve various aspects of the program practically in real time now as many of you know as most of you know evaluating success in this kind of endeavor is really difficult because biomedical product development just takes a super long time and it's also really expensive so even after the initial stage of product validation it can take years for the safety and effectiveness of a product to be proven. But you know, despite these challenges of tracking success we know that the 400 plus projects that we've supported from academic and non-profit research environments through this network have led to over 200 small businesses to continue the development of these projects. And these projects have generated over two billion dollars in follow-on funding, and that is not a typo that's a true number - two billion dollars, and that number is even more impressive when you consider sure that the total NIH investment in these programs has been 71 million dollars.

So, we're even actually seeing benefits start to come out of the network that could affect patients. We have eight projects that have received regulatory approvals that really enable their access to the healthcare marketplace, so we're really starting to see some tangible outcomes that that people really care about real outcomes and really prove that this concept is working. So, in our meeting today and tomorrow we're going to highlight some of the foundational aspects of this Proof of Concept Center approach, and we've designed this meeting so that most of this information is actually going to be delivered in panels directly from the innovators themselves. You'll get to hear them and hear their stories about how this network has helped them.

So, today we're going to have panels about career development, transitions, to small business development, and commercialization resources, and tomorrow we'll hear about equity diversity and inclusion across the network and close things out with final pitches from our innovator showcase competition. That's going to be super exciting we even have some excellent judges from the investment community that can give some feedback and pick the very best projects.

I'm also really happy to announce that NIH is going to be expanding the REACH Network even further with a 20 million dollar investment to support five new REACH hubs we're making some improvements in this new round by encouraging applications from new regions of the country, by encouraging participation by more diverse pool of innovators, and by challenging the hubs to devise ways to support R&D projects beyond the walls of their individual partner institutions so to develop ways to kind of virtualize the support to further increase access to this kind of support. We hope that the broader participation in product development will lead to a broader array of health care solutions especially in those area that have traditionally been neglected by the Biotech Industry, things like diabetes or obesity or opioid use disorder. So we're super excited not just about what we've accomplished, but that we're able to continue to grow this network.

Applications for these new reach hubs are due on February 9th and there's going to be informational webinars about this opportunity, one hosted by SSTI and Alan O'Connor on December 8th and one by our office, the SEED office and NIGMS, on December 20th, and that information has been placed in the chat there or will be placed in the chat so that people can see it.

So with that, I want to thank the Deloitte team for helping us organize and I want to just mention a few housekeeping issues. If you have questions, please type your questions into the Q&A feature for speakers to answer during the sessions or at the end of sessions, and also please join tomorrow's webinar using the day-two link that going to be provided in the meeting agenda. And with that, I'd like you to enjoy the meeting and let's welcome Ian McClure. Who is the Associate Vice President for Research, Innovation and Economic Impact at UK Innovate, and a member of the National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship also known as NACIE, and as I mentioned before the Chair-Elect at AUTM. So Ian, go ahead and kick us off with your Keynote.