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State Selects High-Tech Collaborative for Key Investment *iHub² bolsters ongoing, evolutionary, and economic change for the region*

[Port Hueneme, CA] — On April 4, 2022, the California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA) announced grant award recipients of the Inclusive Innovation Hub (iHub²) program. This one-time, \$250,000 grant will run for 15 months period and will help accelerate regionally focused strategies to spur innovation and diversification across industry sectors and geographies while attracting entrepreneurs from underserved business communities.

CalOSBA designated FATHOMWERX — a public-private partnership created by the Economic Development Collaborative, the Port of Hueneme, Naval Surface Warfare Center/Port Hueneme Division, and Matter Labs — to be among 10 inclusive innovation hubs in the state. This exciting designation is for initial three years and will run through March 2025.

“We are collectively thrilled for the recognition by the state and for their investment,” said Bruce Stenslie, President and CEO of the Economic Development Collaborative. “This new state and local partnership delivers value for us both — assuring that California continues to invest in the kinds of innovation that drives our economic vitality and that locally we’re adding resources to assure the economic participation and benefit by historically under-represented populations.”



Caption: FATHOMWERX was recently recognized by the State of California's Office of the Small Business Advocate for being designated among 10 Inclusive Innovation Hubs located throughout state through a competitive grant process.

FATHOMWERX was established to enhance regional economic competitiveness, create more jobs, and aid in the sustainability of high-tech, high-impact entrepreneurs doing business in the government sector and beyond. This first-of-its-kind program serves Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties by increasing access to mentoring, training, consulting, networking, and funding opportunities for high-tech start-ups, with a specific focus on serving underrepresented tech start-ups.

“As one of the founding partners of FATHOMWERX, the Port of Hueneme is excited that the iHub² program will bolster the advancement of an inclusive service and provide resources to support ongoing change for high-tech entrepreneurs and small business companies,” said Kristin Decas, CEO & Port Director.



Tara Lynn Gray, appointed by Gov. Gavin Newsom as the Director of the Office of the Small Business Advocate, spoke to the audience about the Inclusive Innovation Hub Program (iHub²) that provides small businesses with specialized support and encouragement.

iHub² will provide small businesses with high-tech assistance services, focused technology industry (sector-specific) workshops, mentoring and networking events, high-tech resources at FATHOMWERX, funding options through EDC and its loan network, equity funding networking, and high-tech, node-building events.

“These inclusive innovation hubs are important because they are key investments in California’s competitive edge when it comes to growing technology and science-based

businesses,” said Tara Lynn Gray, Director of the Office of the Small Business Advocate. “In California, we have a very big appetite for innovation. We lead the nation in business start-ups and in job creation.”

“The Naval Surface Warfare Center Port Hueneme Division’s strategic goals include creating a culture of innovation to deliver and sustain capability,” said Alan Jaeger, Ventura Tech Bridge Director at the Office of Research and Technology Applications, Naval Surface Warfare Center, Port Hueneme Division. “This goal puts us on a deliberate pathway of creating and fostering an environment and culture of innovation both inside and outside our command and includes teaming with internal and external stakeholders as well as leveraging industry and academic partners. With the addition of the iHUB resources, FATHOMWERX will have further access to a diverse and under-represented network of innovators and potential solutions to national security initiatives.”

“The state of California designating FATHOMWERX as a science-based incubator and technology hub is an exciting and important honor,” said Oxnard Harbor District President, Mary Anne Rooney. “This official designation will build upon the focus of including underserved communities in future innovation.”

By making an intensive effort to connect with underserved, disadvantaged communities, and high-tech, high impact women and minority-owned technology businesses, iHub² has great potential to create new talent within the high-tech workforce with higher paying jobs throughout the region.



(Left to right) Mark B. Thompson, Alan Jaeger, and Bryan Went discussed how FATHOMWERX provides the region with an environment that is vital for helping to build resources, facilitate entrepreneurship, and support high-tech innovation.

“Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center focuses on leveraging its capabilities and authorities for agile research and development to partner with industry and academia,” said Mark B. Thompson, Manager of the Office of Research and Technology Applications at NAVFAC Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center. “These partnerships are invaluable to both the Navy and

industry in that resources and expertise can be exchanged to greatly accelerate technology development. As a partner in the FATHOMWERX mission, we are enthusiastic and encouraged by its new designation as an iHub2 and look forward to collaborating with a new unique set of innovators across the region.”

About the Port of Hueneme

The Port of Hueneme is one of the most productive and efficient commercial trade gateways for niche cargo on the West Coast. The Port is governed by five locally elected Port Commissioners. The Port consistently ranks among the top ten U.S. ports for automobiles and fresh produce. Port operations support the community by bringing \$2.2 billion in economic activity and creating 20,032 trade-related jobs. Trade through the Port of Hueneme generates more than \$173.2 million in direct and related state and local taxes, which fund vital community services. In 2017, the Port of Hueneme became the first port in California to become Green Marine certified and was voted the Greenest Port in the U.S. at the Green Shipping Summit. www.portofh.org.

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