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RAIN Eugene Accelerator opens to first cohort of startup companies

The Eugene node of the state-sponsored initiative to encourage new startups welcomes eight companies for an intensive 12-week development program

EUGENE, Ore. – The RAIN Eugene Accelerator officially launches on Monday, July 14 with its inaugural class of eight startup companies. Selected from a competitive application process that attracted a diverse array of industries—including biomedical research, software development and nanomaterials manufacturing—the first class of the accelerator program will receive 12 weeks of focused mentoring and development.

“Being an entrepreneur requires adaptability and thick skin,” said Joe Maruschak, Chief Startup Officer and Director of the Eugene Accelerator “Our program will challenge founders’ perceptions of their companies and provide them with the vital skills they need to adapt quickly to feedback in a competitive marketplace.”

RAIN Eugene is a public/private partnership that works as a community catalyst to grow the local innovation ecosystem by connecting entrepreneurs, investors and development resources. Part of the Oregon [Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network](#) (RAIN), the launch of the Eugene accelerator signals the start of the state initiative in Lane County.

Banded together by Governor Kitzhaber’s Oregon Solutions network, the communities and universities in the South Willamette Valley are using seed funding from the State of Oregon to bring economic development to the region. The Oregon Solutions project was co-convened by Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy and Corvallis Mayor Julie Manning.

“The launch of the RAIN Eugene Accelerator is a critical component of the overall RAIN strategy,” said Jim Coonan, RAIN Director, “RAIN is all about the collaboration of our universities and communities to better serve entrepreneurs with scalable, traded sector ideas and the accelerator is focused on making that happen.”

The accelerator will ultimately support two classes of startup companies each year. Participants receive free workspace for the duration of the program, instruction in a

variety of relevant skills, and guidance from skilled mentors with experience managing and launching startup companies.

The inaugural cohort of startup companies includes ADASA, Black Lodge Design Lab, BT Biotech, Dune Sciences, Heads of State, LawyerBoom, Manage My Co-op and SCAPE.

“The breadth of skills and ingenuity that these startups are bringing to Oregon validates the efforts of the Oregon Solutions and Regional Solutions networks to provide a system and process for collaboration,” said Governor Kitzhaber, “Through the partnership that now exists between our two premiere research universities and the communities they serve, RAIN Eugene is helping bring the prospect of long term economic prosperity to the entire state.”

Companies entering the accelerator will go through three phases of training. The first phase will focus on developing founders’ “coachability” and interpersonal skills. The second phase of the program will build on these skills as founders hit the pavement and conduct market research. Founders will take their products out to potential customers and evaluate their needs and impressions of the product and determine whether or not the product is delivering. By focusing on strengths and weaknesses and cultivating the ability to take constructive criticism, teams will emerge strengthened by the experience, Maruschak says.

Founders will spend the final weeks of the accelerator program developing a detailed strategic operations plan that will guide them through the next stage after they leave the program. In addition to daily operations, the planning phase will map out possible funding sources, a marketing plan and a strategy to support and nurture growth after leaving the accelerator environment.

The intensity of the program reflects the harsh reality of the startup world, where companies fail on a regular basis, says Pat Jones, Associate Vice President for Research & Innovation at the University of Oregon.

“Part of the purpose of the RAIN Eugene Accelerator is to rapidly discover if an idea is ready to succeed in the market,” Jones says. “Some companies will accelerate up and out, while others will return to the incubation phase better prepared to revisit their ideas.”

Ultimately, Jones says, the Eugene Accelerator will help generate stronger startups. Companies will graduate from the program knowing they have the potential for growth, hiring and long-term success.

RAIN aims to help the region transition to a knowledge-based future where creativity, innovation and technology drive the economy. By sponsoring venture accelerators in Corvallis and Eugene, the Oregon Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (RAIN) aims to provide emerging companies with the resources and infrastructure they need to succeed.

Link: RAIN Eugene, <http://raineugene.org>

About RAIN Eugene

Supporting the local innovation ecosystem in the cities of Eugene and Springfield, RAIN Eugene works to connect local and regional efforts serving the entrepreneurial community to create high-impact, innovative, traded-sector companies that can grow and thrive in the region. RAIN Eugene is managed as a virtual nonprofit by the City of Eugene, the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce and the University of Oregon.

About Oregon RAIN

The Regional Accelerator & Innovation Network (RAIN) is a consortium of government, higher education, and the business community. RAIN was founded by Governor Kitzhaber's Oregon Solutions Network and funded by the 77th Oregon State Legislative Assembly to advance the formation and growth of tech-based startups companies throughout the South Willamette Valley.

In coordination with the cities of Corvallis and Eugene, as well as communities throughout the region, RAIN is partnered with the Oregon State University Advantage Accelerator-RAIN Corvallis and the RAIN Eugene accelerator sponsored by the University of Oregon and the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce to create an environment for entrepreneurs to establish companies that generate jobs, wealth and support for the region.

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