

Investment: San Jose BioCenter Is a Launch Pad for Entrepreneurs' Dreams



Entrepreneurs with breakthrough technologies should use their passion and resources to drive their discoveries—not to reinvent the wheel.

That is the premise behind the San Jose BioCenter, a science and technology incubator co-sponsored by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency and the San Jose State University Research Foundation. The BioCenter is a 40,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art research facility that houses 40 life sciences and cleantech companies. Its mission is to provide emerging science and technology companies with a “big company advantage” through a new generation of specialized facilities, capital equipment, full laboratory and operational services, along with commercialization support, contacts and expertise. With that infrastructure in place, the BioCenter helps emerging companies with compelling promise to apply their time and capital towards advancing their discoveries and accelerating their path to market.

Opened in 2004, the BioCenter has already guided an impressive list of emerging companies to independence, whether as standalone entities or partners, acquisitions or subsidiaries of larger firms. In fact, the BioCenter reports that its clients have raised more than \$800 million in growth

capital and have fostered more than 600 jobs, all of which has helped bolster the local economy.

Establishing the BioCenter required significant commitment and funding from its founding partners. The San Jose State University Research Foundation and the San Jose Redevelopment Agency invested approximately \$10 million in facilities and equipment at the BioCenter. Prescience International, a firm that specializes in starting and managing centers of excellence, oversees operations of the incubator facility and provides world-class lab operations and commercialization services. The public-private partnership works closely with the portfolio companies to provide access to the resources, networks and experience they need to commercialize their technologies.

Also believing in the strength of synergies among its affiliate and resident companies, the BioCenter is home to complementary enterprises in drug development, diagnostics, device, nanotech, clean technology, energy, material science, bioinformatics and biophotonics. It further balances its portfolio with companies at various stages of development and affiliate members from around the globe.

To help ensure that client companies become significant, long-term market leaders, the BioCenter selects firms that meet a number of key criteria. Successful candidates must have credible teams in business, science and technology. Each must be working in an area of significant medical or market need, and their products must represent a qualified and profitable market opportunity. They must be pursuing a compelling discovery or technology for which they own or are securing intellectual property rights. And they must demonstrate financial solvency.

Executive Director Melinda Richter noted that even though the BioCenter stands out among its peers in regard to its specialized facilities, capital equipment and laboratory and business services, it operates on a model that could and should be replicated elsewhere. “Our novel yet efficient common-sense model changes the probability of success of innovation; it makes the process faster, less expensive, less risky, and more likely to succeed,” she said. “This model allows for more innovations in the pipeline and for companies to prove out their technology faster and to bet on the things that win.”