

## **Adirondack Biotech Initiative Underway**

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ELIZABETHTOWN – The Essex County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) is keying in on the biotech industry in a new development strategy launched last week. The plan, called the Adirondack Biotech Initiative, targets growth custom-tailored to fit existing industry and the region's pristine environment.

Biotech businesses research and develop products in areas of medicine, agriculture, industrial components, and environmental management.

A number of such companies already exist here. Carol Calabrese, co-executive director at the IDA pointed out Trudeau Institute in Saranac Lake, Upstate Biotech in Lake Placid, and Bionique Testing Labs in Lake Clear are a few examples.

"Based on research we've done," said Calabrese, "this industry likes to cluster. We are targeting source companies who supply products and/or services to the industry already here."

"Biotech firms tend to share services, information systems and research facilities," she added.

"Yes, we have talked to existing companies over the past three years. They will remain involved with the initiative as we explore details that support their success, and respond to their needs."

The biotech industry is a good match for Adirondack economic development explained Calabrese.

"For one, it is clean industry; one that fits well with respect to the environment."

In addition, training programs for technical and physical science skills are already in place at technical centers, area colleges, and universities. And biotech jobs usually pay well and provide year-round employment.

"We are seeking to fill a need, not create one," said Calabrese. "Our plan is to add jobs that tap into the trained technical workforce."

Initial funding for the Adirondack Biotech Initiative came from a \$47,240 Empire State Development grant. The money will sustain a yearlong marketing term, and extend a few years past that to implement the project. Follow-up costs will be handled on an as needed basis.

"Funding sources usually evolve as a project develops," explained Calabrese. "Our short term goal is to establish a biotech niche and attract more companies."

### **Company profile**

"We are specifically interested in young companies, 5 to 7 years old," said Calabrese, "because they are smaller and more portable, ideal for relocation and poised for growth. The local economy and infrastructure is suited for companies with 10 to 30 employees," added Calabrese. "Biotech firms also tend to have young employees, people who are very interested in quality of life."

Calabrese was careful not to predict instant results from the program. It can take time for a business to relocate, she said. "It can happen relatively fast or over years. I'm not going to kid you in that regard."

"We will build the cluster already here," she said. "It's really about building a network, and adding support services and suppliers to grow that."

First steps in the program are underway. The IDA is adding a biotech specific Web site, targeting specific periodicals, and will attend several upcoming biotech trade shows and conferences.

IDA is working with CITEC Manufacturing in Potsdam to develop the campaign and build the Web site.

“There is no doubt that young biotech companies located in heavy metro areas have access to lots of stuff, such as labor, infrastructure, education and a cluster of other biotech firms to draw from, “ said Tricia Wilson, marketing director for CITEC and project manager for the Adirondack Biotech Initiative, in a written statement.

“But we want them to know that they have the same access here, can recruit the skilled employees they need with such a beautiful backdrop.”

“Essentially,” added Wilson, “they can accomplish as much, if not more. And they can do it in a setting that doesn’t include traffic reports.”

The biotech program will also establish a database for businesses to use in researching support facilities and services.

“We need to continually identify the edges of growth in the biotech industry,” said Calabrese. “And it is one of the fastest-growing markets.”

Industry analysts predict the biotech sector will more than double its size in the next 10 years.