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Massachusetts Clean Energy Center presents seven Clean Energy and Water Innovation Awards in Amherst, Belmont, Cambridge, Somerville and Worcester

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According toMassachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) CEO Alicia Barton, $280,000 in funding was awarded for seven innovative clean energy projects across the Commonwealth under MassCEC's Catalyst program. It is the first time the program issued a challenge for innovators to focus on clean water technologies, and three of the seven winners have innovative clean-water applications. Organizations and researchers each receiving $40,000 in funding under the Catalyst program are:

* EnerScore (Belmont): Developed an online tool that provides energy performance ratings for all homes using public records and building permit data. Grant funding will enable initial pilot testing with the cities of Boston and Northampton.
* change:WATER Labs (Cambridge): Developed a polymer to reduce volume, thereby reducing costs and energy consumption for decentralized sewage treatment processes. Grant funding will go toward prototype design and construction, and proof-of-concept and prototype testing.
* HMSolution, Inc. (Cambridge) - Water Challenge Awardee: Created a cost-effective water treatment system to remove arsenic, lead, mercury and other harmful chemicals from aqueous solutions. The grant will enable prototype design, construction and testing.
* Tank Utility (Somerville): Developing connected smart meters and digital applications for fuel tanks, aimed at eliminating unnecessary service and equipment dispatches for fuel suppliers and reducing energy consumption. Grant funding will enable commercial software development to support Tank Utility's existing hardware.
* Dr. Ayse Asatekin (Tufts University School of Engineering) - Water Challenge Awardee: Developed a new membrane for treating industrial wastewater, facilitating lower energy use and higher water quality. Grant funding will go toward generating membrane samples and pursuing third-party testing.
* Dr. Samuel Hazen (UMass Amherst): Created a gene technology that considerably improves biomass energy crop yield, increasing renewable fuel production. Grant funding will go toward a proof-of-concept demonstration in full-scale bioenergy crops.
* Dr. Reeta Rao (WPI): Developing a novel process for production of bio-hydrogen, a potential biofuel, increasing hydrogen yield by a factor of three and enabling cost reduction. Funding will enable proof-of-concept testing.

"Innovation starts in the laboratory-but in order to accelerate the pace of progress on Massachusetts' ambitious clean energy and water sustainability goals, we need to help the most promising ideas move beyond the lab stage," said Barton. "We're proud to partner with MTTC to provide critical early-stage funding that will help the next generation of promising clean technologies shorten their path to commercialization."

These grants will support clean energy and demonstration projects in Belmont, Cambridge and Somerville, and at Tufts University, the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

The Catalyst program, funded by MassCEC and managed by the Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center (MTTC), provides grants for early-stage researchers and companies to help them demonstrate the commercial viability of clean energy technologies. Since Catalyst's launch in 2010, MassCEC has awarded $2.17 million to 55 research teams. Past awardees have gone on to raise more than $35 million in funding from outside investors, venture capitalists and federal programs. Catalyst awardees have formed seven new companies and received patents and disclosed inventions for 42 new technologies.

"As prior awardees have shown, this funding can be truly catalytic in helping to build entrepreneurial ventures in Massachusetts," said MTTC director Abigail Barrow. "These grants, while very small, enable inventors to take technologies from idea to early prototype to demonstrate that the technology works. I am especially pleased that three of these awards will go to academic researchers who will be able to show the commercial viability of their inventions with this funding."

Created by the Green Jobs Act of 2008, the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) is dedicated to accelerating the success of clean energy technologies, companies and projects in the Commonwealthâ€”while creating high-quality jobs and long-term economic growth for the people of Massachusetts. Since its inception in 2009, MassCEC has helped clean energy jobs grow by 47 percent, supported municipal clean energy projects and invested in residential and commercial renewable energy installations creating a robust marketplace for innovative clean technology companies and service providers.

The Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center (MTTC) was created in 2004 as a program in the Massachusetts Economic Stimulus Bill. Its goal is to support technology transfer activities from public and private research institutions to companies in Massachusetts. To achieve this goal, the Center works with technology transfer offices at Massachusetts research institutions; faculty, researchers, and students who have commercially promising ideas; and companies across the Commonwealth. The MTTC is based in the University of Massachusetts President's Office.