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To learn more, visit: www.govsbizplancontest.com

Prize list grows for Gov's Business Plan Contest; Jan. 31 is deadline to enter 15th annual competition

MADISON – Entrants in the 2018 Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest will once again compete for more than cash this year. The entry deadline for the 15th annual contest is 5 p.m. Jan. 31 at www.govsbizplancontest.com.

Wisconsin companies have stepped up to offer a variety of service prizes, such as legal assistance, accounting, video production, marketing, design and more. For many contestants, these services will provide an important jumpstart in getting their businesses rolling.

Among the prizes will be office space suitable for startup companies. The following companies have pledged to provide free space to a finalist or finalists in the contest, which will culminate in June at the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Conference.

- University Research Park in Madison will provide a suite for one company for one year.
- Industrious Madison will provide office space on the Capitol Square for one finalist for three months.
- Irontek in Beloit will provide a 12-month membership to one finalist.
- @1403 in Madison will provide office space for one finalist for one year.
- Ward4 in Milwaukee will provide two 12-month memberships to two finalists.

Additional cash and in-kind prizes have been pledged by the following companies to date: American Family Insurance; American Transmission Company; Applied Management (accounting services); AT&T; BloodCenter of Wisconsin; DXC Technology; Eppstein Uhen Architects (office design); Madison Gas & Electric; Marshfield Clinic Health System; Michael Best (legal services); Midwest Prototyping (product prototype); Murphy Desmond (legal services); Quarles & Brady (legal services); Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren s.c. (legal services); SCORE Wisconsin (mentorship classes); Smith & Gesteland (accounting services); State of Wisconsin Investment Board; UW-Madison Office of Corporate Relations; Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation; Wisconsin Technical College System; and ZEBRADO (visual brand package).

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. has been a lead sponsor since the contest's inception.

The 2018 contest is accepting entries online at www.govsbizplancontest.com until **5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31**. The contest is designed to help entrepreneurs turn their ideas into business plans, prepare them to launch a company, get feedback from judges, and to interact with investors and other professionals.

About \$2.2 million in cash and other prizes were awarded and more than 3,500 entries from more than 300 different communities across the state were received. Winners of other selected business plan and "pitch" contests in Wisconsin will have an opportunity to segue into the BPC in a later round.

Wisconsin residents 18 years old and older are eligible, as are teams from Wisconsin-based businesses and organizations. Businesses or teams from outside the state are also eligible to compete if they demonstrate intent to base or expand their business in Wisconsin. Entrepreneurs may also enter multiple ideas, though each idea must be separate and distinct.

Companies or individuals that have raised less than \$25,000 in private equity for their plans in a current form are eligible to enter. Private equity generally refers to angel and venture capital.

As with past contests, the 2018 competition will take place in stages:

- In Phase 1, which is open until 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2018, the contest will accept idea abstracts on the website. Entries should be roughly 250 words (or no more than 2,000 characters, including spaces) and will be graded by the pool of BPC judges. The top 50 idea abstracts will advance to Phase 2.
- In Phase 2, which runs from Feb. 19 to 5 p.m. March 12, 2018, the top 50 idea abstracts will submit an executive summary. The top 20 executive summaries will advance to Phase 3. A mentored "boot camp" for contestants will be held in early March.
- In Phase 3, which runs from April 2 to 5 p.m. April 23, 2018, the top 20 executive summaries will prepare full business plans. Judges will review the plans and pick three finalists from each of the four categories to advance to the final presentation round. Mentored practice sessions will be offered to the top 12 in late May.
- The top 12, or "Diligent Dozen," will square off with oral presentations during the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Conference on June 5 at Union South in Madison.

To enter the contest or learn more about sponsorship opportunities, visit www.govsbizplancontest.com or contact contest administrators at info@govsbizplancontest.com.

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