



## **U-Launch Program Now Accepting Grant Applications to Help Clean Tech Start-Ups Get to Market**

**CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts -- November 1st, 2010** -- An alliance of leading clean technology organizations today kicked off Clean Energy Week by announcing the creation of “U-Launch,” a grant opportunity that will fund commercialization assistance for early-stage start-ups and university-originated clean energy technologies. U-Launch originated as one of five proposals across the country selected for a \$1 million award by the U.S. Department of Energy to build and strengthen “innovative ecosystems” that accelerate the movement of cutting-edge energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies from university laboratories into the market.

The U-Launch program is administered by the Fraunhofer Center for Sustainable Energy Systems (CSE) in collaboration with the New England Clean Energy Foundation (NECEF), the Association of Cleantech Incubators of New England (ACTION), and the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC). By offering grants and venture creation services up to \$100K, the group will focus U-Launch specifically on enabling university clean energy technologies to progress to the commercial stage. U-Launch facilitates this by combining the capabilities of Fraunhofer R&D labs and prototyping facilities with NECEC Executives-In-Residence (EIR) and the ACTION incubators.

In addition to connecting to experienced entrepreneurs and incubator facilities, U-Launch will also support access to funding through venture capital partners and the Investments in Clean Energy program at MassCEC, the first New England state government program to participate in U-Launch awardee funding. Program partners expect U-Launch to help validate, accelerate and spin out new clean energy ventures and products.

Applications will be accepted through the end of 2010. The first round of U-Launch grants will be awarded in early 2011. Information for interested parties, including university researchers, technology licensing officers and potential applicants, can be found on-line on the [TechBridge U-Launch page](#).

“U-Launch provides a valuable solution to lab-to-market acceleration, a critical component to developing the New England energy innovation cluster,” said Peter Rothstein, President of the Council. “This innovation cluster is an engine for economic growth that combines our world-class research universities with private and public financing sources, enabling public policies and leading clean energy companies, all collaborating to accelerate clean-energy research, product development, economic growth and jobs creation.”

“MassCEC is excited to be part of this unique collaboration formed by CSE, the Council and ACTION to address the critical technical, business, infrastructure and financial barriers to the spinout of promising clean energy university technologies,” said MassCEC Executive Director Patrick Cloney. “I congratulate these partners for their vision in forming U-Launch and addressing a critical gap in the clean energy innovation pipeline.”

“The New England region is a leading center of innovation, and is perfectly positioned to facilitate revolutionary new technologies in the clean energy space by leveraging the strengths of our universities, business, finance and research institutions,” said Eric Graham, Director of Fraunhofer’s Techbridge Program. “The U-Launch program will play an invaluable role in helping new university-hatched ventures avoid typical start-up pitfalls and beat the odds to grow into mature, profitable companies.”

The five innovation ecosystem proposals selected by DOE are led by universities or nonprofits based in five different states, and convene a total of 80 partners, uniting the strengths of universities, business, finance, government, research institutes, economic development organizations, accelerators and National Laboratories. DOE selected proposals based on the following objectives: nurturing and mentoring entrepreneurs; pursuing intellectual property protection for technological innovations; engaging the surrounding business and venture capital community; or integrating sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation across university schools and departments.

### **About Fraunhofer Center for Sustainable Energy Systems**

Based in Cambridge, MA, the Fraunhofer Center for Sustainable Energy Systems (CSE) is a non-profit applied research and development laboratory dedicated to the commercialization of clean energy technologies. CSE focuses on PV modules, building energy efficiency and smart grid research. Fraunhofer engages in collaborative research and development with private companies, government entities and academic institutions, performing research that broadly benefits firms, industries and society. The Fraunhofer TechBridge Program is specifically devoted to providing R&D and commercialization assistance services to early stage startup companies. TechBridge leverages the capabilities of 15 Institutes that are part of the Fraunhofer Energy Alliance and works with strategic corporate partners and VC firms to fund promising early stage technologies.

### **About the New England Clean Energy Council**

The New England Clean Energy Council was formed in early 2007. The Council’s mission is to accelerate New England’s clean energy economy to global leadership by building an active community of stakeholders and a world-class cluster of clean energy companies. The Council represents nearly 200 members, comprising clean energy companies, venture investors, major financial institutions, local universities and colleges, industry associations, area utilities, labor and large commercial end-users. The Council’s ranks include more than 60 clean energy CEOs, representatives from most of the region’s top 10 law firms and partners from over a dozen of the region’s top venture capital firms (with a total of over \$8 billion under management). Working with its stakeholders, the Council develops and executes a wide array of programs in

five key focus areas: Innovation, Growth, Education and Training, Adoption, & Policy. For additional information, please visit [www.cleanenergycouncil.org](http://www.cleanenergycouncil.org).

#### **About the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center**

Created by the Green Jobs Act of 2008, MassCEC's mission is to foster growth of the Massachusetts clean energy industry through funding to companies, universities and nonprofit organizations; job training programs; and workforce development grants. MassCEC is also home to the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust, which supports the installation of renewable energy technologies with funds provided by small renewable energy charges on electric bills. For additional information, please visit [www.MassCEC.com](http://www.MassCEC.com).

#### **About the Association of Cleantech Incubators of New England (ACTION)**

The ACTION Network is a consortium of cleantech incubators throughout New England. For the incubator management organizations, ACTION provides a common set of best practices and materials to support operations. For the entrepreneurs in the incubators, ACTION creates a network of collaborators around industry sub-sectors to accelerate commercialization and growth. For the cleantech industry, ACTION provides a network of physical locations where experienced executives can engage with the cleantech industry and become involved with supporting business growth. For industry associations, universities, public officials and NGOs, ACTION is an important economic development engine, a technology commercialization platform and contributor to the growth of the New England clean energy cluster. For additional information, please visit [www.innovativeACTION.org](http://www.innovativeACTION.org).