

LabCentral Launches “LabCentral Ignite” – New Initiative to Advance Life Sciences Innovation by Expanding and Diversifying the Talent Base for the Biotech Industry

New platform from biotech community leader to coordinate, support and connect STEM and workforce education non-profits with biotech startups, investors and sponsors for larger impact

\$185,000 already awarded to local non-profits, including initial grants of \$40,000 each to Jewish Vocational Service, MassBioEd and Station1 and micro-grants to seven other organizations

Cambridge, Mass. – January 13, 2021 – LabCentral, the first-of-its-kind shared laboratory space designed as a launchpad for high-potential biotech startups, today announced [LabCentral Ignite](#), a new initiative with the goal of enhancing regional biotech innovation by stimulating a robust pipeline of diverse, qualified talent. Through internal programming and grants to non-profits focused on STEM education, workforce training and entrepreneurial development, LabCentral Ignite will facilitate broader access to the biotech industry, with emphasis on socio-economically disadvantaged, underserved and under-represented individuals and communities.

To oversee the program’s growth and development, LabCentral has promoted Krista Licata to the role of Managing Director of LabCentral Ignite. She has spent the past seven years with LabCentral in a variety of roles, most recently serving as the Senior Director of Site Operations.

“LabCentral Ignite is a platform for collective investment, non-profit collaboration and a “spark” for regional systemic change in STEM education, talent development and placement, and entrepreneurial support in the biotech industry,” said Licata. “After years of planning, we’re excited to launch this bold new expansion of LabCentral’s mission.”

A key part of LabCentral Ignite is its Talent Ecosystem Fund that will provide grants to selected non-profits. LabCentral has already awarded a total of \$185,000, including three major grants of \$40,000 each as well as seven micro-grants of \$5,000-\$15,000 to local organizations with demonstrated experience in developing the next generation of scientists and biotech leadership. The grant recipients plan to utilize the funds to support and scale up key programs focused on building partnerships and educational collaboration between industry employers, non-profits and underserved communities.

“LabCentral Ignite has been in the planning for a while, but we accelerated it based on the extraordinary events and themes emerging from last year – the power and potential of biotech to be an innovative force, improving the health of communities around the world, contrasted with the division, inequality and lack of opportunity faced by many underserved communities,” said Johannes Fruehauf, co-founder and president, LabCentral. “LabCentral Ignite will catalyze new connections, programs and organizations to accelerate and scale their work in STEM education and workforce development with an emphasis on equity and inclusion. In addition, LabCentral will leverage our strong network within the biotech world to tie our network of sponsors and partners into this work of building a more diverse workforce and be a force multiplier for change.”

LabCentral Ignite awarded its first round of grants totaling \$120,000 to the following organizations:

- [Jewish Vocational Service \(JVS\)](#) is one of the largest workforce development organizations in New England. The LabCentral Ignite grant will be used to design a new mentorship program for its Bridges to College & Careers program that will help JVS biotech students better navigate workplace culture and identify career paths for their roles.
- [MassBioEd](#) is dedicated to growing and developing talent for the life sciences workforce in Massachusetts. The LabCentral Ignite grant will help it to expand its life sciences career awareness program, including BioSCANN, a new role-playing curriculum for middle school students created in partnership with Tufts.
- [Station1](#) is paving a pathway of opportunity through a new model of learning and research – inclusive and socially-directed science and technology. The LabCentral Ignite grant will increase the number of undergraduate students participating in its transformative flagship education, research, and internship program, the [Station1 Frontiers Fellowship](#), in the life sciences. It will also expand the Station1 curriculum in areas related to the societal impact of the life sciences.

“Our mission is focused on advancing equity, ethics, and sustainability of leading edge science and technology education and research, with a particular focus on expanding opportunity for college students from low income households, from under-represented backgrounds, and who are first generation to college,” said Dr. Christine Ortiz, founder of Station1 and Professor at MIT, “We are thrilled to have been selected as one of the first organizations to receive a LabCentral Ignite grant, as it will provide talented students access to state-of-the-art scientific research and technology commercialization, thus creating a foundation for lifelong academic, personal, and professional advancement and success in the life sciences.”

LabCentral Ignite also awarded a total of \$65,000 in micro-grants to a range of local organizations, including:

- [BioBuilder Education Foundation](#) – offers a comprehensive curriculum in synthetic biology for teachers and students, and workforce development for traditionally under-represented student populations
- [Gloucester Biotechnology Academy](#) – offers a biotechnology certificate and summer STEM programs.
- [HMS MedScience](#) – innovative high school biology course immersing students into simulated medical emergencies.

- [Just A Start](#) – a community development corporation dedicated to promoting equity by creating access to stable housing and building pathways to economic opportunity.
- [The LEAH Project](#) (a program of Health Resources in Action) – a STEM, college access and career readiness program for Boston area youth with the vision of diversifying the STEM workforce.
- [Life Science Cares](#) – collective effort of the life sciences industry to eliminate the impact of poverty through survival, education and sustainability programs.
- [Tutoring Plus of Cambridge](#) – 1:1 academic tutoring and mentoring support at no cost for students in grades 4-12.

LabCentral Ignite specifies topics to which applicants must adhere and a full list of activities that qualify, as well as other eligibility criteria. More information about open grant cycles and how to invest in the Talent Ecosystem Fund can be found on the [LabCentral Ignite site](#).

About LabCentral

A private, non-profit institution, LabCentral was founded in 2013 as a launchpad for high-potential life-sciences and biotech startups. Operating a total of 100,000 square-feet in the heart of Kendall Square in Cambridge, Mass., LabCentral offers fully permitted laboratory and office space for as many as 70 startups comprising approximately 500 scientists and entrepreneurs. More information is available at www.labcentral.org.