



Bexar County Commissioners Court

San Antonio, Texas 78205-3036

210.335.2555

210.335.2926/fax

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Contact: David Marquez

210.335.0661/o

210.241.2792/m

Bexar County collaborates to create tech business competition

Bexar County announced Tuesday evening at the Tech Bloc Summer Rally that it will work with Tech Bloc, a local nonprofit corporation, to develop a technology business competition called the "Techovate Battle." The County will use up to \$50,000 of its recently created Innovation Fund to provide cash grants to the winning companies. Tech Bloc will manage all aspects of the competition.

In his May 2015 State of the County address, Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff identified a need for greater collaboration between government, academia and the private sector to grow the County's technology industry. Wolff identified seven pathways to increase innovation and technology-focused economic development in San Antonio. To jump-start this initiative, Judge Wolff announced the creation of a \$1 million Innovation Fund for technology-related economic development purposes.

Judge Wolff articulated a vision that technology companies could "create here, scale here" or "create there, scale here" by developing an economic climate that encourages small companies to innovate, stay and grow in San Antonio. This vision would also help attract innovative tech companies from around the world that are moving to scale and can benefit from San Antonio's evolving and sophisticated technology ecosystem.

Seven Pathways

1. University research and tech education
- 2. Venture capital and support for start-up tech companies**
3. Livability
- 4. Skilled training**
- 5. New incentive programs for tech companies**
- 6. Target private sector cyber firms to locate in San Antonio**
7. Build on technological strengths of our health care industry

- more -

Over the past year, Judge Wolff and other local tech ecosystem leaders have been discussing various ways to pursue these pathways.

“We’ve been meeting with thought leaders from UTSA, Geekdom, TechStars, Rackspace, the City of San Antonio, and many others to develop this agenda,” Judge Wolff said. “We have great consensus on a new economic development approach for the digital reality that’s all around us, and we are striving to be just as innovative as the people and companies we want to attract.”

The Techovate Battle is designed to support four of the seven pathways identified. The companies who win the Tech Bloc competition will be provided with a Bexar County Techovate Grant for business purposes. The sizes of the individual award grants are still to be determined by Tech Bloc.

“We’re just starting to really understand how unique this industry is from an economic development perspective, and how valuable it is,” Judge Wolff said. “Every aspect of society is affected by rapid technological innovation. Successful 21st century cities will be judged by their willingness and ability to support this new economy. Their sustainability depends on how effectively they adopt these innovative and often disruptive technologies.”

With \$50,000 committed to Techovate grants, and another \$50,000 provided to CyberSecurity San Antonio, the County has made the first of many investments to use the Innovation Fund as a technology catalyst.

"The community should be proud and excited at the unprecedented public, private and academic collaboration that has come together in such a short period of time," said Wolff. "I am thrilled to see so much focused energy and purpose."

Tech Bloc will have more details about the competition available on its website this fall.

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*About SA Tech Bloc: **Activating** San Antonio’s Tech Industry as one voice to support the public and private work needed to build a robust tech economy and ensure a vibrant San Antonio in the 21st Century and beyond. More information is at satechbloc.com or on Twitter @SATechBloc. #TechovateBattle*