



## **Bexar County Commissioners Court**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 21, 2016**

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### **Bexar County awards \$50,000 to small companies in start-up competition**

Three local tech startups have been awarded a total of \$50,000 in the County's Tech Fuel competition, organized through Tech Bloc. SnackDot, Rising Barn and MilTribe spent months fine tuning their businesses, making pitches and receiving mentorship through a volunteer panel of judges from the tech industry. Commissioners Court on Tuesday directed Economic Development staff to negotiate grant agreements with each company.

"It was exciting to be there at the Tech Bloc rally for the announcement," County Judge Nelson Wolff said. "We believe very much that San Antonio is an entrepreneurial city — one where people step up and take risks — so we wish you the greatest success in making your companies work."

Commissioners Court created the Tech Fuel competition in October 2016 to provide investment in local entrepreneurs and innovators. Tech startups of all stages were eligible to enter as long as they had raised less than \$1 million in outside funding, had less than \$1 million in revenue, and intended to grow their companies in Bexar County. The money for the competition comes from the County's Innovation Fund.

SnackDot took the top prize of \$30,000 with its micro market vending system to bring on-demand snacks to offices. For a small monthly fee, businesses can sell snacks and drinks through self-checkout using a mobile app or through delivery.

Rising Barn, a homebuilding kit manufacturer, took second place with a \$15,000 grant. Rising Barn will design small structures specific to clients' needs and land; and through the turnkey option, the design and construction teams will start the permitting, manufacturing and installation process. The company also has community development plans for multiple units.

The third place firm, MilTribe, will receive a \$5,000 grant to help grow its military community marketplace. MilTribe connects military service members and their families to services, goods and exclusive benefits. MilTribe members also can sell goods through the site.

Eight companies qualified for the competition and were narrowed down to five finalists after making pitches to the judges in February. The companies then had three months to develop their business models and address issues identified by the judges. The judges included Augie Pedraza, vice president of engineering for AirStrip Technologies; Nick Longo, co-founder of Geekdom and founder of CoffeeCup Software; Michael Girdley, CEO of Codeup; Kara Gomez, program manager for Techstars Cloud Program; and Razil Owen, San Antonio Pets Alive! chief marketing officer.

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#### **About Tech Bloc**

Tech Bloc is a youthful, tech- and urban-centric movement helping position San Antonio to better compete in the international technology economies of today and tomorrow. A voice for the technology ecosystem in San Antonio, Tech Bloc is uniting students, workers, job creators, and urbanists to promote technology education, innovation, job growth and entrepreneurial new starts. Tech Bloc also works with regional leaders to enhance San Antonio's urban livability and improve our city's attractiveness as a career destination for creative-class workers and entrepreneurs.