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Diverse group of judges, investors to screen entries for 2020 Governor's Business Plan Contest

MADISON – Nearly 90 judges have volunteered so far to judge entries and provide feedback in the 2020 Governor's Business Plan Contest, which includes a cross-section of disciplines that help define Wisconsin's startup culture.

This year's judging pool will also feature a strong representation from early stage investors. The list includes many investors from some of the Upper Midwest's most active groups, such as: Wisconsin Investment Partners, Golden Angels Investors, Capital Midwest, Venture Management, Inventure Capital, N29 Capital Partners, Bascom Ventures, 30Ventures, NEW Capital Management, NVNG Ventures, HealthX Ventures, gener8tor, and NeuGen Health.

Contestants have until 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 31, 2020, to enter their 250-word business ideas at govsbizplancontest.com.

Other major categories of judges include veteran entrepreneurs; advisors from accelerators and incubators; executives in larger businesses that often do business with startups and emerging companies; professionals from financial institutions, such as banks and credit unions; and experienced service providers working in the trenches with startups on a daily basis.

The list also includes judges with a background in higher education or research and development, often serving as direct points of contact for entrepreneurial programs on their respective campuses.

Judges provide feedback to contestants throughout the contest's four phases. A separate group of contest mentors includes experts from the UW-Extension's Center for Technology Commercialization and SCORE. Mentors are available for questions from contestants throughout the contest.

“This talented cross-section of judges and mentors allows for a thorough review of contest entries – as well as valuable feedback to contestants from people who know their way around technology, investing and business,” said Tom Still, president of the Wisconsin Technology Council. The Tech Council is producing the 17th annual contest.

Designed to encourage entrepreneurs in the startup stage of tech-based businesses in Wisconsin, the contest leads to valuable public and media exposure for the top business plans and helps spur economic growth in the state. Once again, finalists will share in about \$150,000 in cash and in-kind prizes.

Since the contest's inception in 2004, more than 3,900 entries have been received from 300 communities across Wisconsin. Finalists have shared in more than \$2.4 million in cash and service prizes (such as legal, accounting, office space and marketing).

About 77% of the finalists from 2012-2019 are still in business.

Past finalists have launched companies that have raised \$200 million in grants, loans and private equity financing – all while creating jobs and economic value for Wisconsin.

The contest's major sponsor is the **Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.**

To enter or become a sponsor, visit govsbizplancontest.com.

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