

# INNOVATION

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## NREL LAUNCHES CLEAN ENERGY INCUBATOR NETWORK

*Initiative to provide support for start-ups and technology development*

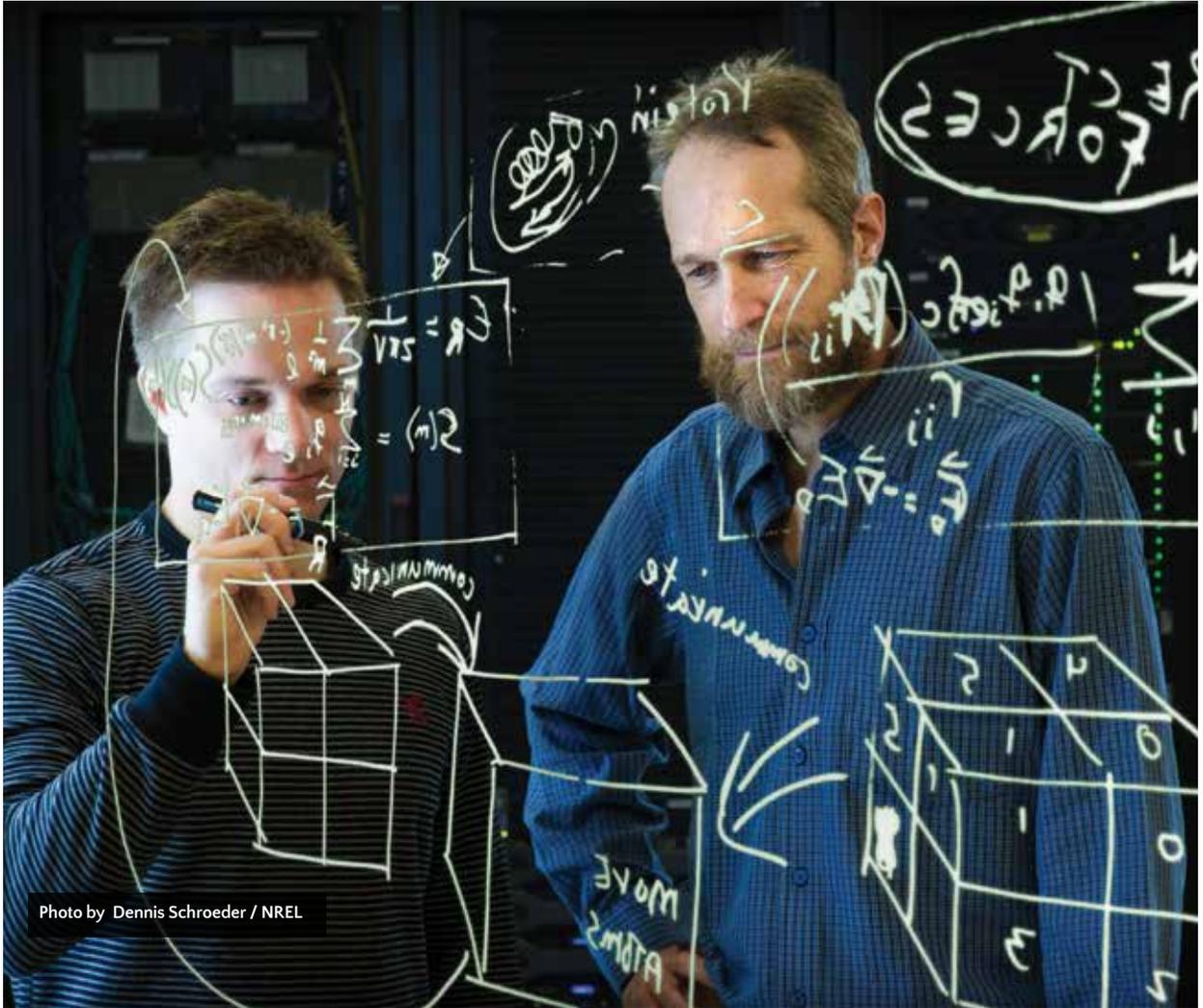


Photo by Dennis Schroeder / NREL

The Energy Department's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) have launched the Clean Energy Incubator Network. The program, funded by the Energy Department, aims to improve the performance of clean energy business incubators, connect critical industry and energy sector partners, and advance clean energy technologies emerging from universities and federal laboratories.

Through its newly launched website, <http://incubatenenergy.org>, networking opportunities, and identifying industry

best practices, the network provides nationwide coordination that addresses the unique challenges facing energy start-ups.

"This website of resources and tools for incubators and entrepreneurs will serve as a focal point of the network," said Matt Ringer, NREL's project manager. "With our past experience building databases for a variety of related energy resources, NREL is well positioned to develop this type of resource for the clean tech industry."

Over time, the website will include funding, laboratory,

and event resources, in addition to an evaluation toolkit that will recommend resources specifically targeted to guide start-ups, based on their commercialization readiness level.

EPRI aims to serve as the convening force behind building greater success for innovation across the industry by sharing strategies and helping to facilitate connections between leaders in the clean energy incubator space.

“With the issues consistently seen when transferring clean energy technologies to the market, this type of incubation is particularly challenging,” said Beth Hartman, EPRI’s project manager for the new network. “To address these challenges, the network will help leading incubators in the clean energy industry learn from each other how to best find resources for supporting entrepreneurs. This support of entrepreneurs will also include connecting them with innovative partners from established industry leaders.”

Along with the NREL website, EPRI is working to help organize a variety of in-person and virtual events aimed at sharing best practices on both incubation techniques and clean energy technologies. The workshop convening at the ARPA-E Energy

Innovation Summit, Feb. 9-11, marks the first of events focused on convening the incubator and innovation community. Later this year, a national summit will bring together an entire marketplace: start-ups, incubators, clean energy investors, and industry participants.

The Clean Energy Incubator Network also plans to implement a SmartIncubation™ program, in which the network will publish the results of its clean tech start-up analysis every six months, identifying and recommending best practices and strategies.

“Start-ups in the energy industry, unlike other industries, typically require more capital, longer timelines, and intense networking to commercialize workable technologies,” Hartman said. “This community will provide a smart focus on early stage clean tech incubation to meet strategic needs in the energy industry. In the end, our collaboration will support new technologies in energy that add diversity to our energy mix, reduce pollutants and create a more flexible power system for our nation.” ↵

— Source: *National Renewable Energy Laboratory*

## ONLINE CROWDFUNDING PORTAL FUELS RENEWABLES INVESTMENT

*Site allows renewable energy projects to raise debt, equity and/or donations*

GridShare LLC recently announced the launch of its independent crowdfunding platform to help renewable energy projects and cleantech companies raise capital. GridShare is a unique online platform where renewable energy project developers and cleantech companies from around the world post their funding needs. Potential investors can peruse investment opportunities in a variety of renewable energy sectors, including: solar, wind, geothermal, biogas, and small hydropower. GridShare also intends to host funding opportunities for energy efficiency initiatives and early-stage clean technology ventures.

“Raising money has been a huge impediment to the growth of the capital-intensive renewable energy industry,” said Jack Jacobs, CEO and Co-Founder, GridShare. “Now, with GridShare’s help, a project developer or cleantech venture can tap into a new funding channel and, ultimately, spend less time fundraising and more time focusing on their core business.”

There are three different types of investment opportunities that a company may offer through GridShare: debt, equity, and donations. High net-worth individuals, or “accredited investors,” can browse projects online, read pertinent information about the venture, and then pledge funding in exchange for equity or interest. Non-accredited investors can donate funds to a project or company that offers this option. As soon as the JOBS Act crowdfunding rules are finalized, all users will be able to invest freely for equity online.

Posting a project on GridShare is free and easy. Once the GridShare team approves the project, it will be published online. Investors will then have the opportunity to review the project details, and pledge their financial support online. The offeror then contacts the investor to arrange payment and finalize investment terms.

“For too long, large banks have controlled which solar projects can be financed. Finally, project developers like Samba Energy can rely on GridShare to offer high quality solar investments to investors nationwide,” said Michael Hidary, Managing Partner, Samba Energy, a national provider of software and services for clean energy and commercial building energy efficiency. “Samba Energy can now complete more installations and private investors can gain strong, predictable returns from solar power projects.”

GridShare earns a commission from the offeror only if its funding goal is fully achieved. GridShare also offers optional services for users that prefer to sell securities through a registered broker/dealer, conduct legal transactions under the guidance of an experienced law firm, and/or develop their materials with the help of a marketing professional.

— Source: *GridShare LLC*