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### **World Trade Center San Diego unveils 2016 MetroConnect cohort**

*Annual program to help 15 local companies with international expansion plans*

**San Diego** –San Diego Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer, World Trade Center San Diego, JPMorgan Chase & Co. and business and civic leaders unveiled the [15 companies](#) selected to participate in the MetroConnect Program, a comprehensive support program to help local companies accelerate their global growth.

“The MetroConnect Program helps us to foster our startup community to provide phenomenal opportunities for San Diego entrepreneurs abroad,” said Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer. “I am proud of the 15 companies selected by MetroConnect, which represent virtually every sector of our region’s innovation economy from life sciences to maritime tech and wireless analytics. It is my hope that they will use our MetroConnect program to write new chapters in San Diego’s success story.”

From Deering Banjo, the largest banjo manufacturing company in the U.S., to Ocean Aero, an autonomous underwater unmanned systems company, the 2016 MetroConnect companies represent a diverse cross section of San Diego’s innovation economy.

Each MetroConnect participant will be awarded a \$10,000 grant provided by JPMorgan Chase to assist with their international efforts.

Building on the success of the pilot round, the MetroConnect Program is creating additional support services in 2016 to directly help San Diego companies. These services include:

- A dedicated trade and investment manager at WTC San Diego to support company participants in deploying overseas strategies during the grant period
- Access to workshops that address export compliance, financing and fundraising and global marketing
- Reduced airfare on the Japan Airlines direct flight from San Diego to Tokyo
- Free access to SYSTRAN software for website translation and customer service needs
- Consideration to compete for an additional \$35,000 during the MetroConnect Grand Prize Pitchfest in November 2016

The expanded MetroConnect Program is made possible by JPMorgan Chase, a company committed to helping San Diego reach its full economic potential.

“JPMorgan Chase is pleased to support these San Diego businesses that are ready to grow internationally,” **said Tim West, head of JPMorgan Chase’s Middle Market Commercial Banking practice in San Diego.** “The expanded MetroConnect Program will not only enable these local firms to spend time in their target international markets but they will also benefit from educational seminars on how to export and find the right service providers. In time, we hope their international expansion efforts will lead to growth of the San Diego economy.”

MetroConnect funds can be used for a variety for global services including travel (to and from target markets), participation in trade shows, establishment of a foreign subsidiary, foreign language translation of marketing

materials and more. In 2015, MetroConnect Grand Prize Winner Cypher Genomics was acquired by San Diego-based Human Longevity Inc. after using the money to fund a partnership with Genomics England. Pharmaceutical company IriSys – another 2015 participant – opened a business development office in Shanghai.

“Global connectivity is crucial to San Diego’s economic future, and SMEs are increasingly its driver,” **said Nikia Clarke, executive director of World Trade Center San Diego.** “Thanks to JPMorgan Chase, we are continuing to build out a comprehensive export support program to ensure that San Diego’s goods, services and technologies are competing overseas.”

According to the Brookings Institution, [companies that are global](#) pay their employees higher wages, are less likely to go out of business and spur more efficient development of technology and R&D.

In total, 73 San Diego companies applied to the MetroConnect Program. Companies were selected based on criteria including potential for export growth, development of an international strategy and potential benefit the company would receive from international expansion. Judges included representatives from Applied Membranes, Biocom, Qualcomm Ventures, U.S. Department of Commerce, San Diego Regional EDC, San Diego State University’s CIBER, Tech San Diego, Taylor Guitars and UC San Diego.

The MetroConnect Program is administered by [WTC San Diego](#), an affiliate of San Diego Regional EDC. The program is made possible through JPMorgan Chase, with additional support from Japan Airlines, Qualcomm Ventures, SYSTRAN and Taylor Guitars.

For more information about MetroConnect, please go to [MetroConnectsd.org](#)

#### **The 15 program participants:**

1. Aurora Spine
2. AVACEN Medical
3. Calbiotech
4. Deering Banjo Company
5. ElliptiGO, Inc.
6. GroundMetrics
7. Hyperikon
8. INOVA Drone
9. MANTA Instruments Inc.
10. Ocean Aero
11. Ocean Reef
12. Rough Draft Brewing Company
13. Solatube Worldwide Sales
14. VaultRMS
15. Whova

#### **About World Trade Center San Diego**

World Trade Center San Diego operates as an affiliate of San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. WTC San Diego works to further San Diego’s global competitiveness by building an export pipeline, attracting and retaining foreign investment and increasing San Diego’s global profile abroad. [sandiegobusiness.org/wtcsd](#)