

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Sept. 26, 2018

Contact  
Sarah Lubeck  
[sl@sandiegobusiness.org](mailto:sl@sandiegobusiness.org)

**Mayor Faulconer, World Trade Center San Diego unveil 2018 MetroConnect cohort**  
*Annual program to help 20 local companies with international expansion plans*

**San Diego** – San Diego Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer and World Trade Center San Diego (WTC), JPMorgan Chase & Co. and business and civic leaders unveiled the 20 companies selected to participate in the [MetroConnect program](#), a comprehensive export assistance program to help local companies accelerate their global growth.

“Expanding San Diego’s global reach is vital to creating more local jobs for San Diegans and boosting our regional economy,” said **San Diego Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer**. “The MetroConnect program and their growing companies are introducing innovative products and services to new international markets and sharing San Diego's story with the rest of the world.”

From visual-aid tech startup Aira, to soap manufacturer Dr. Bronner’s, to top 10 Inc. 5000 company Scientist.com, the 2018 MetroConnect companies represent a diverse cross section of San Diego’s innovation economy.

Now in its fourth program-year, the MetroConnect program equips small- and medium-sized companies (SMEs) with a suite of financial and programmatic resources in their efforts to bring their products and services global. Program resources include:

- \$10,000 in matching grants to cover up to 50 percent of the costs associated with international expansion, made possible by JPMorgan Chase and the Department of Defense’s Office of Economic Adjustment and EDC’s 501(c)(3) Foundation.
- Dedicated WTC San Diego staff manager to support company participants in deploying overseas strategies during the grant period
- Free export consulting with JAS Forwarding (USA), Inc. on ITAR/EAR regulations and other export activities; in-kind support by San Diego International Airport
- Access to workshops that address export compliance, financing and fundraising and more
- Reduced airfare on the Japan Airlines direct flight from San Diego to Tokyo, and on Air Canada direct flights from San Diego to Canada. Assigned Lufthansa agent for direct flights from San Diego to Frankfurt, Germany
- Access to country representatives at the Japan External Trade Organization and the United Kingdom Government Office in San Diego
- 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 June 2019

“JPMorgan Chase is proud to continue supporting the global expansion of San Diego businesses,” said **Tim West, Executive Director and head of JPMorgan Chase’s Middle Market Banking practice in San Diego**. “MetroConnect will empower these 20 local companies to grow in targeted international

markets, and help them navigate many of the complex nuances of global business. MetroConnect’s track record speaks for itself, and we’re looking forward to seeing the program’s continued impact on the San Diego economy.”

Since the program’s debut in 2015, 45 MetroConnect alumni have collectively generated \$15 million in new export sales, signed more than 116 new contracts, added 161 new jobs to the region, set up nine new overseas facilities and seen four successful company exits. Past participants include Calbiotech (now ERBA Diagnostics), Rough Draft Brewing, Deering Banjo Company, Cypher Genomics (acquired by Human Longevity Inc.), Planck Aerosystems and many more.

“Amid increasing uncertainty over national trade policy, ensuring that local companies get the tools they need to be successful overseas is more important than ever. We know that companies that export pay higher wages, are less likely to go out of business, and become more competitive and resilient,” **said Nikia Clarke, executive director of World Trade Center San Diego.** “Thanks to JPMorgan Chase, the MetroConnect program helps San Diego companies export their innovation around the world, which creates jobs and opportunities back here at home.”

Against the backdrop of rapid changes in global production, a newfound ‘trade war’ with China, and renegotiations of trade agreements, it is more important than ever to support SMEs in going global. In 2015 alone, San Diego exported more than \$17 billion in goods overseas, as well as billions more in services like software, cybersecurity, engineering and research. SMEs produce 92 percent of those goods – driving home the point of programs like MetroConnect. According to the Brookings Institution, companies that are global pay higher wages, are less likely to go out of business and increase productivity of the domestic market.

For more information about MetroConnect, please visit [MetroConnectSD.org](http://MetroConnectSD.org).

The 2018 MetroConnect companies are:

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Aira                      | 11. Hookit                                 |
| 2. Allett                    | 12. IPS Group Inc.                         |
| 3. Arctic Zero, Inc.         | 13. KULR Technology Corp.                  |
| 4. AtYourGate                | 14. LRAD Corporation                       |
| 5. Bitchin' Sauce            | 15. MRP Training Solutions                 |
| 6. Cloudbeds                 | 16. PKL Services                           |
| 7. Conectric Networks        | 17. Quality Controlled Manufacturing, Inc. |
| 8. Dr. Bronner's             | 18. Raveon Technologies Corporation        |
| 9. Eddy Pump Corporation     | 19. Scientist.com                          |
| 10. Epitope Diagnostics Inc. | 20. Telaeris, Inc.                         |

The MetroConnect program is highly competitive, with just 20 companies selected based on a variety of criteria, including interest in new markets, interest in targeted metro markets, assessed impact of funds, current international traction and more. This is up from just 15 companies in the first three years of the program. Applicants were assessed by a panel of judges, including representatives from Qualcomm

Ventures, Biocom, U.S. Commercial Service, Tech San Diego, Rough Draft Brewing, San Diego State University, Tech San Diego, UC San Diego, San Diego Regional EDC and WTC San Diego.

**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](http://sandiegobusiness.org/wtcsd)

###