



## **AgTech Initiative – Who We Are and What We Do**

Growth Dimensions for Belvidere Boone County has formed a partnership with Boone County Illinois, the City of Belvidere, Northern Illinois University, the Illinois Technology Development Alliance and the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research to nurture and accelerate entrepreneurial activity with a focus on innovative uses for agricultural products in the region. This effort is called the AgTech Initiative. The long term vision of the AgTech Initiative includes the development of the New Uses AgTech Park.

The AgTech Initiative is managed by the AgTech Management Team – a subcommittee of Growth Dimensions for Belvidere and Boone County, Inc.

### **The following people serve on the AgTech Management Team:**

Greg Brown - DareCloud Development – Chairs the Team  
Fred Brereton - Mayor, City of Belvidere  
John Lewis - Northern Illinois University  
Mark Williams - Executive Director Growth Dimensions  
Ken Zehnder - Northern Illinois University

### **The AgTech Initiative encompasses the following functions and programs:**

- I. **New Uses Entrepreneur Development Center (NUEDC):** NUEDC is the core component of the AgTech Initiative. Northern Illinois University staffs and operates the NUEDC through an SBA funded contract with the City of Belvidere. The NUEDC is currently housed at Growth Dimensions' office located at 200 South State Street, Belvidere, Illinois. (815) 547-4252.

#### **NUEDC Tasks include:**

1. Develop the operational plan of the NUEDC and manage its day to day operations.
2. Develop the necessary new uses entrepreneur support system within the region to provide long term sustainability of the initiative
3. Provide commercialization support services and consultation
4. Strategically market the services of the NUEDC and the region as a center for biobased economic excellence.

Staff for the NUEDC: Norbert Ziemer, Operations Manager

- II. **Biomass Product Development Program (BPDP):** This program is administered and managed by Growth Dimensions and the Illinois Technology Development Alliance and funded in part by the U.S. Department of Energy. The tasks of this program are designed as an extension of the NUEDC tasks.

**BPDP Tasks include:**

1. Develop and implement product development and commercialization support services aimed at fostering the formation and growth of companies commercializing technologies converting biomass to industrial uses.
2. Develop a competitive capital award program to provide qualified clients with funds on a cost share basis to commercialize agriculture-based materials into alternative industrial products.
3. Complete preliminary design and engineering work for the 20,000 sq/ft Ag-Tech Commercialization Center.

**Current AgTech Initiative Projects**

AgTech NUEDC is currently working with numerous clients/businesses that are focused on biomass commercialization opportunities designed to leverage expanding market demand for biofuels and biobased products. These commercialization activities are supported and aligned with the goals of the 2002 Farm Bill, the 2005 Energy Bill and the Advanced Energy Initiative that was outlined by President Bush in the State of the Union Address. The recently developed USDA Guidelines for Designating Biobased Products for Federal Procurement will provide additional momentum for novel biomass products. The commercialization activities supported by AgTech are focused on business opportunities that offer biobased and environmentally sound products that meet the emerging needs of a number of key business sectors. The products will be manufactured using Illinois derived renewable resources wherever possible, and if successful, they will lessen the nation's dependence on foreign oil as these bio-based products replace older, less desirable petroleum based products.

The projects and businesses currently supported by AgTech Initiative will serve as the nucleus of a future regional center. This center would showcase "biofuels and biomass innovation and economic excellence" and create value added streams of new use opportunities for Illinois agricultural commodities. There are currently 4 bioenergy and 3 biomass product manufacturing projects that are the focus of the commercialization support provided by the NUEDC arm of the AgTech Initiative. All of these projects share several common needs: business plan vetting, intellectual property management, market analysis, biofuels commercialization expertise and biomass product beta-testing and performance validation. AgTech is committed to providing these clients with an integrated bundle of these services via NUEDC and its network of partners.

**Competitive Capital Award Program**

The Biomass Product Commercialization Award Program was established and the first round of request for proposals was solicited. Proposals are currently being reviewed for selection and award. Overall, Growth Dimensions has authority from the U.S. Department of Energy to award over \$500,000 for projects that lead to marketable biomass products or processes. All awards will have a \$100,000 maximum. Each project must have a cash or in-kind non-federal cost share equal to \$1.60 for every \$1.00 of DOE funds.

The funds allocated to the award program will be awarded to companies as a subcontract. Growth Dimensions will offer at least two solicitation rounds for funding. After the companies submit their proposals, a rigorous review process will take place to ensure that the appropriate companies are chosen on a merit basis.

**Client and Commercialization Priority Areas in 2006:**

- Biobased cleaning products (corn based)
- Biodiesel plants and associated infrastructure
- Biofuels and Biorefinery IP generation
- DDG energy extraction for co-combustion applications
- Biomass energy conversion for the farm
- Biomass products in the poly-foam arena (recapture business lost to China)

- DDG fractions as feedstock for plastics (USDA collaboration)
- Corn/soy oils as feedstock for biobased industrial lubricants and engine oils

### **Identify Funding Sources**

- Develop long-term strategy for funding
- Facilitate interest from private investors, perhaps creating a local cooperative sources to generate AgTech funding
- Pursue major corporate investment partnerships in key initiative projects
- Campaign to local business and producer community to generate support for AgTech Initiative
- Investigate potential endowments
- Seek State funding to leverage federal dollars already received

### **YOUR VALUED PARTICIPATION**

- ***Thank you*** – All involved with the AgTech Initiative are extremely grateful for your assistance. Without your help the project would not be where it is today. Your opportune letters of support, your advocacy to secure funding, your attendance at various meetings, and a timely good word to colleagues to further the progress of the AgTech Initiative are all greatly appreciated.
- ***Keeping you informed*** – We want to keep you apprised of the details and development of the AgTech Initiative. We are prepared at any time to answer questions you may have and meet with you or your constituent regarding any facet of the project. We also extend an open invitation to come visit us at our office in Belvidere.
- ***Request for your support*** – We ask for your assistance in the following ways:
  - Support our state funding requests;
  - Back key projects during key periods (i.e., development reviews, announcements, meetings and funding requests)
  - Advise us of other potential projects and other funding opportunities;
  - Continue to advocate the initiative on behalf of the people of Boone County based on the benefits the project will bring to them and the broader region.