



Scientists “speed date” with small businesses

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Los Alamos National Laboratory and the [Santa Fe Business Incubator](#) brought together small manufacturing businesses and scientists for an unusual version of speed dating at an event on October 17.

The Eureka Effect evening gave businesses the chance to talk with a range of Lab scientists begin the process of potentially receiving free assistance from the Lab under the [New Mexico Small Business Assistance](#) (NMSBA) program.

The NMSBA allows small businesses facing a technical challenge to access the unique capabilities of Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories, and the program has assisted over 2,648 small businesses in all parts of New Mexico since 2000.

“Events like these are a good introduction to the program, and to the capabilities of the scientists that are here,” says Kim Sherwood, NMSBA project manager. “It helps the companies to see what sort of assistance is available, and to start building relationships with people from the Laboratory.”

“It’s not often business owners get the chance to run their plans past some of the smartest scientist and engineers in the world,” says Sean O’Shea, program director at the Santa Fe Business Incubator. “It’s a great opportunity.”

Klaus Messerer is one of the entrepreneurs who sat at a table as seven Laboratory researchers including electrical engineers, chemists, and mechanical engineers stopped by to learn about his business and see where they might be able to help. His company, LED Habitats, makes elegant indoor garden setups powered by LED lights. “I didn’t really know what to expect, but talking to the scientists was very positive,” he says. “There are some promising leads that came out of it, and they had some great ideas.

Laboratory chemical engineer Bill Kubic has helped several small businesses under the program. “You get to work on some interesting problems, and often it’s a new way of applying your knowledge,” he says. “Getting to see the practical application of the work you do is rewarding.”

Sean O’Shea from the Santa Fe Business Incubator addresses the businesses and scientists.

If it looks like there might be a match between one of the scientists and a business, the company will submit a formal application for the program, and if successful, they can receive up to \$20,000 in technical assistance from the Lab.

“Even if one of the scientists here today aren’t a good fit for a company’s issue, they often know someone else at Los Alamos who can help,” Sherwood says.

NMSBA is partially funded through a tax credit from the state of New Mexico and has created or retained over 5,700 jobs since its creation in 2000. This year, it is projected to help around 350 small businesses—and one of them might have made their first connection at this event.

For more information, contact Kim Sherwood at 505-665-1305.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

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