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NEWS RELEASE

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The Ion receives \$1.5M grant for accelerator programs

The Accelerator Hub will live at The Ion, anchoring Houston's Innovation District

HOUSTON – (Sept. XX, 2020) – [The Ion](#), the innovation and startup hub developed by Rice University, has received a grant totalling \$1.5 million from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) that will significantly expand The Ion's ability to support entrepreneurs and startups driving economic development across the Houston-Galveston region.

"This award represents a unique opportunity for The Ion to support economic development across the Houston-Galveston region," said Jan E. Odegard, interim executive director at The Ion and the principal investigator on the EDA award. "We are really excited about working with [DivInc](#) and [the Rice Alliance for Technology and Entrepreneurship](#) to actualize the full potential of the opportunities that these funds will help unleash."

The grant was awarded to The Ion as part of the [Build to Scale \(B2S\) program](#), and it received top funding of \$1.5 million for a three year project in the 2020 Venture Challenge category for the new Accelerator Hub at The Ion.

The Accelerator Hub will bring together [The Ion Smart and Resilient Cities Accelerator](#), which focuses on supporting startups developing technology and solutions that will help cities and communities, ours specifically, not only be “smarter” but also more resilient allowing for a faster and more effective recovery from the next disaster, be it a storm, a flood, or other natural disaster; [The Rice Alliance Clean Energy Accelerator](#), a program to support early-stage energy startups building solutions for a cleaner, more efficient and sustainable future; and [DivInc Accelerator](#), an Austin based accelerator setting up at The Ion to serve minority and women-led startups with a heavy focus in addressing social injustices and inequities in the workplace.

“Receiving this grant is a big win for our city—furthering The Ion’s opportunity to bring together leading minds to solve some of our toughest challenges. We believe that it’s a fully collaborative approach that will lead to accelerating energy innovation and sustainable solutions,” said [Brad Burke](#), managing director of the Rice Alliance. “The Rice Alliance Clean Energy Accelerator is proud to be one of three accelerators receiving this grant and working alongside The Ion Smart and Resilient Cities Accelerator and DivInc to support innovators in making their ideas a reality.”

“The Ion’s Accelerator Hub, which unites these accelerator programs and is also supported by Vision Galveston, will create collaborative and sustainable regional innovation,” said Christine Galib, senior director of programs and co-principal investigator on the award. “Being connected through programs at the hub enables startups and entrepreneurs, community members, corporate innovators, academic partners to leverage each other’s strengths in a streamlined way – such that the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.”

These programs will amplify their strengths and be more effective and inclusive in the development of entrepreneurial talent. The partnership with DivInc will enable The Ion and the Innovation District to expand their reach and activate opportunities across the region, “yielding exponentially additive value that builds momentum for the Houston region’s innovation economy, carbon management and energy transition, and job creation.” continued Odegard.

"DivInc embodies the mindset that this generation and all the generations of innovators to follow must be inclusive of people of color and women entrepreneurs who will build successful scalable growth companies to address tomorrow's challenges and opportunities. By removing the barriers that currently exist, we unleash this untapped potential and lift Houston to new economic heights. To do this we must establish strong collaboration with partners like The Ion, Rice University, the EDA and many others." Preston James, chief executive officer at Divinc.

The Ion and The Ion plaza, set to be the centerpiece of the Innovation District that Rice Management Company, the investment arm of the University, is developing in Houston’s midtown area, will open its doors in 2021. Applications for startups to join the accelerator programs will open shortly with the first cohorts to run in spring 2021.

To schedule an interview with Jan Odegard or Brad Burke or for more information, contact Avery Franklin, media relations specialist at Rice University, at averyrf@rice.edu or 713-348-6327.

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