



**News release**

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**Gateway wins SBA grant award;  
One of 50 chosen out of 800**  
*Launch Box to host, drive effort*

The U.S. Small Business Administration today announced that Gateway Technical College was one of 50 winners out of 800 applicants for the first Growth Accelerator Fund Competition, with \$50,000 granted to its Launch Box Accelerator Program in Racine.

Winners were selected by a panel of seven judges who are experts in entrepreneurship, investing and business plans both inside and out of the federal government. Judges reviewed the applications and pitch videos submitted by the 100 finalists in the competition. Each organization will receive a cash prize of \$50,000 from the SBA.

“This represents an exciting opportunity for Gateway and Launch Box to provide a service to local entrepreneurs which we have been unable to do prior to this,” said Kristin Niemiec, Launch Box manager. “It will help those entrepreneurs, who – as their business grows – will be the job creators, the tax base creators. This is something we have hoped to provide all along.”

Participants will be involved in an intense, 12-week mentoring program to help them grow their business, such as working on revenue models, customer

surveys, prototypes and working to make sure their business is profitable. Launch Box will host the accelerator program and offer such resources as prototyping at the Fab Lab housed at Gateway's SC Johnson iMET Center in Sturtevant, connections with area entrepreneurs and providing business space at its facility.

This is the first business accelerator program in Racine County.

"The SBA is empowering accelerators and startups that are on the cutting edge of successful, innovative new endeavors," said SBA Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet. "We've seen the enormous success of the accelerator model in communities like Silicon Valley. We believe we can export this type of sophisticated support structure across the country to help start-ups become commercially viable and create jobs more quickly.

"I want SBA to stand for 'Smart, Bold and Accessible' and these accelerators encompass all three of these goals."

Being part of the accelerator program will also give businesses the opportunity to access seed money they may have been unable to tap into prior to participating in the program. Niemiec said entrepreneurs benefit greatly from the program because "it is entrepreneur-led – by entrepreneurs, for entrepreneurs."

Companies which complete the program are then required to mentor new program participants, called a "folding" requirement.

For more information, please contact Kristin Niemiec at (262) 898-7404.

Gateway Technical College collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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