



Innovation Center

2024 ANNUAL REPORT
(July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)

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WHAT WE DO

The Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine (WMed) Innovation Center is Kalamazoo's technology entrepreneurship hub. With an abundance of wet labs, engineering labs, private offices, shared equipment, and two unique co-working programs, the Innovation Center is the perfect home for any technology company. For those who don't need physical space yet, the numerous training programs, networking opportunities, and workshops are ideal.

Since 2003 our 69,000 square foot building has been a vital component of the Kalamazoo entrepreneurial community, hosting networking events and providing meeting space for various activities. The Innovation Center is also the Kalamazoo SmartZone, a state-designated area where technology-based firms locate in close proximity to all of the community assets that assist in their endeavors. Through the SmartZone, high-tech startups can access numerous programs including the Business Accelerator Fund, the Emerging Technologies Fund, and the MI-STEM Forward Internship Program.

The Innovation Center collaborates with many other local and regional support organizations such as the Small Business Development Center, SCORE, the WMU Starting Gate, the City of Kalamazoo, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and more. If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an entire ecosystem to raise a startup. Here in the pages of our annual report, you will learn about what makes the Innovation Center special.

TOGETHER WE COMMERCIALIZE.



“Overall, I am very appreciative of all the Innovation Center has done for us. It has been a great opportunity being part of this SmartZone and facility.”



What Motivates Us



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This year we marked the 20th anniversary of WMed Innovation Center in its current location. Reflecting on the incredible journey we've undertaken is humbling. Over the past two decades, we have worked hard to catalyze groundbreaking discoveries, empower visionary entrepreneurs, and drive transformative change in the life sciences.

From humble beginnings on the 5th floor of McCracken Hall, our program has grown into a beacon of excellence, attracting cutting-edge companies in the fields of healthcare and biotechnology. Their success is our success—a testament to the dedication and passion of our remarkable team, the resilience of our innovators, and the unwavering support of our partners and stakeholders. Together, we have fostered an environment where creativity thrives, ideas flourish, and life-changing solutions come to life.

This milestone is not just a celebration of our past achievements but also a reflection of our ongoing commitment to pushing the boundaries of science and entrepreneurship. We have seen remarkable advancements in research, witnessed the launch of successful ventures, and contributed to groundbreaking technologies that are redefining the landscape of medicine and wellness.

As we celebrate our 20-year journey, we remain deeply committed to nurturing the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs. Our vision for the future is to continue building on our legacy, driving forward with the same passion and ingenuity that have brought us to this significant anniversary. We look forward to many more years of success, discovery, and transformation, and we are excited to see what the future holds for our vibrant community.

Thank you for being an integral part of this extraordinary journey. Here's to the next chapter in our story, filled with continued success and boundless possibilities.



Michigan's Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II



Elected officials and the honorees

OUR TEAM



SANDRA COCHRANE, MBA, Assistant Dean for the Innovation Center. Sandra coordinates and oversees all activities

at the Innovation Center in support of entrepreneurship and commercialization, including technology transfer for the medical school. Her work at WMed focuses on growing the Innovation Center into a hub for burgeoning life science, technology, and engineering companies. She serves as a reviewer for the National Science Foundation's Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) Program as well as its Partnerships for Innovation (PFI) program. A native of Ann Arbor, Sandra and her family have called Van Buren County home for over 20 years. In addition to holding a National Business Incubator Association's Certificate of Incubator Management, Sandra is a graduate of Michigan State University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in English Education and a master's degree in Business Administration.



MADelyn PINDER, Business Services Manager. Madelyn has been with the Innovation Center since 2004. As Business Services Manager

for the Innovation Center, she serves as the first point of contact for clients and visitors. Madelyn manages the day-to-day business activities of the Innovation Center, receives guests for client companies, and serves as the face of the Innovation Center for everyone who comes to the facility, working to ensure that the Innovation Center is a positive experience for all. Madelyn previously served as Community and Investor Relations Specialist at Southwest Michigan First and participated in the planning and build-out of the Innovation Center. She also gained development experience at Kalamazoo College and as Program Manager for a private foundation. Madelyn completed the National Business Incubator Association's Certificate of Incubator Management in 2010.



LANDON GRIZZLE, Scientific Equipment Coordinator. Landon joined the Innovation Center team in September 2023. His primary responsibility is to

oversee all of the scientific equipment at the Center, keeping it in proper operating condition and recommending the addition of new equipment as needed. Prior to joining the Innovation Center, Landon was a Quality Operations Laboratory Technician at Pfizer. The knowledge of scientific equipment that he gained at Pfizer made him well-equipped to take on the role of Scientific Equipment Coordinator. Landon earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biomedical Sciences from Western Michigan University in 2021.



“Everything is well managed by the staff, and everyone has been great to work with!”

OUR PARTNERS & SPONSORS

The Innovation Center is fortunate to have the support of several organizations from across the state of Michigan. These partners and sponsors provide refreshments and snacks for events, content for educational workshops and seminars, and free and reduced cost services to the clients of the Innovation Center. Partners and sponsors enrich our entrepreneurial community.



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

We offer many events, both in-person and virtually, to serve our clients and other entrepreneurs across the state of Michigan.

- **KALAMAZOO VENTURE TUESDAY**
- **TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES**
- **MONTHLY CLIENT LUNCHESES**
- **NUMEROUS WORKSHOPS**, including SBIR/STTR grant preparation, Running Your Business for a Successful Exit, and Healthcare Economics
- **VARIOUS COMMUNITY VISITS AND TOURS**, such as the U.S. Jordan Leadership Exchange Program and the Linden Grove Middle School Technology Club



Dr. Irving Vega from Michigan State University speaks at a Translational Research Seminar Series event.



A typical client lunch

OUR CLIENTS

- **Exactica Analytical Services** provides analytical services to drug development companies requiring assistance solving problems. The services offered include GC, GC/MS, HPLC, ICP-OES, and more.
- **Food For Skin** is focused on providing holistic solutions for people with sensitive skin.
- **Kalsec** is the leading global producer of natural spice and herb flavor extracts, colors, antioxidants, and advanced hop products for the food and beverage industry.
- **LifeNet Health**, is a biotechnology company dedicated to providing expertise to the area of in vitro toxicology, with a mission to build improved methods for predicting human adverse effects from chemical exposure.
- **Microbiologics** is the world's leading experts and go-to collaborators for biological products and services, focused on protecting the health and safety of people around the world. The WMed Innovation Center houses the Antibiotic and Microbiome Research Center, partnering with pharmaceutical, biotechnology and animal health companies to bring new life-changing antimicrobial drugs to market.
- **MONEYSPRINTER, INC.** is a fintech startup that provides worldwide remittance and peer-to-peer transaction services online. The company uses proprietary technology to drive competitive conversion rates and other conveniences, and is focused on improving speed, access and security with every transaction in the remittance service and peer-to-peer transaction space.
- **Next Stage Labs** focuses on the ornamental plant industry. NSL helps clients who are in the development phase of a new variety, bringing material to market and needing to ensure their genetics stay disease free, or looking to ship plants internationally.



Sandra Cochran presents Roy French of NBS with a graduation gift.

- **Northern Biomolecular Services** is a contract research organization specializing in advanced molecular biological techniques for the determination of biodistribution, persistence, and gene expression of cell and gene therapy products in biological samples through real-time qPCR quantification analysis. NBS

graduated from the Innovation Center in the fall of 2023 and moved into a Portage building purchased by the company.

- **Proteos, Inc.** provides a wide range of expression platforms, purification methods, protein analysis tools and assay services. Proteos offers multiple expression platforms that can be combined with purification services for production of high-quality recombinant proteins and antibodies.
- **Revision Autonomy** leads the development of automotive computer vision algorithms to bring more capability to existing Advanced Driver Assistance Systems. Their cutting-edge technology allows any vehicle using a camera to perceive and understand the surrounding environment no matter the weather condition.
- **SafeSense Technologies LLC** is a sensor technology company providing innovative solutions using flexible hybrid electronics for the Sports Performance, Physical Therapy and Medical Diagnostics markets. SafeSense has developed SCOUT, a “smart helmet impact sensing system”, which helmet manufacturers can use in existing helmets to automatically record and communicate the occurrence of potentially dangerous impacts.
- **Separation Solutions / SepSol Process Solutions** is a manufacturer's representative and distributor of equipment for filtration and separation, powder and bulk processing, dust collection and packaging. SepSol has extensive experience in providing solutions for pharmaceutical, chemical, food, beverage, plastics, aggregates, metal powders, oil & gas, foundry, paint & ink, cosmetics, and recycling.
- **Single Source Procurement, Inc.** staffs and stocks an on-site scientific supply storeroom and coordinates ongoing routine procurement for companies, as well as coordinating instrument repair and researching and negotiating one-time purchases. By utilizing the leverage of over 100 client companies, SSP is able to pass substantial savings on to all customers through volume ordering and reduced shipping, handling and processing fees.
- **Southwest Michigan APEX Accelerator** provides no cost assistance to businesses throughout Southwest Michigan interested in selling their product/service to the Local, State, and Federal Governments.

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- **StatLab Medical Products** has been supplying the anatomic pathology laboratory for over 30 years. Their purpose is to enable their customers to deliver optimal patient care through timely diagnoses. StatLab Medical Products is a leading developer and manufacturer of cost-effective histology, cytology and immunohistochemistry diagnostic supplies.

- **Tarn Biosciences** is developing a range of therapeutics to treat all classes of tuberculosis.

- **Tetra Therapeutics** develops therapeutics to treat memory loss and cognitive impairment by improving how the brain processes and stores information. Working with potentially breakthrough technology, Tetra’s goal is to improve the quality of life for patients suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, traumatic brain injury, major psychiatric disease, and neurodevelopmental disorders.



Sandra Cochrane congratulates Vestaron’s Bob Kennedy.

- **Vestaron Inc.** is a leader in the development and marketing of safe and effective bioinsecticides derived from naturally occurring peptides found in

spider venom. Vestaron also graduated from the Innovation Center in the fall of 2023 but remains as an Anchor Tenant.

- **Videka** is the natural alternative for pet food protection, providing today’s pets and pet-parents innovative, high-quality products that are extracted from nature and competitively priced. Videka leverages both global sourcing and vertical integration to secure the best quality ingredients at the best prices for customers.

- **Western Michigan University’s Biosciences Research & Commercialization Center** dedicates its pharmaceutical expertise and resources to the commercialization of life-science discoveries and the growth of Michigan’s life sciences sector. The BRCC, established in 2003 by the Michigan Legislature, provides startup and gap funding to promising Michigan-based life sciences and medical device ventures entering the commercialization phase of development.

Client Satisfaction Survey Highlights

The Innovation Center strives to provide the most supportive environment possible for the greatest number of clients. While not perfect, the Innovation Center succeeds in meeting the needs of the majority of companies in residence. The annual client satisfaction survey completed in the summer of 2024 utilized a **5-point scale**.



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Nothing speaks to success like the hard numbers. We are proud to report the annual economic impact that the Innovation Center achieved through the efforts of our client companies for the past 12 months (4/1/2023–3/31/2024).

Number of Companies Created	1
Number of Companies Expanded	6
Number of Companies Served	43
Jobs Created (Number of FTEs)	23
Average Annual Salary of Jobs Created	\$97,700
Jobs Retained	237
Average Annual Salary of Jobs Retained	\$145,458
MEDC Funds Awarded to Companies	\$112,000
SBIR, STTR, and Other Federal Funding	\$875,000
New Sales (Increase in Revenue)	\$166,761,243
People/Companies Attending Events	709
Patents Applied For	14
Issued Patents	8
Licensing Agreements	3
Commercialized Products	50

Data collected from the annual Innovation Center grant report to the MEDC, October 2023 and April 2024



“Staff is very knowledgeable and patient and courteous.
A wonderful facility to grow an emerging business.”

NEXT YEAR (2024-2025)

As we look to the future, our commitment to driving progress remains steadfast. We are poised to embrace new opportunities and navigate emerging trends in the life sciences landscape. Our focus will continue to be on:

Innovative Research and Technology: We will continue to support cutting-edge research and technology development by companies pushing the boundaries of what's possible in fields such as genomics, personalized medicine, and regenerative therapies. By fostering an environment of collaboration and creativity, we aim to accelerate breakthroughs that will redefine patient care and treatment.

Entrepreneurial Excellence: Our dedication to nurturing entrepreneurial talent will persist, with a focus on equipping the next generation of leaders with the tools, resources, and mentorship needed to thrive. We will enhance our programs to address evolving industry needs and ensure that our program graduates are prepared to tackle complex challenges with innovative solutions.

Sustainability and Growth: We are committed to building a sustainable model that ensures long-term success and growth. We will explore new avenues for funding, expand our network of collaborators, and continually refine our approach to meet the evolving needs of the ecosystem.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we look forward to the next twenty years of our program. Together, we will shape the future of life science innovation and continue to make a difference in the world.



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“WMed staff team is always friendly and willing to help.
GREAT TEAM!”