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## **Multi-State Partners Host Gulf Coast Pitch Competition**

Four business entities from across Mississippi and Louisiana are partnering to promote entrepreneurship in the first annual Gulf Coast Pitch Night. The Small Business Innovation Research Consortium (SBIRC), Louisiana Technology Transfer Office, Marine Industries Science & Technology Cluster (MIST) and Innovate Mississippi will co-host the event on Wednesday, October 17, at the scenic Great Southern Club in Gulfport, Mississippi. The four-way collaboration will strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem across state lines.

“The pitch competition will showcase tech talent, provide business-to-business networking, and allow entrepreneurs to meet investors in a social setting,” says Andy McCandless, SBIRC Chairman. “This is just the beginning of tech sector growth throughout the South.” McCandless sees the annual event growing over time to include additional programs and more coastal states.

Recent tech growth in the Southern states shows that the time is ripe for supporting forward momentum. In recent years, Louisiana’s economy has seen

steady growth in digital media and biosciences, while Mississippi has seen similar growth in the aerospace industry and marine sciences. Sector-focused initiatives have evolved with incubators and college tech transfer offices, while angel investment groups have emerged to support the startup community. Targeted tax incentives, like Louisiana's Research and Development Tax Credit, have helped leverage private sector efforts, as well as public-private hubs like Stennis Space Center.

Joe Graben, MIST Manager, says the new collaborative benefits both Louisiana and Mississippi. "Each state brings its own unique assets and culture to the table," says Graben. "The idea of the pitch event is to compound the efforts of two smaller states to increase our competitiveness as a region. The ultimate goal is to accelerate the growth curve for start-ups, while bringing high-pay, quality jobs on line."

The Gulf Coast Pitch Night is supported by several sponsors, including Title Sponsor Callais Capital. Event sponsors include law firm Baker Donelson, marketing agency Model Content, and the Louisiana Technology Park. This mix of sponsors signals a diverse gathering expected for this innovation event. The sponsors will help underwrite the event and support the pitch winner package, valued at \$10,000 of cash and in-kind services.

Callais Capital's Managing Director Harold Callais sponsored the event in the spirit of unifying the business community. "Entrepreneurship and innovation must be celebrated in joint initiatives like this event to maximize ecosystem impact and value. We are thrilled to be a part of this initiative, building new relationships and helping to unite local startup ecosystems."

[Register for Gulf Coast Pitch Night](#)

SBIRC, Tech Park, 7117 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA.