



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 19, 2022

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Current, the Chicago-based water innovation hub, wins \$516,619 U.S. Department of Commerce grant to support entrepreneurship and solutions to water challenges

Current is one of 51 national recipients of “Build to Scale” venture funds from U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded through highly competitive process

October 18, 2022 (CHICAGO) — Current, the region's preeminent water innovation hub, has been awarded \$516,639 in competitive federal funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce to help boost entrepreneurs and companies developing solutions to a range of water challenges. Current's award was one of just 51 nationally and the only award in Illinois.

EDA's [“Build to Scale” program](#) provides annual challenge grants to accelerate technology entrepreneurship by increasing inclusive access to entrepreneurial support and startup capital. The 2022 awardees will leverage an additional \$48 million in matching funds from a variety of private and public sector sources. These EDA investments support advanced manufacturing, bioscience, clean energy and blue economy clusters in regions throughout the United States.

“The Great Lakes region is positioned to become a globally significant climate and clean tech innovation center, and Illinois' leading commitment to a carbon-free future by 2045 sets our target,” said Alaina Harkness, Current's Executive Director. “Improving the ways we manage and steward the world's water resources is at the heart of that opportunity, and Current's entrepreneurship programming will help ensure that companies with novel solutions can grow right here in Illinois.”

"Strengthening technology ecosystems are a critical key to the Biden Administration's efforts to build a stronger America," said **Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo in awarding the challenge grants**. "Innovation and entrepreneurship have long been keys to American success and will continue to strengthen our collective economic and national security, as well as individual prosperity and well-being."

[Current](#), an independent Chicago-based water innovation hub, has led the development of strategies to grow an inclusive Blue Economy in the region, guided by an advisory group of community and workforce development experts, water startups, and public sector and industry leaders. An early recommendation called for targeted investments in mentoring, pilot opportunities, and other supports for entrepreneurs facing steep commercialization challenges as they bring solutions to an array of water challenges to market.

ABOUT CURRENT

Current is an independent nonprofit water innovation hub. Founded in Chicago in 2016, our mission is to grow an inclusive Blue Economy, accelerate innovation, and solve pressing water challenges. We bring together corporations, advocates, researchers, and governments to develop water management policies and test new technologies — projects that would be too risky or even impossible without sustained collaboration. Current has helped attract more than \$20M in federal investments for water innovation to the region, launched the first real-time water quality monitoring tool for the Chicago River, and supported the commercialization of more than a dozen water startups.

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