

PRESS RELEASE
DATE: JANUARY 26, 2023



**CHICOSTART Awarded EDA Build-To-Scale Venture Challenge
with CSU, Fresno WET Center and Cleanstart**

Chico, CA: [Chicostart](#), is honored to announce it was awarded a Build to Scale funding level of the 2022 Venture Challenge through the U.S. Economic Development Association Grant (EDA). The intent of the Build to Scale Program is to “build regional economies through scalable startups”. The Venture Challenge awards grants to organizations that enable startups and support regions in overcoming barriers that prevent would-be innovators from accessing these opportunities.

Chicostart, in partnership with [California State University-Fresno's Water, Energy, and Technology \(WET\) Center](#) and [Cleanstart](#), will leverage this EDA investment to execute the Accelerate Innovation by Mobilization to Rural Communities (AIM-RC) project, a unique, 3-year, partnership-focused expansion of current small-scale programs. This joint project will utilize proven programming to mobilize emerging business support, innovation and emerging industry exposure in rural communities across the target region.

“The focus will be on industries relevant to the rural target area, including agriculture/food, water efficiency, biotechnology, any aspect of forest management, any aspect of clean tech, and sustainable tourism. This collaborative project will provide strong, rural-focused industry exposure for spurring economic development that supports historically underserved and underfunded communities and regions,” stated **Chicostart’s Executive Director, Eva Shepherd-Nicoll**.

Helle Petersen, Executive Director, WET Center with CSU, Fresno notes “It is with great excitement we join Chicostart and Cleanstart in the “Accelerate Innovation by Mobilization to Rural Communities” project. It is crucial to expand our reach and engagement into rural and underserved communities in our region and this project will provide us with the vehicle to do so. In three years, our hope is to

show that innovation happens everywhere, and that our regions are capable of growing prosperous startups solving global issues."

Thomas Hall, Executive Director, Cleanstart says "We look forward to working with Chicostart and the CSU, Fresno WET Center to go into communities, bringing access to resources needed to control their destiny. These communities face unique challenges from fires and drought, driven by climate change. With this support, they will also be in the best position to overcome through innovating solutions, building companies, and invigorating their local economy. "

To learn more about the Venture Challenge and Build to Scale Program [CLICK HERE](#).

For a full list of Build to Scale awardee's visit:

<https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/build-to-scale/venture-challenge/2022>

In April 2022, Chicostart was 1 of 10 designees awarded the statewide iHUB2 grant from CalOSBA. Chicostart's iHUB2 designation covers over 20+ counties in Northern California, focusing on building the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem for equitable access to entrepreneurial resources with inclusive ecosystem expansion into our rural and diverse communities. This includes expanding Chicostart's growTECH and entrepreneurial initiative throughout the region.

About Chicostart: Chicostart supports and enriches Northern California's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem by providing small business, entrepreneurs and startups the resources they need to succeed. Our platform includes shared office amenities, mentoring, workshops, internships, tech talks, student to business projects, entrepreneurial events, satellite office programs, and anything else that helps our core mission of helping startups succeed. As a GO-BIZ iHub for the Far North, the Chicostart ecosystem includes but is not limited to investors, technologists, entrepreneurs, students, educators, local businesses, agencies and mentors.

###