

Babraham Research Campus wins EEDA Capital Equipment Grant to accelerate drug discovery

16th February 2010

Babraham Bioscience Technologies (BBT) has won a grant of £321,763 from the East of England Development Agency's (EEDA) capital equipment competition to provide equipment that will support drug discovery and biomedical innovation in the region. Bioscience organisations across the East of England will have access to the equipment, which will be a valuable addition to the existing expertise and capability within Babraham's Technology Development Lab (TDL) established at the BBSRC-funded Babraham Institute.

Access to cost-effective specialist equipment on flexible terms is a critical need of growing companies and is a unique offering within the Babraham Biocubator. The funds will be used to purchase a Biacore T100, a new screening instrument to exploit therapeutic and diagnostic targets that will be particularly useful for the development of biological therapeutics as well as for discovering new drugs. The equipment will be maintained in BBT's TDL, an open access facility that provides an alternative to outsourcing through direct access to drug discovery equipment. Partners supporting BBT's bid to secure and maximise the use of this new equipment for regional SMEs were Antitope Limited, ERBI Limited and Senexis Limited, all residents of Babraham's Biocubator.

Mark Treherne of Senexis, the consortium's Chairman, commented, "We believe that that this new state-of-the-art device will unlock untapped potential from within the companies that use it. We all now look forward to being able exploit this new device to accelerate the discovery of novel drugs, antibodies and diagnostics towards commercialisation."

Derek Jones, Chief Executive of BBT said, "We are delighted that we have been able to secure this funding from EEDA and this will further enhance the Technology Development Laboratory resources we have available to support bioscience enterprise and innovation in the East of England. The principle of scientific and commercial collaboration at the Babraham Research Campus is exemplified by this initiative where campus companies, led by BBT, united as a consortium to bring about the acquisition and management of equipment that will benefit early-stage companies in the region."

The TDL is a fully-equipped biology and chemistry laboratory, which fast tracks early-stage concepts and technologies into viable commercial propositions and provides a comprehensive range of services to the early-stage drug discovery community. The TDL's unique offering to the region was recognised by the award of £300k in the inaugural round of EEDA's Capital Equipment Competition in 2009; this grant funded a suite of bio-processing equipment for the production and purification of biologicals, supporting the drug discovery community and bioscience organisations in the East of England.

Paul May, Executive Director of Innovation at EEDA said, "Bioscience has been identified as a pivotal sector in driving UK plc out of recession, and the East of England has heritage and growing strengths in this field, spearheaded by the Babraham Research Campus. Here at EEDA, we understand the economic imperative of funding those who are just beginning to succeed in their chosen industry, which is why this capital equipment competition is so important. It really enabled us to select focal points across the region, like Babraham, where EEDA could invest in the 'infrastructure' that ambitious, early-stage bioscience companies need to take them to the next level and move their concepts closer to market success."

The addition of the Biacore brings new capabilities to the TDL for screening and a quality control platform to test new biologicals. Dr Emmanuelle Astoul, BBT's Knowledge Transfer Manager said, "The EEDA grant will not only allow us to provide self-service access to this state-of-the-art equipment but also to offer practical training in its uses. We anticipate this new offering at the Babraham Research Campus will be of great value to biotech companies in the region, allowing them to save on both time and cost in developing new products or service development."

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Notes for Editors

Babraham Bioscience Technologies Ltd is the wholly-owned subsidiary and trading arm of the Babraham Institute and delivers the Knowledge Transfer remit of the Institute. Bringing together scientific, technological and commercial excellence, BBT supports innovation and enables the successful exploitation of biomedical research based on both technologies emanating from the Babraham Institute and bioventures relocating to the Babraham Research Campus. Babraham's Technology Development Lab (TDL) is a fully-equipped biology and chemistry laboratory, established to support innovation in biotechnology and biomedical fields. This pioneering concept was designed to accelerate the translation of early-stage concepts and technologies into viable commercial propositions. It does so by providing access either to equipment, facilities or procurement of TDL research staff to undertake the work. The services offered by the TDL are particularly helpful for cash-limited start-ups, helping to reduce cash-burn during the critical early stages of the technology development curve. Website: www.babraham.com

The Babraham Research Campus is the UK's leading knowledge-driven Biomedical Park where world-class research, business know-how and entrepreneurial excellence come together to stimulate effective knowledge transfer. The campus provides a unique and highly successful environment that actively fosters innovation. BBT has taken a prominent role regionally, initiating and leading partnerships to promote knowledge and skills flow and has established a reputation for successfully translating innovative science into viable business opportunities through partnerships for wealth creation. This is stimulating inward investment to the campus and contributing to regional development. Babraham plays a pivotal role in the lifesciences hub and science park network in the region; it is an EEDA innovation hub. Enterprise hubs are physical or virtual environments which support the region's high growth and innovative businesses. They offer the opportunity for businesses to share knowledge and best practice, as well as access to specialist innovation support, training and services.

The Babraham Institute, an independent charitable organisation located six miles south-east of Cambridge, is an institute of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. Carrying out world-leading innovative research and advanced training with relevance to the biomedical, biotechnological, pharmaceutical and healthcare communities, the institute underpins government's national responsibilities for healthcare research and training. Research focuses on the mechanisms of

cell signalling and gene regulation, which underlie normal cellular processes and functions, and on how their failure or abnormality may lead to disease. The latest technologies are being used to study the basis of conditions such as neurodegenerative disorders, foetal abnormality, cancer and diseases of the immune and cardiovascular systems. The commercialisation of the Institute's research is managed by its trading subsidiary, Babraham Bioscience Technologies Ltd. Website: www.babraham.ac.uk

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) is the UK funding agency for research in the life sciences. Sponsored by Government, BBSRC annually invests around £450M in a wide range of research that makes a significant contribution to the quality of life in the UK and beyond and supports a number of important industrial stakeholders, including the agriculture, food, chemical, healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors.

BBSRC provides institute strategic research grants to the following: The Babraham Institute; Institute for Animal Health; Institute for Biological, Environmental and Rural Studies (Aberystwyth University); Institute of Food Research; John Innes Centre; The Genome Analysis Centre; The Roslin Institute (University of Edinburgh); Rothamsted Research

The Institutes conduct long-term, mission-oriented research using specialist facilities. They have strong interactions with industry, Government departments and other end-users of their research.

About EEDA

EEDA has a clear mission - to improve the economy of the East of England.

So whether it's helping businesses through the recession, supporting people to be the best they can or breathing new life into places, everything we do comes back to our mission statement. EEDA works across the six counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Our investment decisions have a track record of delivering considerable returns. A recent independent report found that for every £1 EEDA spent, we generated a mid-point return of £4.75 for the region's economy.

Visit www.eeda.org.uk to find out more.