



PROJECTS FOR BOOSTING BIOBUSINESS

THE CAPITAL REGION of Finland has 1.2 million inhabitants and it serves as an attractive base for biosciences. The Helsinki region encompasses nine universities, six polytechnics and several research centers. It hosts four campuses relevant to life sciences: Meilahti Medical Campus, Viikki Life Science Campus, Kumpula Science Campus and Otaniemi Campus. The umbrella organization, Biocentrum Helsinki at the University of Helsinki and Aalto University, has around 600 people engaged in research in molecular biology, molecular medicine and biotechnology. Earlier this year the Nordic EMBL Partnership for Molecular Medicine officially inaugurated the Institute for Molecular Medicine Finland (FIMM) in the city. In addition, the region is part of the Center of Expertise program, HealthBIO, focusing on health applications in biotechnology and business areas related to health. It includes the five largest life science clusters in Finland, located in Tampere, Turku, Oulu, Kuopio and the Helsinki region.

“There are about 100 companies in the Helsinki region operating in the HealthBIO sector and in addition we have numerous subsidiaries of international big and medium sized pharma and diagnostics companies,” says Pekka Ihalmo, Project Manager at HealthBIO Helsinki region.

Strengths within life science in the Helsinki region are to be found within almost all areas of life science and include neurological disease and brain research, cancer research, molecular medicine, diagnostics, stem cells, cell therapy and bioinformatics.

“On the company side we have several successful companies in the fields of diagnostics and drug development, for example,” says Pekka Ihalmo.

Creating opportunities

As a way to support and stimulate a new generation of life science scientists and business profiles in the Helsinki area, HealthBIO has

established a PhDs to Business Life project. The project enhances the employment opportunities of life science PhDs by providing training in business and industry skills, career coaching, recruitment support and financial aid for companies to hire unemployed jobseekers.

“So far eight PhDs have found a new position or job at a life science company in the region with the help of this project,” says Pekka Ihalmo. “It provides long term benefits for job seekers in the region.” Another of the region’s initiatives to promote and strengthen the life science sector is the Boost Biobusiness project. Companies selected for the project will receive services and coaching based on their particular needs, for example company strategy, funding, partnering, marketing, new market entries, communication, EU projects, regulatory issues, quality systems and IPR. The project uses both in-house and external experts and they arrange workshops, seminars and partnering events, as well as more specific actions.

“The project creates an immediate help for SMEs and gives them a push in the right direction, a boost for their businesses,” says Pekka Ihalmo.

The right environment

The issue of financing for a small life science company is always a source of debate and this is also the case in the Helsinki area.

“We try to help companies by creating the right environment for them to grow, develop enabling tools and procedures to support their funding, growth and entry into global markets. Getting financing is always a topic of discussion. My opinion is that good companies always get funding in the end,” says Pekka Ihalmo.

He and his colleagues help companies in finding EU-programs and other sources of financing; they identify themes, participate at investor meetings and other international partnering events, and help out in partnering. For example, on August 31st HealthBIO will arrange a nationwide networking event in Tampere. Financers from all over

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the Europe have been invited to this meeting.

“We also provide both local and international companies with web-based services at Biobusiness.fi, where we publish important news, events and information about the Helsinki bio-region. You can also get an overview of companies as well as our research strengths here,” adds Pekka Ihalmo.

CULMINATUM INNOVATION

Culminatum Innovation Oy Ltd is a development company owned by the Uusimaa Regional Council, the cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa, and the universities, polytechnics, research institutes and business community of the Helsinki region. The main function of Culminatum is to manage the Centre of Expertise Program within the Helsinki region over the current third program period 2007-2013. The goal with HealthBIO program is to generate, develop and internationalize Finnish bio-business.

The right way to conclusions

StatFinn Oy is an independent privately owned Contract Research Organization (CRO) established in 2005. We provide statistical and data management services to customers conducting experimental research in the various fields of life sciences.

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