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Young Adults Are Target of Entrepreneurial Initiative

By Michelle Miller, founder and CEO, High Desert Discovery District

A frequent lament of New Mexico's business community is the loss of brainpower and energy that results when young people move out of state to pursue economic opportunities they can't find at home.

This exodus isn't unique to New Mexico and, by itself, isn't cause for alarm.

No matter where they live, young people almost always leave their home state after completing their schooling or training, even if they obtained that education tuition-free at New Mexico universities.

Exploring the larger world and all its offerings helps young adults mature into self-aware global citizens — an asset to any community they choose to settle in.



What most concerns economic-development advocates is how to make New Mexico that destination of choice for our dispersed millennials — the generation now in its 20s and 30s.

The High Desert Discovery District (HD3) — the first private, nonprofit high-tech startup accelerator in New Mexico — is dedicated to cultivating a climate of innovation and possibility that entices young professionals and entrepreneurs to return to the state and contribute to its economic prosperity.

In late February, we're teaming up with Intel Corp. to host Millennial Innovation: HD3 Discovery Day @ Intel. The two-day event offers millennials a place to share innovations and discoveries and learn about commercialization and startup opportunities in New Mexico.

Our state's vast research and development sector, much of it centered in national laboratories and other research institutions, is a tremendous — and too often untapped — asset. Discovery Day draws from these knowledge banks and from the business and investment communities and pairs these experts with millennial-age entrepreneurs and innovators who have a product or discovery they want to develop for market.

The event is expected to attract postdoctoral students working in our national laboratories, graduate level and undergraduate students in our universities, students in trade and community colleges and other millennial-age entrepreneurs or innovators with marketable ideas.

The Feb. 25-26 event takes place at the Rio Rancho Intel Campus, 1600 Rio Rancho Boulevard S.E.

Those selected to participate will have 30 minutes to privately present an idea to a panel of experts and answer panelists' questions. The closed setting assures that sensitive and proprietary business and technological information can be safely shared and openly discussed. All Discovery Day discussions are confidential.

Each adviser participating in the HD3 event has extensive experience matching technology opportunities with marketplace needs and understands product development, investment strategy, marketing and sales, management, valuations and exit strategies. Advisers also belong to international networks and can involve their contacts to promote the most promising concepts.

Between 12 and 15 entrepreneurs are typically selected to make presentations based on our list of criteria, which is available at www.hddd.org. The deadline to apply for the event is Feb. 6.

Finance New Mexico is a public service initiative to assist individuals and businesses with obtaining skills and funding resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org. Sponsored by:

