

Chicago Innovation Awards and Molex Announce “The Innovators Connection”

New initiative recognizes explosive growth of innovation in and around Chicago by linking innovative firms of all sizes in unique strategy designed to grow regional economy

Chicago Illinois—The [Chicago Innovation Awards](#) in partnership with [Molex Incorporated](#) has launched the Innovators Connection, an initiative to build bridges and linkages between the region’s most innovative small businesses and large corporations located in and around Chicago.

The inaugural large company participants include Coyote Logistics, Dell, Edelman, Elkay Manufacturing, Hillshire Brands, Molex, Medline, UPS, Vedder Price, Wintrust Financial and others. Hundreds of the region’s most innovative small businesses already part of the Chicago Innovation Awards process will be involved right from the start.

“The spirit of innovation is thriving in Chicago,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “Big and small businesses have the potential to grow even faster through cooperation and interaction. The Innovators Connection will foster this interaction, helping to create jobs and economic opportunity for our city and its residents.”

“The Innovators Connection is a practical yet powerful strategy for building the region’s economy,” said Thomas D. Kuczarski, co-founder of the initiative with Dan Miller of the Chicago Innovation Awards. “In the digital startup world alone, a new business is created in this region every other day. At the same time, Chicago and the surrounding communities are home to many Fortune 500 size firms. The Innovators Connection will build new bridges between startups and established firms. Everyone wins and the region’s economy grows.”

Kuczarski notes that large companies can be important customers and potential partners for both startups and established small businesses across diverse industries as they bring new products, services, and technologies to market. “Why search the globe for opportunities when there are so many global firms right here in our community?” he points out. “One global firm in our backyard that sees so much value in connecting with other innovators is Molex. Their long-term commitment to innovation makes them a natural sponsor for this program.”

Molex Incorporated, with headquarters in suburban Lisle, is a multi-billion dollar global



electronics manufacturer and an industry leader in the design and development of interconnect solutions. The company has a long-standing commitment to bring solutions to customers that enable them to build some of the most innovative products on the market.

“Since its founding in 1938, Molex has cultivated a rich tradition of innovation,” said Brian Krause, vice president of global marketing and communications. “As the company celebrates its 75th anniversary, we are honoring this milestone by looking to the future. It is in this spirit that Molex is proud to sponsor the Innovators Connection to help link Chicago firms that support the proliferation of next-generation technologies.”

The Chicago Innovation Awards is the region’s foremost annual recognition of new products and services brought to market in the Chicago region. Its new venture, the Innovators Connection, will build upon the in-depth, proprietary information obtained each year about hundreds of regional firms and their innovations, as well as build relationships with investors, universities, and the public sector.

“The Chicago Innovation Awards has established a track record of identifying, supporting, and promoting successful innovations,” said Bryan Brochu, who will be leading the Innovators Connection. Over the 11-year history of the awards, 100 percent of the award winners are still in business, with 19 of them being acquired by larger firms.

“Our concept is straightforward,” said Luke Tanen, executive director of the Chicago Innovation Awards, who will be joining Kuczarski, Miller, and Brochu in this new initiative. “We have built a unique set of relationships throughout the region. Through the Innovators Connection, our large company participants will express their desired needs relating to technologies, products, services, categories and industries that provide them value, and the Innovators Connection will match relevant Chicago area start-ups to these large companies.”

Organizations interested in being involved with the Innovators Connection should contact Bryan Brochu at bryan@chicagoinnovationawards.com or 312-988-1514. Information is available online at www.chicagoinnovationawards.com/innovators-connection.

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About the Chicago Innovation Awards

The Chicago Innovation Awards, established in 2002, have grown from a single awards ceremony to a year-long series of events and activities designed to celebrate innovation in the Chicago region, educate people and organizations about the principles of innovation, and forge

relationships that strengthen companies, grow the economy and create jobs. The organization's expansion has included formation of the Chicago Innovation Foundation and the Innovators Connection. The Foundation promotes innovation education, and provides scholarships to college students each year, and the Innovators Connection builds bridges to connect large and small companies in the Chicago region. For more information, visit www.chicagoinnovationawards.com.

About Molex

Providing more than connectors, Molex delivers complete interconnect solutions for a number of markets including: data communications, telecommunications, consumer electronics, industrial, automotive, commercial vehicle, aerospace and defense, medical, and lighting. Established in 1938, the company operates 41 manufacturing locations in 15 countries. The Molex website is www.molex.com. Follow us at www.twitter.com/molexconnectors, watch our videos at www.youtube.com/molexconnectors, connect with us at www.facebook.com/molexconnectors and read our blog at www.connector.com.