

InnovateNC Asheville



THE COLLIDER
Market-Driven Climate Solutions
thecollider.org

Our Vision:

Asheville is the global center of innovation for products and services that accelerate climate resiliency.

2017 Executive Summary

To achieve this vision, a dedicated philanthropist launched The Collider, a 6000 square foot nonprofit innovation center based in downtown Asheville, NC, focused on catalyzing market-driven climate solutions. Innovative climate solutions must be grounded in the best science and speak the language of business. But every day, businesses and communities are making billions of dollars of decisions without this vital information. Initial estimates are that \$1 trillion will be spent globally on climate adaptation in the coming years. That's where The Collider comes in. Headquartered in "Climate City" - Asheville, NC - The Collider exists to bring together diverse expertise and stimulate a new industry: climate products and services.

Asheville is perfectly positioned to be a global leader in climate services, as it is the home of NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information, which archives all of the nation's weather and climate data. Since locating in Asheville in 1952 as the National Weather Records Center, the expertise NOAA has spun off an increasingly vibrant community of private, academic, and nonprofit innovators. Yet, to help grow this ecosystem to its full potential, create long-term sustainable economic and social impact, drive improvements in climate resilience globally, and position North Carolina as a leader on the world's stage we need a coherent strategy and a strong backbone organization to coordinate an approach.

Targeted Outcomes

The strategy of InnovateNC Asheville is driven by the innovation-centric economic development outcomes of The Collider:

Short-term Outcomes: Next 12-18 months

- Strengthened connections across the climate solutions ecosystem within Asheville and from Asheville to the broader climate solutions economy;
- Increased awareness and reference of Asheville as "Climate City" at the local, regional, and national levels; and
- Growth in talent retention and attraction in the climate solutions field that is demographically representative of the Asheville community.

Medium-term Outcomes: 2+ years

- Growing number of climate solutions livable wage jobs;
- Increased private and public investment in local climate science enterprises;
- Established reputation as "Climate City" regionally and nationally;

- Asheville established as a global network of climate science providers; and
- Growing number and diversity of private-sector climate services enterprises located in Asheville and Western North Carolina.

Investable Strategies

As a startup nonprofit organization, working to catalyze the development of an emerging field, The Collider is focused on launching a set of high-impact initiatives focused on supporting existing climate enterprises, launching new ones, creating a pipeline of new job opportunities that will attract and retain high quality talent, and foster a global network of climate services providers, headquartered in Asheville, who are able to create practical solutions together. Over the next 12-18 months, the Collider is focused on working with partners such as NOAA, Venture Asheville and UNC Asheville to launch the following programs pending local, state, and national philanthropic investment.

Thomas R. Karl Internship Program

In accelerating the growth of climate solutions, it is critical to develop the next generation of leaders. To train these emerging leaders, The Collider has established an internship program, that will support college and graduate students interning with member climate service providers. The program will explicitly favor the development of a diverse workforce. To succeed in its mission, the field of climate services must reflect the diversity of those it serves, and leverage the richness therein. Accordingly, the program will look to develop the diversity of the interns in every way, including skillset, interests, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and gender.

The Collider's goal is to provide six interns a year this opportunity by offering internships in the spring and fall semesters, as well as during the summer break. To incentivize and make affordable the use of interns by startup climate solution providers, as well as provide some form of financial compensation to students, The Collider will pay for the interns.

We have piloted this program starting in Spring 2017 and have found it highly successful thus far for the 2 interns and their employers. Every college we've discussed this opportunity with (5 so far) is excited to engage.

Investment Request: \$60,000 to cover stipends for six interns

ClimateCon 2018

The Collider is spearheading a new event in 2018 – ClimateCon, a conference on the business of climate – that will provide unequivocal proof of Asheville's deserving global status as "Climate City."

Taking place in March, ClimateCon 2018 will be an annual, weeklong event that will include activities related to climate and climate change that will be of interest for businesses, students, and the general public. Specifically, we envision the following:

- **Climate Solutions Business Forum.** This component of ClimateCon will connect experts that can deliver investment opportunities and risk reduction using climate science and data. Targeting corporate risk and portfolio managers, investors, business solution providers, climate consultants and tool developers, this component of ClimateCon will include:
 - The release of the first “State of the Climate Solutions Report” (for which we received grant funding from Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation to help research, write, and produce).
 - An “Innovation Showcase” featuring the climate solutions and products developed by The Collider member organizations.
 - A panel discussion highlighting the philanthropic and market opportunities within climate solutions.
- **Climate Change & Solution Education.** The education component of ClimateCon will be reflective of a standard academic conference, with keynotes, lightning talks, and poster sessions, but be uniquely focused on exposing future climate solutions professionals to the climate solutions industry. We intend to partner with Western North Carolina colleges and universities to make this event accessible to these students.
- **Welcome to Climate City.** Despite the fact that NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Information (the world’s largest archive of climate, weather, and environmental information in the world) is located in downtown Asheville (and has been for decades), and that dozens of climate-related businesses are here – as well as The Collider, which opened in March 2016), the Asheville community at large is not as aware as we’d like that this truly is “Climate City.”

With the debut of ClimateCon, we seek to change that! We plan to engage groups ranging from AIR (Asheville Independent Restaurants), ASAP (Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project), and Asheville Brewers Alliance, to the Asheville Downtown Association, Asheville Grown Business Alliance, and the Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau to turn Asheville into, truly, “Climate City” for a week, bringing the need for climate solutions alive and accessible to anyone who wants to engage.

This whole-town takeover will result in a conference experience like no other, with exceptional business value that can only take place in Asheville. By bringing this mix of business professionals together, we aim to advance the commercialization of climate and environmental data and climate science, and help businesses identify potential uses/needs for climate adaptation and resiliency. The Collider needs community support to advance the feasibility, awareness, and energy of ClimateCon 2018.

Investment Request: \$40,000 (event production and community engagement efforts)

State of the Climate Solutions Report

By March 2018, The Collider will develop and release the first "State of the Climate Solutions" report. This landmark report will explain the landscape of the industry - its size and scope, the

major roles, major players, their business models, their dependencies and relationships, the value chain from data to decisions, and the growth pathways of the players. It will focus on climate solutions powered by climate data and information. It is likely to serve as the framework for future policy decisions.

The Collider is seeking resources to develop the short-term capacity for researching, writing, and producing this report.

Investment Request: \$75,000 (production costs and personnel support)

Member Business Incubation

Approximately 75% of the businesses that are members of The Collider are startups or young and growing companies. They have expressed the desire for exposure to customers, capital, and connections. The resources they seek are well beyond “Entrepreneur 101” – for those needs, we connect them with Asheville’s thriving startup ecosystem. They’re looking for highly-specific connections to the customers looking for climate risk solutions, the capital looking to invest in resilience, and the connections to the highly fragmented global community working in this space. The Collider is currently offering all of those, but can do much more to grow our member companies.

The Collider is seeking resources to develop incubation and acceleration services by strengthening connections to customers and capital through production of events, meetings, seminars, and webinars.

Investment Request: \$75,000 (personnel support)

Next Steps

Asheville and The Collider are moving currently forward with the strategic planning and implementation of these initiatives. Local, state, national, and philanthropic funding and investment will expedite The Collider’s ability to grow this emerging market. For further information on any of these initiatives, please contact James McMahon (jmcmahon@thecollider.org) or Megan Robinson (mrobinson@thecollider.org).

Executive Committee Contact Information

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