

Comments on ORNL Tech transfer.txt

From: Doug Lawyer [dlawyer@knoxvillechamber.com]

Sent: Wednesday, January 21, 2009 4:40 PM

To: GC-62

Cc: Rhonda Rice

Subject: Comments on ORNL Tech transfer

Attachments: image001.jpg

I understand that DOE is accepting comments on technology transfer initiatives in your federal national labs. Here's some thoughts on tech transfer at ORNL:

* One of the key economic development strategies of Knox County, Tennessee, which sits in a region we call The Innovation Valley, involves Technology transfer from Oak Ridge National Laboratory. It is a focus of our daily economic development efforts through a program we call Technology Mining and Matching. We have a strong connection with ORNL and its partnerships division.

* During the eight years that UT-Battelle LLC has managed ORNL, we have seen a significantly increased emphasis on entrepreneurial efforts to grow new companies around ORNL technologies. Newer initiatives like the Oak Ridge Science and Technology Park are designed to increase the engagement of ORNL and larger, more established companies. We have also seen continued support for companies located in our region's technology business incubators.

* Regardless of the size of the company or its years of existence, we frequently hear comments about challenges in doing business with a national lab and changes that would improve the process. Many companies talk about the advance payment issues that challenge them. Others talk about the time and therefore cost of executing agreements. Others complement DOE for its efforts to try new approaches to tech transfer such as the EERE Technology Maturation Fund, and we believe that more innovative initiatives like this one to help push technologies forward are important.

* While I'm not a direct customer of a national lab, the work that our organization is seeking to do to strengthen the economy of the Innovation Valley depends significantly on the ability of companies in the region to capitalize and access the intellectual assets of ORNL. I encourage the Department of Energy to do everything possible to streamline the agreements in ways that expedite the execution process to get technologies into the marketplace much faster. The economic crisis that is facing our country and region is extremely challenging, and we need to be innovative and rapid in our economic development efforts.

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