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Haslam Announces Regional Entrepreneur Centers

Brian Reisinger

Gov. Bill Haslam has announced the business accelerators responsible for his regional entrepreneurship push, with the Nashville Entrepreneur Center landing a large portion of Middle Tennessee.

The Tennessee Republican has made entrepreneurship a central part of his economic development strategy. Commissioner Bill Hagerty of the state's Economic and Community Development Department has been expected to announce the regional centers responsible for implementing Haslam's strategy throughout the state.

Nashville's own Entrepreneur Center led the list. The Entrepreneur Center's role was widely expected, with CEO Michael Burcham already heading StartUp Tennessee for the governor in addition to his local duties. Excerpts from the announcement, with details for Middle Tennessee:

"The Regional Entrepreneurial Accelerators will be an incredible asset throughout Tennessee to help aspiring entrepreneurs launch and grow their businesses with expert mentoring and support," Haslam said.

Accelerators will be located in each of the nine Jobs4TN Jobs Base Camp regions to assist area entrepreneurs as they develop business plans and launch companies that have the potential to create new jobs. Each accelerator will become a foundational component of the region's economic development strategy while creating a network of partnerships and mentors within the local business community, the statewide investor base, higher education, non-profits and government.

A \$250,000 grant will be awarded to each of the nine Regional Entrepreneurial Accelerators as a result of a competitive grant application process. Each application was judged by multiple reviewers and assigned a composite score based on how effectively it responded to the program criteria. The grant funding is a combination of state and federal dollars and contingent upon each accelerator providing at minimum an additional \$250,000 in local matching support.