

## **Houston Region Named Semi-Finalist for National Science Foundation Engines Grant**

*NSF initiative designed to create regional-scale innovation ecosystems throughout the United States*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 14, 2023

(HOUSTON, TX) The Greater Houston Partnership and the Houston Energy Transition Initiative (HETI), in partnership with five regional universities, including University of Houston, University of Texas, Austin, Texas Southern University, Rice University and Texas A&M University, was recently named a semifinalist for the National Science Foundation Regional Innovation Engine (NSF Engines) program, and was invited to the Virtual Site Visit (VSV) stage.

NSF Engines is a bold new initiative designed to create regional-scale innovation ecosystems throughout the United States. This program will provide up to \$160 million of funding for up to 10 years to establish each Engine and an opportunity to usher in a transformational revolution of economic growth by harnessing the nation's rich science and technology research enterprise and regional-level resources to address societal challenges and promote national competitiveness.

"This NSF Engines program is a tremendous opportunity for the Houston region. The Partnership and HETI, along with our universities and ecosystem partners are demonstrating that the collaboration across all parts of our energy innovation ecosystem creates a distinct advantage in leading the energy transition. The region is primed and ready for this opportunity." said Bobby Tudor, CEO of Artemis Energy Partners and Chair of HETI.

The proposed regional Engines is called *Accelerating Carbon-Neutral Technologies (ACT) and Policies for Energy Transition* and aims to accelerate the global energy transition through while also creating strong, equitable economic growth for the region.

"The ACT Engine will leverage our diverse energy innovation ecosystem and talent, creating a true competitive advantage for existing and new energy companies across our region. Texas is leading the way in nearly every energy and energy transition solution, and this Engine can catalyze our region's continued growth in low-carbon technology development and deployment," said Jane Stricker, Senior Vice President of Energy Transition and Executive Director for HETI.

"Houston is poised, like no other city, to lead the energy transition. The ACT Engine presents a remarkable opportunity to not only leverage the region's unparalleled energy resources and expertise but also harness our can-do spirit. Houston has a proven track record of embracing challenges and finding innovative solutions," said Renu, Khator, University of Houston President. "Through the collaborative efforts facilitated by the ACT Engine, I am confident that we can make significant strides towards creating a sustainable future that harmonizes economic growth, environmental protection and social equity."

ACT builds upon a nascent, but fast-growing, energy innovation ecosystem and leverage the unmatched energy assets and infrastructure across the region to accelerate the development and deployment of technological, policy, and financial solutions for a low-carbon future in a manner that promotes economic growth balanced with environmental protection and social equity.

“Providing affordable, reliable energy while minimizing the impact on the environment is going to be one of the most challenging, most important priorities for this generation,” said Reginald DesRoches, Rice University President. “It’s a priority Rice and the Houston region are zeroed in on, and joining forces with these universities and industry partners through the ACT Engine will allow the U.S. to advance this imperative with an incredible force, urgency and impact. ACT will be located in the most diverse region of the country, with demographics that represent the future of America, and we will advance a commitment to and culture that embraces diversity, equity and inclusion and all of the vital strengths it brings to bear in research and science.”

“ACT has the potential to foster the existing and growing excellent engagement between industry, academia, and communities, particularly with respect to workforce training programs. This Engine has the potential to advance our regional workforce across all skill levels to ensure a just and equitable energy transition in the region and become the global exemplar,” said Michelle Penn-Marshall, Vice President for Research and Innovation, Texas Southern University.

The ACT Engine will pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity in innovation and entrepreneurship programs required for a just energy transition for all, including others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and those areas affected by environmental and social injustice in the region.

"Growth of our innovation ecosystem is crucial to the continued prosperity of our region, and Houston—as a global leader in energy—will play a key role in that growth. The NSF Engine grant would provide critical support for UT Austin researchers and regional stakeholders to build our energy future together,” said Brian Korgel, Director of the UT Energy Institute.

"Texas A&M is proud to partner with the top institutions and energy leaders in the state of Texas to lead the greater Houston area to go from the Energy Capital of the World to the Energy Innovation Capital of the World. Texas A&M is a leader in energy innovation research, a top national public research institution and the largest university and largest engineering program in the nation,” said John Sharp, Chancellor, The Texas A&M University System.

“Our energy innovation ecosystem is inclusive, dynamic, and fast growing. The ACT Engine has the potential to increase the amount of innovation coming into the ecosystem and the capabilities available to scale technologies needed in the energy transition,” said Barbara Burger, energy transition advisor and director to several firms including the Greentown Board of Directors and former Chevron innovation and ventures executive. “I am confident that the members of the ecosystem – incubators, accelerators, investors, universities, and corporates – are ready for the challenge that the ACT Engine will provide. More innovation to address the energy transition? Bring it on.”



The program is open to coalitions led by U.S.-based for-profit businesses, non-profit organizations, and U.S. accredited institutions of higher education with a campus located in the U.S. Finalists for the program will be announced later this year.

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### **HETI | Greater Houston Partnership**

The Greater Houston Partnership is dedicated to strengthening Houston's position as the Energy Capital of the World. The economic vitality and growth of our region's economy is inextricably tied to the energy industry. The Partnership's Houston Energy Transition Initiative (HETI) builds on the best of traditional energy skills and systems to leverage Houston's industry leadership to accelerate global solutions for an energy-abundant, low-carbon future. HETI is a coalition of industry, academic and community partners working together to ensure the long-term economic competitiveness and advancement of the Houston region as leaders of the global energy transition.

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