

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **HIRE360 PROUDLY PARTNERS WITH GREAT LAKES RENEW, A FINALIST IN NSF'S INNOVATION ENGINES COMPETITION FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE BLUE ECONOMY INITIATIVE**

*Collaboration Proposes Plan to Leverage Innovation and Workforce Development to Create Sustainable Ecosystems and Drive Inclusive Economic Growth*

**CHICAGO**—Great Lakes ReNEW, a pioneering water innovation initiative, has achieved finalist status in the National Science Foundation's (NSF) inaugural Innovation Engines competition. The competition, offering up to \$160 million in funding over a decade, aims to create a Blue Economy innovation engine in the Great Lakes Region. HIRE360, a key partner in the initiative, is poised to contribute significantly to the success of this transformative project.

"We are proud to be part of the Great Lakes ReNEW initiative and its vision for the Blue Economy," said Jay Rowell, Executive Director of HIRE360. "Our focus on workforce development aligns with the goals of the program, and we are dedicated to ensuring that the benefits accrue to the people and places that need them most."

Great Lakes ReNEW, coordinated by Current and comprising over 50 partners, has been selected as one of 10 groups from across the United States to be chosen as an NSF Engine. It was selected from 16 finalists, 188 invited proposals, and more than 700 initial submissions. This milestone is a result of a collective effort to catalyze and foster inclusive innovation ecosystems. The program offers the largest investments in NSF history, intended to boost innovation capacity, create sustainable ecosystems, and drive inclusive economic growth.

The initiative, focusing on recovering energy, nutrients, and critical materials from water and wastewater, spans six states, including Illinois, where HIRE360 is actively engaged. The collaboration proposes an ambitious plan to leverage inclusive innovation, workforce development, and stakeholder engagement, aiming to drive a decarbonized circular Blue Economy in the Great Lakes region.

"The freshwater resources of the Great Lakes are vital for the health, wealth, and security of the entire nation," said Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker. "The scientific, industrial, and human resources we have right here in Illinois and across our region give us the right to win in the race for technologies to manage and protect our water assets – and the world's."

Great Lakes ReNEW is strategically positioned to secure a place among the up to five regional "engines" selected by NSF. These engines will build partnerships across industry, academia, government, nonprofits, and communities to drive inclusive growth through investment in research, development, and commercialization of advanced technologies addressing national challenges.

HIRE360's involvement in the ReNEW initiative extends beyond traditional support. As a partner, HIRE360 is actively contributing to workforce and entrepreneurship training essential for the creation, implementation, and management of new technologies and practices. The goal is to create a seamless pipeline of opportunities for individuals most affected by joblessness and systemic barriers to participation.

The additional partnering organizations that make up ReNEW include:

AmFam Institute \* AO Smith \* Argonne National Laboratory \* Black & Veatch \* Burnt Island Ventures \* CAEL \* Cara Collective \* Chicago State University \* City Colleges of Chicago \* Cleveland Water Alliance \* Discovery Partners Institute \* Dow \* Entrepreneurs' Center \* Evergreen Climate Innovations \* Exelon \* Freshwater Advisors \* Fund for Our Economic Future \* Great Lakes Water Authority \* Illinois Institute of Technology \* Illinois Science & Technology Coalition \* Illinois Ventures \* Imagine H2O \* Marquette University \* Mazarine Ventures \* Metropolitan Council \* mHUB \* New Water \* Northwestern University \* NSF I-Corps Hub Great Lakes Region \* Ohio State University \* Oldcastle \* P33 \* Purdue University \* S2G Ventures \* Sentry \* State of Illinois \* State of Ohio \* State of Wisconsin \* Steamville \* TIES \* True North Venture Partners \* University of Chicago \* University of Cincinnati \* University of Illinois Chicago \* University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign \* University of Minnesota \* University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee \* Wayne State University \* World Business Chicago \* WRTP Big Step

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### **About HIRE360**

Launched in December of 2019, HIRE360 is an Industry Led, Community Focused nonprofit ensuring that our city's future is inspired by all the communities that call Chicago home. Our "demand" driven approach to workforce development allows a direct connection with employers and unions to develop workforce recruitment and training programs that meet the specific and timely employment needs of the hospitality and construction sectors. As a workforce intermediary, we identify, recruit, skill up and help community members navigate the apprenticeship process. Our business development program creates wealth and career opportunities in Chicago's communities by investing capital, time and mentorship to help Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises start, grow and thrive. Learn more at [www.HIRE360Chicago.com](http://www.HIRE360Chicago.com).

### **About Current**

Current is an independent nonprofit water innovation hub. Founded in Chicago in 2016, our mission is to grow an inclusive blue economy, accelerate innovation and solve pressing water challenges. We bring together corporations, advocates, researchers and governments to develop water management policies and test new technologies — projects that would be too risky or even impossible without sustained collaboration. Current has helped attract more than \$20 million in federal investments for water innovation in the region, launched the first real-time water quality monitoring tool for the Chicago River and supported the commercialization of more than a dozen water startups. **Read more about Current:** <https://www.currentwater.org>