

Maher: The BIC turns 2

By Sean Maher

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The Boulder Innovation Center is just beginning its third year as a resource for Boulder's entrepreneurial community.

Seems like a good time to look back and see how things have gone since the Boulder Economic Council and the city of Boulder first funded the BIC back in 2005.

Like most start-up ventures, the BIC has evolved into a different animal than originally conceived. Nonetheless, it has become a valuable and integral part of Boulder's entrepreneurial community.

Co-founder and CEO Doug Collier has focused on developing two primary resources for entrepreneurs. First is the Stage 2 program aimed at young companies that already are in business, but may need help with raising capital, marketing, product development, etc.

Because Boulder is known globally as a leader in natural products and software, these two industries are the focus of the Stage 2 program. Some clients include Boulder Ice Cream, Third Street Chai, Six 88 Solutions and metaWorks.

The second area where the BIC has focused is technology transfer.

In partnership with the University of Colorado Office of Technology Transfer, the BIC has built a bridge between the academic and business worlds to commercialize technologies developed on campus. This program brings professors, researchers and students together with outside business experts. Locomotion and Mentor Interactive are two local companies that evolved out of the BIC's tech transfer program.

Perhaps the BIC's greatest success has been getting Boulder's famous serial entrepreneurs connected with the next generation. Collier created blue ribbon panels of natural products and software veterans to evaluate and advise BIC clients.

Imagine the thrill for a young organic entrepreneur to get advice from an industry legend like WhiteWave founder Steve Demos.

And so the BIC begins its third year with a solid track record. However, it is a critical time in the organization's short history. Collier has decided to pursue a business opportunity and officially stepped down as CEO last week. The uncertainty caused by this transition has left some supporters uneasy.

Not to worry. While Collier has done a great job and will be missed, he has built a solid foundation for the BIC. Plus, there is a strong board of directors with a vision for the future that is both compelling and realistic.

One of their goals is to add renewable energy as a target industry along with natural products and software. This is a perfect fit for Boulder and presents a great opportunity for partnerships with city and state economic development efforts.

They also plan to create new educational programs and collaborate with other entrepreneurial resources in

Boulder, Denver and beyond. This will allow the BIC to leverage its resources and serve more clients.

As I mentioned at the start, the city of Boulder and the Boulder Economic Council helped start the BIC. However, support from the state of Colorado, CU and more than 20 local businesses has also been critical. All of these supporters should be proud of what the BIC has accomplished and excited about the future.

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