

# Ben Franklin to Invest \$559,802 in PA Technology Companies

The Associated Press

The Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Northeastern Pennsylvania (BFTP/NEP) board approved the investment of \$559,802 in regional companies. BFTP/NEP is an award-winning, state-funded economic development organization that links early-stage technology firms and established manufacturers with experts, universities, funding, and other resources to help them prosper through innovation. BFTP is an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and funded by BFTDA.

Since beginning operation, BFTP/NEP has helped to create 15,479 new jobs and retain 21,459 existing jobs, to start 429 new companies, and to develop 1,127 new products and processes. Ben Franklin has returned \$3.50 to Pennsylvania for every \$1.00 invested in the program.

BFTP/NEP will invest in early-stage technology firms in loans.

, East Stroudsburg - \$30,000 Build the infrastructure to roll out a national sales effort to promote A Sound Strategy's software-as-a service products that help customers utilize web-based platforms to increase sales and enhance efficiency. Small- and medium-sized businesses sometimes underutilize online tools because of the cost and difficulty in implementing and maintaining them. ASSi's siteMaster® platform helps companies manage their web content, memberships, events, and e-commerce. The company's newest product, touchFolio?, allows client companies to develop and manage a mobile application on touchscreen mobile phones and tablets. Clients use the app as a sales tool to showcase products and services easily and at a lower cost, allowing them to compete with larger enterprises.

, Danville - \$100,000 Validate a diagnostic and prognostic test that predicts the risk of developing esophageal cancer in patients with Barrett's Esophagus. The test employs a "spatial systems biology approach" to anatomic pathological testing, in contrast with the current pathology testing that is a largely manual and subjective process. Cernostics will continue to develop this molecular diagnostic test with biopsy specimens and clinical data from Geisinger Health System, Danville, in order to select and refine biomarkers and complete software development. Additional clinical validation studies will lead to commercialization of the test via Cernostics' clinical reference laboratory.

, Bethlehem - \$100,000 Develop a new, minimally invasive structural heart repair product called Permaseal?, and begin commercializing it. Micro Interventional designs, develops and commercializes proprietary technologies targeting unmet

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needs in the treatment of structural heart disease. The Permaseal closure device is intended to close myocardial punctures, incisions, and otomies in structural heart repair procedures. This product will serve the large market of surgical patients who are currently unable to undergo high-risk procedures, particularly for the increasingly popular Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation procedure (TAVI).

, Bloomsburg - \$25,000 Establish and expand OPTiMO's digital forensics suite of information technology products and services through the addition of business development and sales resources and implementation of a new marketing strategy. OPTiMO delivers enterprise-level information technology products and services to federal government and commercial clients. Products include software related to the Digital Forensics, e-Discovery, and Litigation Support industries.

, Bethlehem - \$70,000 Complete design and begin commercialization of five hardware products and one software control application for this developer of audio streaming and distribution products. Modern performances in theaters and houses of worship require a variety of approaches to provide performers the ability to hear their own performances as well as cues. Wired systems currently in use require extensive cabling, limiting performers' movements, and have limited audio source reception. Pivitec uses wireless mobile devices as interactive controllers for its network devices to address problems in live professional audio products.

., Allentown - \$20,000 Support sales and marketing efforts at this producer of a cloud-based employee recognition and reward system. Walton provides a web-based application, Recognition PRO?, which allows company managers to more systematically and cost-effectively reward employees in ways that are most meaningful and motivating to them, thereby improving employee morale. The application is built on and incorporates the exclusively licensed content of Dr. Bob Nelson, NY Times best-selling author of 1001 Ways to Reward Employees.

Ben Franklin will invest in the following established manufacturer companies in 1:1 matching grants.

, Berwick - \$18,302 With assistance from Bloomsburg University, install and implement an Enterprise Resource Planning system at this manufacturer of butterfly valves for the municipal water industry. This software package will increase internal process efficiencies through the production and collection of accurate data metrics. Once implemented, the company will better understand and control shop operations and turnaround times to compete even more effectively.

, Reading - \$50,000 With assistance from Northampton Community College's Emerging Technology Applications Center, develop a new power distribution and illumination system at this manufacturer of electronic, electromechanical, computer products, systems, and services primarily for the U.S. Department of Defense. This system will incorporate smart grid technology and be used in modular power distribution units for military field applications.

, Easton - \$50,000 With assistance from Lehigh University, complete a sustainability analysis to reduce energy consumption by more than 20%. GFH is an international

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leader in thermoplastic extrusion, primarily manufacturing PVC and CPVC piping for a diverse set of customers. Energy costs are a top manufacturing expense, so a cost savings in this area will yield a significant competitive advantage.

, Hazleton - \$25,000 With assistance from Lehigh University's Enterprise Systems Center, establish and implement an Enterprise Resource Planning system at this producer and distributor of pizza, shells, tomato sauce, and doughballs throughout several states. This software package will establish an information technology infrastructure that is necessary for the company to continue its growth. The system will help Longo's to enhance manufacturing control and improve profitability.

, Wilkes-Barre - \$26,500 With assistance from Northampton Community College's Emerging Technology Applications Center, assess current energy usage procedures at this manufacturer of machined metal components for the automotive, energy, and defense industries. Identify the amount of potential savings in the procurement of energy, use of equipment, and improved efficiency of energy resources. Further, identify other opportunities to improve productivity, reduce waste, and increase process throughput to enhance Medico's competitiveness in the market.

, Allentown - \$45,000 With assistance from Lehigh University's Enterprise Systems Center, conduct a plant-wide analysis with the goal of reducing energy consumption by at least 10% at this provider of contract packaging services for pharmaceutical companies. Energy consumption at the company represents a substantial percentage of overhead, and Sharp operates in a highly price-sensitive market. Reducing these costs will allow the company to compete more effectively.

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