



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RBTC Announces Selection of First Cohort for RAMP Business Accelerator

Flex Metric by SoftSolutions will be anchor tenant in the newly renovated Gill Memorial Building

ROANOKE, Va. — Six high-potential startups have been selected to serve in the inaugural cohort at RAMP (Regional Acceleration and Mentoring Program), a business accelerator program in downtown Roanoke. The six companies were chosen for their ability to expand and create jobs within the STEM-H field. The program launches June 1, 2017, in the renovated Gill Memorial Building in downtown Roanoke.

The inaugural cohort is comprised of the following:

- **Acomhal Research Inc.**, a biotech spinout from the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute (VTCRI), working on an innovative therapeutic drug to target chemoresistant cancer cells and prevent tumor recurrence in glioblastoma. Acomhal Research Inc. is led by Dr. Samy Lamouille and Dr. Robert Gourdie,
- **Altede**, developing easy and affordable tests for gluten and other allergens in food. Altede is led by Ed Champion, Dr. Anna Champion, and Briana Petruzzi.
- **Autonomous Flight Technologies, Inc. (AFT)**, licensed and credentialed to use drones for business developing new ways to replace older, slower, and costlier methods. AFT is led by Josh May.
- **DESA**, developing screening assessments to more effectively support the diagnosis and monitoring of health issues such as dementia, depression, concussion, PTSD, anxiety, pre- and post-surgery instructions, among others. DESA is led by Jonathan Briganti, Brian Elliot, and Dr. Anne Brown.
- **Flex Metrics by SoftSolutions**, providing real-time production visibility technology for print, packaging, and manufacturing industries for almost 20 years. Flex Metrics is led by Jay Foster.
- **Volatia**, a full-service language service company, providing on-site, over the telephone, and remote video interpretation and translation services in more than 280 languages. Volatia is led by Baraka Kosongo, recently recognized with the Regional Entrepreneur award at RBTC's TechNite.

The businesses in the cohort will benefit from structured mentorships between entrepreneurs and experienced individuals in their field, gain access to funding that will get them beyond early stage, and receive business education specifically targeted to scaling technology-based start-ups.

“There is so much to celebrate with our first cohort. The companies represent a diverse set of industries and are in various stages of their business development,” said RAMP director Mary Miller. “This program is designed to provide the tools and support to move the needle for each one, and I expect to see just that. I couldn’t be more pleased to just have a small part in all of this.”

Achomal Research Inc., Altede, AFT, DESA, and Volatia will all co-locate on the third floor where they will have access to a 1Gig fiber network made available through a generous partnership with Cox Business. Additionally, the space, furniture, and utilities are provided to these companies free of charge. Flex Metrics by SoftSolutions, in addition to participating in the inaugural cohort, will be the Gill Memorial Building’s anchor tenant and will be located on the first floor.

Support for RAMP comes from a broad public/private partnership that draws on leaders in higher education, government, and the region’s growing technology community. RAMP founding partners include:

- ! the City of Roanoke, which owns the building and won a \$600,000 state grant to renovate the Gill building as an accelerator;
- ! Virginia Western Community College, which will provide business education classes and faculty support;
- ! the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, which pays for the Director and will lead the accelerator’s mentorship and networking initiatives.

An open house to meet the inaugural cohort will be held on Monday, June 5, 2017, at 5pm at the Gill Memorial Building (709 S. Jefferson Street, Roanoke, VA 24011).

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ABOUT THE ROANOKE - BLACKSBURG TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL (RBTC) The Roanoke - Blacksburg Technology Council is a non-profit, member-driven association of businesses and organizations in the greater Roanoke - Blacksburg region, working together to promote the growth and success of the region's technology sector. Its membership includes more than 250 organizations. The RBTC is the leading resource for the region's growth and success. It exists to connect and unite the region's technology community, develop and educate thought-leaders, mentors, and the technology workforce, and improve access to talent. To learn more, please visit <http://www.rbtc.tech>.