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## CENTRAL FLORIDA WINS INAUGURAL NSF REGIONAL INNOVATION ENGINES AWARD FOR UP TO \$15M OVER TWO YEARS WITH POTENTIAL TO RECEIVE UP TO \$160M OVER 10 YEARS

*NSF Engines: Central Florida Semiconductor Innovation Engine aims to reshore advanced packaging of semiconductors regionally*

**Kissimmee, Fla., January 29, 2024** – The U.S. National Science Foundation today [announced](#) that Central Florida was selected as one of the 10 inaugural NSF Regional Innovation Engines (NSF Engines). NSF Engines: Central Florida Semiconductor Innovation Engine will initially receive up to \$15 million for the next two years. NSF's initial \$150 million investment into these 10 regions is being matched nearly two to one by commitments from state and local governments, other federal agencies, philanthropy, and private industry. [See a map of the inaugural NSF Engines.](#)

Led by [BRIDG](#) and anchored in Osceola County's 500-acre technology campus known as NeoCity, the [NSF Engines: Central Florida Semiconductor Innovation Engine](#) (the Engine) brings together major Central Florida research institutions, local government, nonprofits, and economic and workforce development partners to support the reshoring of the semiconductor advanced packaging industry. Initially, the Engine will support five use-inspired research projects at partnering institutions—University of Central Florida, University of Florida, and imec—with immediate impacts to advanced packaging, security, and heterogeneous integrated microelectronics systems in extreme environments. Likewise, partners in economic development and workforce development contribute to this dynamic ecosystem, ensuring that Central Florida workers will have access to jobs with livable wages in the semiconductor industry regionally.

"The inaugural NSF Engines awards demonstrate our enduring commitment to create opportunity everywhere and enable innovation anywhere," said NSF Director Sethuraman Panchanathan. "Through these NSF Engines, NSF aims to expand the frontiers of technology and innovation and spur economic

growth across the nation through unprecedented investments in people and partnerships. NSF Engines hold significant promise to elevate and transform entire geographic regions into world-leading hubs of innovation."

With a potential NSF investment of nearly \$1.6 billion over the next decade, the NSF Engines represent one of the single largest investments in place-based research and economic development in the nation's history — uniquely placing science and technology leadership as the central driver for regional economic competitiveness and job creation.

"As a not-for-profit focused on inclusive regional economic development around semiconductor advanced packaging of microelectronic systems, and as the first company to begin business operations in NeoCity, we are honored to lead the U.S. National Science Foundation NSF Engines: Central Florida Semiconductor Innovation Engine and are very thankful for and very proud of our partners in achieving this award," said Dr. John Allgair, CTO and interim president for BRIDG, the lead organization for the award. "We look forward to working closely with our partners in the years to come to foster and grow an inclusive regional semiconductor manufacturing, advanced packaging, and microelectronics systems industrial base together."

NSF Engines: Central Florida Semiconductor Innovation Engine includes a robust partnership of R&D, economic development, nonprofit, workforce development, and local government: BRIDG, CareerSource Central Florida, Florida High Tech Corridor, imec, the Orlando Economic Partnership, Osceola County, University of Central Florida, University of Florida, and Valencia College.

"We are thrilled to see BRIDG receive this major investment from the National Science Foundation to continue their leadership in the semiconductor industry. In less than a decade, we've seen NeoCity right here in Osceola County grow into a major hub for these innovative technologies — creating opportunities for local high-paying jobs, partnerships with global leaders like South Korea, and the discovery of intelligence that will solidify the U.S. as leaders in 21st century technology," said Congressman Soto. "I was proud to vote for the CHIPS and Science Act last Congress, which authorized the NSF Engines program. As the NSF begins disbursement of these funds, I look forward to working with our partners at BRIDG to ensure we are prioritizing key projects and moving towards our shared goals."

"Receiving a grant from the National Science Foundation is not just a financial endorsement; it is a key milestone that recognizes the innovative spirit and unwavering commitment to progress that defines Osceola County's efforts at NeoCity," said Osceola County Commission Chair Cheryl Grieb. "This is just the latest testament to a future where innovation knows no bounds. It cements our path toward making Osceola County a hub for groundbreaking research, technological advancement, and workforce development."

"This win represents a pivotal moment for our region's efforts to become a national hub for semiconductor and microelectronics research, development, and manufacturing," said Tim Giuliani, president and CEO of the Orlando Economic Partnership. "With over half a billion dollars in state and federal investments in the past year and a half alone, Osceola County's NeoCity is on the verge of transitioning from what once was just an idea to an economic engine anchoring a critical industry cluster."

"We are grateful for this award and excited to be part of the NSF Central Florida Semiconductor Innovation Engine, which will leverage imec's 40-year track record of world-class R&D expertise in advanced packaging and system integration to support the U.S. semiconductor industry and create new opportunities for cutting-edge innovation and collaboration," stated Raj Jammy, president of imec U.S. Operations. "This NSF Engine award is a recognition of the strategic importance of NeoCity as a hub for cutting-edge, industry-relevant research and development and of the strong partnership between imec, BRIDG, and our esteemed academic partners, including the University of Florida, the University of Central Florida, Valencia College, and other key stakeholders in the region. We look forward to contributing to the success of this initiative and to the growth of a vibrant semiconductor ecosystem in Florida."

"We are excited that NSF selected our team for this award," stated Dr. Grace Bochenek, director of School of Modeling, Simulation and Training at the University of Central Florida. "The University of Central Florida is committed to driving innovation and supporting the success of the nation's semiconductor industry. There are multiple ongoing research and academic initiatives in the microelectronic semiconductor area at UCF, and university president, Alexander Cartwright established this area as one of six Presidential Initiatives identified for growth. Ongoing semiconductor research at UCF is a very interdisciplinary with a focus in micro electromechanical systems and micro fabrication facilities that include semiconductor chip manufacturing as well as other areas. These efforts, along with our excellence in modeling, simulation, and digital twin technologies will accelerate that future."

"This award is life changing for residents in Osceola County and our region who will be able to learn and gain careers within the semiconductor industry," says Pam Nabors, president & CEO of CareerSource Central Florida. "As the workforce partner, we are honored to work together with regional leaders to advance and diversify the semiconductor industry."

"This is exciting news that we are part of the 10 inaugural NSF regional engine program teams, the only Florida team and the only semiconductor-focusing team, directly responding to the national activities regarding the CHIPS and Science Act," stated Dr. Y.K. Yoon, professor in the department of electrical and computer engineering at the University of Florida. "We know that a significant portion of semiconductor manufacturing takes place overseas, resulting in pressing economic, environmental, and national security concerns. The semiconductor chip packaging industry is particularly inequitable, with only 2-3% of semiconductor packaging activities currently occurring within the United States. Our Florida team is proud to lead the changes in the important semiconductor packaging, manufacturing, and security. We are committed to advancing the semiconductor industry in the United States and contributing to the nation's economic growth and security."

"Valencia College is honored to work with Osceola County and BRIDG to lead the way in workforce development to support semiconductor manufacturing in Central Florida. Today's announcement is a monumental milestone in this effort," stated Dr. Kathleen Plinske, president of Valencia College.

"Winning one of the first-ever NSF Regional Innovation Engines awards is a transformational moment we will reflect on years from now as a turning point in the history of Florida's high-tech economy," said Florida High Tech Corridor CEO Paul Sohl, Rear Adm. USN (ret). "This accomplishment validates our region's innovation potential and spotlights a collaborative effort by many partners who set aside their own interests for a common goal: to propel our ecosystem and the communities we serve forward by cementing this region as a global hub for groundbreaking semiconductor research and technological innovation. Firing up this Engine is going to be awesome!"

Teams that demonstrate progress toward well-defined milestones could potentially receive up to \$160 million each from NSF over 10 years, as they seek to catalyze the NSF funding to draw additional investments into the overall region.

[Today's announcement](#) delivers on the bipartisan priorities outlined in the "[CHIPS and Science Act of 2022](#)," which authorized the NSF Engines program with a focus on market-driven research and development, innovation, translation, and workforce development.

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#### **About NSF Engines**

Launched by the NSF Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships in May 2022, the NSF Engines program uniquely harnesses the nation's science and technology research, development enterprise and regional-level resources. For more information, visit the [NSF Engines program website](#).

### **About BRIDG**

BRIDG is a not-for-profit, public-private partnership specializing in digital, RF, and photonics interposer technology development coupled with advanced packaging capabilities. As an ITAR-certified and DMEA trust-ready supplier, BRIDG offers R&D expertise and a 200mm microelectronics fabrication facility geared toward system miniaturization, device integration, hardware security, and product manufacturing key to aerospace, defense, automotive, telecommunications, medical, and the IoT/AI revolution. Supported by Osceola County, Florida High Tech Corridor Council, imec, Orlando Economic Partnership, TEL, SUSS MicroTec, Siemens, and SkyWater Technology (Center for Neovation operator), BRIDG provides the physical infrastructure and collaborative process to connect challenges and opportunities with solutions; “Bridging the Innovation Development Gap” making commercialization possible. Located at NeoCity BRIDG is centrally located 20 minutes from Orlando International Airport and within a mile of Florida’s Turnpike. [www.GoBRIDG.com](http://www.GoBRIDG.com)

### **About NeoCity**

Following the impacts of the Great Recession, Osceola County decided to make a long-term investment to create a 500-acre technology district, known as NeoCity, to diversify its economy. Since then, Osceola County and their regional partners have invested over \$273 million to make NeoCity the hub to Central Florida’s burgeoning semiconductor industry. NeoCity’s anchor building, the Center for Neovation, (total of 109,000 sq. ft) consisting of a 36,000 square ft. cleanroom, is home to SkyWater Technology, imec USA, BRIDG, TEL, and SUSS MicroTec. The Osceola County School District’s NeoCity Academy, located next to the Center for Neovation, works with SkyWater, BRIDG, and imec USA to provide internships for the high school students to work in the fab. [www.NeoCityFL.com](http://www.NeoCityFL.com)

### **About Osceola County**

Osceola County is the third fastest growing county in the nation. We anticipate the future before it happens, forever pioneers when it comes to planning communities and economies that work. We are a diverse community of lifelong residents and recent transplants, third-generation immigrants and new arrivals – all who flourish here because Osceola County brings you closer to what’s most important. Residents have the opportunity to lead a full life alongside people who share your aspirations for the future. We excel at turning the most ambitious ideas into reality. People here aren’t just hardworking. They are innovative, visionary, and entrepreneurial; they are the free-flowing energy that powers every industry in Central Florida. Our legacy is leading Central Florida by example – you can always count on Osceola to put you in the right place at the right time, so you can be first to what’s next. [www.osceola.org](http://www.osceola.org)

### **About CareerSource Central Florida**

CareerSource Central Florida (CSCF) is Florida’s second largest regional workforce board that is state and federally funded with an annual operating budget of approximately \$45 million. CSCF provides comprehensive services to connect career seekers and local businesses at no cost. Services include screening and hiring talent; employee training and education; paid internships and no cost skills training and education programs. In fiscal year 2021-2022, CSCF has served more than 39,500 career seekers and 3,500 businesses. The organization has placed more than 5,600 individuals in jobs and helped advance skills for more than 2,500 career seekers across Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake and Sumter Counties. For more information, visit [www.CareerSourceCentralFlorida.com](http://www.CareerSourceCentralFlorida.com).

### **About the Florida High Tech Corridor**

An economic development initiative of three research universities—the University of Central Florida, the University of South Florida, and the University of Florida—the Florida High Tech Corridor converges and catalyzes the capacity of high tech, innovative, and bright minds across a 23-county region to generate a global ripple effect that advances the lives of people in the communities it serves. Powered by an ethos of collaboration, The Corridor aligns opportunities and resources in academia, industry, and economic development to unleash the region’s expotential. [floridahightech.com](http://floridahightech.com)

### **About imec**

Imec is a world-leading research and innovation center in nanoelectronics and digital technologies. Imec leverages its state-of-the-art R&D infrastructure and its team of more than 5,500 employees and top researchers for R&D in advanced semiconductor and system scaling, silicon photonics, artificial intelligence, beyond 5G communications and sensing technologies, and in application domains such as health and life sciences, mobility, industry 4.0, agrofood, smart cities, sustainable energy, education, and others. Imec unites world-industry leaders across the semiconductor value chain, international tech, pharma, medical and ICT companies, start-ups, and academia and knowledge centers. Imec is headquartered in Leuven (Belgium), and has research sites across Belgium, the Netherlands, and the USA, and representation in three continents. In 2022, imec’s revenue (P&L) totaled 846 million euro. [www.imec-int.com/en/usa](http://www.imec-int.com/en/usa)

### **About Orlando Economic Partnership**

Winner of the National Chamber of the Year award, the Orlando Economic Partnership (OEP) is an economic and community development organization that is seizing the moment to advance Broad-based Prosperity® and create a more prosperous economy for all. Through the power of partnerships, we grow the economy, attract growing companies, boost job creation, drive investment, improve competitiveness and fuel regional leadership. Learn why opportunity in Orlando is *Unbelievably Real™* at [InvestOrlando.org](http://InvestOrlando.org).

### **About University of Central Florida School of Modeling, Simulation, and Training (SMST)**

The University of Central Florida School of Modeling, Simulation, and Training (SMST) is renowned for its prestigious graduate program and innovative research. It operates leading, internationally recognized research facilities dedicated to advancing

modeling and simulation (M&S) and providing learning opportunities for students. The school has been at the forefront of M&S research for over 40 years, and, in 2018, established one of the first M.S. and Ph.D. programs in M&S. Through its research institute, SMST is exploring the most advanced M&S research concepts in the world for government and commercial applications: digital engineering; computer modeling; virtual, augmented, and mixed reality; behavioral cyber security; intelligent tutoring; human factors; cognition; artificial intelligence; and digital twin. [www.ucf.edu/modeling-simulation](http://www.ucf.edu/modeling-simulation)

#### **About University of Florida ECE**

The Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) Department at the University of Florida has a long and storied history. Since 1909, we have been engineering impact and innovation while creating the best workforce in electrical and computer engineering for the state of Florida and for the nation. Our research, discoveries, and the resulting technologies continue to touch lives everywhere enhancing the economic and social well-being of all Floridians and citizens of the world in innumerable and impactful ways. Since our beginnings, we have grown into one of the largest and most successful departments in the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering (HWCOE). [www.ece.ufl.edu](http://www.ece.ufl.edu)

#### **About Valencia College**

Serving nearly 70,000 students at 10 campuses and training centers across Central Florida, Valencia College is recognized as one of the top community colleges in the nation. The college offers a variety of associate and bachelor's degrees and short-term, job training programs, with industry leading rates of graduation, transfer and job placement, as recognized by the Aspen Institute, Achieving the Dream and other national organizations. [www.valenciacollege.edu](http://www.valenciacollege.edu)