



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

ITEM NO. 5.3

DATE: June 23, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Brandon Cardwell, Innovation and Economic Development Director

SUBJECT: Resolution authorizing execution of a two-year grant agreement with i-GATE Development Corporation for entrepreneurial support and development activities for Fiscal Years 2025-26 and 2026-27 in an amount not-to-exceed \$300,000 each fiscal year.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends the City Council adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute a two-year grant agreement with i-GATE Development Corporation for entrepreneurial support and development activities for Fiscal Years 2025-26 and 2026-27 in an amount not-to-exceed \$300,000 each fiscal year.

SUMMARY

Since i-GATE's founding in 2010, the City of Livermore has provided financial and staff support for the organization's activities, which have included operation of a startup incubator, entrepreneur training programs, regional branding campaigns, workforce development activities, and networking events.

From 2014 to October of 2022, i-GATE was managed by City staff member Brandon Cardwell, who served as executive director of the non-profit organization. An independent executive director, Yolanda Fintschenko, PhD., was appointed by the i-GATE board of directors in October 2022 to lead i-GATE through a period of new growth, including the reopening of Daybreak Labs startup incubator which was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

While i-GATE no longer requires City staff to serve in a leadership capacity for the organization, City funding is still needed to support i-GATE's entrepreneur development activities, specifically the operation of Daybreak Labs startup incubator.

On September 27, 2023, the City of Livermore entered into a two-year Grant Agreement with i-GATE Development Corporation for entrepreneurial support and development activities. The grant agreement provides financial support and certainty for i-GATE as it reestablished Daybreak Labs and continues

offering training, networking, and branding initiatives that support the growth of the local innovation economy. The current grant agreement is set to expire on June 30, 2025.

The attached two-year grant agreement (Exhibit A to the Resolution) will provide financial support and certainty for i-GATE as it continues to grow Livermore's innovation economy by offering training, networking, and branding initiatives.

DISCUSSION

In 2009, the State office known at the time as the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GO-ED) issued a call for proposals to establish a network of innovation hubs, or "iHubs", throughout California. The City of Livermore, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and Sandia National Laboratories-CA collaborated to submit a proposal that included dozens of additional partners spanning government, industry, and academia. The proposal was titled "Innovation for Green Advanced Transportation Excellence" (i-GATE), and focused on commercialization of advanced energy and transportation technologies from Livermore's two national labs, leading to high quality job creation and investment in the local innovation economy.

The proposal was accepted by GO-ED and i-GATE was named one of the first six iHubs under the new state program. Shortly after the designation was received, it became clear that the State did not intend to provide any financial support for the iHub program.

i-GATE's local partners, including the City of Livermore, agreed to provide the necessary financial support to advance the initiative's programs, particularly the establishment of an independent non-profit startup incubator, which opened in June of 2011.

From 2014 to October 2022, City staff member Brandon Cardwell served as executive director of i-GATE in addition to his role with the City. In October of 2022, Yolanda Fintschenko, PhD., was hired as i-GATE's first independent executive director. Dr. Fintschenko's task was to operationalize the new Daybreak Labs facility at 7683 Southfront Road, which is a business incubation facility focused on serving life sciences and "deep tech" startups, including those working on commercializing technologies focused on climate, energy, agriculture, materials, and other scientific disciplines. Additionally, i-GATE conducts entrepreneurial training, under the banner Startup Tri-Valley.

The City has provided ongoing financial support for i-GATE's incubation and programming activities, supporting over 50 startup companies throughout the organization's history. These activities have resulted in the creation of hundreds of jobs across the region and investment of over \$440 million in follow-on funding in local startups supported by i-GATE's incubator, Daybreak Labs.

These activities have also included a variety of business events, including the annual Tri-Valley Life Sciences Summit, AI Summit, Life Sciences and AI Speaker Series, Climate and Energy tech events, Daybreak Labs Lunch and Learns for startup founders, and many events connecting startups to funding and to the local talent pipeline. i-GATE also hosts the Startup Tri-Valley podcast, highlighting local entrepreneurs and investors. i-GATE is required to report annually on its various grant activities, including Daybreak Labs operations, events, entrepreneurial support programs, and promotions. The 2023-24 report can be found in Attachment 1.

City funding is required to support i-GATE's entrepreneur development activities. On September 27,

2023, the City of Livermore entered into a two-year Grant Agreement with i-GATE Development Corporation, which will expire on June 30, 2025. The two-year agreement for Fiscal Years 2025-26 and 2026-27 will provide up to \$300,000 each year in financial support for i-GATE as it continues to reestablish Daybreak Labs and offer training, networking, and branding initiatives that support the growth of the local innovation economy.

FISCAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPACTS

\$300,000 has already been budgeted in the City's General Fund (Fund 001) for FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27.

COMMUNITY PILLAR

2: Economy That Prospers

GOAL

3: Encourage an innovation driven economy

ATTACHMENTS

1. [Annual Report 2023-2024](#)
2. [Resolution](#)
3. [Exhibit A - Grant Agreement](#)

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