



NEWS RELEASE

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Griffiss Institute Hosts First-Ever HUSTLE Demo Day for Startups to Make Their Home in the Mohawk Valley with \$300,000 Investment





Rome, NY – Griffiss Institute President & CEO Heather Hage hosted the HUSTLE Defense Accelerator Demo Day, on August 18, where attendees, both in person and online, experienced the region's best and brightest seed-stage startup companies as they made their pitches for \$300,000 in prizes, made possible by a \$2 million Upstate Revitalization Initiative grant from Empire State Development, recommended by the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council (MVREDC). Winners are expected to use the funds to scale their new ventures in the Mohawk Valley. The event was a celebration of the culmination of the HUSTLE Defense Accelerator program and offered local food, drinks, and networking opportunities.

“Access to mentors and capital are critical for tech startups to start strong and grow healthy here in the Mohawk Valley”, said **Heather Hage, President and CEO**. “Our region offers outstanding opportunities for tech startups, with leading edge research facilities, diverse minds, a culture of grit and tenacity, and a high quality of life with low cost of living. Programs supporting startups to traverse the early stages of team and technology development are essential to the growth of our regional economy and the delivery of defense solutions that keep America safe. Thank you to Rome Lab, New York State, and all the local leaders who volunteered their precious time to mentor and support our HUSTLE teams on their way to Demo Day.”

"Congratulations to this year's HUSTLE teams on your robust approach to employing multiple capabilities at different levels and partnering with the Government in advancing developing technology and defending national interests," said **Col Fred E. Garcia II, Director of AFRL Information Directorate**. "We look forward to working with you as you progress in your respective disciplines and continue to work with the department of defense to open the door to countless opportunities."

The HUSTLE Defense Accelerator is an elite and immersive 12-week training academy for seed-stage startups pushing artificial intelligence, machine learning, cybersecurity, quantum science, and unmanned aircraft system solutions. Four startups were chosen to pitch for HUSTLE Demo Day because of their validated potential to elevate U.S. national security and economic competitiveness.

During a 12-week residency at Innovare, these startups are provided the opportunity to sharpen skills in running a business. They enjoy education and mentoring through a group of highly talented professionals and participate in a special track unique to the HUSTLE accelerator where they learn how to work with the government, opening the door to partnerships and funding to grow their ventures and deliver trusted technologies to the American economy.

“The Griffiss Institute is a tremendous partner to Oneida County and the HUSTLE program that it operates at our Innovare Advancement Center is a prime example of how together we are shaping the future of the high-tech defense industry,” said **Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr.** “I would like to congratulate all the HUSTLE teams for displaying such innovative approaches to elevating our national security and I wish the winners the best of luck as they reinvest in the Mohawk Valley.

ThermoAI, the first-place winner, will receive \$200,000 and will locate their business in the Mohawk Valley for 12 months. ThermoAI, from Binghamton in Broome County, develops artificial intelligence to optimize combustion- directly reducing high-risk refueling missions, cutting operational costs, and reducing emissions. Founded by a machine-learning Ph.D. from Oxford, a chemical engineer, and a published applied AI expert. Backed by NSF, NYSERDA, Creative Destruction Labs, and Techstars AI.

CyberSpara, the second-place winner, will receive \$100,000 and will locate their business in the Mohawk Valley for 12 months. CyberSpara, hailing from Canton in St. Lawrence County, helps business owners, educational institutions, and government agencies such as the Department of Defense and the Air Force to equip themselves with proper tools and empower individuals to reduce cyber threats and mitigate such national security challenges.

The other two teams who competed included:

- **McGuirk USA – Portland, ME** McGuirk USA, Datalytica, and Quanterion Solutions Incorporated (QSI), provide engineering, data analysis, cyber, and counterintelligence support to industry, defense, and government programs globally.
- **Secwins – Syracuse, NY** Secwins provides Digital Twin design, development, and deployment, to provide single views of truth across fragmented data sources.

The Griffiss Institute’s HUSTLE Defense Accelerator draws the best and brightest startup talent to help further build the Mohawk Valley’s defense industry ecosystem,” said **President, CEO and Commissioner of Empire State Development, Hope Knight.** “I would like to congratulate ThermoAI and CyberSpara for their successful pitches of innovative ideas. ESD is proud to support companies that will create solutions for real world issues and increase New York State’s economic competitiveness in national security.”

In addition to dozens of local leaders who volunteered their time to lecture, mentor, coach and invest resources in this first HUSTLE cohort, several organizations joined Griffiss Institute and Innovare as partners and sponsors to make the HUSTLE program possible, including:

- Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate
- Amazon Web Services
- Assured Information Security
- AX Enterprize
- D’Arcangelo & Co.
- Dreamweaver Law
- Empire State Development
- Hage & Hage LLC
- NSF Innovation Corps
- National Security Innovation Network
- NYC Regional Innovation Network
- NYSTAR
- NYSTEC
- Patent Hacks™
- Squadra Ventures
- SUNY Research Foundation
- Syracuse University’s NYS Science and Technology Law Center
- Upstate Capital Association of New York

For more information about the HUSTLE Defense Accelerator, visit griffissinstitute.org/hustle

Photos:

(Top, L-R) Col Fred Garcia, AFRL; Allison Madmoune, Empire State Development; Carolina Chaves, ThermoAI; Aiden Livingston, ThermoAI; Dan Fayette, Griffiss Institute; Heather Hage, Griffiss Institute

(Bottom, L-R) Col Fred Garcia, AFRL; Allison Madmoune, Empire State Development; Nicholas Querques, SUNY Research Foundation; Kyle Meagher, CyberSpara; Kambiz Ghazinour, CyberSpara; Felix Litvinsky, CyberSpara; Tanya Waite, SUNY Research Foundation; Heather Hage, Griffiss Institute

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About Us

Griffiss Institute (GI) is a nonprofit STEM talent and technology accelerator for the United States Department of Defense and an international network of academic, government and industry partners. Since 2002, the GI has served the Air Force, the Mohawk Valley region, and the United States, empowering diverse teams with talent and technology development programs that lead the nation in technical and economic impact. In the past five years, the GI has partnered with Rome Lab to host 271 visiting scientists, employ 823 interns, support 508 local K-12 students with tuition-free STEM Camps during school breaks, and trained 63 startups in defense tech commercialization with 47 graduates of its incubator. Devoted to converging teams and technologies to solve complex national challenges, the GI is

proud to enable its international network from its home at Innovare Advancement Center in New York's picturesque Mohawk Valley. Griffiss Institute exists to elevate the next generation of talent and technologies that enhance national security and economic competitiveness for our region, state, and nation. www.griffissinstitute.org

Innovare Advancement Center is a 150,000 square foot open innovation hub that converges world-class scientific, engineering, and entrepreneurial talent from universities, government, and industry to tackle new challenges in artificial intelligence, machine learning, cybersecurity, quantum, and unmanned aerial systems. Innovare's unique capabilities include highly specialized laboratories for experimentation in quantum communications and neuromorphic computing, 40,000 square feet of high-tech and high-speed communications-enabled collaboration spaces, an auditorium with capacity for over 250 people, an access point to the NY UAS Test Site, and coming in spring 2022 – an indoor unmanned aerial system (UAS) research and testing facility with 110,000 square foot indoor flight testing area - the largest in the United States. www.innovare.org