

Port of New Bedford joins global marine research network

Mayor Jon Mitchell, Port Director Edward Anthes-Washburn, and ImpactLABS Managing Director Chris Rezendes signed a memorandum of understanding with Thor Sigfusson, Founder and Chairman of the Iceland Ocean Cluster and the Ocean Cluster Network, creating an official partnership with the marine incubator.

This partnership will officially make New Bedford part of a global network of Ocean Clusters, each committed to sharing knowledge and developing business opportunities for their member organizations. The New Bedford Ocean Cluster will focus on the area's natural strengths in the commercial fishing industry, fish processing, offshore renewable energy and the developing opportunities for traditional marine businesses in the burgeoning tech segments known as Blue Tech and the Internet of Things (IoT).

The Iceland Ocean Cluster is a marine incubator located in Reykjavik, Iceland, that builds and supports a network of entrepreneurs and businesses in the marine science industries to facilitate the creation of new business, ideas, and research that will ultimately add value to the industry. Over ten startups have been created in the incubator in Reykjavik over the last five years. These startups are creating valuable products for the health care, skin care and nutraceutical markets.

"Cultivating a network of commercial fishing interests and new technology companies can spur innovation in New Bedford, and support the port and fishing industry," said Mayor Jon Mitchell. "As the center of commercial fishing on the east

coast, New Bedford is seizing an opportunity to help create new small businesses and jobs for our residents.”

“We are very excited to connect New Bedford to the Ocean Cluster Network,” said Thor Sigfusson, founder of the Iceland Ocean Cluster. “The Iceland Ocean Cluster has successfully connected startups, research and design, universities, investors and fisheries. With the establishment of the NBOC, as a sister cluster, we believe same dynamism can be created in New Bedford.”

ImpactLABS works with a number of local businesses and organizations to develop sensors and other technologies to collect data and information that supports their growth and efficiency. They work with commercial fishermen to improve on-board monitoring and on-board ocean floor sonar/bathymetry, as well as maximizing efficiency on their vessels. This agreement formalizes the existing relationship between the Port of New Bedford and ImpactLABS; the Port has piloted many new technologies through its own facilities and by connecting ImpactLABS entrepreneurs with existing port users and businesses.

“Sustainable fisheries, oceans health and coastal resilience are three of the greatest challenges confronting the planet, and three of the biggest opportunities to prove the power of digital technology,” said Chris Rezendes, Managing Director of ImpactLABS. “But that proof can only happen with leadership from the people who know these opportunities and challenges best – the fleet, the local scientific community, and the people who live on and near the ocean. New Bedford and Reykjavik are two of the best places in the world to find the talent and experience to teach the tech community what we need to do to help. We are honored to do our part.”

“The New Bedford Ocean Cluster allows our marine industries to formally connect and learn from Iceland’s industries, and vice versa,” said Port Director Edward Anthes-Washburn who has been

cultivating the relationship with the Iceland Ocean Cluster and its founder for the past several months. “Our fishermen, researchers, tech entrepreneurs, and other shoreside industries will only benefit from the ideas and information produced at the Iceland Ocean Cluster.”

Locally, the New Bedford Ocean Cluster will also be part of a growing entrepreneurship cluster developing in Greater New Bedford. Many businesses and organizations in New Bedford focus on the development of marine science technologies to further the goals of the commercial fishing industry and other marine-related business, including the UMass Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST and UMass Dartmouth Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE), the New Bedford Economic Development Council, and the New Bedford Wind Energy Center.