

# **WTC: An eight-directional compass from Eau Claire wins 2017 Gov.'s Business Plan Contest**

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Madison, Wisconsin – An Eau Claire startup that developed a product to maintain or regain a firefighter's orientation during a fire took home the grand prize in the 14th annual [Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest](#).

Jeff Dykes, a firefighter captain, has patents pending in five countries for "Northern Star Fire," an eight-directional electronic compass that firefighters place inside their breathing apparatus to help find their way inside burning structures. The small compass, which Dykes displayed while presenting Tuesday at the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Conference, is designed to help firefighters safely navigate in smoke-filled buildings.

"Jeff Dykes' passionate presentation and well-written plan will help Northern Star Fire solve a problem while building a business," said Tom Still, president of the Wisconsin Technology Council, which produces the contest.

Northern Star Fire presented along with 12 other finalists; winners were announced Wednesday. Northern Star Fire won the contest's Advanced Manufacturing category. Other category winners were:

**Business Services:** Compost Crusader, Milwaukee, provides a cost-effective pick-up service to organizations and municipalities that want to divert organic material from the landfill. Presenter: Melissa Tashjian, Milwaukee.

**Information Technology:** DotCom Therapy, Madison, connects students and patients to a certified speech-language pathologist through an online platform which lowers costs and is more convenient for users. Presenter: Emily Purdom, Madison and Springfield, Mo.

**Life Sciences:** Nano Red, Milwaukee, is developing a platform capable of delivering potent immune-activators directly to the tumors and sparing healthy tissue. It can be adapted to carry the most currently approved cancer drugs that are more effective and less toxic. Presenter: Johnathan Ebben, Milwaukee.

Thirteen contestants emerged from three rounds of judging in the contest organized through the Wisconsin Technology Council, which produces the contest in conjunction with its partners and sponsors. The contest began in late January with more than 170 entries; more than 3,350 entries have been received since the contest began in 2004.

This year's finalists delivered seven-minute pitches on their business ideas during the 15th annual [Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Conference](#), which was held at Madison's Alliant Energy Center. Second- and third-place category winners were:

**Advanced Manufacturing:** VibeTech, Jeffrey Leismer, Sheboygan; EWPanel, Chunhua Yao, Madison.

**Business Services:** Health Connection, Jordan Mather, Appleton; ThirdSpace, Scott Kohl, Milwaukee and Pixologie, Ann Matuszak, Milwaukee (tie.)

**Information Technology:** Cardigan, Matt Younkle, Madison; i65, Melinda Caughill, Mequon.

**Life Sciences:** Synesis, Kenneth Iwinski, Wisconsin Rapids; Cellular Logistics, Rick Soni, Sun Prairie.

Finalists submitted full business plans for review by a panel of more than 85 judges established by the Tech Council, which is the non-profit and non-partisan science and technology adviser to the governor and the Legislature. Each plan described the core product or service, defined the customer base, estimated the size of the market, identified competition, described the management team and provided key financial data.

Sponsors are contributing cash, office space, legal assistance, accounting,

information technology consulting, marketing, prototyping, web design, event space and more. About \$2.2 million in cash and in-kind prizes have been awarded since the inception of the contest in 2004.

Lead sponsors of the 2017 contest thus far include [@1403](#); [3Rhino Media](#); [American Family Insurance](#); [American Transmission Co.](#); [AT&T](#); [Hudson Business Lounge](#); [Keane Consulting/Workspace at Bishops Woods](#); [Michael Best](#); [Midwest Prototyping](#); [Pieper Properties](#); [Quarles & Brady](#); [Racine Metal-Fab](#); [Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren](#); [SCORE Wisconsin](#); [University Research Park](#); [Ward 4](#); [Whitewater University Technology Park](#); [Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.](#)

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To learn more about the contest, visit [govsbizplancontest.com](http://govsbizplancontest.com).