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Idaho National Laboratory receives national recognition for Small Business Mentoring Program

IDAHO FALLS – The U.S. Department of Energy recognized Idaho National Laboratory as the 2009 Mentor of the Year for its commitment to mentoring small businesses. The DOE Mentor of the Year recognizes INL's Mentor-Protégé Program for enhancing the capabilities of small businesses to perform contracts and subcontracts for INL, other DOE laboratories and federal agencies.

“INL has been instrumental with its small business program,” said Maria M. Mitchell, Small Business Program manager with DOE’s Idaho Operations Office. “This mentor- protégé relationship is another prime example of INL’s continued success in its outreach efforts.”

INL entered into a Mentor-Protégé agreement in 2006 with Portage Environmental, Inc., a local disadvantaged small business that wanted to transform itself to better match the lab’s long-term mission. The result was a relationship that has allowed INL to assist Portage in diversifying its capability to provide task-based engineering and environmental services.

“Our Mentor-Protégé Agreement with Portage demonstrates how coaching and mentoring can help focus and grow a small business,” INL Mentor-Protégé Program’s Marsha Burke said. “The success of the mentor-protégé agreement is a direct result of the time invested by BEA to help Portage succeed through this partnership.”

As a result of INL’s mentoring efforts, Portage has become a capable and qualified partner in the realm of task-based services. In 2009, Portage was awarded a contract to oversee INL’s chemical management program. Through training, initiative and commitment, the INL and Portage employees worked together ensuring that Portage’s qualifications and capabilities were sufficiently developed to undertake the work while managing risks associated with the transition.

“Portage is pleased that DOE has recognized INL as mentor of the year,” said Kerry Martin, Portage’s Mentor-Protégé Project Manager. “Through the INL’s mentoring, Portage has been able to expand its capabilities to support the new nuclear missions at the Laboratory while still supporting them through our traditional areas of engineering and environmental services. INL has been instrumental to our growth into new business areas and helping solidify Portage’s business base.”

Portage has exceeded INL’s expectations and added significant value to the services it provides the lab. It also completed all mentor-protégé related projects on or ahead of schedule, on or below budget, with no lost time accidents or safety issues.

“Mentoring is a fundamental component of INL’s program to target, shape and retain small businesses,” INL Small Business Program Manager Stacey Francis said. “We will continue to look for other small businesses that can benefit from these mentoring agreements and help us fulfill our mission.”

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multi-program national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of the strategic goal areas of DOE: energy, national security, science and environment. INL is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.

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By Brad Bugger