

## BIOTECH

# Officials tout \$44m federal investment in N.H. biotech industry

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo joined both US senators from New Hampshire, plus local officials, for a roundtable about the future of the “BioFabrication Cluster” in Manchester

By **Steven Porter** Globe Staff, Updated July 15, 2023, 12:01 p.m.



US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo greets Tom Bollenbach, chief technology officer for Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute (ARMI) in Manchester, N.H., on Friday, July 14, 2023, as ARMI founder Dean Kamen, left, Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig, and US senators Maggie Hassan and Jeanne Shaheen (not pictured) toured the ARMI facility in Manchester, N.H., to publicize the selection of southern New Hampshire’s BioFabrication Cluster for a \$44 million award from the Build Back Better Regional Challenge. JOSH REYNOLDS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

MANCHESTER, N.H. — Health care innovators are working toward a future in which an ailing patient can receive a new bodily organ without having to wait for a human donor.

That's one piece of the grand vision behind emerging work in biofabrication — which is the manufacture of living cells, tissues, and organs — and it's part of a potential economic engine that officials hope will transform Manchester in the years to come, with a \$44 million boost from the federal government.

The city, which partnered with the Manchester-based nonprofit [Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute](#) (ARMI) and other local stakeholders to compete for a chunk of economic development funding through the US Department of Commerce, was among 21 coalitions selected for the nationwide [program](#).

The major initiative is projected to create 7,800 jobs directly and another 15,200 jobs indirectly in southern New Hampshire, according to the city's [application materials](#).

“New Hampshire should be so proud that you received this money,” US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said on Friday after she toured an ARMI facility. “It was an intense competition that my department ran.”



Senator Maggie Hassan, left, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, and Senator Jeanne Shaheen, speak during a roundtable discussion following a tour of the Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute (ARMI) facilities in Manchester, N.H. on Friday, July 14, 2023. JOSH REYNOLDS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Manchester's project, known as the "BioFabrication Cluster," aims to establish the area as a leader in the production and distribution of engineered cells, tissues, and eventually full organs. The plans for the federal funding include a scaled-up production facility, a business accelerator, a work-and-learn program, and pilot stations for a flight-based network to distribute organs in the future.

ADVERTISING



Raimondo, the former governor of Rhode Island who is now a member of President Biden's [cabinet](#), came to Manchester for the tour and a roundtable discussion to tout the ambitious goals of the “Build Back Better Regional Challenge,” which was funded through the American Rescue Plan Act to aid economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

She was joined by senators Jeanne Shaheen and Maggie Hassan and Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig, who are all Democrats. (Governor Chris Sununu, a Republican, wasn't there, though he [expressed his support](#) for the grant proposal last fall, when the award was announced.)

“What's happening right here in the Millyard of Manchester will revolutionize the way that we provide health care around this country and around the world,” Craig said.

The event was a victory lap of sorts for all involved. While the focus stayed squarely on how the federal investment may help the city and region economically, without any reference to partisan politics, Friday's high-profile visit called attention to an accomplishment that Craig has cited in her [newly launched bid for governor](#). It also gave her a chance to tout that accomplishment alongside three Democratic women former governors.

Craig is facing Executive Councilor Cinde Warmington in the 2024 contest for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination.

Senator Shaheen's daughter, Stefany Shaheen, serves as [chief strategy officer](#) for ARMI and spoke with Raimondo during Friday's tour. When asked by a reporter whether her daughter's involvement should raise concerns about potential conflicts of interest, Senator Shaheen said her daughter is paid by ARMI, not the government.

Raimondo said Manchester's application stood out from the competition because of its quality, its communitywide approach, and the persistent advocacy of Shaheen and Hassan.

Application [materials](#) note that Manchester's coalition and partners include not only ARMI but Southern New Hampshire University, Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, the University of New Hampshire, the Manchester Transit Authority, and the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission as well.

In order for biotechnology tools and techniques to fulfill their potential, the Food and Drug Administration needs to revise its approvals process, Shaheen said.

"This is a whole new avenue for the FDA," she said, "and they need a process that's going to recognize that they shouldn't keep doing things the same way they've been doing them in order to address these new opportunities for regenerative medicine."

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