

## Veolia accelerates green start-up support programme

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[Veolia Environnement](#), the world's largest environmental services company, this week for the first time revealed five of the 200 start-up companies selected for its accelerator programme at the Clean Tech Forum in San Francisco.

The Veolia Innovation Accelerator (VIA) programme, which was debuted at the same event this time last year, selected clean tech start-ups that align with Veolia's businesses in water, waste, environmental, energy and transport sectors.

More than 200 start-ups have been chosen to take part in the programme and, although only five contracts have been officially signed, a further 15 are expected to be announced by June.

Forty nine per cent of the companies are from Europe, 43 per cent from the US and eight per cent from Asia, with innovations predominantly in water (35 per cent), energy (31 per cent) and waste (20 per cent).

Philippe Martin, senior vice-president of research and innovation, told the conference that the 150-year-old company had developed the VIA program to source innovations externally.

"The VIA programme is dedicated to sourcing innovation outside of the company," he said. "We have around 850 researchers at Veolia, and we already rely on partnerships with research institutions and universities. But we need to add to that partnerships with technology companies, start-ups and emerging companies. We need to team up to start up companies to bring additional technologies and additional know-how to the services that we are providing.

"VIA means that we can bring clean tech start-ups to scale and they can take advantage of our numerous operations around the world."

Unlike classic venture capital investments, no money is directly invested by Veolia in the start-ups on the VIA programme, but the companies will benefit from Veolia's resources, access to R&D, resources, and new markets.

Philip Abrary, chief executive officer of Canadian company Ostara, said access to new markets made the programme appealing for his business. Ostara was founded in 2005 with \$10.5m (£6.5m) in venture capital funding through VantagePoint Venture Partners in the US and Frog Capital in the UK, with a view to developing technology to recover nutrients in waste, such as phosphorus, and turn them into commercial fertiliser.

But Abrary said that to grow the business, he wanted to look to Europe where waste water treatment processes are more advanced, partly because of EU regulations and because agricultural fertilisers such as phosphorus are imported into the EU.

"Europe is an important market because it is one step ahead of the US," he said. "So this partnership with Veolia gives us greater bandwidth to expand geographically. They have all the pieces that we don't have and our technology complements their services."

Last year, Ostara struck a deal with Thames Water to help build a system in Slough to recover phosphorus and ammonia from waste water, turning it into high-quality fertiliser.

Abrary also said that Ostara's Crystal Green fertiliser would be used on the Olympic park in London.

"The EU is a natural next market for us because the waste water treatment industry is more consolidated," he said, referring to the hundreds of water authorities in California alone, in contrast to the 20 water suppliers in the UK.

The other four companies that Veolia revealed had benefited from the programme are Envolution, a French company that has developed environmental analysis kits; CoSMo, a French software company; GreenRoad, a US fuel-saving start-up, and Advanced Cyclone Systems, a Portuguese company that has developed technology that removes industrial particulates.

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