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Knoxville, Oak Ridge jilted for tech hubs

State's 5 hopefuls denied federal boost for research

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When the Biden administration announced it would create tech hubs across the U.S. to boost domestic clean energy and artificial intelligence research, it sounded like a program tailor-made for the Knoxville and Oak Ridge region.

The list of hubs, announced Oct. 23, did not include Knoxville, or any of the

Tennessee regions that applied for the designation.

The CHIPS and Science Act, signed into law by President Joe Biden last August, set aside \$10 billion to establish these tech hubs, which will receive special access to federal funding and assistance for their region from several federal departments.

A consortium of nearly 40 partners, led by the East Tennessee Economic Council, got to work in May on a Knoxville application, making the case that the region is a national and global center for nuclear energy.

Powerhouse institutions like Oak

Ridge National Laboratory, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville joined the effort early on.

"We were disappointed that we did not receive designation," Tracy Boatner, president of the East Tennessee Economic Council, told Knoxville News in a statement. "However, Tennessee currently has a thriving nuclear energy ecosystem with 229 companies located across the state. Here in East Tennessee, we have a thriving cluster of both existing and new nuclear companies."

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The Spark Innovation Center is located at the University of Tennessee Research Park at Cherokee Farm in Knoxville. BRIANNA PACIORKA/NEWS SENTINEL

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