

Guadagno: Nestle deal a 'door opener' for life sciences sector

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Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno. - (AARON HOUSTON)

When it comes to telling New Jersey's economic development success stories, having names like Panasonic, Bayer and Subaru can go a long way in convincing other companies to stay and grow here.

That's why Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno is thrilled to add Nestlé to that list.

“In the industry that Nestlé is in, it's a door opener, quite frankly,” said Guadagno, the state's top official for economic development. “When Nestlé gets here and it is ready and up and running we will turn to Nestlé to be our ambassador.”

Guadagno spoke to NJBIZ Friday after Nestlé Health Science, a subsidiary of the Swiss food and beverage giant, announced it would open a new 180,000-square-foot headquarters and research and development facility in Bridgewater by next year. It will do so after renovating an

existing building at the so-called Center of Excellence campus on Route 202/206, under a deal with owners Advance Realty and CrossHarbor Capital Partners.

All told, Nestlé plans to populate the facility with about 60 people currently based in Florham Park, Nestlé Health Science’s current headquarters, and more than 100 positions that will be new to the state. Nestlé Health Science, a roughly 5-year-old business that develops nutrition-based therapies, said teams from its R&D center in Minneapolis will be among the new positions.

The deal is a success story for the state and the Partnership for Action, the network of public agencies and business leaders dedicated to economic development here. Guadagno said the partnership has been involved in marketing the 110-acre site ever since Sanofi U.S. announced it would cease its R&D operations there more than two years ago.

That meant first finding a buyer and then helping to attract new tenants to what could have become one of New Jersey’s many vacant corporate campuses. But Guadagno said that’s not the case thanks to collaboration between the public and private sectors and to Advance’s vision for creating a mixed-use hub anchored by commercial tenants such as Nestlé.

“(The Nestlé facility) is really going to make it an area for innovation,” she said. “It’s a great New Jersey story and it shows that we are able to reinvent ourselves in a space that was huge and now we’ve been able to develop it in a way — working together with Advance and Cross Harbor — to make it destination for life sciences.”

The Partnership for Action dates back some six years and includes the state Economic Development Authority, which in July awarded Nestlé Health Science a 10-year, \$14.4 million tax credit in connection with the project. And Guadagno said the state will continue to be involved as Nestlé Health Science builds out the space, whether it’s by directing the company to the state’s talent networks or making sure the company gets government support for job training or building an environmentally friendly facility.

The same partnership has helped retain companies such as Bayer HealthCare and Ferring Pharmaceuticals International. And those success stories can be invaluable to the organization known as Choose New Jersey, the nonprofit marketing arm that’s supported by the state’s business leaders



“So we love it when Celgene goes out and tells its New Jersey story, for example, or Ferring International or Bayer goes and tells their story about why they’re staying in New Jersey,” Guadagno said. “In the pharma, life sciences and R&D space, Nestlé will be added to what is a long list of successes over the last six years.”
