



# THRIVE Central Luzon Journal

REGIONAL INCLUSIVE INNOVATION CENTER – REGION 3

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# Regional Inclusive Innovation Centers (RIICs)

## *Strengthening the Philippine Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem*



The Philippine government, through the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), launched the Inclusive Filipinnovation and Entrepreneurship Roadmap in 2018. The roadmap outlines the vision and goals for a strengthened

Philippine innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem. A key recommendation of the roadmap is the establishment of Regional Inclusive Innovation Centers or RIICs. Considered the cornerstone of the Philippine Inclusive Innovation Industrial Strategy, the RIICs aim to increase the use of innovation to drive economic transformation in the Philippines.

The launch in 2018 paved way for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding among Filipinnovation agencies comprised of DTI, DOST, National Economic Development Agency (NEDA), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT). In 2019, the Memorandum of Understanding was further expanded to include the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to support the upskilling and reskilling of human resource, who will be at the core of innovation in the country.

To design and develop RIIC models across the country, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Science, Technology, Research, and Innovation for Development (STRIDE) Program provided technical assistance to DTI and DOST in establishing the RIICs.



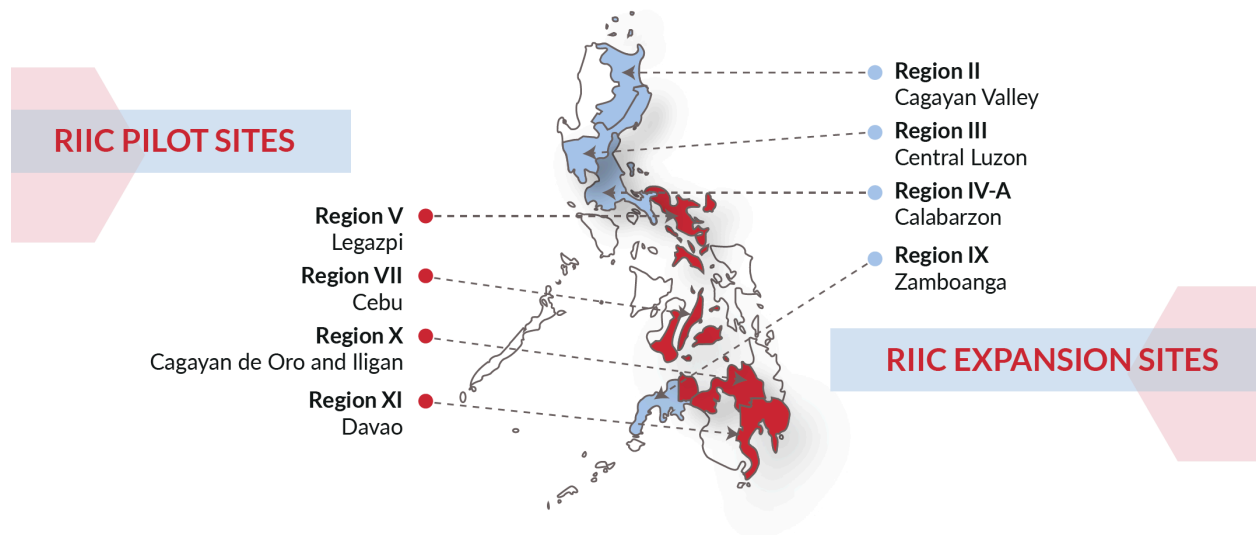
Ultimately, RIICs aim to generate better employment opportunities, more entrepreneurial activities, and sustainable economic prosperity driven by science and technology.

The RIICs are envisioned to be a convergence of different innovation-driven programs, facilities, and entities in government, industry, and academia working together to commercialize market-oriented research and development outputs that enhance productivity and competitiveness in

the regions. The RIIC adopts an ecosystem-wide approach to bridge gaps and increase collaborations between innovation stakeholders. These activities are grouped into three thematic areas:

- **mapping** key innovation actors, resources, and initiatives
- **linking** innovation players in government, academe, and industry through strategic dialogues;
- and **aligning** key programs and services towards actual industry needs.

## RIIC Sites



Since 2018, the Filipinnovation agencies headed by DTI and DOST, industry, and academe, through the technical assistance from the USAID STRIDE Program have established the RIIC in four pilot sites in Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, Davao, and Legazpi. From the successes and learnings in pilot areas, the initiative was expanded to Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, and Zamboanga Peninsula in 2020.

USAID STRIDE worked closely with partners to facilitate an iterative and participatory process to develop the RIIC in each target site, with strong consideration of the dynamics in

 Bicol	 Cebu	 Cagayan de Oro
 Iligan	 Davao	 Cagayan Valley
 Central Luzon	 Calabarzon	 Zamboanga

the local landscape, as well as stakeholder priorities. An adaptive and flexible approach was utilized to facilitate consensus among stakeholders. As a result, each RIIC is unique and has been set up to continuously evolve as opportunities arise. To sustain the RIICs, the support of the Regional Development Council from each site is obtained, and a core group of regional stakeholders is formed to drive efforts forward. Towards the end of 2021, there have been a total of nine local RIIC innovation programs developed across eight regions in the country\*.

The technical assistance provided by the STRIDE Program to government agencies, industry, and academia not only helped develop and pilot RIICs in selected regions, but more importantly, enabled the convergence of innovation ecosystem stakeholders which played a critical role in the identification of priority sector per region.

Sites	RIIC Program	Acronym Meaning	Priority Sector
Region 2	SHINE Cagayan Valley	Sustaining Harvest through Innovation and Nurturing Enterprises in Cagayan Valley	Citrus
Region 3	THRIVE Central Luzon	Technological Hive of Regional Innovation for a Vibrant Ecosystem in Central Luzon	Processed Food
Region 4a	LINC Calabarzon	Linking Innovation Networks for Competitiveness in Calabarzon	Barako Coffee
Region 5	BRIDGE Bicol	Building Resiliency and Innovation to Drive Growth of Enterprises in Bicol	Pili
Region 7	7 Up Cebu		Advanced Manufacturing
Region 9	ZamPen InnoHive		<i>(ongoing selection)</i>
Region 10	<i>(regional brand to be developed)</i>		
	OROBEST	Optimizing Regional Opportunities for Business Excellence through Science, Technology, and Innovation	Processed Food
	ILIGANiCE	Innovation through Industry, Government, and Academe Networks and Inclusive Community Engagements	Processed Food
Region 11	iSTRIKE Davao	Innovation through Science and Technology and Risk Resilient base Initiatives toward Knowledge Economy in Davao	Processed Fruits and Functional Food

\* though pilot sites have initially launched on the provincial level, all RIIC sites are to have a regional brand that would unify provincial efforts

## Message from Our Chairpersons



**Dr. Julius Caesar V. Sicat**  
Regional Director, DOST-3  
Chairperson, THRIVE Central Luzon (RIIC-3)

*We present to you the journey that we have undertaken since the inception of the Regional Inclusive Innovation Center in Central Luzon which we aptly named the Technological Hive of Regional Innovation for a Vibrant Ecosystem or THRIVE Central Luzon. In order to facilitate the implementation of its mission, we have established a Business Innovation Unit at Bulacan State University which became the locus of our activities. It must also be noted that following the success of this strategy, the same is currently being replicated by Tarlac Agricultural University. Riding on the success of its initial years of implementation the group crafted a comprehensive plan for a road map to guide us in the next five years. [...] It is also aimed at providing guidance and basis for inter-organizational collaboration and coordination. As the inter organizational mechanism for stakeholder collaboration in the region THRIVE Central Luzon has resolved to commit to the following statement of purpose:*

*“The THRIVE Central Luzon empowers MSMEs with information, direction and organization to boost knowledge generation and adoption of commercially-viable research development and innovation technologies, to promote productivity and competitiveness nurtured through collaborative spaces and convergence mechanisms for innovation programs services and partnerships.”*

*The shared vision statement is the main strategy which the THRIVE Central Luzon key stakeholders will pursue towards sustainable economic development of Region 3 by 2026. THRIVE Central Luzon commits itself to the achievement of the desired outcome, positive end results from the effectiveness of the RIIC implementation, indicators for quantification of outcomes in order to gauge performance, and targets that are attainable and verifiable outputs that key partners commit to achieving at the end of/ at specific intervals of the strategic plan.*

*In order to attain desired outcomes, the institutional members of THRIVE Central Luzon had committed to undertake strategies and activities using their combined resources and expertise in the next five years.*

*THRIVE Central Luzon will employ network development and management in order to establish a fluid system for program operations through coordination and networking among the government academia and private institutions. Through networking, joint planning and*

consultations, they will be able to effectively manage the innovation ecosystem in Central Luzon. Moreover, education and advocacy for inclusive innovation for MSMEs and academic/R&D institutions will be pursued. Information campaigns through scientific forums and dialogues capacity building initiatives or and the institutions to enhance innovation assets and capital as well as building capacities of MSMEs to develop adapt and utilize our RDI Services and Scientific innovations will be pursued. And finally, innovation program convergence that will provide NGAs and LGUs platform to coordinate, develop and implement relevant programs, projects activities and appropriate interventions that would assist MSMEs in their innovation journey will be prioritized. This will also involve planning activities with key stakeholders to galvanize their convergence through a Memorandum of Understanding and strategically implement joint or collaborative projects monitoring, documenting and sharing of best practices.

That in a nutshell will be the direction of THRIVE Central Luzon in the coming months and years. I am quite confident between our shared and unselfish commitments to this worthy initiative we will surely achieve our aspirations to empower our MSMEs in the region with commercially viable technologies, collaborative spaces and convergence mechanisms.

Let me also take this opportunity on behalf of all the agencies and entities that comprise THRIVE Central Luzon to express our profound gratitude and admiration to our USAID STRIDE partners who painstakingly guides us in our RIIC journey. We would not have been able to put the pieces together if not for their ardent and unselfish support the establishment of THRIVE Central Luzon. As we momentarily part ways with you, our USAID STRIDE friends, let me assure you with the culture of collaboration and teamwork that you have instilled in us will be our bible towards success and sustainability.



Maraming maraming  
salamat po sa inyo.  
Mabuhay ang USAID  
STRIDE! Mabuhay THRIVE  
Central Luzon!

(THRIVE Central Luzon  
STRIDE Send-off,  
May 6, 2022)



**Ms. Leonila T. Baluyut**  
Regional Director, DTI-3  
Co-Chairperson, THRIVE Central Luzon (RIIC-3)

*When good things must come to an end—the Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development or STRIDE, the program funded by USAID that has helped establish the Regional Inclusive Innovation Centers, including the Technological Hive of Regional Innovation for a Vibrant Ecosystem or THRIVE Central Luzon, is coming to a close. In our Ceremonial Send-off, we celebrated the partnerships, collaborations and milestones that we have achieved so far, with THRIVE Central Luzon through the assistance and guidance of USAID STRIDE. THRIVE Central Luzon was officially launched on March 12, 2021, setting out to strengthen the region’s innovation ecosystem by improving stakeholders’ access to innovation and creating platforms for dialogue, collaboration and partnerships, that would contribute to inclusive and sustainable development. Personally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the chance to collaborate with STRIDE on the RIIC project. It was an incredibly efficient, hardworking team that we were able to work with. Thank you for the encouragement, the cooperation and patience, the networks and partnerships, that we have established through RIIC. Indeed, your guidance made this possible.*

*Cheers, USAID STRIDE! Dr. Thomas LeBlanc, Office of Education Director USAID Philippines; Dr. Richard Abendan, Chief of Party, STRIDE Program; Ms. Marella Castro, Ms. Catherine Racho, Mr. Wadel Cabrera, and the rest of the STRIDE-RTI team. A job well done on the RIIC pilot sites in Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, Davao, and Legazpi, as well as the creation of new RIIC sites in Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, and Zamboanga. We wish you well in your next projects for the Philippines.*

*I also would like to acknowledge the offices with whom I share the chance to work with STRIDE. DOST Region 3, CHED, BulSU, PCCI North Luzon, and the academe. And the support of the DTI Regional Operations Group headed by Usec Bles Lantayona, and the DTI Competitiveness and Innovation Group, as THRIVE Central Luzon would have never taken flight as it did without your help.*

*As the STRIDE Program closes, we will move on with greater confidence and motivation to make THRIVE Central Luzon work even better than before. For the benefit of our MSMEs, the key stakeholders in Bulacan, and all the seven provinces of the region for which the RIIC was primarily created. Let us all give a warm round of virtual applause to our partners from USAID STRIDE again and again and again. Thank you, and congratulations!*

*(THRIVE Central Luzon STRIDE Send-off, May 6, 2022)*



## Messages from National Officials



**Dr. Rafaelita M. Aldaba**

Undersecretary for Competitiveness and Innovation  
Department of Trade and Industry

*On behalf of the Department of Trade & Industry, it is my pleasure to join you virtually as you celebrate the progress and achievements of Central Luzon's Regional Inclusive Innovation Center. Cultivating the connections and engagements among local government agencies, MSMEs and industry groups, start-ups, and the region's higher educational institutions, is critical in fostering a culture of innovation that is necessary to create new products and new processes and strengthen the region's competitiveness.*

*By coming together, bringing in more partners from the private sector and establishing and enhancing your interactions and linkages. The Technological Hive of Regional Innovation for a Vibrant Ecosystem or THRIVE Central Luzon is evidently poised to grow vigorously as a community of innovators in the region. It is my hope that your initiatives will be replicated and sustained between and among other partners from industry and the academe in the region with DTI, DOST, CHED and other government agencies providing the needed assistance and enabling more interactions that capitalize on the region's strengths, address local needs and meet the changing demands of the market.*

*As we recognize THRIVE Central Luzon's accomplishments, we also wish to acknowledge and extend our gratitude to our partners from USAID STRIDE, who have provided technical support and helped establish the RIIC in Region 3.*

*While some challenges still remain, we continue to fill the gaps, build bridges between industry and academe, and harmonize and align the various support program from the government and the private sectors to deliver better services & substantial impact to our innovators and MSMEs. Rest assured that the DTI remains committed in providing support programs for our MSMEs, with innovation as key drivers to help them grow their businesses and to enable enterprises to adopt digital technologies to make their processes more efficient, and use these technologies to innovate and create new products, new services and new business models. Thank you and I look forward to strengthening our collaboration as we promote the acceleration of the commercialization of market-oriented innovations from Central Luzon.*

*(THRIVE Central Luzon STRIDE Send-off, May 6, 2022)*



**Dr. Rowena L. Guevara**

Undersecretary for Research and Development  
Department of Science and Technology

*For the past 5 years, the Department of Science & Technology, and The Department of Trade and Industry, and all other line agencies, such as the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Information & Communications Technology, the National Economic Development Authority, have been making significant strides in developing the country's innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem.*

*This commitment is sealed through the Memorandum of Understanding on Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship, signed in the 2018 Inclusive Innovation Conference. The Filipinnovation provides a framework for collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, industry & civil society organizations. The interaction of these stakeholders has created and transferred knowledge that has enabled new products and new business models to catalyze economic transformation and development.*

*One of the cornerstones of the Filipinnovation is the establishment of the Regional Inclusive Innovation Centers or RIICs, with the assistance of USAID's Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development—STRIDE, and with support from regional agencies, chambers of commerce, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders. RIICs serve as venues for collaboration among government, academe and industry players collectively pursue market-driven research.*

*RIICs are remarkable as a concept for the Philippine innovation ecosystem by building an active network dedicated to innovation, entrepreneurial activities will be fully supported, and economic prosperity in the regions would be hastened. With the enhanced support to the RIICs and the innovation ecosystem as a whole, the DOST Science for Change Program is in full swing in offering assistance for the continued growth of our industries through R&D. We have Collaborative Research & Development to Leverage the Philippine Economy or CRADLE that aims to enable technological advancement & innovation of local companies.*

*The Business for Innovation through the Science & Technology Program or BIST where private companies are encouraged to invest in R&D with the help of the government. The BIST Program was designed to provide assistance to Filipino-owned companies to acquire relevant technologies for R&D activities by shouldering 70% of the cost of equipment with repayment at zero percent interest. We also have the Niche Centers in the Region or NICER for R&D that enables our education institutions to make significant improvements in regional research and contribute to regional development.*

*The DOST remains committed to innovation and our partnership with DTI and the RIICs as we aspire to create profitable solutions and strengthen the capabilities of our local industries.*

*I would like to give a toast to the STRIDE Program for your efforts to strengthen the Regional Inclusive Innovation Center or RIICs. These centers have been meaningful connections towards the economic progress of our country. Through the leadership of Engr. Zedrick Farin, we have seen the rise of the Technological Hive of Regional Innovation for a Vibrant Ecosystem or THRIVE Central Luzon. It has been a key platform to aid small and medium enterprises in Region 3.*

*Before I end, allow me to take this opportunity to thank all our partners, DTI, NEDA, CHED and the local government of Region 3 who worked tirelessly in ensuring continued development in the region.*

*Thank you also to USAID STRIDE for giving strength and order to the RIIC activities. We are proud to have you as our partners in our continuing quest for inclusive innovation. Maraming salamat po at muli, magandang agham sa ating lahat.*

*(THRIVE Central Luzon STRIDE Send-off, May 6, 2022)*



**Dr. Ronald L. Adamat**  
Commissioner  
Commission on Higher Education

*On behalf of the Commission on Higher Education, I bring to you my greetings of peace and solidarity... I'd like to thank USAID because of STRIDE or the Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development Program, our country's science, technology and innovation programs have been capacitated and strengthened and have prepared our people towards achieving inclusive economic growth.*

*Allow me to say that we have three areas in higher education that are potentially beneficial and complementary to the STRIDE Program. These are the areas of Instruction, Research & Production. I'd like to focus on research because this is where we in the higher education sector are best capable of doing and in fact because of research we have been invited to collaborate with USAID.*

*We know that STRIDE has been actively supporting collaborative research between industry and the academe, and specially between US and Philippine universities and colleges. STRIDE has also been an active provider of capacity building trainings for our researchers, and prepares them to become able and capable partners in addressing business challenges involving our MSMEs or Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. It can be noted that MSMEs are one of those who were hit the hardest because of the pandemic and we are glad that the Central Luzon Regional Inclusive Innovation Center through the STRIDE team was able to get the commitment of our local researchers to participate and contribute in coming up with the Innovation for Business Recovery (IBR) Plans for our MSME beneficiaries.*

*I know that this innovative, strategic plan of action with the help of experts of our higher education institutions in Region 3, our MSMEs can achieve growth despite the challenges they face. So we should get to work now that we have completed this partnership and open our doors for more collaborative effort in the future. I am sure we will reap the benefits of our collaboration especially that the THRIVE Regional Inclusive Innovation Center is actively promoting regional linkages activities and strengthening competitiveness through innovation.*

*For our part in the higher education sector, I can say that being part of the local innovation ecosystem, we are opening our doors to our university extension services, research and development laboratories, and industry academe collaboration as our commitment to the overall STRIDE program. Thank you very much and mabuhay!*

*(THRIVE Central Luzon STRIDE Send-off, May 6, 2022)*

# The THRIVE Central Luzon Journey

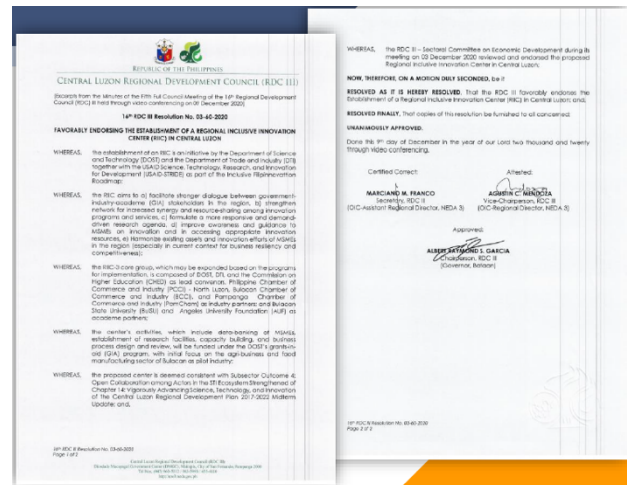
## RIIC-3 Structure

THRIVE Central Luzon is comprised of a growing number of institutions with the following core group: DOST-3 (chair) and DTI-3 (co-chair) as lead agencies, supported by CHED-3 and NEDA-3. The industry sector is represented by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry-Region 3 (PCCI-3); while Bulacan State University (BuSU), Angeles University Foundation (AUF), and Tarlac Agricultural University (TAU) are the core representatives from academia.

The core group is currently supported by seven higher education institutions (HEIs) across the region: Bataan Peninsula State University (BPSU), Central Luzon State University (CLSU), Don Honorio Ventura State University (DHVSU), Holy Angel University (HAU), Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), Pampanga State Agricultural University (PSAU), and Tarlac State University (TSU).

## RDC Adoption

The RIIC was formally established in Region 3 on December 10, 2020, duly adopted by the Central Luzon Regional Development Council (RDC) as endorsed by its Sectoral Committee on Economic Development (SCED).

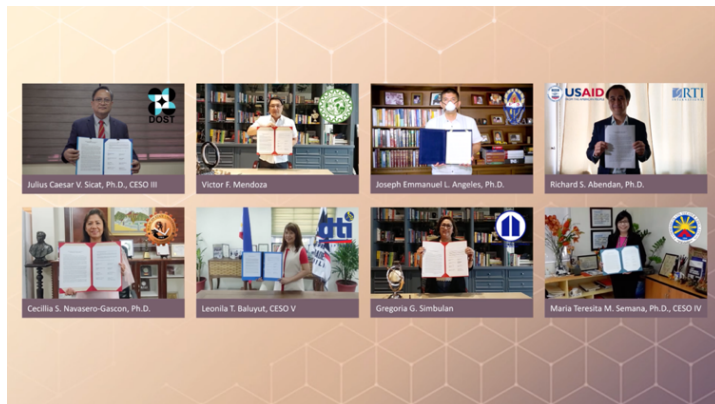


## The RIIC-3 Brand

Dubbed as the Technological Hive of Regional Innovation for a Vibrant Ecosystem or THRIVE Central Luzon, the regional branding represents the innovation community built through the RIIC initiative. The branding was inspired by the need to revitalize the region amidst the pandemic, with overall creative guidance from Ms. Marella Castro. Aligned with the overall vision of the RIICs to promote convergence between government, industry, and academia, it aims to unlock and sustain competitive advantages for local businesses towards local economic development in the region.



## Program Launch



On March 12, the region's RIIC launched its local innovation program, unifying the region's innovation efforts under one banner dubbed "Technological Hive of Regional Innovation for a Vibrant Ecosystem" or THRIVE Central Luzon.

Graced by Office of Education Acting Director Jona Lai, the event featured an overview of the Central Luzon RIIC Innovation Program, the awarding of Php1.5M funding for RIIC activities under the DOST Grants-In-Aid, and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Signing Ceremony among RIIC Region 3 core institutions.



## Business Innovation Unit (BIU)



In its pilot implementation, the THRIVE Central Luzon RIIC established a Business Innovation Unit (BIU) in Bulacan housed in BulSU. Unlocking Php1.5 million funds under the DOST Local Grants-In-Aid Program, the THRIVE Central Luzon BIU serves as a dedicated unit for the implementation of RIIC activities and as a dynamic point-of-contact, increasing access to innovation services and linking stakeholders in the innovation ecosystem. It will be replicated in Tarlac under Tarlac Agricultural University as part of the RIIC expansion for all provinces in the region.

## THRIVE Central Luzon Website

On Nov. 19, 2021, STRIDE initialized the integration of mapping efforts with representatives from the Commission on Higher Education Region 3 (CHED-3), Bulacan State University (BulSU), and Angeles University Foundation (AUF). BulSU consolidated existing HEI data from CHED, R&D data from AUF, and industry data from DTI-3 and partner chambers for the initial mapping phase.

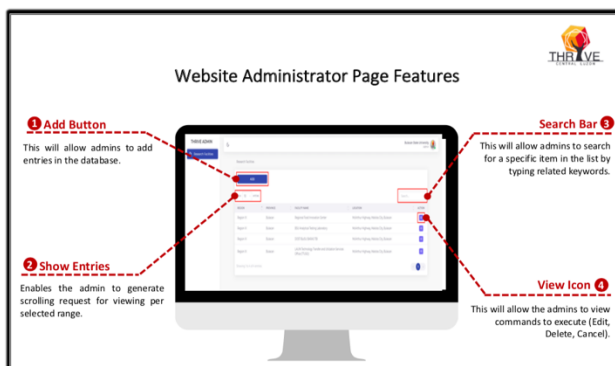


On June 29, 2021 THRIVE Central Luzon RIIC launched its website that houses the regional innovation database, and is designed with provincial access points as aligned with the Regional Cybernetics Centers of the Commission of Higher Education–Region 3 (CHED 3). The website is intended to increase stakeholder awareness and utilization of local innovation resources and intellectual capital, as well as to enable business matching of MSMEs on their industry needs.

One of the main highlights of the launch is a Virtual MOA Signing among university presidents who have expressed their commitment to the RIIC initiative. Bulacan State University as the RIIC-3 project lead and Central Access Point will be supported by the following Provincial Access Points: Angeles University Foundation (AUF), Bataan Peninsula State University (BPSU), Central Luzon State University (CLSU), Don Honorio Ventura State University (DHVSU), Holy Angel University (HAU), Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), Pampanga State Agricultural University (PSAU), Tarlac Agricultural University (TAU), and Tarlac State University (TAU).



The second half of the program is the *Industry e-Kapihan* segment with speakers from RIIC pilot sites who shared experiences and success stories from industry leaders, as well as MSMEs who are primary beneficiaries of the RIIC initiative. The event was graced by USAID Office of Education Director Thomas LeBlanc, with messages of support from national champions of the RIIC: DOST Undersecretary for R&D Rowena Guevara and DTI Regional Operations Group Undersecretary Blesila Lantayona.



With STRIDE support, Bulacan State University conducted capacity building activities on August 2021 for data managers of the THRIVE Central Luzon Website. Data manager modules were distributed among partner delegates for the updating of their data resources on the RIIC-3 regional innovation database.



## Innovation Guidebook

On August 4, 2021 USAID STRIDE socialized the MSME Innovation Guidebook for Region 3, cascading the process behind the guidebook, with information on the local innovation resources to illustrate the stages for innovation.

The THRIVE Central Luzon Innovation Guidebook for MSMEs is envisioned to help MSMEs jumpstart their innovation projects by providing useful information about local innovation assets, programs, and services in Region 3. It introduces basic concepts and ideas related to innovation to help enrich MSMEs' understanding of the process, with sample activities at each juncture to make it more relatable to our readers. This is a concise and handy reference for businesses to better navigate the innovation resources relevant to their operations.



For subsequent versions of the guidebook, RIIC-3 partners are looking forward to develop a comprehensive version for printing, which would also be translated to the local language to be better understood by MSMEs.

## NSTW 2021

In November 24, 2021, Bulacan State University hosted the visit of DOST Secretary Fortunato de la Peña as part of the National Science and Technology Week 2021 activities. STRIDE provided creative and technical guidance for an exhibit on THRIVE Central Luzon RIIC, showcasing milestones such as the program and brand launch, the THRIVE Central Luzon website featuring



the regional innovation database, ceremonial signings among partner institutions, industry e-kapihan, and the ongoing Innovation for Business Recovery (IBR) service. As a token of the exhibit, national and regional officials from DOST were also able to receive the first printouts of the THRIVE Central Luzon Innovation Guidebook for MSMEs. As part of the regional celebration of the National Science Technology

Week 2021, THRIVE Central Luzon was featured in one of the segments of the DOST Region 3 SETUP Webinar Series, with STRIDE Convergence Manager Catherine Racho as speaker. The webinar held on November 26 provided a platform in promoting the Innovation for Business Recovery program and its services for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

## Innovation for Business Recovery (IBR)

One of the core offerings of THRIVE Central Luzon is the Innovation for Business Recovery (IBR) program, which is the priority linkage activity under the RIIC initiative. It aims to empower MSMEs in the time of pandemic by helping them develop a research-driven, market-oriented business



plan for recovery and resiliency. USAID STRIDE facilitated a 2-day IBR Capacity Building Session, led by Convergence Manager Catherine Racho. The RIIC-3 IBR TWG consists of partner delegates from DOST and DTI, BCCI, BuISU and Senior Mentors from AUF and TAU. With support from STRIDE Business Advisors, the THRIVE Central Luzon IBR TWG was able to generate IBR Plans for two MSME beneficiaries for its pilot implementation: Mang Dencio's Sweets & Delicacies, and TLM Yema Buko Pie and

Pasalubong Center. The IBR will be implemented in the long-term by the THRIVE Central Luzon Business Innovation Unit/s (BIU) with guidance from the RIIC-3 IBR Technical Working Group.

## BIU MSME Support Services

### MSME Financial Literacy Training

A Financial Literacy Training for Mang Dencio's Sweets & Delicacies was held on November 9-10, 2021. Led by IBR Senior Business Mentors from Tarlac Agricultural University and Angeles University Foundation, the activity featured one-on-one mentoring on topics such as budgeting and smart spending, managing debt, utilizing credit and increasing income, among others. This follows the recommendations of the IBR TWG to capacitate Mang Dencio's in better managing their business, and comprises part of the MSME services under the RIIC Region 3 Business Innovation Unit.



## Technology Pitching & Adoption

THRIVE Central Luzon BIU held a Technology Pitching Session on December 22, 2021 as a parallel intervention to the Innovation for Business Recovery (IBR) Program of THRIVE Central Luzon (RIIC-3). Partner universities showcased food processing equipment to MSME beneficiary TLM Yema Buko Pie. Tarlac Agricultural University (TAU) presented the chipping equipment for powdered products, while Bulacan State University presented their ube halaya maker.

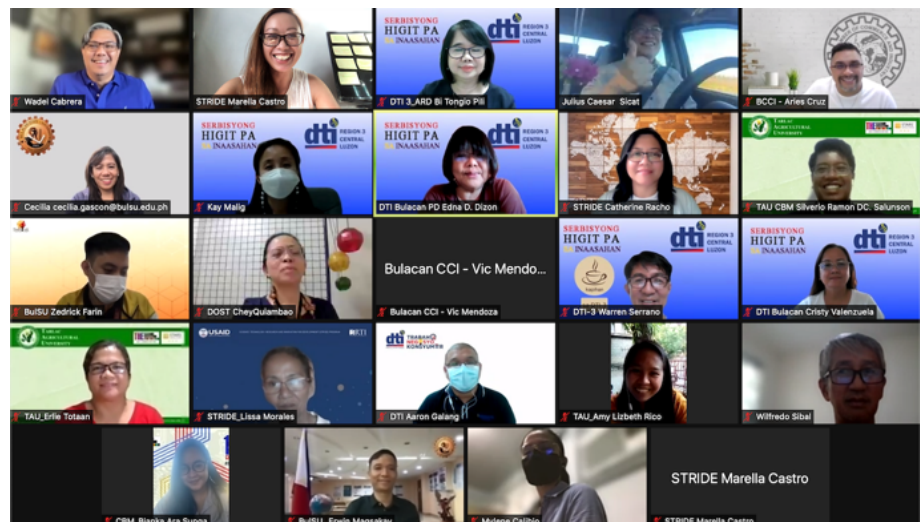


On March 8, 2022, STRIDE met with LAUIn (Leading the Academe in Utilizing Intellectual Property) representatives Dennis dela Cruz and Erus Lumague for integration under the RIIC-3 Business Innovation Unit in BulSU to establish the university's technology transfer processes and jumpstart the commercialization of university technologies. This will be expanded to other RIIC-

3 partners once process models have been finalized. An output from another STRIDE-supported program—the IP Management Program for Academic Institutions Commercializing Technologies (IMPACT), LAUIn is a Technology Transfer and Utilization Services Office funded by DOST in partnership with Bulacan State University.

## Strategic Planning (2022-2026)

STRIDE facilitated the development of a 5-year Strategic Plan, through a series of workshop and validation sessions from December 2021 to March 2022 to strengthen synergy among core institutions and sustainability of implementation. Partners were able to level off on activities, strategies, and objectives.





The THRIVE Central Luzon Strategic Plan (2022-2026) has been formally adopted by the Regional Development Council on June 2, 2022.

## USAID STRIDE Appreciation Ceremony

On May 6, THRIVE Central Luzon held a virtual USAID Appreciation Ceremony and STRIDE Send-off, attended by more than 60 partners from government, industry and academia via Zoom, and is open to the public via Facebook Live. Sharing messages of support to RIIC Region 3 were CHED Commissioner Ronald Adamat, DTI Undersecretary for Competitiveness and Innovation Group Rafaelita Aldaba, and DOST Undersecretary for Research and Development Rowena Guevara.

In light of the STRIDE project's closing, partners celebrated STRIDE interventions in support of RIIC milestones. The activity featured the turnover of Innovative Business Recovery Plans for two MSME beneficiaries as well as awarding of technology to TLM Yema Buko Pie for the pilot implementation of the IBR.

Other highlights include the presentation of the THRIVE Central Luzon MOU 2022, and awarding tokens of appreciation from partners. STRIDE Chief of Party presented Certificates of Appreciation to Region 3 partner institutions in recognition of the strong collaboration forged through the RIIC.



## RIIC-3 MSME Champions

### IBR MSME:

#### Mang Dencio's Sweets & Delicacies

*I am Benjie Reyes, owner of Mang Dencio's Sweets and Delicacies. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the THRIVE Central Luzon for choosing me as one of the MSME beneficiaries for the Innovation Business Recovery (IBR) Program.*



*Sa tulong po ng USAID STRIDE at ng THRIVE Central Luzon IBR TWG mas mabuti ko pong naintindihan kung pano magnegosyo at pano makaahon sa epekto ng pandemya. Marami akong natutunan sa mga nakakaangyong kamustahan sessions at mentoring nila, lalo na nung aming naging Financial Literacy Training.*

*Maraming salamat po sa aking masisipag na IBR Advisers mula sa USAID STRIDE sina Ms. Mariela Alcaparas at Ms. Marella Castro, Bulacan State University, na pinangunahan ni Sir Zedrick Farin at Airish Danganan, sina Dr. Mon Salunson ng Tarlac Agricultural University at Dr. Yturalde ng Angeles University Foundation.*

*Ako po ay mapalad at nagkaron ako ng bagong perspective at mga stratehiya kung paano pa mas palalakin ang Mang Dencio's Sweets and Delicacies. Napakagandang experience po ang pinagsama-samang suporta mula sa DTI, DOST, Bulacan Chamber, BulSU, AUF, TAU at USAID STRIDE.*



*Looking forward po ako na maipagpatuloy ang ating nabuong partnership, para sa implementation ng inyong mga recommendations. Ako ay proud na maging kabilang sa unang Ambassador ng THRIVE Central Luzon RIIC at ng IBR program para sa mas nakararami pang MSMEs. Maraming salamat po!*

## IBR MSME:

### TLM Yema Buko Pie and Pasalubong Center

Ako po si Leonora C. Magaling ang may ari ng TLM Yema Buko Pie and Pasalubong Center ay buong puso na nagpapasalamat sa THRIVE Central Luzon, sa DTI, DOST, BCCI, BuLSU, TAU, USAID STRIDE at sa lahat ng ahensya na nagtulong-tulong upang suportahan ang isang katulad ko kasama ng aking munting anghel na si baby Ibrahim Riichie na bagamat siya ay nasa aking sinapupunan pa lamang ay hindi naging hadlang upang ako ay mabiyayaan ng programang ito, at hinango ko po sa programang ito ang kanyang pangalan upang maging simbulo ng ating pagkakaisa ng layunin kasama po siya para sa kasalukuyan at sa hinaharap, pati narin ng aking buong pamilya at lahat ng empleyado.



Para po sa akin, ang pagkakataon pong ito ay isang matibay kong gabay upang mas pag ibayuhin ko pa ang aking kaalaman mula sa maraming karanasan na pinanday ng maraming oportunidad at ng mga taong may matitibay na personalidad at determinasyon na matulungan ang gaya ko, kayo pong lahat ay naging inspirasyon ko upang sa bawat hagdanan at pagsubok ay malampasan ko.

Bilang karagdagan, ako po ay isa sa mapalad, sapagkat dahil po sa Innovation for Business Recovery program ay pinatunayan po nito na ang aking pakikipagsapalaran ay hindi titigil at maghihintay na lamang sa kung ano ang kahinatnan nito dahil sa mga pagsubok na nararanasan nating lahat.

Sapagkat ang IBR Plan na pinagtulangang buuin ng buong husay at karunungan ng mga dalubhasa ay mayroon akong pinanghahawakan na magsisilbing gabay, upang ang nasimulang pangarap ay magpatuloy na may kalakip ng tamang pamamaraan ay magkaroon ng katuparan sa hinaharap.

Sa tulong ng THRIVE Central Luzon at sa pamamagitan ng IBR Plan, hindi napo ako maliligaw o panghihinaan ng loob sapagkat alam ko po na meron akong tamang deriksyon kung saan patungo ang TLM Yema Buko Pie and Pasalubong Center.



Sapagkat nasusulat po sa IBR Plan ang bawat hakbangin, pamamaraan at resources na aking kakailanganin at bilang pagbabalik loob sa kabutihang aking natamo, sisikapin ko po sa abot ng aking makakaya na magawa, matupad at sa bandang huli ay kapwa po natin ito mapagmasdan ng may ngiti sa ating puso.

Muli maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.

# Messages of Appreciation for USAID STRIDE

*(THRIVE Central Luzon STRIDE Send-off, May 6, 2022)*



**Ms. Gina T. Gacusan**

Regional Director, NEDA-3

Core Group Member, THRIVE Central Luzon (RIIC-3)

*First, let me thank the USAID for the STRIDE Project that they have introduced and implemented in our country. Second, I would like to thank them as well for selecting Central Luzon as one of the eight RIICs in the country, The Project THRIVE is something that we are welcoming and hoping that it will be a game changer in the landscape of Central Luzon.*

*The NEDA actually looks at innovation as something that we would like to institutionalize. In fact, NEDA is asking that all the Regional Development Councils in the country create a committee on innovation. But why is innovation so important for us to develop? Because we see innovation as a game changer. Filipinos by culture I guess are averse to risk, that is why innovation is something that we are not quite comfortable with. A lot of brilliant ideas and brilliant minds have escaped us and some brilliant ideas were thought of by Filipinos but these Filipinos implement their brilliant ideas outside the country because they were welcomed there.*

*Now with this project we hope that these ideas that could solve all problems will be easier to be implemented and welcomed. We hope that with the HEIs, the SUCs, DTI, DOST, the Chambers of Commerce, and all these entrepreneurs will be pulling their resources, their energies together in order to find new ways of doing things, new ways of improving on things that we used to have. I firmly believe that with our joint efforts we can make this happen.*

*On behalf of NEDA and RDC, I commit that we will support all of the activities that the THRIVE will have in Central Luzon and our commitment is not just to include you in the agenda but more importantly that we will realized the outcomes that we have thought of. We know that we really cannot control outcomes, but we can control the opportunities—and open all of these opportunities to all the entrepreneurs we have out there.*

*Thank you again USAID and to our THRIVE team. You have our support and we wish you all the best. Maraming salamat po!*



**Dr. Cecilia S. Navasero-Gascon**  
President, Bulacan State University  
BIU Project Leader, THRIVE Central Luzon (RIIC-3)

*On one of the most challenging and trying years in history, at most and heartfelt expression of gratitude is duly credited to the USAID initiative to the Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development or STRIDE for supporting the Central Luzon Regional Inclusive Innovation Center or the RIIC-3 in forging strong collaboration, partnerships and linkages towards harnessing and achieving inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem efforts for all.*

*BulSU is very much thankful for the DTI, DOST, and USAID STRIDE partnership for allowing the university to become one of the cornerstones and lead conveners of the THRIVE Central Luzon. As we close the gap towards reaching the end of this adversity, let us all be eager to face the future by sustaining and expanding the convergence forged between the government, industry and the education sector. Maraming salamat USAID STRIDE.*

*As Bulacan State University sincerely appreciates the support from the government and USAID STRIDE, I am elated to award the Ube Halaya Making Machine developed by the BulSU College of Engineering Mechanical Department to our industry partner, TLM Buko Pie and Pasalubong Center through Miss Leonora Magaling.*

*Today's awarding would not be possible without the initiative of the THRIVE Central Luzon, RIIC with the assistance of DOST BulSU BARAS TBI. This is one of the many projects of THRIVE to manage to identify potential research and development output for technology transfer. A pipeline of the university's commitment to welcome more partners in strengthening collaborations with stakeholders in Central Luzon.*

*We at the Bulacan State University firmly believe that these activities spearheaded by the THRIVE Central Luzon break will further open wider opportunities. Bulacan State University pledged to support the other research and development institutions in the region towards the realization of the development of technologies that can be adopted by the SMEs as we rebuild a more capacitated Region III.*

*Thank you very much. To God be the Highest Glory.*





**Dr. Max Guillermo**

President, Tarlac Agricultural University  
Core Group Member, THRIVE Central Luzon (RIIC-3)

*Warm greetings from Tarlac Agricultural University! It's truly an honor to be part of this noteworthy activity, as we empower MSMEs with information, direction and organization, boosting knowledge generation and adoption of commercially viable RDI technologies possible, as well as promoting productivity and nurturing competitiveness, new collaborative spaces in convergence mechanisms on innovation programs, services and partnerships.*

*As the STRIDE program is coming to a close, we would like to express our sincere thanks to USAID STRIDE. This is really an innovative program that would have not been possible if it were not for you. This is a bittersweet moment knowing that the STRIDE program may be concluding a chapter now but we are confident that this would live on.*

*As one of the new core group members of RIIC-3, on behalf of Tarlac Agricultural University, I would like to express and ensure our commitment in this undertaking. Spearheading the expansion of the THRIVE Central Luzon Business Innovation Unit in the Province of Tarlac is truly a great honor and privilege. We understand that our role is certainly immense but rest assured that we will make an effort to deliver what is expected of us. Thank you for the trust and confidence in Tarlac Agricultural University. Mabuhay po kayo!*



**Atty. Maria Amalia Tiglao-Cayanan**

Regional Governor  
Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc.–Region3  
Core Group Member, THRIVE Central Luzon (RIIC-3)

*Much has been accomplished and achieved through the collaboration, partnerships, and innovative ways of aligning and putting together stakeholders and key players and matching programs and services in order to meet the needs of industries and enterprises through the establishment of [THRIVE Central Luzon Business Innovation Unit], which is envisioned to be the receptacle of dynamic linkages at the center of Philippine economic transformation, the gap between industries and academia through the application of research and development shall be bridged. It is an innovation ecosystem database for granted aid stakeholders thriving synergistically in the region because of the onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic MSMEs and even large enterprises are struggling to survive and are looking for partners who could help them in their recovery and for solutions in order to innovate and adopt new ways of doing business.*

*They do not have to look far, as the team already streamlined the process and have developed a menu or list in order to help industries and enterprises accelerate in the recovery of their businesses. The best thing is that these linkages, networks, innovations, and technological solutions, are easily accessible to the industries and enterprises. This is by far the most comprehensive regional collaboration among the government, the industry and the academia for innovation and inclusiveness that I have come across.*

*On behalf of PCCI Central Luzon as its Regional Governor, I wholeheartedly render support to the RIIC-3. I believe that this will fast track economic recovery, increase employment rate, and will result to better quality of life to the Filipino people. All these mentioned above will not come to fruition without the technical support of USAID through its Science, Technology, and Research for Development or STRIDE. As the program comes to close, it is undeniable that the technologies, processes and knowledge developed innovatively and are enhanced because of this program, are big leaps forward and not merely strides, for industries and enterprises and ultimately the Philippine economy and the Filipino people. On behalf of PCCI Central Luzon, please accept our heartfelt and sincere gratitude.*



**Ms. Gregoria G. Simbulan**

North Luzon Area Vice President,  
Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Core Group Member, THRIVE Central Luzon (RIIC-3)

*In 2020, during one of their scoping session USAID STRIDE came to us members of industry and other stakeholders to get our perspective on the current innovation landscape in our Region, our beloved Central Luzon. They made mention of innovation networks, business process alignment, linking tools, and convergence mechanisms. At the outset, while such words were very familiar and well understood by everyone, to many of us as this will be under a certain organization with which we are not so familiar with which is the Regional Inclusive Innovation Center. We were waiting for the concept to be concretized. Furthermore, at the height of the pandemic, there were certainly more pressing concerns competing with our time and attention—and that is the need of businesses to survive, particularly our Micro, Small and Medium Industries which are hardest hit by the pandemic.*

*Eventually and in time, we understood that there are gaps that we could address if we together. USAID STRIDE made it possible not only to help us achieve our milestones amidst a pandemic but to do so in a very limited span of time. Given the project closing was coming ever near. **THRIVE Central Luzon is proof that innovation with collaboration is indeed worthwhile.** STRIDE partnering with stakeholders under the banner project THRIVE Central*

Luzon in their tireless efforts was able to help create this thriving community between government, industry, and academe.

We in the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with our advocacy and program centered on innovation as instrument for business recovery for the economic bouncing back to the path of prosperity, share the vision to elevate our regional economy by improving access to research, technologies and other services that can make our MSMEs more resilient and more competitive.

So, thank you USAID STRIDE for all that you have imparted with us. From making simple connections you have nurtured a growing community where collaboration is at the heart of innovation. Thank you for enabling and inspiring stories of Ate Leonora Magaling and Kuya Mr. Benjie Reyes made possible through USAID STRIDE and our RIIC Central Luzon. There will be more successes to come because of the efforts and the passion that they've put into the organization, USAID in cooperation with THRIVE Central Luzon.



Allow me to take this opportunity on behalf of all the partner institutions, to present this Plaque of Appreciation to USAID STRIDE for its valuable expertise and guidance in strengthening the innovation ecosystem through the establishment of Regional Inclusive Innovation Center - THRIVE Central Luzon. Given this day of May 6, 2022.

Signed Dr. Julius Caesar Sicat - Regional Director DOST Region III, Signed Ms. Leonora Baluyot- Director of DTI Region III, Signed by yours truly Gregoria Simbulan- Vice President of PCCI North Luzon.

Mabuhay THRIVE Central Luzon! Mabuhay USAID STRIDE! While this is supposed to be a send-off ceremony, the relationship with you is deep and passionate. So, USAID STRIDE. No goodbyes now, See you again soon. Maraming salamat po at pagpalain tayo ng Poong Maykapal.



**Engr. Zedrick Farin**  
RIIC-3 Business Innovation Unit Head  
Bulacan State University

*To the regional partners and future members of the THRIVE Central Luzon Regional Inclusive Innovation Center, we at the Business Innovation Unit (BIU) would like to extend our sincerest gratitude and appreciation for your support during the establishment of this regional convergence. From project proposal to implementation, your guidance helped us achieve our shared goals.*

*We would like to acknowledge the unwavering support from USAID STRIDE. Ms. Marella Castro, imparted her valuable expertise and capacitated the whole THRIVE Central Luzon BIU team in every stage of our RIIC journey. Through her encompassing guidance, we learned how to cultivate valuable partnerships for the RIIC, become more responsive, and deliver expected outputs and develop best practices for replication. Not only were we able to learn to conduct regional activities and events, but along the way we were able to further expand our talents and capabilities in management, technical knowledge, communications and creative media. The experiences obtained through the RIIC bring immeasurable joy and satisfaction even during the sleepless nights. The smile brought to the faces of our stakeholders truly compensates all of our efforts and boosts our confidence to go the extra mile and become more dedicated in our work.*

*Since its inception, even from the time when we were developing the regional brand, that represents the innovation community built through the RIIC initiative, Ms. Marella has instilled in our team and to the whole RIIC-3 TWG, to think out of the box with a future-oriented, innovation-collaboration mindset, and for us to continuously work towards the sustainability of the THRIVE Central Luzon RIIC for years to come.*





# THRIVE Central Luzon

REGIONAL INCLUSIVE INNOVATION CENTER  
REGION 3