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INL to build \$48 million lab in I.F.

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Boyer Co. expects to break ground this fall on the facility, which will focus on scientific research.

Idaho National Laboratory officials Wednesday unveiled plans for a \$48 million building on the Idaho Falls campus.



This image shows what INL's new lab will look like. - Courtesy of Idaho National Laboratory

Construction is set to get under way this fall on the 131,000-square-foot Research Education Laboratory. It will be used primarily for research space in areas such as chemistry, robotics, high-temperature materials and catalysis, INL Deputy Laboratory Director Dave Hill said.

The three-story laboratory will be built in what is now the parking lot of INL's Energy Research Office Building on Fremont Avenue, north of Freeman Park. It will feature an auditorium that's open to the public and capable of seating 350.

The Boyer Co., a Salt Lake City-based development firm, will build the new lab. Its president, Jake Boyer, said as many as 200 people will be employed during construction. He expects many of those workers to come from local subcontractors, although Boyer's company has hired Boise construction firm Engineered Structures Inc. as its general contractor.

Once built, the U.S. Department of Energy will lease the building from Boyer rather than buy it. The DOE often prefers to lease buildings instead of owning them to avoid large upfront cash outlays, said Robert Miklos, director of INL's Project Management Office.

Hill said INL hopes that ramping up the lab's research facilities will help it attract more scientists, not just to develop technologies but to study fundamental science as well.

"We're always hiring young staff -- believe me -- and we're hoping this will enable us to hire more," he said.