National Commission on Innovation & Competitiveness Frontiers

Compete.
Council on Competitiveness

Competing in the Next Economy

Innovating in the Age of Disruption and Discontinuity

A Call to Action

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Introduction and Overview

The foundation of a nation's long-term prosperity lies in its productivity—the effectiveness with which it employs its human, capital, and natural resources to generate goods and services. Both now and in the future, a nation's capacity to swiftly and efficiently reallocate these resources and adapt its economic engines in response to change—its economic dynamism—will be a critical factor in determining its global competitiveness, economic growth, ability to generate wealth, and overall national security.

The Council on Competitiveness' **National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers** is dedicated to advancing the global competitiveness posture of our nation through actionable and transformational policy recommendations that foster greater productivity and prosperity for Americans. This report explores the evolving dynamics across the economic, technology, and security landscapes and identifies the most important policies and actions that the federal government, states, private sector, and research ecosystem must take to position the United States at the forefront of technology leadership, economic strength, and global competitiveness.

This report follows the Commission's 2020 report, *Competing in the Next Economy*, which put forward 50 policy recommendations to transform our national innovation landscape. Many of these recommendations have already been acted on, but the national and global competitive landscape has changed radically in a short period: AI adoption and deployment are accelerating; energy demand and supply dynamics are transforming; the nature of work is evolving; and geostrategic competition is intensifying.

The United States urgently needs a refreshed vision for accelerating American innovation and securing our competitive position for the future.

Boosting U.S. Innovation Tenfold—10x

The Council on Competitiveness and its National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers calls on the incoming administration and new Congress to act strategically and boldly toward a transformative goal for U.S. competitiveness: boosting U.S. innovation tenfold—**10x**.

To achieve this goal, the Commission is issuing a Call to Action for a 10x increase along seven pillars and 55 recommendations that target key barriers and opportunities.*

Innovation today needs all sorts of new investments, realignments, and programs. Policymakers and a range of critical stakeholders must come together to accelerate innovation and strengthen the U.S. competitive position—by forging new public-private partnerships and reinvigorating international engagement, by building improved infrastructure and streamlining regulations, and by ensuring broader participation of an evermore skilled U.S. workforce in the innovation economy.

This Call to Action is organized into three sections, including:

- The seven 10x pillars and why they are critical areas for driving U.S. productivity, national security, and prosperity
- The seven priority recommendations for accelerating U.S. innovation
- All 50+ recommendations for accelerating U.S. innovation.

The Council and Commission encourage policymakers to consider the full scope of these recommendations.

* This report's recommendations are synthesized from a series of meetings in 2023 and 2024 of the National Commissioners, as well as a range of virtual working group meetings—involving 100+ leaders across economic sectors around the country—that took place regularly over the past two years.

The Seven 10x Pillars for Driving U.S. Productivity, National Security, and Prosperity

Pillar 1

Renewing 10x the Nation's Strategic Vision for an Age of Technological Revolution and Geo-Strategic Challenge

A new competitive reality demands an expanded vision for U.S. innovation capacity and capability. The federal government cannot singlehandedly drive innovation in the United States, but it can co-create with the private sector a strategic vision and prioritize key initiatives for investment and action. By doing so, the United States can achieve global leadership in the dual-use platform technologies of the next economy, such as transformational computing (e.g., AI and quantum), energy (e.g., advanced nuclear), and advanced biology (e.g., bioscience, biotechnology, and biomanufacturing).

Pillar 2

Unleashing 10x the Most Competitive Business Climate for Innovation

A robust pro-innovation policy framework drives investments to create new products and services, which creates high-value jobs and makes the United States a fierce global competitor. The United States must establish innovation friendly tax and fiscal policies in concert with reducing regulatory burdens and costs. The United States can empower business to take the lead in global innovation and effectively tackle major societal challenges by reducing investment risks, protecting intellectual property, ensuring cyber resiliency, investing in infrastructure, establishing a supportive policy and regulatory framework, optimizing for pro-growth fiscal policy, promoting research and development, and encouraging entrepreneurial activity through targeted incentives.

Pillar 3

Asserting 10x U.S. Global Leadership

Growing geostrategic competition with China demands asserting American influence on the global stage. China seeks to overtake America's leadership role—across economic, military, and social spheres—and is proactively working to define the rules of the road for the second half of the century and building the economic and strategic alliances to underpin its dominance. The United States must robustly engage on the international stage to collaborate with strategic allies to counter adversaries and secure America's leadership position at the helm of the world order.

Pillar 4

Expanding 10x the Transition to Energy Abundance, Security, and Sustainability

As electricity demand in the United States continues to rise—due to the push for energy independence, the proliferation of energy-intensive AI applications, the electrification of vehicles, and a revitalized manufacturing sector—it is imperative for the nation to sustainably utilize and expand its energy sources. This includes advancing cutting-edge energy technologies (e.g., fission and fusion), and enhancing U.S. energy infrastructure through innovation and accelerated commercialization (e.g., small modular reactors and Generation IV reactors).

Pillar 5

Accelerating 10x Technology Development and Deployment at Speed and Scale

As technology advances more rapidly each year, and as global competitors develop and scale technologies at blistering speeds, the United States must accelerate innovation through the deployment of cutting-edge technologies across all sectors of the economy. Business, government, academia, and national laboratories must be empowered to move faster to test, prove, and scale innovations to ensure every sector of the U.S. economy is operating with the most advanced products, services, and technical solutions.

Pillar 6

Empowering 10x Skilled Workforce

People innovate, so to build a world-leading innovation economy, and secure it for generations to come, the United States must first build a world-leading innovation workforce. Yet, today, the country faces skills shortages across our economy—from the researchers making discoveries in AI, quantum, biology, and nuclear to entrepreneurs commercializing new technologies to the manufacturers and technicians needed to deploy and operate next-generation technologies and processes.

Pillar 7

Expanding 10x Place-Making Innovation and Collaborative Innovation Networks

Innovation occurs everywhere. As a nation, we must deepen and broaden innovation ecosystems in all parts of our country—amplifying the networks of people, places, and assets that create the basis for growth and inclusive prosperity. Regional innovation hubs that bring together businesses, universities, national laboratories, and government in hyper-connected and collaborative networks can stimulate unexpected and productive partnerships, cultivate pro-innovation regional cultures, and support the development of specialized workforce skills and expertise.

Priority Recommendations for Accelerating U.S. Innovation

Within this comprehensive Call to Action of 55 recommendations across seven 10x pillars, seven recommendations stand out as having the most transformational impact potential on American innovation.

The Council on Competitiveness and its National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers urge the incoming Congress and new administration to take decisive action now on these recommendations.

In a new age of disruption and discontinuity, the United States cannot afford anything short of a transformative effort to boost innovation 10x. **The time to act is now.**

1. **Establish a pro-growth, competitive corporate tax rate of 21 percent or lower, and reduce the federal deficit to 3.7 percent of GDP by 2027.** This competitive corporate tax rate will help ensure that U.S. companies stay cost-competitive with other nations, and that the United States continues to be a leading destination and home for businesses. At the same time, federal deficits must be reduced while investment in federal R&D, technology initiatives, and modern scientific infrastructure is increased to maintain U.S. global economic and military leadership, broaden access to innovation for underserved communities, and counter China's growing technological power.
2. **Increase U.S. R&D investment to 1960s levels of two percent of U.S. GDP.** Congress should fully appropriate and implement the science provisions of the CHIPS and Science Act, while also funding the U.S. Department of Defense and non-defense federal investments in research and development at historic levels.

3. **Remove barriers and create incentives to accelerate technology deployment and domestic manufacturing at scale.** Adopt a warp-speed model for streamlining and reducing regulation—fast-tracking permitting and licensing—to significantly speed up U.S. innovation and commercialization of exponential technologies here in America.
4. **Launch an advanced Nuclear Energy Moonshot to achieve energy abundance, security, and sustainability.** The federal government—in partnership with states and the private sector—must launch a Nuclear Energy Moonshot to accelerate the development and deployment of next-generation nuclear energy power plants, including small modular and fusion reactors, to meet the soaring demand for clean, baseload electricity.
5. **Establish a National Bipartisan Commission on AI to lead exponential technology convergence.** Congress should immediately establish and fully fund a National Commission on Artificial Intelligence to model future scenarios of AI impacts and better understand the implications of AI for productivity, new capabilities, education, and the workforce.
6. **Build regional innovative ecosystems, and expand the science and technology talent pipeline.** Establish a White House "Regional Economic Development Council" to coordinate all federal and community economic development activities to optimize goals, enable co-investment, and eliminate duplication. Congress should also expand the mandate and authorities of federal departments and agencies to fund regional innovation ecosystem building, support innovative financing models for investment, expand advanced manufacturing "Enterprise Zones," and develop a certification process for "Innovation Districts."
7. **Advance U.S. technology statecraft.** To foster a supportive global environment for U.S. technology expansion and cooperation, the United States, in collaboration with allied countries, must become the global leader in technology statecraft. This includes promoting strong intellectual property (I.P.) protection and enforcing strict penalties for I.P. infringement. The United States must also exert greater leadership in global standards-setting and work to remove non-tariff barriers to trade and market access. Additionally, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) must be expanded to review foreign investments in venture capital and startups focused on key dual-use technologies, including cybersecurity.

Pillar 1

Renewing 10x the Nation's Strategic Vision for an Age of Technological Revolution and Geo-Strategic Challenge

A new competitive reality demands an expanded vision for U.S. innovation capacity and capability. The federal government cannot singlehandedly drive innovation in the United States in partnership, but it can co-create with the private sector a strategic vision and prioritize key initiatives. By doing so, the United States can achieve global leadership in the platform technologies of the next economy, such as transformational computing (e.g., AI and quantum), energy (e.g., advanced nuclear), and advanced biology (e.g., bioscience, biotechnology, and biomanufacturing).

Recommendations

1. U.S. leaders must articulate an "all nation" strategy on the central role of advanced technology in the nation's economic strength and national security.
2. The United States must develop a ten-year strategic computational initiative, investing $100 billion in R&D and domestic manufacturing of dual-use computing platforms, including supercomputers, quantum, A.I., and semiconductors.
3. Congress should establish a bipartisan A.I. commission for U.S. global leadership in A.I. research and deployment.
4. The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) should develop a public-private partnership to accelerate R&D in advanced, critical materials and domestic manufacturing at scale.
5. Congress should appropriate multi-year funding to modernize aging and obsolete research infrastructure at national laboratories and universities.
6. The U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Commerce, and U.S. Department of Energy should pilot A.I. for digital twins of critical, dual-use supply chains and manufacturing.

Pillar 2
Unleashing 10x the Most Competitive Business Climate for Innovation

A robust pro-innovation policy framework drives investments to create new products and services, which creates high-value jobs and makes the United States a fierce global competitor. The United States must establish innovation friendly tax and fiscal policies in concert with reducing regulatory burdens and costs. The United States can empower business to take the lead in global innovation and effectively tackle major societal challenges by reducing investment risks, protecting intellectual property, ensuring cyber resiliency, investing in infrastructure, establishing a supportive policy and regulatory framework, optimizing for pro-growth fiscal policy, promoting research and development, and encouraging entrepreneurial activity through targeted incentives.

Recommendations

1. Reduce by 2027 the federal deficit of seven percent of U.S. GDP to historic, sustainable levels of 3.7 percent, while ensuring increased investment in the nation's science and technology enterprise.
2. Restore federal investments in R&D to historic highs of two percent of U.S. GDP.
3. Fully appropriate the "Science" funding authorized in the CHIPS and Science Act.
4. Establish competitive, pro-growth tax policies with a corporate tax rate of 21 percent (or lower), and by instituting a 25 percent investment tax credit for new machinery and equipment.
5. Expand the Research and Experimentation Tax credit and restore expensing.
6. Create new tax and fiscal incentives for U.S. manufacturing, including re-shoring, new Enterprise Zones (EZs), and workforce training.
7. Eliminate all double taxation of U.S. corporate profits and individual income earned overseas.
8. Establish a "National Innovation and Infrastructure Bank" to invest in scaling emerging technologies and modernizing aging infrastructure.
9. Streamline and reduce regulatory costs and burdens that impede investment and growth in U.S. businesses, entrepreneurs, and communities.
10. Invest in public data collection agencies to increase the use of hard data for policymaking and to evaluate innovation investments and pro-growth regulations.

Pillar 3
Asserting 10x U.S. Global Leadership

Growing geostrategic competition with China demands asserting American influence on the global stage. China seeks to overtake America's leadership role—across economic, military, and social spheres—and is proactively working to define the rules of the road for the second half of the century and building the economic and strategic alliances to underpin its dominance. The United States must robustly engage on the international stage to collaborate with strategic allies to counter adversaries and secure America's leadership position at the helm of the world order.

Recommendations

1. Accelerate U.S. technology statecraft to enhance soft power and advance U.S. economic and security interests globally.
2. The U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Department of State, along with the U.S. Trade Representative, U.S. Export-Import (EXIM) Bank, and other financing agencies, must strongly advocate for U.S. interests in technology regulations, standards setting, procurement policy, and the illegality of forced technology transfer requirements.
3. Increase the number of Americans working in multilateral organizations, from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), The World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the World Bank to advance U.S. interests and forge deeper partnerships in the developing world.
4. Decouple from China on frontier, dual-use technology R&D activities in concert with expanding strategic, resilient partnerships with allies and emerging nations in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.
5. Globally promote the role of I.P. protection and enforcement as essential platforms for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and technology collaboration, while vigorously enforcing strong, swift penalties for I.P. infringement of U.S. products and services.

6. Require state-of-the-art cyber security protection in all federally funded R&D programs, bilateral R&D partnerships, and multilateral large-scale research facilities, such as CERN and ITER.
7. Expand the resources and mandate of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to review foreign investments in VC funds, private equity, and start-ups in frontier, dual-use technology, such as A.I. quantum, advanced semiconductors, cybersecurity, biotechnology, and space.
8. Increase the number of American students, researchers, scholars, and participants in R&D educational programs with strategic allies and partner nations.

Pillar 4

Expanding 10x the Transition to Energy Abundance, Security, and Sustainability

As electricity demand in the United States continues to rise—due to the push for energy independence, the proliferation of energy-intensive AI applications, the electrification of vehicles, and a revitalized manufacturing sector—it is imperative for the nation to sustainably utilize and expand its energy sources. This includes advancing cutting-edge energy technologies (e.g., fission and fusion), and enhancing U.S. energy infrastructure through innovation and accelerated commercialization (e.g., small modular reactors and Generation IV reactors).

Recommendation

1. Launch a Nuclear Energy Moonshot to accelerate next-generation nuclear technologies, and turbocharge the production of clean, baseload energy.
2. Use all sources of domestic energy “sustainably.”
3. Build a national transmission superhighway and smart, self-healing electric grid.
4. Accelerate and reward energy efficiency and productivity.
5. Mobilize and train a world-class energy workforce.

Pillar 5
Accelerating 10x Technology Development and Deployment at Speed and Scale

As technology advances more rapidly each year, and as global competitors develop and scale technologies at blistering speeds, the United States must accelerate innovation through the deployment of cutting-edge technologies across all sectors of the economy. Business, government, academia, and national laboratories must be empowered to move faster to test, prove, and scale innovations to ensure every sector of the U.S. economy is operating with the most advanced products, services, and technical solutions.

Recommendations

1. Adapt warp speed models to expedite R&D, smart regulation, permitting, and deployment of new technologies at speed and scale.
2. Expand federal and private sector partnerships, co-investment, and personnel exchanges in new and disruptive fields driven by rapid technology convergence.
3. Allocate from .05–1.0 percent of federal research grants to support the technology commercialization process, including I.P. protection, prototyping, and overall technology transfer services.
4. Expand the role of the U.S. Department of Energy's National Laboratories in ongoing strategic partnerships with U.S. industry in commercializing Lab-generated I.P.
5. Establish a fixed portfolio of renewable funding for National Laboratories to perform long-term R&D in support of future missions.
6. Authorize federal pilot acquisition systems for frontier technologies to rapidly acquire dual-use technologies from the commercial sector for advancing government missions.
7. Preserve the Bayh-Dole Act's "march-in" rights for government agency research sponsors without using such rights to force industry price controls.
8. Create State agencies to coordinate and expedite regulatory processes and permitting, and to provide technical assistance to small and medium businesses.

Pillar 6
Empowering 10x Skilled Workforce

People innovate, so to build a world-leading innovation economy, and secure it for generations to come, the United States must first build a world-leading innovation workforce. Yet, today, the country faces skills shortages across our economy—from the researchers making discoveries in AI, quantum, biology, and nuclear to entrepreneurs commercializing new technologies to the manufacturers and technicians needed to deploy and operate next-generation technologies and processes.

Recommendations

1. Establish an "all of nation talents program" and create incentives for U.S. students to enter critical technology fields to expand the U.S. science and technology talent pipeline.
2. Federal agencies (U.S. Departments of Energy, Defense, and Education; National Science Foundation; et al.) should provide financial and economic incentives for U.S. students to go into technical fields with significant shortages, offering competitive, paid scholarships and stipends.
3. U.S. Department of Defense Service branches—Army, Navy, Air Force, and Space Force—should forge new partnerships to connect civilian communities to national security assets and operations in their respective regions.
4. Academia and industry need to foster strong links and partnerships for students to attain and rapidly adapt to business-ready skills.
5. Align workforce design and preparation activities across the regional innovation ecosystem, with the active participation of workforce boards, businesses, and local economic development authorities.
6. Increase investment in polytechnic institutions and community colleges to strengthen and upskill the technical workforce.
7. Emphasize experiential learning models and support from employers.
8. Invest in lifelong learning programs, empathizing experimental learning modules with support from employers.

Pillar 7
Expanding 10x Place-Making Innovation and Collaborative Innovation Networks

Innovation occurs everywhere. As a nation, we must deepen and broaden innovation ecosystems in all parts of our country—amplifying the networks of people, places, and assets that create the basis for growth and inclusive prosperity. Regional innovation hubs that bring together businesses, universities, national laboratories, and government in hyper-connected and collaborative networks can stimulate unexpected and productive partnerships, cultivate pro-innovation regional cultures, and support the development of specialized workforce skills and expertise.

Recommendations

1. Establish a White House "Regional Economic Development Council" to coordinate all federal and community economic development activities to optimize goals, enable co-investment, and eliminate duplication.
2. Under the auspices of the"Regional Economic Development Council," design a strategy that leverages private sector infrastructure, R&D, and workforce investments to maximize regional benefits and local impact.
3. Expand the mandates of all federal departments and agencies—including the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Small Business Administration, and the National Science Foundation—to explicitly support the development and expansion of regional innovation ecosystems across America.
4. Develop innovative new financing models to cultivate vibrant and sustainable innovation ecosystems in underserved communities, including investing in advanced manufacturing "Enterprise Zones."
5. Establish criteria and a certification process for "Innovation Districts," and provide tax and other benefits for regions achieving "Innovation District" certification.
6. To build and strengthen the Defense Industrial Base, deepen collaboration between universities, businesses, workforce boards, National Laboratories, and the U.S. Department of Defense, including access to shared secure research facilities.

7. Leverage existing national and regional cooperative extension programs in advanced manufacturing, agriculture, and health care to facilitate rapid R&D deployment and new job creation.
8. Increase the knowledge base of innovation ecosystem policy and practice, the sharing of best practices for regional models and experimental pilots that attract and grow high-value investment and job creation.
9. Build new networks of business, academia, labor, and government leaders across states and regions to join forces and leverage the existing assets and capabilities required to build next-generation capacity for the industries and jobs of the future.
10. Deepen and broaden regional access to early-stage and mezzanine financing for start-ups, business scale-up, and build-out of manufacturing operations, using tax and other targeted incentives, including in underserved communities and Enterprise Zones.

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About the Council on Competitiveness

For more than three decades, the Council on Competitiveness (Council) has championed a competitiveness agenda for the United States to attract investment and talent, and spur the commercialization of new ideas.

While the players may have changed since its founding in 1986, the mission remains as vital as ever—to enhance U.S. productivity and raise the standard of living for all Americans.

The members of the Council—CEOs, university presidents, labor leaders and national laboratory directors—represent a powerful, nonpartisan voice that sets aside politics and seeks results. By providing real-world perspective to Washington policymakers, the Council's private sector network makes an impact on decision-making across a broad spectrum of issues—from the cutting-edge of science and technology, to the democratization of innovation, to the shift from energy weakness to strength that supports the growing renaissance in U.S. manufacturing.

The Council's leadership group firmly believes that with the right policies, the strengths and potential of the U.S. economy far outweigh the current challenges the nation faces on the path to higher growth and greater opportunity for all Americans.