**National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers**

**Working Group on Broadening and Deepening the U.S. Innovation**

**Ecosystem**

***Session 3 Discussion Guide***

Wednesday, March 6th, 2024

3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Agenda**

* 3:00-3:10 – Welcome & Recap
* 3:10–3:50 – Discussion
* 3:50-4:00 – Conclusion & Next Steps

**Background & Recap**

The ‘Future of Place-Based Innovation: Broadening and Deepening the U.S. Innovation Ecosystem’ charter identifies four broad issue areas for the Commission and its Working Groups to explore:

1. Establishing regional and national strategies to define, coordinate, and support specialized regional innovation hubs.
2. Investing in expansion and retention of the local talent base.
3. Promoting inclusive growth and innovation in regional hubs.
4. Strengthening local innovation ecosystems by enhancing digital infrastructure and local financing.

When this Working Group met in October 2023, discussion focused on expanding and retaining local talent bases. Specifically, the group identified four key themes:

* **Building talent throughout the workforce pipeline**, including upskilling workers and identifying young talent.
* **Increasing the diversity of the innovation workforce** through targeted engagement and partnerships.
* **Creatively defining regions** to broaden collaborations and open new connections.
* **Incentivizing development and investment in new communities** by building additional financial and innovative capacity.

**Discussion: Promoting Inclusive and Extensive Regional Growth & Innovation by Leveraging Generational Investments**

**GOAL: Build on past discussions and begin driving toward concrete policy recommendations.**

**TOPICAL FOCUS: Redefining the nature of place to promote inclusive growth**

*The questions below are intended to guide discussion and provide food for thought. Not all questions need to be directly addressed during the Working Group session. Moderators and Working Group participants will collaboratively shape discussion around priority issues.*

The last few years have seen some of the largest investment in place-based innovation ever, from basic infrastructure to funding the creation of semiconductor clusters to regional clean energy hubs across the country. At the same time, the way in which employers, employees, and policymakers think about and define “place” is evolving and becoming much more expansive. These trends present new opportunities to promote inclusive growth, build new innovation ecosystems, and engage a wider range of workforce participants.

How can leaders across organizations capitalize on federal investments through IRA, BIL, CHIPS, etc. to promote inclusive growth and uplift historically overlooked or bypassed communities?

**Directing Capital to Historically Overlooked Communities**

* How should grant administrators and federal agencies think about directing funding from recent federal legislation to “under-tapped” communities? Do grant selection criteria need to adapt to more equitably direct funding?
* What can businesses and educational institutions located in diverse regions do to make a compelling case to invest in their communities?
* Are there instructive examples or recent models of communities that have successfully attracted investment and innovation activity by using unconventional approaches (e.g., leveraging the shift to remote work) in their favor? How could these examples be replicated?

**Ensuring Federal Grant Projects Benefit Local Communities**

* As grant money supports major new innovation clusters (e.g., Hydrogen Hubs), how can we ensure that the benefits of these projects (e.g., jobs, economic activity) flow to local communities?
* How can local leaders capitalize on momentum from large federal projects/grant funding to build a permanent and vibrant innovation ecosystem?

**Targeted Efforts at Inclusive Growth**

* How can leaders at the national and regional levels identify communities that are currently underserved and underutilized, but have strong potential for to plug into and contribute to the national innovation ecosystem?
* How can leadership in local communities promote innovation/economic growth while ensuring that underserved communities/populations participate equitably in this growth?

**Conclusion & Next Steps**

* This Working Group will meet again June 5th, from 3:00-4:00, to build on the ideas generated in this session and explore new topics. A short summary will be sent to Working Group participants in the coming weeks.