

## National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers

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

#### Ecosystem

#### *Session 2 Discussion Guide*

Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023

2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

#### **Agenda**

- 2:00-2:15 – Welcome & Recap
- 2:15–3:15 – Discussion
- 3:15-3:30 – 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 September 2023, discussion focused on capitalizing on historic investments in place based policies, including designing and securing federal grants. Specifically, the group identified five key themes:

- Measuring innovative capacity, gaps, and opportunities
- Strategically pursuing funding opportunities
- Improving the federal grant process
- Building and retaining vibrant regional innovation workforces
- Identifying and supporting communities of untapped potential

The goal of this and future Working Group sessions is to drive toward concrete policy recommendations.

The priority topic for today's session is expanding and retaining local talent bases.

*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.*

## **Discussion: Expanding and Retaining Local Talent Bases**

Securing and maintaining a strong innovation workforce is one of the largest challenges for underutilized communities – especially for regions with a smaller population. Building and retaining a vibrant talent base requires that communities are attractive for both working and living. **What kinds of investments or incentives are most critical to securing a strong talent base?**

### **Role of Regional Colleges and Universities**

- What role do local higher education institutions play in building regional workforces?
  - How can investments and partnerships bolster the capacity and reach of these institutions?
  - How can small and large institutions engage with and augment local K-12 education systems?
  - How can higher education institutions help students build network connections with regional entities? What role does experiential learning play in this effort?

### **Impact of the Shift to Remote Work**

- Does the pandemic-driven shift to remote work present new opportunities to capitalize on a redistribution of talent?
  - Is this trend likely to be lasting? How can communities capitalize on this potentially unique moment?
  - What role do remote workers, who work in but do not live in your community, have in bolstering regional innovation workforces? Are these workers a stopgap measure or a long-term solution?

### **Building Attractive Communities for Modern Workforces**

- What are the most important services or infrastructure, especially in smaller communities, to support and attract workers (e.g., affordable housing, reliable childcare, speedy broadband, etc.)?
  - Where are the largest gaps in supporting infrastructure or the social safety net? How should investment priorities be set?
  - How can funding for expensive but impactful projects and programs be attained? What is the role of public-private partnerships in securing this funding?

## **Conclusion & Next Steps**

- The Council will present initial findings from this group and our three other Working Groups at our annual National Competitiveness Forum on December 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. A short summary, akin to last session, will be sent to Working Group participants shortly.