National Commission on Innovation and Competitiveness Frontiers

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

Session 2 Discussion Guide

Friday, September 15th, 2023
3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Agenda

- 3:30-3:40 – Welcome & Introduction

- 3:40-4:15 – Topic #1 Discussion

- 4:15–4:50 – Topic #2 Discussion

- 4:50-5:00 – Conclusion & Next Steps

Background & Context

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 the Commission convened at UC Davis earlier this year, discussion focused on topics 1 and 4. Discussion during this and subsequent Working Group meetings will unpack those topics further, explore issue areas 2 and 3 above, and respond to recent policy and technology developments that are shaping the broader landscape of place-based innovation. Specifically, major recent developments in this space include:

- CHIPS Act Regional Tech Hubs: Funding from the CHIPS Act will support over 20 regional technology and innovation hubs, providing a unique opportunity to establish new innovation ecosystems and new regional specializations.

- Other Relevant Legislation (incl. ARP, IIJA, and IRA): Between these three bills, there was about $80 billion invested in place-based industrial policy. Capitalizing on this momentum, and establishing more predictable funding pipelines, will be critical to building additional innovation ecosystems.

- Remote Work Implications: Even before the explosion of remote work, people are not as mobile, increasingly choosing to live in the same regions where they grew up. This trend could continue with remote work, but increased flexibility also provides opportunities to expand talent sourcing.

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

Topic 1: Leveraging partnerships to create and enhance regional innovation ecosystems

- What types of innovation demand physical proximity, and how can the co-location of assets, talent, and infrastructure be coordinated?

- How can higher education institutions, K-12 education systems, and businesses partner to develop talent specializations in fields with an undersupply of properly trained workers? Do these partnerships require physical proximity?

- Are there opportunities to connect government programs, businesses, and universities with similar specializations that are located in disparate geographies?

Topic 2: Capitalizing on regional advantages to address national innovation gaps

- How can regional specializations be systematically identified and mapped to existing gaps and opportunities in critical industries?

- How can regions identify gaps in the necessary ingredients of innovation (e.g., workforce, housing, start-ups) and address these gaps? Are new measures of innovation capacity necessary?

- What partnerships can be created to build new specializations in geographies across the country? Are new forms of partnerships or models of collaboration necessary?

- How can regions best leverage university infrastructure to increase access to research facilities and open new opportunities for joint projects?

Conclusion & Next Steps

- Our second session will be held **October 18th, from 2:00pm-3:30pm**, and will focus on the role of human capital in place-based innovation, including expanding the local talent base and promoting inclusive growth and innovation. [*Moderators thank WG participants*]