



Date: November 26, 2025

To: Staff Members of Louisiana Congressional Delegation

From: John R. Dearie and Katie Allen  
Center for American Entrepreneurship

Re: November 13<sup>th</sup> Roundtable Regarding New Orleans Innovation Community

## **Executive Summary**

The Center for American Entrepreneurship respectfully submits this briefing memo to share the major take-aways and policy implications of a roundtable conducted on November 13<sup>th</sup> in New Orleans, LA regarding the report “[Advancing Regional Innovation Economies: Mapping the Momentum of America’s Top Entrepreneurial Regions](#)”, recently released by the Palo Alto, CA-based Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center (NEC). The roundtable included 14 leaders in the New Orleans innovation and entrepreneurship community.

The purpose of the roundtable was to present the major findings of the NEC report, which identified New Orleans as one of eight U.S. metro areas that have outpaced peers in the proportional number of early-stage companies that have grown in valuation and employment, even amid macroeconomic headwinds and volatility. Participants also discussed how New Orleans can build on the success achieved to date. Factors identified included greater support from key industries and educational institutions in the region, more investment in local startups by pension funds and other institutional investors, long-term retention of local entrepreneurs and skilled talent, national recognition of New Orleans as a national innovation center, and public policies that further de-risk the decision to become an entrepreneur.

## **Introduction**

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, the [Center for American Entrepreneurship](#) (CAE) participated in a roundtable event in New Orleans, LA regarding the newly released report “[Advancing Regional Innovation Economies: Mapping the Momentum of America’s Top Entrepreneurial Regions](#)”. The roundtable was hosted by [The Idea Village](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit accelerator whose mission is to support regional startups and build successful companies.

CAE is a nonpartisan, Washington, DC-based 501(c)(3) research, policy, and advocacy organization founded in July of 2017. CAE works with federal policymakers regarding the critical importance of entrepreneurs and startups to innovation, economic growth, job creation, and expanding opportunity – and to pursue a comprehensive policy agenda intended to achieve a stronger, more resilient, and inclusive U.S. economy through thriving entrepreneurship.

The report was produced and the roundtable was organized by the [Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center](#), a Palo Alto, CA-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance economic progress for all by providing world-class education, global networks, and cutting-edge research.

The report documents the latest phase of a four-year initiative called Advancing Regional Innovation Economics (ARIE), which maps the factors and conditions that shape equitable access to entrepreneurship, catalyzing inclusive economic growth through metro-level data, actionable insights, and founder-informed policy recommendations. ARIE is funded by JPMorganChase and Nasdaq.

The ARIE initiative was motivated by two important realities. First, repeated research has demonstrated that new businesses – “startups” – are disproportionately responsible for the innovations that drive [productivity growth](#) and economic growth, and account for virtually all net new [job creation](#). Second, the opportunity to launch and grow new businesses – as well as vibrant innovation communities – is not evenly distributed across the country. Some regions perform better, while others lag behind – in other words, when it comes to entrepreneurial success, geography matters. The purpose of the ARIE initiative is to understand how and why.

Launched in 2021, ARIE began by mapping the barriers and opportunities for entrepreneurship nationally and internationally, before turning its focus on U.S. states. In 2022 and 2023, the initiative focused on measuring structural factors contributing to entrepreneurial success through field interviews and case studies. More recently, ARIE sharpened its focus on metropolitan areas, where “entrepreneurial dynamics are most visible and actionable.” The focus on metro areas enabled ARIE researchers to pair quantitative modeling with on-the-ground narratives, and to demonstrate how place – including specific institutions, industries, and public policies – shapes opportunity for entrepreneurs.

The new report presents granular insights regarding how place creates distinct environmental conditions for entrepreneurial and innovation success, especially for emerging communities.

## **The Roundtable**

[Nicola Corzine](#), CEO & Executive Director of the NEC, began the roundtable by outlining the ARIE initiative, summarizing the findings of previous phases of the initiative, and explaining the approach the objectives of the most recent phase of the effort.

Nicola explained that in establishing a list of “Top 20” metro areas based on income and the number of new businesses created, a pattern emerged that showcased eight stand-out metro areas that have succeeded according to five critical themes: 1) access to early-stage capital of all kinds; 2) a combination of top research universities, community colleges, and entrepreneurship training programs; 3) domestic and international talent flows; 4) public policies that support, de-risk, and encourage entrepreneurship; and, 5) a flywheel effect that begins when each of the four previously mentioned conditions reinforce one another, strengthening and accelerating growth.

New Orleans is one of those stand-out innovation communities. The purpose of the roundtable was to present the New Orleans-specific findings of the report, and to discuss what can be done to build on the success achieved to date.

Fourteen mostly local innovation community leaders participated, including:

- [Jon Atkinson](#): CEO at The Idea Village
- [Liz Maxwell](#): Chief of Staff at The Idea Village
- [Tim Williamson](#): Founder and CEO of NieuxCo
- [Jill Johnson](#): Co-Founder and CEO at Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership (IFEL)
- [Chris Reade](#): Founder and President at LookFar Ventures
- [Kwamena Aidoo](#): Co-Founder at Corridor Ventures
- [Jessica Allen](#): CEO at Propeller
- [Jasmine Brown-DeRousselle](#): Chief External Affairs Officer, Greater New Orleans, Inc.
- [Evie Poitevent Sanders](#): VP of Innovation & Entrepreneurship at Greater New Orleans, Inc.
- [Jeanne Exnicios](#): Director, Marketing and Communications at The Tulane University Innovation Institute
- [Dr. Tara Lopez](#): Dean of the College of Business at Southeastern Louisiana University
- [Dorien Nunez](#): Senior Consultant at Community Development Venture Capital Alliance (CDVCA)
- [James Bason](#): President & CEO of TruFund Financial Services, Inc.
- [Victoria Phipps](#): Vice President, Global Philanthropy at JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Ms. Corzine initiated the roundtable discussion by asking participants a series of questions:

**What has contributed most to New Orleans’ success as an innovation community?**

Responses from participants included:

- City residents willing to be entrepreneurs;
- A “scrappy” culture among the city’s entrepreneurial community;
- A strong “sense of place” and a long-term commitment to New Orleans among community entrepreneurs;
- Close connections among the city’s entrepreneurial community and its leaders;
- A broader city community supportive of entrepreneurs;
- Dedicated economic development agencies and officials that understand the importance of new businesses to economic development;
- Key established industries in the region on which entrepreneurs can draw for ideas, skilled talent, capital, and other support;
- Education institutions in the region that value and actively support entrepreneurship;
- Active networks of angel investors and venture capitalists to provide capital to entrepreneurs; and,
- A wide range of innovation community support organizations like shared-work spaces, incubators, and accelerators.

### **What would it take to further leverage the progress New Orleans has achieved to date?**

- Broadening access to, and raising the quality of, education in the community – both early and continuing education;
- Access to more business advisory services and mentoring for startups;
- Reliable and affordable insurance protection from frequent natural disasters like hurricanes and floods;
- Local, state, and federal policy support for entrepreneurs and for New Orleans – meaning, to date New Orleans’ development as a successful innovation community has been a “bottom-up” process; the city now needs “top-down” support to solidify progress to date and reach the next level of development;
- National recognition of New Orleans as a leading innovation community in order to attract more entrepreneurs, skilled talent, and investment;
- Keeping more entrepreneurs and skilled talent in New Orleans for the long-term;
- Greater progress in mobilizing capital for entrepreneurs, especially incentivizing more investment in startups by local pension funds and other institutional investors; and,
- Public policies that de-risk the decision to become an entrepreneur.

### **What issues should policymakers focus on to support New Orleans’ further development as a nationally significant innovation center?**

- Tax policies – One participant mentioned how effective the city’s film and digital media tax credits have been in attracting film and television projects to New Orleans. Participants agreed that similar tax policies could be explored to attract and retain startups and skilled talent, including favorable income, capital, and even housing tax credits.
- Capital formation – As mentioned above, participants emphasized the importance of greater progress in toward expanding access to capital for entrepreneurs, particularly mobilizing more angel investors in the region as well as incentivizing more investment in startups by local pension funds and other institutional investors;
- Education – Participants strongly agreed with the NEC report that research universities and community colleges are a critical component of any thriving innovation community. With this in mind, several participants argued that teaching business skills and supporting entrepreneurship should be a central priority of curricula determination and resource allocation.
- Regulatory streamlining and simplification – Participants also agreed that ensuring New Orleans remains a leading innovation center requires de-risking entrepreneurship and minimizing business “frictions,” which entails streamlining regulation and licensing.

## Conclusion

As job growth has [slowed](#) in recent quarters, and as artificial intelligence (AI) threatens to [eliminate](#) millions of American jobs in coming years, U.S. policymakers should focus ever more sharply on the job creating power of entrepreneurship. And policy efforts to strengthen American entrepreneurship should include the priority of expanding access to entrepreneurial opportunity to every state, city, and town in America. With that in mind, NEC's new report is mandatory reading for entrepreneurs, economic development professionals, business leaders, local, state, and federal policymakers, and anyone else interested in understanding the factors and conditions that support thriving innovation communities – and how to build on entrepreneurial success achieved to date by cities and states across the country.

For the full report, analysis, and data, please access the report at “[Advancing Regional Innovation Economies: Mapping the Momentum of America's Top Entrepreneurial Regions](#).”

CAE appreciates the opportunity to submit this memo. If you have any questions about the roundtable, the report, or the content of this memo, please reach out at [john@startupsUSA.org](mailto:john@startupsUSA.org) or (202) 821-9448.