Policy Recommendations

America cannot continue to be a country where a few groups prosper while many others experience economic uncertainty. Innovation activity in the United States needs to be pursued inclusively and its benefits shared broadly across diverse groups and communities throughout society. Innovation needs to provide access to quality goods and services for all socioeconomic and demographic groups.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Revise degree requirements for hiring. Companies should reform hiring practices to open opportunities for "new collar" workers, focusing on skills and credential-based hiring for positions that do not require a bachelor's degree. Many low- and middle-income individuals and workers in rural areas have difficulty attaining bachelor's degrees in today's higher education systems but possess the necessary skills and experience to fill jobs — particularly when work-based learning and shorter education pathways are available.

Develop partnerships to scale inclusive innovation programs.

The government should partner with private-sector and local stakeholders to support effective and replicable program models for revitalizing local innovation ecosystems and fostering inclusive economic growth, particularly in low-income and rural areas of the country.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Support and expand innovation "residency" programs in underserved areas. The government should explore ways to scale up and support efforts to bring new opportunities to traditionally underserved regions (including rural, noncoastal and lower-income areas) and incentivize entrepreneurial activity. This work includes making competitive grant funding available to programs that match talent with start-ups in areas that lack a well-established start-up community or culture, as well as supporting regional development initiatives that aid entrepreneurial activity.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Deliver training resources more effectively. The federal government should identify and support organizations that have successfully replicated training programs that deliver industry-aligned skill-training and job-matching services to high-need groups across multiple sites or using online platforms. This action helps maximize the impact of workforce training resources by supporting delivery models that meet the range and extent of local resource needs.

Support diversity in entrepreneurship.

The government should collaborate with private actors to support diverse entrepreneurial ecosystems and build a national network of inclusive incubators and accelerators beyond traditional innovation hubs such as New York and Silicon Valley. Such ecosystems should promote entrepreneurship among disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Facilitate access to finance. Industry should partner with federal, state and local governments to increase the availability of and access to credit to empower entrepreneurs from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Provide mentorship and networking. The public and private sectors should collaborate to provide coaching and mentoring to strengthen business and entrepreneurial skills among diverse entrepreneurs. They should build and bolster networks that enable frequent and enduring interaction between these entrepreneurs and the wider business community.

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