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2019 REGIONAL INNOVATION STRATEGIES COMPETITION I6 GRANTEES ANNOUNCED

July 23, 2019

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On Tuesday, July 23, [U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced \(/news/press-releases/2019/07/23/ris.htm\)](/news/press-releases/2019/07/23/ris.htm) the grantees under EDA's 2019 Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) program competition.

This year, 26 [i6 Challenge grantees \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/) were funded along with 18 Seed Fund Support recipients. The RIS portfolio represents a catalytic, nationwide program designed to fuel high-growth entrepreneurship and increase access to capital for communities across America.

The i6 Challenge aspires to increase productivity and accelerate growth through entrepreneurship that translates innovations, ideas, intellectual property, and applied research into new businesses, accelerated paths to export, increased foreign direct investment, and new jobs.

The 2019 RIS Notice of Funding Opportunity generated over 140 i6 Challenge applications to the program. The 26 selected award recipients represent a geographically diverse cohort spanning 19 states, with Minnesota as a new addition to the RIS portfolio. In total, the 2019 i6 Challenge cohort generated \$20.2 million in matching funds from a variety of private and public sector stakeholders, with \$17.5 million in EDA funds to support programmatic efforts of the projects.

Knowing that innovation is a key driver in economic advancement, there was increased emphasis on growing innovation-driven industries of the future, to include the advancement of the commercial space economy and the integration of smart technology to enhance regional infrastructure in cities and airports. For example, the [Maui Economic Development Board \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/maui-economic-development-board-inc.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/maui-economic-development-board-inc.htm) is launching a space-focused career pathway

curriculum to fuel Hawaii's commercial space economy with the help of renowned space specialists. [Smart City Works \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/smart-city-works-inc.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/smart-city-works-inc.htm) is on a mission to strengthen smart city technology to improve livability and resilience of cities in Northern Virginia and to develop market ready solutions to key infrastructure challenges. Nearby [Atlantic County Economic Alliance \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/atlantic-county-economic-alliance.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/atlantic-county-economic-alliance.htm) in New Jersey is developing a smart airport and aviation partnership to test smart airport and aviation technologies by utilizing regional assets such as the Smart Airport Research Test-Bed facility and an FAA-approved drone test flight facility.

A common theme among this year's cohort was the emphasis on bridging the urban-rural divide in entrepreneurial opportunity. To that end, [Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/eastern-shore-entrepreneurship-center.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/eastern-shore-entrepreneurship-center.htm) is bringing rural and urban cohorts together to address challenges in agriculture, aquaculture, and the environment across Eastern and Southern Maryland. [Marquette Tech District Foundation \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/marquette-tech-district-foundation-inc.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/marquette-tech-district-foundation-inc.htm) is expanding their current model of a tech district into the Rural Delta Tech Innovation Network (RDTIN) that will support rural communities throughout the Delta region by cross-pollinating programs in Missouri and Kentucky. In Tennessee, [AgLaunch \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/aglaunch-initiative.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/aglaunch-initiative.htm) is leveraging a multi-state, multi-institution initiative to create platforms to commercialize technologies in agricultural technology, facilitate farmer transitions into next generation agricultural opportunities, and forge farms of the future.

Strengthening America's manufacturing base through technology development and deployment is core to the mission of several i6 Challenge award recipients, including [Purdue University's \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/purdue-university-northwest.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/purdue-university-northwest.htm) initiative to drive next-generation advanced manufacturing technology and develop an innovation economy workforce in central Indiana. [Austin Community College \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/austin-community-college.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/austin-community-college.htm) is launching a manufacturing and prototyping lab facility and business incubator to accelerate Central Texas' manufacturing economy and drive increased physical product innovation.

Several 2019 i6 Challenge recipients are on the cutting edge of a rapidly evolving healthcare environment. [The University of Nebraska \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/university-ne-medical-center.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/university-ne-medical-center.htm) is building a medical technology pipeline in Omaha to prototype, validate, and commercialize new medical devices through life-saving entrepreneurial opportunities. [University of California Los Angeles \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/regents-university-ca-los-angeles.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/regents-university-ca-los-angeles.htm) is supporting aspiring clinical and technical entrepreneurs to bridge the gap between medicine and technology to advance patient care at their Biodesign Hub. On the East Coast, the [Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida \(/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/mayo-clinic-jacksonville.htm\)](/oie/ris/i6/2019/awardees/mayo-clinic-jacksonville.htm) is building a community of innovators to develop new healthcare and life science products.

EDA is excited to invest in these organizations as they continue to build regional capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship and enhance job creation in their communities.

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