

U.S. Department of Commerce invests \$1 million in eight states to strengthen innovation and economic growth initiatives

Universities in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Washington awarded federal funding

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WASHINGTON – Acting U.S. Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank today announced \$1 million in Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants to universities in eight states as part of the University Center Economic Development Program, a partnership to leverage university assets to promote American innovation and strengthen regional economies.

“The Obama administration is committed to investing in higher education, including University Centers nationwide, which play a crucial role in promoting innovation, technology transfer, and the commercialization of research,” said Acting Secretary Blank. “The eight grants announced today will help American universities support the entrepreneurship and job creation that are vital to economic growth in each of these regions.”

EDA-funded University Centers conduct applied research, provide technical assistance to public and private-sector organizations, and conduct other activities with the goal of enhancing regional economic development. They offer a full range of services tailored appropriately to each region’s needs and the institution’s strengths. University Center business solutions include basic and applied research, market research, feasibility studies, product development, strategic and financial planning, seminars and training, and management consultations. These services enhance business productivity, streamline operations, increase quality, and cut costs.

The grantees and grant amounts include:

- University of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska (\$125,000)
- Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona (\$100,000)
- *California State University, Chico and Fresno, California (\$125,000)*
- University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii (\$182,847)
- Boise State University, Boise, Idaho (\$125,000)
- University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada (\$125,000)
- University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon (\$125,000)
- Washington State University, Pullman, Washington (\$125,000)

Following is more information about each grantee:

University of Alaska, Anchorage: The University of Alaska Center for Economic Development leverages university-based resources and expertise to advance entrepreneurship, cultivate innovation, support commercialization and expand regional economic competitiveness by supporting industry clusters across Alaska. The center also provides a venue for students to work on applied projects that strengthen their overall learning experience, ensures faculty have opportunities to contribute to public and private industry led initiatives, supports the university's research and commercialization growth initiatives, and engages with organizations across Alaska that otherwise might not have had the opportunity to work with the University of Alaska system.

Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff: With designation as an EDA University Center, Northern Arizona University will be able to expand its existing services to include many partners from the private, public, and tribal sectors. Projects already underway in Arizona's cluster economy that will benefit include: a thriving businesses incubator for commercialization and tech-transfer; a high-skilled regional workforce training center; an initiative to attract and retain environmentally-friendly businesses and high-growth enterprises; and an effort to develop renewable energy capacity, both utility-scale and distributed generation.

California State University, Chico and Fresno: The Center for Economic Development at California State University, Chico, has formed a regional partnership with California State University, Fresno. It will focus on cultivating an economic ecosystem throughout California, with an emphasis on their combined 31-county service area of the Great Central Valley. Through this partnership, the center will focus on economic development activities that further industry growth, job creation, entrepreneurship, innovation, commercialization, and workforce development in industry sectors with high growth potential, including agriculture, clean energy, health care, and water.

University of Hawaii, Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Pacific Business Center Program strengthens the regional competitiveness in Hawaii and the American-affiliated Pacific Islands by advancing high-growth entrepreneurship, business expansion of innovation clusters, business disaster preparedness, and post-disaster economic recovery. The center will serve distressed communities by promoting economic diversification; providing higher paying, higher skilled jobs in broad cluster industries in Hawaii; and supporting the development of private-sector jobs in the Pacific Islands to build local capacity.

Boise State University, Idaho: TechHelp, Idaho's University Center at Boise State University, has two primary areas of focus: (a) cultivating innovation and (b) expanding business opportunities in Idaho's innovation clusters. With its partners at the University of Idaho and Idaho State University, the center addresses industry needs and helps companies compete more effectively in the global market. It does this by working with public and private consultants across Idaho to provide technical assistance and training to the state's manufacturers, food and dairy processors, and entrepreneurs.

University of Nevada, Reno: The University of Nevada's Center for Economic Development will focus on supporting regional commercialization efforts and business expansion in the region's innovative clusters. The center already works with faculty and researchers across campus to assist communities throughout the state—from small mining and agricultural communities to larger urban areas. Government officials, planners, and decision makers rely on the research and guidance provided by the center. Its assistance to early-stage, innovative, technology-based companies, contributes to higher skilled, higher wage jobs in both Nevada and its surrounding region.

University of Oregon, Eugene: The University of Oregon's University Center will focus on creating long-term partnerships that extend beyond the initial stages of community needs assessment or strategic planning, helping businesses and communities focus on implementation and outcomes. By incorporating a strong service learning component, the center will also provide university students with field-based learning experiences, training future professionals in the field of economic development.

Washington State University, Pullman: The focus of the University Center at Washington State University is to make the full resources of the university available to the public in order to promote economic development in the State of Washington and the region that includes extreme western Idaho and northern Oregon. The center will focus on cultivating innovation and providing technical assistance; advancing high-growth entrepreneurship; and supporting commercialization of innovative ideas, products, and services. One of the center's unique services is its Innovation Assessment Center, which gives inventors and innovators relevant data and interpretation about the market forces they face.

About the U.S. Economic Development Administration (www.eda.gov)

The mission of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing the nation's regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. An agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce, EDA makes investments in economically distressed communities in order to create jobs for U.S. workers, promote American innovation, and accelerate long-term sustainable economic growth.

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