Top Ten Most Innovative Economic Development Initiatives
Announced by Brookings Institution, Rockefeller Foundation

States and Municipalities, from Youngstown to Los Angeles,
Are Outpacing Washington with Creative Solutions to Grow Jobs and Expand Global Markets

(Washington, DC) – The Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program and The Rockefeller Foundation today released the second annual list of top ten initiatives around the country that show the most promise for creating jobs, growing regional economies, and boosting global competitiveness in 2013.

This year’s list of “Innovations to Watch” represents the most forward-thinking and effective solutions that are now being implemented by America’s states and metropolitan areas in the arenas of low carbon, exports, human capital, innovation, and governance. The innovations are part of the Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation, which presents fiscally-responsible state policies and practical metropolitan-led solutions that leaders can use to move toward the next economy.

“While partisan politics continues to paralyze Washington, leaders in states and municipalities across the country are moving forward with innovative solutions that address the many economic challenges we will face in the coming years,” stated Bruce Katz, vice president at Brookings and co-director of Metropolitan Policy Program.

“As we prepare for the presidential inauguration next week and look at the tough legislative battles ahead, it’s important to recognize where the real governing is taking place – not in Washington but by state, city, corporate, civic, university and environmental leaders all over the country,” added Katz.

“America is renewing itself from the bottom up. As we’ve seen before, times of great challenge often result in great innovation, and this list highlights the smart, pragmatic, and bi-partisan solutions now being implemented on the ground that will grow a skilled workforce, double exports, and bolster advanced industries,” stated Judith Rodin president of The Rockefeller Foundation.

“These ten innovations represent extraordinary examples of how communities are building on their distinctive advantages to better position themselves in a global marketplace that is fiercely competitive and undergoing massive change,” Rodin added.

The top ten innovative initiatives this year are in the metropolitan areas of Portland, OR; Chicago, IL; Youngstown, OH; San Antonio, TX; and Los Angeles, CA; and statewide in Florida, California, Massachusetts, Kansas, Washington and Oregon. (See below for more details.)
All ten initiatives embrace a vision of economic growth that is productive, sustainable, inclusive, and globally oriented. They are imaginative in design; advanced by networks of leaders who cross jurisdictional, ideological and political lines; and can be easily replicated in other jurisdictions.

For example, San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro and local business and civic leaders championed a ballot initiative, which passed in November, to provide $31 million per year in new sales tax revenues to build city centers in which thousands of pre-K children will be educated mostly for free. The long-term goal: build a more skilled workforce for the region.

Florida Governor Rick Scott is building on the state’s smart decisions to prioritize investments in the Port of Miami, which carries fully one-third of US trade with Latin America, to prepare for changing dynamics in global trade, such as the expansion of the Panama Canal.

To reduce the skills gap, Kansas is incentivizing college students to pursue technical education at local technical colleges, providing free tuition for technical education classes, and awarding each school district $1000 for every student who graduates with an “industry-recognized credential.”

California has instituted a new cap-and-trade system to lower carbon emissions and further demarcate that state as the center of the American clean economy.

**Top 10 State and Metropolitan “Innovations to Watch”**

**Exports**

Metro – Portland, OR: Metropolitan Export Plan – An ambitious strategy to help business and distinctive clusters of firms access global markets.


**Low Carbon**

Metro – Chicago, IL: “Retrofit Chicago” – Leveraging private investment in a new Infrastructure Trust for the energy retrofit of public buildings.

State – California: Cap-and-Trade – The launch of a carbon trading system to lower carbon emissions and further demarcate the state as the center of the American clean economy.

**Innovation**

Metro – Youngstown, OH: National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Institute – A new regional manufacturing initiative to exploit the full opportunities brought by 3D printing.

State – Massachusetts: Top-USA Massachusetts – A research exchange between Boston-area and Brazilian research institutions.
Human Capital

Metro – San Antonio, TX: Pre-K Expansion – A commitment to expand pre-k education to give every student a strong start on the path to secondary and post-secondary success.

State – Kansas: Career and Technical Education Initiative – State incentives for enrollment in and completion of local technical education and community college classes.

Governance


The Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation is working to present fiscally-responsible state policies and practical metropolitan-led solutions that leaders can use to move toward the next economy that is driven by exports, powered by low carbon, fueled by innovation, rich with opportunity and led by metropolitan areas. To learn more, please visit: http://www.brookings.edu/about/projects/state-metro-innovation.

The Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings provides decision-makers with cutting-edge research and policy ideas for improving the health and prosperity of metropolitan areas, including their component cities, suburbs, and rural areas. To learn more, please visit: www.brookings.edu/metro. Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/brookingsmetro.

The Rockefeller Foundation fosters innovative solutions to many of the world’s most pressing challenges, affirming its mission, since 1913, to “promote the well-being” of humanity. Today, the Foundation works to ensure that more people can tap into the benefits of globalization while strengthening resilience to its risks. For more information, please visit: www.rockefellerfoundation.org.

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