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**Bass Initiative on
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at BROOKINGS

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Brookings launches new guide to help local leaders assess their innovation district

A new how-to guide for economic development practitioners outlines framework for conducting an innovation ecosystem audit.

Washington, D.C. – A new Brookings guide out today, “[Assessing your innovation district: A how-to guide](#),” is a tool for public and private leaders to audit the assets that comprise their local innovation ecosystem. The guide is designed to reveal how to best target resources toward innovative and inclusive economic development tailored to an area’s unique strengths and challenges.

Over the past two decades, a confluence of changing market demands and demographic preferences have led to a revaluation of urban places—and a concomitant shift in the geography of the growing innovation economy. This evolution can be seen in the increased clustering—often around universities, medical centers, and other anchors—of firms, intermediaries, and innovative workers in dense urban districts or “hubs.” City—and increasingly suburban—stakeholders have taken notice; many are exploring ways to support this growth as a means of fostering job creation, economic opportunity, and revitalization in their communities.

“[Assessing your innovation district: A how-to guide](#)” outlines a five-part integrated framework for conducting an innovation ecosystem asset audit. Developed through research and on-the-ground observations on the key elements that constitute a healthy innovation ecosystem, the framework is centered on a set of five major questions:

1. Critical mass: Where are your region’s highest concentrations of innovation assets?
2. Innovation capacity: Is the district leveraging and aligning its distinctive advantages to grow and strengthen firms’ innovation capacity?
3. Diversity and inclusion: Does the district have an inclusive, diverse, and opportunity-rich environment?
4. Quality of place: Does the district have physical and social assets that attract a diversity of firms and people, increase interactions, and accelerate innovation outcomes?
5. Leadership: Does the district have the leadership necessary to succeed?

(MORE)

These framework elements are explored in detail in the guide. Separate sections describe the importance of each element to the creation of a healthy innovation ecosystem, suggesting the kinds of questions “auditors” will want to ask, and providing sample methods and data that can be used to answer them. The guide concludes with advice on the types of indicators that innovation district stakeholders might track to gauge their district’s success, along with suggestions for how additional measures might be utilized in the future to further fuel district growth and development.

To download the guide and the accompanying spreadsheet for auditing, [click here](#).

About The Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Initiative on Innovation and Placemaking

The Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Initiative on Innovation and Placemaking is a collaboration between the Brookings Institution and Project for Public Spaces. It aims to catalyze a new cross-disciplinary approach to city building that integrates the reinforcing benefits of vibrant public spaces, innovative urban economies, and inclusive growth.

To learn more, visit: www.brookings.edu/project/anne-t-and-robert-m-bass-initiative-on-innovation-and-placemaking/.

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