

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

## GOVERNOR MURPHY ANNOUNCES NINE COMMUNITIES SELECTED TO RECEIVE INNOVATION CHALLENGE PLANNING FUNDS

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today announced that the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) will award \$100,000 each to nine communities to advance plans to strengthen their local innovation ecosystems through the pilot round of the Innovation Challenge. The nine communities receiving awards for their planning proposals are: the City of Bridgeton, the City of New Brunswick, Passaic County, the City of Trenton, Atlantic County, the City of Atlantic City, Camden County, Union Township, and Monmouth County.

“Communities across New Jersey responded to this challenge with a clear commitment to spurring innovation in their local ecosystems,”

**said Governor Murphy.** “From the installation of a high-speed 5G fiber network to the creation of a collaborative research-driven incubator and maker’s campus, these plans will help further New Jersey’s ability to compete and win in the 21st century economy.”

In July, the EDA launched the Innovation Challenge through a Request for Qualifications/Proposals (RFQ/P), offering individual communities or teams of municipalities an opportunity to compete for planning awards of up to \$100,000 to catalyze the growth of local ecosystems throughout New Jersey. Proposals were scored against pre-established evaluation criteria, including the plan’s ability to achieve one or more goals of the Innovation Challenge, strength of the established partnership, commitment of additional funding from partners, presence and strength of a defined collaborative stakeholder engagement process, evidence of the plan’s ability to grow the number of small businesses/attract employers, planning for solutions based on the use of new and emerging technologies, and an ability to execute the project or viability of the planning project. Applicants also received points based on their Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI) ranking.

“We designed the Innovation Challenge to help communities take the next step forward in building an inclusive, sustainable culture of entrepreneurship and innovation – whether they already had an established ecosystem or were just beginning,”

**said EDA CEO Tim Sullivan.** “The uniqueness and quality of the proposals we received illustrates New Jersey’s spirit of innovation, from the south to the north. We look forward to working with these communities as they turn their plans into reality.”

The nine proposals receiving awards include:

### **City of Bridgeton**

"Bridgeton: A Center for Smart Food Manufacturing" is a project that seeks to develop a national model for innovation and emerging technology for the food sector by establishing a technology hub for the food industry cluster in Bridgeton. The plan calls for creating a 15,000 to 20,000 square foot facility dedicated to development, testing, and training on the latest cutting-edge technology to make food production, processing, and packaging safer and more efficient.

### **City of New Brunswick**

The City of New Brunswick, together with its higher education partner and strategic partners, has established the parameters of a project to address two significant issues as part of its overall Innovation Initiative which it sees as essential components to growing the local innovation economy. First, the Center for Advanced Infrastructure & Technology (CAIT) at Rutgers University will direct a project focused on improving mobility through universal connectivity. Second, the partnership will work with an architect and lab planner to design a prototype Lab of the Future for start-up companies that require the availability of flexible lab spaces.

### **Passaic County**

The County of Passaic, City of Paterson, and City of Passaic will develop a needs assessment to determine the future of physical infrastructure and workforce/sector development strategy in the County’s most distressed urban centers. Specifically, the assessment will analyze and evaluate options to install a high-speed 5G fiber network in the commercial and industrial areas of Paterson and Passaic so they can better attract and support entrepreneurs and emerging sector employers. This plan will involve discussion on how best to implement a 5G fiber optic network along commercial corridors.

### **City of Trenton**

The City of Trenton will plan the Trenton Production and Knowledge Innovation Campus (TPKIC) in the city’s creative, education, and transit districts, anchored by a build out of Mercer County Community College’s James Kerney Campus as a multi-university collaborative hub and a new research and commercialization nexus near Trenton Transit Center. This partnership will be led by a consortium of all five institutions of higher education in Mercer County: Mercer County Community College, Princeton University, Rider University, The College of New Jersey, and Thomas Edison State University. The vision behind TPKIC is to build a collaborative research-driven incubator and maker’s campus for existing and start-up businesses, local creators, students and faculty at partner colleges and universities, and Trenton Public Schools students and recent graduates.

### **Atlantic County**

The Atlantic County Government, in conjunction with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, Atlantic Cape Community College, and the Atlantic County Improvement Authority, has put forth a proposal to fund a Strategic Plan and Action Agenda for the location, design, and development of the Atlantic County Aviation and Technical Academy near the Atlantic City International Airport, to provide an adequately trained workforce to serve these facilities and address the current and emerging needs of the aviation industry. This proposed plan will establish the Academy close to the Atlantic City International Airport to address the growing workforce demands of the industry and leverage the potential for new business within the existing cluster of aviation and aeronautic industries in and around the Airport.

### **City of Atlantic City**

Atlantic City and Stockton University propose a Center for Marine & Environmental Science to be located in Atlantic City, potentially on the waterfront at Bader Field. The Center will be a multi-story, multi-tenant building serving as the home for its Center for Marine and Coastal Sciences, office and lab space for the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, and a coastal resilience/Blue Economy Coastal Research Incubator. The Innovation Challenge will assist the City, Stockton University, and strategic partners advance the Center for Marine & Environmental Science and build the capacity needed to drive innovation-centered economic development. The Center will synthesize a state agency-higher education partnership and catalyze new businesses and research as a result.

**Camden County**

Working together with Rowan University's College of Engineering, Cooper's Ferry Partnership, Verizon, and Camden City, Camden County will seek to demonstrate and evaluate a holistic, integrated approach to improve downtown Camden's surface transportation performance and integrate this approach with other best practices involving public safety. Working with its public and private sector team members, Camden County intends to address how emerging transportation data, technologies, and applications can be integrated with existing systems to address Camden's transportation challenges.

**Township of Union**

Union Township and its strategic partners aim to develop a plan to expand within Union the current incubator housed at the Institute for Life Science Entrepreneurship (ILSE) at Kean University. ILSE operates an 8,000 square foot business incubator for startups and for companies relocating or expanding into New Jersey, provides business accelerator services, hosts industry events, and conducts R&D through its research unit.

**Monmouth County**

Monmouth County is seeking to facilitate the growth of an emerging technology cluster at Fort Monmouth, which already includes three tech company headquarters with over 1,000 employees currently located on the former Fort.

The awards were approved at the EDA's monthly Board meeting. At the meeting, Sullivan announced that the EDA will be continuing the Innovation Challenge, with additional details expected to be posted shortly at [www.njeda.com/InnovationChallenge](http://www.njeda.com/InnovationChallenge) ([https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_\\_t.e2ma.net\\_click\\_7qigy\\_nrddit\\_fx8avf&d=DwMfAQ&c=4BTEw-1msHjOY4ITcFLmDM6JB8x6ZgbU2J24IH0HZLU&r=xF3DPDNEH8rwpTwktOjb4MHQ0EgF6v3M0zt3hszQvyU&m=8TVwyeldaY9JUNcn9IIPJTsK96rjQn-NcfwERdscits&s=MSaXylSg3-XBsbD\\_JHXTQqA6q\\_0aWz4fXVSk3iu3XI&e=](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__t.e2ma.net_click_7qigy_nrddit_fx8avf&d=DwMfAQ&c=4BTEw-1msHjOY4ITcFLmDM6JB8x6ZgbU2J24IH0HZLU&r=xF3DPDNEH8rwpTwktOjb4MHQ0EgF6v3M0zt3hszQvyU&m=8TVwyeldaY9JUNcn9IIPJTsK96rjQn-NcfwERdscits&s=MSaXylSg3-XBsbD_JHXTQqA6q_0aWz4fXVSk3iu3XI&e=)).

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