



**THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE**  
Washington, D.C. 20230

It is my pleasure to support the Business Innovation Conference's goal of promoting innovation and entrepreneurship as a means to advance economic growth. I share these goals, and I have taken several steps to advance them at the Department of Commerce, including the creation of the Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE) and the National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Council).

The mission of OIE is to maximize the economic potential of new ideas by removing barriers to entrepreneurship and the development of high-growth and innovation-based businesses. The OIE is housed in the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and works closely with the White House and other Federal agencies to drive policies that help entrepreneurs translate new ideas, products and services into economic growth.

Additionally, the Council advises me and the rest of the Obama Administration on key issues relating to innovation and entrepreneurship. The Council includes successful entrepreneurs, innovators, angel investors, venture capitalists, non-profit leaders and other experts who will identify and recommend solutions to issues critical to the creation and development of entrepreneurship ecosystems.

Recently, I announced the winners of the i6 Challenge, a new \$12 million innovation competition led by EDA, in partnership with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). The i6 Challenge seeks to identify and support the nation's best ideas for technology commercialization and entrepreneurship in six different regions of the country. The winning team from each region will receive \$1 million from EDA to support their project and may be eligible for additional awards from NIH and NSF. Projects include efforts to drive innovative technologies in the medical and bioscience industries to market more quickly by bringing experts in science and academia together with public and private-sector businesses and entrepreneurs.

Best wishes on a successful conference, and thank you for your work to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gary Locke".

Gary Locke