

IAF BUSINESS INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (E6)
Entrepreneurship and Innovation: The Practitioners' Perspectives (1)

Author: Mr. Conor Duggan
United States

HOW TO BUILD A SPACE CLUSTER

Abstract

The space community often gets too caught up focusing on how far out we can go or how much further we can see, so much so that it often loses sight of the need for and benefits of proper economic development strategizing regarding the advancement of the space industry here on Earth. Not only can this be an industry that generates substantial, sustained economic growth and creates a massive amount of new jobs in a particular region, but properly cultivated clusters are what spawn robust industries, and it is healthy, legitimate, commercial industry that will truly enable our civilization's outward movement into the cosmos.

This study looks at the processes and benefits of governmental entities taking an economic development approach to the commercial space industry, both as it relates to economic growth beneath the atmosphere and above it. It conducts this analysis through the particular lens of the work being done on this front in the Puget Sound region of Washington State, where the state government has recently developed its first space focused economic development strategy.

To construct this strategy, the state first worked to establish the necessity, focus, and objectives of a regional space industry development strategy. Working with the state's existing industry and other relevant organizations, the next task was to outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and challenges in Washington's space cluster landscape at present. Using the results of both of these tasks, the state produced a set of strategic principles and tactics to guide the cluster development work. In turn, these strategic principles and tactics are being continually used to derive tangible, targeted initiatives and guide the development of detailed action plans through which to pursue them.

Washington State has long been the global leader in the terrestrial aerospace industry, and the industrial output of its aviation supercluster has had substantial influence on worldwide transportation infrastructure. The overarching practices and patterns of the space industry will eventually come to closely mirror that of the terrestrial aerospace industry. Through the adoption and execution of a strategic economic development plan that utilizes Washington's wealth of experience in aerospace cluster development, in addition to the state's other uniquely advantageous characteristics, Washington can solidify its leadership on the final frontier and reshape our civilization's space transportation infrastructure just as it reshaped that of Earth's.