

The Rise of the Rest: Creating Vibrant Innovation Ecosystems Outside of Major Metro Areas Through Research Parks and Innovation Districts

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Brief overview

University research parks and innovation districts are key anchors for universities, federal labs and other stakeholders located in non-metro areas to connect with the local community. By providing space for spin out companies to stay local, and places for corporate engagement, research parks and innovation districts are key strategies to both retain and attract technology capital to non-metro areas served by anchor institutions (such as land grant universities) that are often headquartered in non-metro areas.

Use in U-I engagements outside of major metropolitan areas

As outlined in *The Smartest Places on Earth* by Van Agtmael and Bakker, university connectors in unexpected places, including non-metro areas, transform communities through “brain sharing” techniques in communities of innovation. Research parks and innovation districts provide the necessary placemaking to engage in these strategies.

Key features

- **Retention of graduates** from universities in non-metro areas through start-up opportunities
- **Attraction of major corporations to non-metro areas** to tap into local talent from resident universities
- **Community engagement**, housing and mixed-use facilities surrounding universities and other anchor institution.

Key takeaways

- **Leadership and seed funding** from university administration or other anchor institution
- **Student and faculty involvement**
- **Champions from local business community**

Resources Required

- Seed funding for visioning a vibrant ecosystem
- Time commitment from university leadership and local business community
- Long-term commitment from university or affiliated foundation to be a backstop for financial commitments

This toolkit is a product of the May 21-23, 2019 event hosted by UIDP and the University of Arkansas, “University-Industry Engagement Outside Major Metropolitan Areas and Megacities: Identifying Issues and Finding Solutions.”



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Best practice examples

- University of Illinois Research Park is a leading technology hub that cultivates startups and accelerates corporate innovation. Located on campus, the Research Park has more than 120 companies, employing 2,100 in high-technology careers. At any time, more than 800 student interns are gaining valuable experiential learning and work experience while making contributions to internal corporate research and product development programs. (SOURCE: Research Park Census, July 2018).
 - Multinational and/or publicly traded corporations in the Research Park include ADM, Abbott Laboratories, AbbVie, AGCO, Ameren, Bayer, BP, Brunswick, Capital One, Caterpillar, CME Group, Corteva AgriScience, John Deere, Forcepoint (a subsidiary of Raytheon), Grainger, Graybar, Littelfuse, NVIDIA, Riverbed Technology, State Farm, Synchrony, Syngenta, and Yahoo (Verizon Media Group).
- Purdue University Research Park is a technology-based business incubator network managed across six Indiana locations. With more than 260 companies that employ nearly 4,500, the network provides an annual economic impact of \$1.3 billion to the state, boosting technology and product commercialization and economic development. With a mission to serve Purdue and impact lives, it engages faculty, staff and students to bring innovations to communities across the state.
 - Multinational and/or publicly traded corporations in the Research Park include Cargill, Inc., GE, IBM, New York Life Insurance Company, State Farm, Novo Nordisk, Rolls Royce, Schweitzer Engineering, Sentient Science and United Healthcare.
- For more information on parks and innovation districts outside major metro areas, visit www.aurp.net or send email to briandarmody@aurp.net.