

Mayor's Co-Working and Accelerator Roundtable Summary Report

Event Date:
August 6th, 2014

Prepared By:
Department of Innovation and Performance





City of Pittsburgh

Innovation & Performance

*William Peduto
Mayor*

*Debra Lam, Director & Chief
Innovation & Performance Officer*



1) Purpose

The purpose of the Mayor's Co-Working and Accelerator Roundtable was to provide a space to begin the conversation about fostering the Co-Working and Accelerator communities in Pittsburgh by convening industry sector leaders.

Roundtable Discussion On Accelerators And Co-Working Spaces In Pittsburgh Hosted By Mayor Peduto

View the discussion with civic, non-profit and business leaders on opportunities to form a shared vision for the future of inclusive, collaborative innovation in the City.

[READ MORE](#)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



2) Event Description

The Mayor's Co-Working and Accelerator Roundtable was the third in the Mayor's Innovation Roundtable Series, which included the Maker Movement, Clean Technology and the Start-Up Roundtable. The Mayor's Roundtable Series is designed to be an opportunity for the City to meet with the innovation community in Pittsburgh, promote their good work and create a continuing dialogue to keep Pittsburgh on the cutting edge.



Coworking Spaces, Startup

Incubators and Accelerators are a key part of the continuing modernization, positioning Pittsburgh as a top 10 city for starting a business¹ and a top 15 city for technology startups².

¹ Rapacon, S. (2013, January). 10 Great Cities for Starting a Business. Retrieved August 11, 2014, from Kiplinger: <http://www.kiplinger.com/slideshow/business/T006-S001-10-great-cities-for-starting-a-business/index.html>

www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us

604 City County Building, 414 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

@PGHIP

The event was broadcast live on the City of Pittsburgh Cable Channel, while City representatives live-tweeted the event to engage with participants and citizens, using the hashtag [#CocceleratePGH](#). The event included five micro-presentations from both the accelerator and co-working communities, which provided a contextual background for the open discussion that followed. The event will be periodically rebroadcast on the City of Pittsburgh Cable Channel in the coming weeks.

a) *Introduction:*

- **Innovation & Performance Chief and Director Debra Lam** began the Roundtable, elaborating on the purpose of the event as well as introducing the speakers and the moderator, Jennifer Wilhelm of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh.
- **Mayor William Peduto, City Councilman Daniel Gilman and Chief of Staff Kevin Acklin** gave brief introductions to the Roundtable attendees to outline the background of the Co-Working and Accelerator communities in the city and reiterated the City's strong commitment to ensuring these sectors continue to thrive.

b) *Presentations:*

- [Dave Mawhinney](#) – Co-Founder and Director, [Carnegie Mellon Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#)
 - [Discussion](#) on the entrepreneurial pedigree of CMU, as the university strives to become a comprehensive, multi-faceted destination of choice for students and faculty seeking to become entrepreneurs.
- [William Generett Jr.](#) – President and CEO, [Urban Innovation21](#)
 - [Discussion](#) on inclusiveness in the innovation community and ensuring that the progress of Pittsburgh can be seen in all neighborhoods.
- [Rebecca Harris](#), Director, Center for [Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham University](#)
 - [Discussion](#) on increasing entrepreneurial opportunities for women, while meeting their unique needs.
- Mark Musolino, Founder, [Revv Oakland](#)
 - [Discussion](#) on the needs of the Co-Working Community in order to make Pittsburgh a national and international competitor in the sector.
- [Brandon Blache-Cohen](#), Executive Director, Amizade ([The Global Switchboard](#))
 - [Discussion](#) of using co-working as a method of collaboration and global engagement in order to make Pittsburgh a more “global city”.

² Kelly, S. M. (2013, February 21). Top 15 Cities for Tech Startups. Retrieved August 11, 2014, from Mashable: <http://mashable.com/2013/02/21/top-cities-startups/>



- c) *Discussion:* After the presentations concluded, there was an open discussion, moderated by Jennifer Wilhelm, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategist at the URA of Pittsburgh. She opened discussion with three questions:
1. How can we encourage inclusion and diversity in entrepreneurship programs and in Co-Working spaces?
 2. How can we ensure that Pittsburgh can be competitive in this sector regionally, nationally and internationally?
 3. What can City government do to foster the Co-Working and Accelerator communities in Pittsburgh?

3) Communications

The Department of Innovation & Performance underwent a communications plan in order to inform the public of their ability to watch the Mayor's Co-Working and Accelerator Roundtable as well as to gain feedback. The audience of the communications plan was the members of the co-working and accelerator movement, active citizens who are interested in City developments, and citizens and business owners who are unaware of ongoing innovation in Pittsburgh but are predisposed to the goals of the movement.

These groups were targeted through various mediums. The [Innovation and Performance Homepage](#) as well as the departmental [Twitter feed](#) were used to advertise the event online. The Twitter campaign was a coordinated effort with the participating organizations, who all posted about the event using the same hashtag, [#CocceleratePGH](#).

During the event, the Mayor, I&P and the participants tweeted with the citizens watching the roundtable on the City Cable Channel. Retweets by participating organizations expanded the reach of the PGHIP account, widening its sphere of influence.

www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us

604 City County Building, 414 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

@PGHIP

Following the Roundtable, [video of the event](#) was posted on the [City of Pittsburgh YouTube Channel](#) and edited videos of each of the individual presentations are forthcoming. Citizens are also able to purchase a DVD of the event from the City Cable Channel.

4) Roundtable Attendees:

- Eve Picker, Director, [Bruno Works](#)
- Julien Scranton, Director, Strategic Growth Services, [Pittsburgh Technology Council](#)
- Dan Gilman, City Councilman, [Pittsburgh City Council](#)
- Josh Lucas, Founder, [The Hardware Store](#)
- Thomas Link, Director, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, [Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh](#)
- Ilana Diamond, Managing Director, [AlphaLab Gear](#)
- Reed McManigle, Senior Manager, Business Development and Licensing, [CMU Tech Transfer Office](#)
- Lenore Blum, Distinguished Career Professor of Computer Science, [Carnegie Mellon University](#)
- Dave Mawhinney, Co-Founder/Director, [Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#), Carnegie Mellon University
- Jack Mason, Director of Entrepreneurial Studies, [Duquesne University](#)
- Evan Facher, Associate Director, [University of Pittsburgh Innovation Institute](#)
- Juan Garrett, Deputy Director, Riverside Center for Innovation
- Mary McKinney, Director, [Small Business Development Center at Duquesne University](#)
- Robert Stein, Executive Director, [University of Pittsburgh Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence](#)
- Richard Lunak, President & CEO, [Innovation Works](#)
- Babs Carryer, Director, Education & Outreach, [University of Pittsburgh Innovation Institute](#)
- Brandon Blache-Cohen, Executive Director, [Amizade \(The Global Switchboard\)](#)
- William Generett, President & CEO, [Urban Innovation21](#)
- Jim Jen, Executive Director, [AlphaLab](#)
- Rebecca Harris, Director, [Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham University](#)
- Eric White, Business Development Executive, [Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh](#)
- Petra Mitchell, President and CEO, Catalyst Connection
- Jennifer Wilhelm, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategist, [Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh](#)
- Paul Burke, Founder, [Demand Co.](#)
- Mark Musolino, Founder & President, [Revv Oakland](#)
- Scott Wolovich, Board Member & Co-Founder, [New Sun Rising](#)
- Nicole Muise-Kielkucki, Manager of Social Enterprise Initiatives, [Idea Foundry](#)

www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us

604 City County Building, 414 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

@PGHIP



5) Findings from Discussion Questions:

- a) *Topic 1:* How can we encourage inclusion and diversity in entrepreneurship programs and in Co-Working spaces?

Pittsburgh is rapidly becoming a hub for entrepreneurship and innovation, especially in the technology sector. ³ Scott Wolovich of New Sun Rising agreed, saying that the City should be **expanding the definition of inclusion in order to serve a wider variety of entrepreneurs**⁴.

Juan Garrett of the Riverside Center for Innovation exemplified Wolovich's point through the organization he represents, as they have begun a **Southwestern Pennsylvania Veteran's Chamber of Commerce** to target a group that is traditionally underserved in this region.

Councilman Gilman believes we should be changing our targeting strategy as well; noting that fostering entrepreneurship should **begin in Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Community College of Allegheny County, because not all entrepreneurs need to have a Bachelor's Degree or higher.** ⁵

Mary McKinney of Duquesne University noted that while it is important prioritize diversity, **members of these diverse communities need to have a seat at the table and should be given attention when looking for local services and vendors.** ⁶ Mayor Peduto responded to that comment, stating that increasing diversity

³ (Kelly, 2013)

⁴ (Wolovich, 2014)

⁵ (Gilman, 2014)

⁶ (McKinney, 2014)

is a primary goal of his administration, as **the city is changing and the City should reflect that change.**

- b) *Topic 2:* How can we ensure that Pittsburgh can be competitive in this sector regionally, nationally and internationally?

Denise DeSimone from C-Levelled suggested that we give further thought to the customer – how do we get these businesses clients to ensure that they **flourish after they have been “accelerated”**?⁷ Babs Carryer from the University of Pittsburgh agreed, noting that Pittsburgh is great at supporting start-ups at the early stage, **but these start-ups need customers to survive**⁸.

Branding and Marketing was a hot topic for many of the participants at the roundtable. Bill Generett mentioned that Pittsburgh should **promote its unique advantages** rather than attempting to rebrand in the model of tech hubs like Silicon Valley. Jim Jen of AlphaLab agreed, saying that Pittsburgh needs to **highlight its critical mass and celebrate its successes** – Pittsburgh is the home of nationally recognized companies and the sector is becoming denser.

Nicole Muise-Kielkucki of Idea Foundry wants to expand beyond private innovation and **promote organizations that are interested in social engagement**⁹. Rebecca Harris of Chatham University followed up on that statement by saying that a commitment to social engagement is what will keep millennials in Pittsburgh¹⁰.

Harris, however, took a different approach, noting that we should be **promoting small local businesses outside of the tech sector**, which create the unique cultures of the different Pittsburgh neighborhoods.

Mayor Peduto noted that Pittsburgh is making a name for itself nationally with the White House Maker Event. In his opinion, **the White House is noticing what Pittsburgh is becoming, not what it was**¹¹.

- c) *Topic 3:* What can City government do to foster the Co-Working and Accelerator communities in Pittsburgh?

Eve Picker of Bruno Works suggests that the city and members of council could **come to communities to talk to them about the benefits of co-working spaces, as city connections are not a large source of referrals**.¹²

The Mayor agreed, noting that **partnership and capacity are two of the pressing issues that the City hopes to address**¹³. Debra Lam, Chief and Director of Innovation and Performance mentioned this in her final remarks, stating that

⁷ (DeSimone, 2014)

⁸ (Carryer, 2014)

⁹ (Muise-Kielkucki, 2014)

¹⁰ (Harris, 2014)

¹¹ (Peduto, 2014)

¹² (Picker, 2014)

¹³ (Peduto, 2014)

infrastructure, collaboration and networking would be key priorities going forward¹⁴.

Julien Scranton of the Pittsburgh Tech Council mentioned that the City should not only concern itself with solving the problems of the City of Pittsburgh, but ensuring that the innovation community in the city can **find solutions that drive changes worldwide¹⁵.**

7) Communications

The Department of Innovation & Performance undertook a Communications Plan leading up to the event to ensure that the Roundtable was promoted using the various forms of media and communication. It served to ensure officials involved in promoting the event were using the same information and to communicate to citizens how to view and engage with the Co-working and Accelerator Roundtable. The audience of the communications plan was members of the Co-Working community, internal communications officials, active citizens who are interested in what is happening in the City and the general public.

A media advisory went out the Tuesday before the event on August 5th as well as a [press release](#) the morning of the event on August 6th. The event was broadcast live on the City of Pittsburgh's Cable Channel and is posted on the City's [YouTube Channel](#).

The event was live tweeted throughout, using the hashtag [#CocceleratePGH](#). The event had two write-ups, in the [Pittsburgh Business Times](#) and [WESA FM](#).

9) Recommendations and Next Steps

This event provided several great ideas with the potential to improve the climate for Co-Working Spaces and Accelerators in Pittsburgh. These ideas included:

- Cultivating an entrepreneurial culture in a more diverse group of people, from veterans to high school students
- Creating a framework to allow fledgling start-ups to find a consumer base after they have entered the market
- Developing a more robust infrastructure for innovation through organizations like the Urban Redevelopment Authority
- Fostering a greater network for collaboration between various innovators in the City
- Rebranding and promoting Pittsburgh as a growing hub for innovation, with a unique cultural appeal.

This roundtable was one part of a larger conversation between the City and other sources of innovation in Pittsburgh. Throughout the summer and into early fall, the Innovation and Performance Department and the Mayor will continue with the roundtable model to ensure that that the City is doing as much as possible to meet the needs of this growing community. These discussions will help develop an innovation network of the City visualized through a map showing how each group interacts geographically. Each innovation roundtable will follow a similar format.

¹⁴ (Lam, 2014)

¹⁵ (Scranton, 2014)