

The Agenda for America's Entrepreneurs: Additional critical policies including infrastructure, economic development and licensing and permitting

To compete fairly, it's essential that community development and infrastructure initiatives benefit small businesses and their local communities, rather than large corporations. Small businesses rely on public infrastructure more than large businesses that have their own infrastructure capabilities. The pandemic has also exacerbated issues in the supply chain, which are hammering small business owners' abilities to recover effectively. Investments into the nation's infrastructure must be targeted to meet the needs of small businesses and traditionally underserved business owners like women, entrepreneurs of color and rural entrepreneurs.

More than 220,000 of our country's bridges are structurally deficient and need to be repaired or replaced, one of every five miles of America's roads are in poor condition and much of rural America lacks crucial access to broadband technology. Investing in both our physical and broadband infrastructure supports access to customers and suppliers, enhances business operations and creates demand for the goods and services small businesses have to sell. [Our polling](#) shows a majority of small business owners agree that robust investment in our nation's infrastructure is crucial to the success of their business. Similarly, our communities should create pathways, not barriers, in starting, growing and expanding a business by ensuring that licenses and permits are not unnecessarily burdensome.

Build our physical and broadband infrastructure through robust and innovative investments

- Promote supply chain stability and diversity, especially those in rural and underserved communities.
- Strengthen investments by federal agencies to spur growth and support small businesses that are key players in the clean energy economy's supply chain through economic clusters and other related programs.
- As the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs law is enacted, ensure broadband access bolster's America's heartland. Providing broadband access to rural communities will benefit entrepreneurship, especially in an age of growing digitization. States with large rural communities should earmark grants for expanding access and affordability to broadband.
- Establish state broadband offices. For example, Minnesota has established an Office of Rural Broadband, with the statutory goal of making broadband accessible to all homes in Minnesota. This will better support rural communities in accessing broadband.
- Create an "infrastructure bank" or other sustainable infrastructure financing entity to drive continued investment from the public and private sectors into the nation's roads, bridges and other infrastructure.
- Support legislation, particularly at the state level, to counteract the FCC's repeal of net neutrality. Without a fair and open Internet, small businesses will be at a disadvantage when trying to compete with larger corporations that have the resources to ensure their websites receive special prioritization from their Internet service providers.
- Expand access to shared workspaces, accelerators and incubators that provide the physical and operational infrastructure for entrepreneurs to start and grow new businesses.

- Reauthorize the Export-Import Bank to continue allowing small businesses to engage in exporting activities. Small and medium-sized businesses [account for 98%](#) of the 300,000 American companies that export. The Ex-Im Bank fills in the gaps offered by traditional financing by partnering with private-sector lenders to provide loans, loan guarantees and credit to aid foreign purchasers in buying American-made goods.
- Ensure that infrastructure is resilient enough to endure ever-increasing extreme weather events. Small businesses are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather since they rely on their public infrastructure like roads, bridges and power-grids. This should include reintroducing and passing the Strengthening the Resilience of our Nation on the Ground (STRONG) Act.

Ensure local economic development benefits small businesses, rather than large national or multinational corporations

- Oppose state and local tax policies that amount to "giveaways" to large corporations at the expense of investing in Main Street small businesses.
- Fully disclose incentive packages offered to large companies interested in making job deals with communities. It is important that a community's residents and small business owners are fully aware of what elected officials are offering and what the impact will be on affordable housing, public transportation and taxes.
 - For example, states can develop Unified Economic Development Budgets (UEDBs) that will streamline all economic development spending and provide transparent information to policymakers and taxpayers on tax expenditures. UEDBs include names of companies receiving subsidies, the amounts of the subsidies and program and agency-specific expenditures, among other valuable pieces of information, to assist policymakers in making informed decisions with a complete picture of the entire development budget.

Licensing and permitting standards

- Encourage states to revisit licensing standards and requirements while maintaining consumer and safety standards. Some states require licensing that is overly complicated, burdensome and costly. State legislatures should revisit their requirements and consider their impacts on entrepreneurship and biases that are targeted to specific industries, disproportionately impacting women and people of color.
- Coupled with commonsense safeguards to protect consumers, consider universal licensing for certain professions as an option to better support low-income entrepreneurs and other small business owners. Universal licenses—those that can be used across state lines—would better spur entrepreneurship through small business expansion and growth. This could be particularly important for tri-state small businesses.
- Enact measures that would reform occupational licensing. In many states, individuals with criminal records are often unable to acquire licenses to operate a business, undermining their long-term success and offsetting recidivism.