

# SCIENCE BUSINESS

United Kingdom

Reading List - States of the union play the innovation card

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Yet more research into local innovation comes from the National Governors Association (NGA) in the USA. Janet Napolitano, Governor of Arizona, now chairs the NGA and has made “Innovation America” the theme for her term of office.

As a part of this activity, the NGA asked the Pew Center on the States to look into the issues that states face. The result is a set of reports on aspects of innovation.

The catalyst for the activity is no surprise. “Huge new overseas competitors like China and India are competing for the same pools of cash and people as California, Indiana and the rest.”

One of the reports, Innovation America: Investing in Innovation, has some useful guidelines on how to succeed in this business:

- Develop a statewide research and innovation strategy that not only puts in place all the components for innovation, but aligns them in ways that provide advantages to in-state companies;
- Make investments to gain talent, build topnotch research enterprises and compete for federal dollars in those focused areas where the state can be world-class;
- Encourage, even mandate, collaboration among universities, the private sector and other institutions;
- Put world-class professionals, not political pals, in key positions;
- Create an organization and consistent funding source that facilitates a continuity in R&D partnering and spending; and
- Hold the recipients of public investments accountable for delivering on promised benefits.

Number four on the list will come as a surprise to many in Europe where we don't talk about putting “political pals” in charge. Whether or not it happens is, of course, another issue.

The NGA's web site also lists Recent State Initiatives to Promote Innovation. Interestingly, many states begin with initiatives in education. Others are active in creating the infrastructure needed for innovation, such as universal access to broadband telecoms.

Hawaii, home of the famous guitar, has come up with an interesting one and has “invested in its creative industry by developing a Music Enterprise Learning Experience, which will apply the successful ‘Nashville’ model from Belmont University to build the technical and business skills of native musicians”.