

Q&A with with Rebecca Blank, Acting Deputy Secretary of Commerce



Rebecca M. Blank was designated as Acting Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce on November 18, 2010. In this role, Blank focuses on matters of management and policy for the department's 12 bureaus, functioning as Commerce's chief operating officer.

Q. It is Women's History Month. Please reflect on your career in economics and what you feel is needed to expand opportunity for women in America and globally.

A. A large segment of my past research and writing as an economist has focused in one way or another on women's lives and well-being. I've been very interested in the changes in women's work behavior and earnings over time, in changes in family demographics, and in the impact of public policies on family well-being. Women's employment opportunities have expanded greatly over the past several decades; women are working more and working more continuously throughout their lives. Furthermore, young women now graduate from college at a higher rate than young men. The combination of growing education levels and growing workforce experience means that women's wages and work opportunities should continue to expand.

That said, women still earn less than men, typically because they are in a very different set of jobs and these jobs tend to pay less on average. One of the reasons why I strongly support this administration's efforts to increase the number of women who are attracted to the so-called 'STEM' (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields is because I think girls need to be encouraged to think more broadly about the possible careers that are open to them. Beyond the United States, these issues are even more pressing. A growing body of research suggests that one of the best policies for long-term development is better education for girls in the developing world. Countries that increase girl's schooling opportunities typically see reduced population growth, improved family health, and higher family incomes.

Q. President Obama has made it clear that necessary spending cuts will not hinder much needed investments to continue the economic recovery. How does the President's FY2012 budget proposal help create jobs and

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WINNING THE FUTURE:

EDA Invests in Manufacturing in the Midwest

Read the Kauffman Foundation blog



Last week, Assistant Secretary Fernandez along with Assistant to the President for

increase U.S. competitiveness?

A. President Obama's FY12 budget invests in what will make America stronger – education, science and technology, and a 21st century infrastructure. Both parties understand the necessity of cutting spending, and the President's budget is filled with difficult choices. The budget reduces non-security, discretionary spending to its lowest percentage of the economy since Dwight Eisenhower was in office. But these choices allow us to make crucial investments that will help America out-educate, out-innovate and out-build our economic competitors. It's a budget that recognizes that the most important contest is not between Democrats and Republicans but between the U.S. and countries around the world that will be competing for the jobs and the industries of the future.

More jobs in the future will require higher education, and investments in education programs will ensure that the next generation is prepared with the skills they need to succeed and that America is well-positioned to win the future. The President has called for the preparation of an additional 100,000 science and math teachers, and vowed to make college more accessible and affordable by strengthening our community colleges and permanently extending the American Opportunity Tax Credit. These investments will help achieve the President's goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020.

Investments in American research and technology will facilitate new innovation that leads to creation in American manufacturing. That's why the President's budget challenges our scientists and engineers to invent and develop new technologies to meet our nation's energy challenge, and why the President has set a goal for 80 percent of America's electricity to come from clean sources by 2035.

Building a 21st century infrastructure will help our businesses ship American goods, products, and ideas all over the world. The President has proposed new efforts to put Americans to work repairing and rebuilding America's crumbling roads and bridges, and called for a National Wireless Initiative to provide 98 percent of the country with access to high-speed Internet.

The difference between cuts that are responsible and ones that are reckless is the difference between a future where our children are in a strong position to compete for the jobs of the future and one where they are not. The right investments can win the future by laying the foundation for American competitiveness for years to come.

[Click here to read more of this Q&A](#)

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Highlight



EDA Funding Benefits Women in Hawaii

Submitted by EDA's Seattle Regional Office

In 2006, EDA invested \$300,000 in the Maui Economic Development Board (EDB) in Hawaii to support the Women in

Manufacturing Policy Ron Bloom, and U.S. Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra, met with small business and manufacturing leaders at the White House to announce a new public-private partnership that will deliver \$4.5 million in grant funding to help small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the Midwest compete in the 21st century global economy.

The grants – \$2 million from EDA and \$2.5 million from private-sector partners – will catalyze development of state-of-the-art technologies that accelerate the design process, allowing these small- and medium-sized companies to become more competitive.

EDA awarded the grant to the Council on Competitiveness to form the National Digital Engineering and Manufacturing Consortium.

[Click here to read the press release](#)

Last week, [Secretary Locke testified](#) about work the Obama administration has done to strengthen American manufacturing – the sector added jobs last year for the first time since 1997, while manufacturing activity is at its highest level since 2004 – before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee.

President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness



President Obama's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness (Jobs Council) was created to provide non-partisan advice to the President on continuing to strengthen the Nation's economy and ensure the competitiveness of the United States and on ways to create jobs, opportunity, and prosperity for the American people.

Last month, the President attended the first

Tech (WIT) project, which was started in 1999 and is currently administered by the Maui EDB. The founders of the WIT project were alarmed by data showing that the U.S. would be looking at a critical shortage in the technology workforce by 2012. The founders also viewed women and minorities as the largest under-utilized resource of potential in science and technology. The statistics indicated that in order to maintain the present number of scientists and engineers in the U.S., the enrollment and retention of women and minorities needed to rise from less than 25% to 75%.

The WIT project was developed to address this workforce development need. Partnerships were formed with educators and businesses to create a pipeline from education to employment in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) on a state-wide basis.

By tapping into a non-traditional resource, this pipeline is helping to bring a new generation of highly skilled workers into STEM careers throughout Hawaii and helping Hawaii to keep pace with the changing technological landscape.

This goal of improving the economic quality of life for women by encouraging them into higher paying technology occupations is accomplished through mentorship, internships, facilitating job placement, and training employers and labor unions on strategies to recruit and retain women into apprenticeships and non-traditional employment. The target programs include: Kamaaina come home, mentornet and the Ke alahele program.

[Click here to read more about EDA grants impacting women](#)

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White House Honors Women



Last week, the White House released a new report entitled *Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being*, a statistical portrait showing how women are faring in the United States today and how their lives have changed over time. This is the first comprehensive federal report on women since 1963, when the Commission on the Status of

Women, established by President Kennedy and chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, produced a report on the conditions of women. [View *Women in America* report.](#)

Read *The Wall Street Journal* article, "[Strides by Women, Still a Wage Gap](#)" that highlights the White House report findings.

Women in America focuses on five critical areas: people, families and income; education; employment; health; and crime and violence. The Administration will be honoring Women's History Month throughout March, and will highlight a different section of the report every week.

[Read President Obama's Proclamation of March 2011 Women's History Month](#)

meeting of his Jobs Council. [Read about the meeting](#), and how the President is working with leaders from across all sectors of the economy to create jobs and improve American prosperity.

UPDATE: StatsAmerica.org



The EDA-funded Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC) has recently updated their website, [StatsAmerica.org](#) to contain a new content and mapping features that easily compares innovation capacity in different counties and regions and the underlying drivers. The Innovation Index is an overall measure reflecting a region's innovation capacity and activity. [Click here to visit](#)

President Obama Shines a Spotlight on EDA Grantees



Out-Educating in Cleveland, Ohio

On February 22, President Obama convened a [Winning the Future Forum on Small Business](#), which featured northeast Ohio economic development organizations JumpStart and NorTech – both EDA-funded projects.

EDA is working to revitalize the manufacturing industry and re-train the workforce to bring back these vital jobs that working families rely on to put food on the table - An EDA partnership with JumpStart, Inc. promotes small business development in cities that have been affected by the restructuring of the American automotive industry through the implementation of replicable 'Regional Entrepreneurship Action Plans' in the Midwest.

EDA invested in NorTech of Cleveland, Ohio to develop a regional innovation strategy and

Valerie Jarrett, Director of the Council on Women and Girls and Special Assistant to the President, discusses the Women Owned Small Businesses Federal Contract Program and how it will help women break in to industries where they are currently underrepresented.

[Click here to read more](#)

Women who are helping the Obama Administration achieve its goal of winning the future

Marie Johns' Story: Supporting Small Businesses and Growing the Economy

Marie Johns is the Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Now, as Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), I have the privilege of supporting the small businesses that are innovating, growing the economy, and creating jobs every day. I am especially focused on helping the SBA reach businesses in underserved markets, such as African-American communities. These businesses often have a harder time getting the tools and financing they need in order to compete and thrive. Our loan programs help banks lend more to small businesses everywhere, and our counselors reach millions of entrepreneurs and small business owners each year.

[Click here to read the full blog](#)

Dr. Regina Benjamin's Story: Promoting Health and Wellness for All Americans

Dr. Regina Benjamin is the Surgeon General of the United States.

Prevention is the foundation of public health, and prevention is the foundation of my work as Surgeon General. If we want to truly reform health care in this country, we need to prevent people from getting sick in the first place, and stop disease before it starts. In the health reform law that was enacted in 2010, Congress created a commission to develop the first-ever national prevention strategy, and named me to chair the commission. The panel, made up of the heads of 17 federal departments and agencies, is providing coordination and leadership at the federal level to ensure that the government is focused on prevention.

[Click here to read the full blog](#)

POLICY CORNER

Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center



February 17, 2011

CEC Selects 11 Companies for Its Premier Mentoring Program

[Click here to read](#)

EDA's FY 2012 Budget Proposal

President Obama outlined the best way forward in his [FY 2012 budget proposal](#) to Congress by investing in what makes America stronger and cutting what we cannot

advanced energy industry cluster roadmap, creating new jobs and reinvigorating the competitiveness of communities and regions impacted by the downturn of the auto industry.

Out-Innovating in Pennsylvania

On February 3, 2011, President Obama visited the Penn State Campus at University Park in State College, Pa., and delivered remarks touting the Energy Innovation Hub at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, which builds on the region's unique strengths to develop an innovation cluster for energy efficiency buildings. EDA's \$5 million investment in the E-RIC project includes \$3 million in Public Works funds to support sophisticated laboratory and testing equipment, as well as \$2 million in Economic Adjustment funds to support the external activities of the Hub's Commercialization & Creativity Institute, which will include a virtual proof-of-concept center; a \$10 million Opportunity Research Fund to facilitate prototype development and proof-of-concept demonstrations through competitive grants to researchers; and team-based mentoring. EDA's investment will bolster the center's project portfolio management, market/product development, business plan development, intellectual property licensing, and data management capabilities.

Careers @ EDA

Area Director - Chicago - MAP
(Current/Former Federal Employees & VEOA Eligibles)

Area Director - Chicago - DEU (All U.S. Citizens)

Upcoming Events



March 9, 2011

EDA Assistant Secretary Fernandez participates in Indiana Health Industry Forum Indianapolis, Indiana

March 15, 2011

Secretary Leake hosts National Advisory

afford.

Highlights

- \$325 million to EDA to support our strategic planning, innovation infrastructure and capital projects.
- \$40 million for new Regional Innovation Program (Growth Zones) to support regional cluster development, regional business plans, investment in science parks, etc. in 20 economically distressed areas with growth potential. Assist with planning, seed capital and technical assistance.
- \$20 million for Wireless Innovation Fund, creating a challenge program to leverage public-private partnerships to build or upgrade next generation information and communications technologies to foster regional competitiveness.

Fund 21st Century Infrastructure Program (formerly Public Works) at \$96 million and Economic Adjustment Assistance, our most flexible program, at \$85 million.

[Click here to read White House Innovation Factsheet that mentions EDA investments](#)

[Click here to read White House DOC Factsheet that mentions EDA Growth Zone initiative](#)

Federal Funding Opportunities

US EDA Announces FY 2011 Supplemental Appropriations Disaster Relief Opportunity

On February 11, EDA announced the availability of \$49 million in disaster assistance to support recovery efforts in Rhode Island, Nebraska, Tennessee and Kentucky, all of which were impacted by flooding during the spring of 2010.

Funds will be awarded to projects that devise long-term economic redevelopment strategies and carry out implementation activities that will advance recovery, mitigation and growth efforts in these regions. The funding is available under the FY 2011 Supplemental Appropriations Disaster Relief Opportunity to Supplemental Appropriations Act.

Applications for economic recovery assistance are now available through www.grants.gov. Additional details on this funding opportunity can be found in the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) [notice](#).

US Labor Department announces Green Jobs Innovation Fund Grant competition to support career training programs through community partnerships

The U.S. Department of Labor has announced the Green Jobs Innovation Fund competition to support opportunities for workers to receive job training in green industry sectors and occupations. Through this competition, the department will award approximately \$40 million to support five to eight grantees with awards ranging from \$5 million to \$8 million each. Eligible applicants will include national and statewide organizations with local affiliates that have existing career training programs and will benefit a minimum of six communities per grant. Prospective applicants are encouraged to view the online tutorial "[Grant Applications 101: A Plain English Guide to ETA Competitive Grants](#)." They can register at <http://www.Grants.gov> to access the solicitation for grant applications. In addition, grant information is posted at <http://www.doleta.gov/grants>

Council on Innovation & Entrepreneurship meeting.
Chapel Hill, NC

March 15, 2011

USDA/U.S. Commercial Service
Webinar on [Investment Opportunities in Aviation Alternative Fuels](#)

March 20 – 23, 2011

NADO 2011 Washington Policy Conference
Arlington, Virginia

March 20-22, 2011

IEDC Federal ED Forum 2011
Alexandria, Va.

March 29-30, 2010

Center for Automotive Research
[Roads to Renewal II](#)
Dearborn, Michigan

April 3-5, 2011

EPA/ICMA Brownfields 2011
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

April 4-8, 2011

Hannover MESSE 2011
Hannover, Germany

May 10-12, 2011

EDA Austin Regional Conference
Albuquerque, NM

Extra Extra



February 22, 2011

Sen. Sherrod Brown touts business incubators' job creation powers

In an opinion piece he penned for The Plain Dealer, Senator Brown said: "For every \$10,000 invested in business incubators, up to nearly 70 local jobs are generated."

Process Improvement Update

EDA's Regional Offices recently completed the first round of reviews for applications submitted since the launch of the improvement initiative. Each Regional Office received a number of competitive and highly competitive applications for funding and informed all applicants of their status within the 20 days promised from the December 15 application deadline. Overall, EDA received 120 applications. March 10, 2011 is the deadline for funding cycle 2.

FEATURE ARTICLE:

Submitted by Kim Hill, Director of Center for Automotive Research, Sustainability and Economic Development Strategies Group.



Partnering is the critical element

It's been a tough couple of years, but there are signs the economy is improving. Consumer confidence is returning. Many companies are beginning to invest in research and development and production capacity—especially in the manufacturing and automotive sectors. Perhaps the best sign of health is that the companies are hiring once again. The key question for communities is: are there things that they can do right now to capitalize on these opportunities and revitalize their economies?

The most successful communities are those that partner with their employers for mutual gain. To highlight the importance of these public-private partnerships, the **Center for Automotive Research** through its Automotive Communities Partnership is hosting the second Roads to Renewal conference entitled, "Partnering for Prosperity: Communities & Companies in the Resurging Automotive Economy."

[Click here to read more about this event](#)

The study's findings [commissioned by the U.S. EDA] support Brown's claims of "nearly 70 local jobs" generated per \$10,000 EDA investment in business incubators.

The study concludes that money spent on business incubators appears to have the largest correlation with future economic growth. "In this context, it can be seen that EDA's strategic emphasis over the last several years of entrepreneurship makes sense in terms of its jobs figures."

[Click here to read](#)



March 3, 2011

Grant to partner schools, manufacturers could benefit Mich.

By working with universities that have strong computing programs, small and medium-size manufacturers and their suppliers would better simulate and hopefully simplify the manufacturing process, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said.

[Click here to read](#)



March 2, 2011

Commerce pledges \$4.5 million for technology at Midwest manufacturers

The Commerce Department announced \$4.5 million in grant funding on Wednesday aimed at helping small and medium-sized manufacturers in the Midwest adapt to 21st century technologies.

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