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**NJ EDA**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

# Strategic Innovation Center (SIC) Advisory Council

**APRIL 2026**

**SIC-AC Insights and Actions  
Launch Summary**



# SIC-AC Insights and Actions Launch Summary

## I. One on One Call Strategic Innovation Center - Advisory Council (SIC-AC) Executive Summary — Themes Across Conversations

- **Build “connective tissue” across NJ’s innovation ecosystem.**

Government and SIC-AC should serve as active conveners—linking startups, large pharma/corporates, regulators (e.g., FDA), foundations, and investors—with consistent, visible touchpoints.

- **Clarify value and engagement models for corporates.**

Provide tailored on ramps for different corporate units (CVC, philanthropy, innovation, business lines) and codify examples of effective engagement per SIC.

- **Establish cadence + structure.**

Combine mandatory council convenings with topic sub-committees; use dashboards and KPIs to track status and progress; leverage panels and coordinated events over one-off dialogues.

- **Expand inclusion & talent pipelines.**

Partner with the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ (AACCNJ) and the Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of NJ (SHCCNJ) and other uniquely positioned chambers to connect diverse entrepreneurs into SICs; add workforce development programming and statewide shared talent platforms.

- **Shared Infrastructure:**

Activate the SIC network as a catalyst for a private R&D initiative, integrating shared policies and infrastructure across AI, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing to accelerate innovation and produce concrete deliverables.

- **Market NJ nationally**

Use members as evangelists (toolkits, talking points, social amplification) and stage coordinated deal-flow / innovation weeks that showcase all SICs.

## II. SIC-AC Mission:

The Strategic Innovation Center Advisory Council serves as the cornerstone of New Jersey's Strategic Innovation Centers. It provides the connective tissue that links diverse stakeholders, programs, and initiatives. Through inclusive engagement and strategic insight, the Council aligns priorities, strengthens collaboration across private, public, and academic sectors, and drives a more resilient, equitable innovation economy statewide.

## III. SIC-AC Function:

The SIC-AC will initially convene on a semi-monthly basis (6 meetings per year), with half the meetings conducted in a virtual format and half conducted in person (3 and 3). Through dedicated SIC-AC sub-committees, we aim to eliminate silos, build inclusive talent pipelines, and create shared infrastructure that accelerates the commercialization of breakthroughs and drives sustainable economic growth across the state.

Each SIC sub-committee is positioned to provide insights and forward-looking guidance that will help SICs shape policies and enterprise-level governance frameworks forming the basis for agile and disciplined decision-making. Top-level strategic responsibilities include:

- Identify emerging governance models and recommend best practices for SIC scalability.
- Advise on performance dashboards and KPIs that SICs should adopt for impact measurement.
- Recommend risk mitigation strategies tied to innovation trends and regulatory shifts.
- Suggest cross-SIC coordination mechanisms for resource sharing and alignment.
- Drive opportunity identification by scanning for new collaboration models, policy shifts, and innovation enablers that strengthen SIC impact.

To that end, initially proposed sub-committees will include:

### 1. Corporate Engagement & Market Strategy Subcommittee

**Purpose:** Offer strategic guidance on corporate partnerships and market positioning for SICs.

#### **Strategic Responsibilities:**

- Analyze industry trends and advise SICs on priority sectors for engagement.
- Recommend partnership structures that maximize innovation and commercialization opportunities.
- Provide insights into corporate investment patterns and suggest strategies for SIC attraction.
- Advise on branding and thought leadership initiatives to elevate SIC visibility.

## 2. Startup Growth & Retention Strategy Subcommittee

**Purpose:** Provide strategic insights to strengthen SIC startup ecosystems and retention.

**Strategic Responsibilities:**

- Identify global best practices for founder support and recommend adoption by SICs.
- Advise on capital access strategies, including venture trends and investor engagement.
- Recommend post-program engagement models to keep startups connected to SIC networks.
- Suggest innovative levers to retain high-growth companies in NJ.

## 3. Talent & Workforce Futures Subcommittee

**Purpose:** Shape SIC workforce strategies to anticipate future skills and inclusive pipelines.

**Strategic Responsibilities:**

- Forecast talent needs based on SIC focus areas and emerging technologies.
- Recommend partnerships with universities and training providers for future-ready curricula.
- Advise on diversity and inclusion strategies to broaden participation in SIC programs.
- Suggest metrics for workforce readiness and long-term retention within SIC ecosystems.

# IV. Immediate NJEDA Action Items

### 1. Establish a Full-Year Engagement Calendar

- Create a 12-month calendar that includes quarterly SIC-AC meetings (virtual and in-person), major SIC events, and key NJEDA program milestones.
- **Include industry roundtables, symposiums, and reverse-pitch sessions to foster corporate engagement and visibility.**

### 2. Set Up a Centralized External SharePoint Portal

- Develop a secure SharePoint site for SIC-AC members to access agendas, presentations, governance documents, and NJEDA program updates.
- Include a document library for SIC-specific materials and a section for meeting recordings and action items.

### 3. Create a Communications Toolkit

- **Prepare talking points, press release repository, FAQs, and a summary pages to help council members articulate the SIC mission and NJEDA's role.**
- Include branding guidelines and templates for external communications and LinkedIn engagement.

### 4. Develop a Speaker & Content Management Process

- Confirm speakers from SIC operators (e.g., HAX, NARTP) and NJEDA leadership for kickoff and future events.
- Implement a slide collection and review workflow to ensure timely delivery of presentation materials for council meetings.

## 5. Assign Dedicated Staff Roles for Council Support

- Designate a “quarterback” staff lead to liaise with council members, coordinate logistics, drive follow-through on SIC-AC output..
- Identify NJEDA program managers to provide subject-matter support for subcommittees (corporate engagement, talent, startup retention).

## Appendix

1. Conversation summaries
2. Suggested KPI Set for SICs
3. SIC-AC Meeting Cadence and Format

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# 1. Summaries by Conversation

## 11/19/25 — Victoria Manax (Eckuity)

- **Perspective:** Oncologist/partner at Eckuity; deep PPP experience in Ireland. NJ has foundational strengths; needs stronger “connective tissue” with FDA, large pharma, and foundations.
- **Recommendations:**
  1. NJ should be present wherever regulatory interaction is possible; increase consistency & visibility with big pharma and investors.
  2. Government must actively convene (e.g., quarterly science/BD events).
  3. Clarify who leads connectivity (government vs trade groups like BioNJ); communication is the constraint; start by gathering major players to set the framework.
  4. Focus NJ on later-stage strengths rather than competing with MA’s early R&D niche.
- **Cadence:** Advisory body is “critical”; start monthly then taper to every other month/quarterly based on action load.

## 11/29/25 — Marie Pryor (Microsoft/AI Hub, workforce)

- Role: AI Hub team wants to be a convener/joiner across SICs.
- Needs from SIC-AC: Serve as connective tissue, reduce friction for mentor/expert/speaker drop-ins, create feedback loops, stand up topic sub-committees (e.g., AI ethics).
- Workforce: Engage education partners with concrete examples; connect hub efforts to talent pipelines.
- Cadence: Couple of touches per month focused on deliverables (avoid “FYI” meetings).
- KPIs (center-specific): AI usage, training trackers, talent development, and talent uptake. Process inspiration: Washington State Attorney General task force—monthly meetings, public comment, member briefings; consider briefing the Governor-elect post-inauguration.

## 11/24/25 — Corey Sanders (Coreweave)

- Format preference: Panels that surface commonalities and connective tissue vs. one-off conversations.
- Cross-SIC value layers: Partners like NVIDIA could add capabilities across SICs; bring CTO/CISO voices from large companies to advise and expose startups.
- Council structure: 1–2 mandatory convenings (status/progress “health checks”) + sub-committees.
- Measurement: Provide KPI insights and a dashboard at the next group meeting (target April).
- Enablement: Give SIC-AC an “action toolkit” (e.g., pre-made LinkedIn posts).

## 12/2/25 — Anindya Sengupta (Prudential)

- Goal: Increase corporate adoption in NJ; broaden outreach via members as evangelists (Bay Area, conferences).
- Enablement: Create a simple portal/page with talking points/flow diagram; assign an EDA “quarterback” to manage inbound; consider external facilitators for executive roundtables.
- Program ideas: Reverse-pitch competitions; multi-day symposium (NJ-themed; tracks by sector) with partners (e.g., NJ TRANSIT, JLL).
- Cadence: Quarterly touchpoint; publish year-ahead calendar with monthly reminders.
- Tools: Shared calendar across SICs (e.g., NJ FAST/HAX/AI Hub selection & demo days).
- Company value-add: Make startups more customer-ready via exposure and strategic engagement.

## 12/1/25 — Nina Edwards (Prudential) — Follow-up + Attachment Highlights

- **Innovation Constellations (ICs):**
  - Andromeda: AI/Data/Fintech/Digital (NJ AI Hub, NJII, Bell Labs, NJ FAST)
  - Virgo: Life Sciences/MedTech/Health Equity (HELIX, NJ Bioscience Center, Coriell/Rowan, MIHIC)
  - Orion: Deep Tech/Adv. Manufacturing/Energy (HAX Newark, Plasma Forge, AIC, SciTech Scity)
  - SIC-AC acts as horizontal “connective tissue” ensuring interoperability and alignment.
- **Statewide Innovation Testbed Network (ITB): Multi-site, risk-buffered sandbox for startups & regulated partners (e.g., Prudential) to test tech with shared standards (Responsible AI, privacy, synthetic data).**
  - Phased build: Architecture/standards → infra/governance → pilot tracks (e.g., AI risk & model eval; AI-augmented worker) → cross-SIC expansion.
  - Prudential willing to co-lead development and chair early Andromeda IC efforts.
- **Additional programs:**
  - Founder Fast-Track Access: Concierge-style, milestone-based cross-SIC access outside full accelerator cohorts.
  - **Deal Flow Exchange Week / NJ Innovation Week: Coordinated, center-hosted days; cross-SIC sprints/hackathons; rotating private roundtables.**
  - Innovation Exchange: Shared internships/co-ops, rotation programs, AI upskilling, shared event calendar + resource directory, and alumni network.

Ops notes: Consider Slack Canvas + calendar integrations; poll members on social tagging preferences.

## 12/3/25 — John Harmon (African American Chamber)

- Objective: Move dollars and deals into under-served spaces; connect AACCNJ constituency to the 12 centers (currently “hidden gems”).
- Channels: TV/radio/webinars; tech committee; events (hackathons); new Trenton facility (27k sq ft) with EDA and Rowan workforce partnerships.
  - **Near-term asks:**
    - Provide an overview of innovation centers to his membership; set up field trips/open-door days (AACCNJ scheduled for HAX, 4/20 with SIC team); publish company contact sheet for warm introductions (Technology Innovation Partnerships (TIP) team conducted first office hours with AACCNJ in Jan 2026).
    - Establish office hours with EDA for the Chamber; create an engagement calendar.
- Structure ideas: Sub-committees for traditional businesses; mentorship sub-committee at SIC-AC level.
- Readiness: AACCNJ is an eligible DOL training partner; expects tangible workforce support soon.

## 1/8/25 — Josh Barer (Hibiscus Capital)

- Ecosystem view: NJ has people (pharma talent) and university science, but lacks steady streams of licensable tech; success requires bridges for teams to come into NJ and diversified program models.
- **Value to participants:**
  - Workforce development for pharma professionals to transition into biotech; training universities to orient research toward commercialization.
  - Sub-committees: workforce development; investor education/access; SIC operational efficiency; outreach/communication.
- **Investment focus:**
  - Increase investor education on Evergreen/QVF; run digital showcases (5-minute interviews, Q&A) for investors & entrepreneurs; build SIC angel/institutional investor groups.
  - Measure success primarily by capital raised.

## 1/13/26 — Aisha Glover (Audible)

- Effectiveness lens: Define model effectiveness per SIC via KPIs (job creation, return on investment, etc.) and align resources/policies accordingly.
- Governance: Each SIC has a board and metrics; EDA will monitor and brief SIC-AC; determine when government should remain involved vs. pivot (5-year targets).
- Corporate clarity: Provide concrete engagement arrangements; balance community with confidentiality; tailor messages to each corporation's process.
- Meeting Content: Include "corporate engagement examples" in the next advisory meeting; reconnect with Prudential (Nina/Anindya); involve philanthropic and venture arms; focus on local pathways.
- Ops/format: Portal skepticism—consider SharePoint or alternatives; flexible on virtual/in-person meetings with her preference for Newark.
- Event idea: In the NJ Innovation Expo, run a dedicated track/session for corporate engagement with SICs/startups.

## 2. Suggested KPI Set (to tailor per SIC)

- Economic Impact: Jobs created/retained; capital raised (private/public); follow-on funding. Corporate Engagement: # corporates engaged; # pilots/POCs; time-to-POC; conversion to customers.
- Program Throughput: # startups supported; graduation rates; cross-SIC "fast-track" utilizations.
- Talent & Workforce: # trainees/certifications; internship placements; local hires; diversity metrics (incl. AACCNJ pipeline outcomes).
- Innovation Output: # pilots; model evaluations completed; publications/patents; adoption of Responsible AI standards (where applicable).
- Community Connectivity: Event attendance; cross-center collaborations; mentor hours; media/social reach via toolkit.

## 4. Cadence & Formats

- Council: 1–2 mandatory convenings per year for overview ; sub-committees meet every other month, initially, depending on deliverables.
- Panels over one-offs: Use multi-stakeholder panels (corporates, regulators, SICs) to surface shared needs and solutions.
- Quarterly dashboards: Publish KPI updates and shared calendars; include “action prompts” for members.
- Geography: When in-person, prioritize Newark; maintain virtual flexibility.

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