



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Strategic Innovation Center (SIC) Advisory Council

September 2026

SIC Advisory
Council Members





Saeed Amidi

Founder and CEO

Plug and Play

Saeed Amidi is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Plug and Play, a global innovation platform for startups. In this role, Mr. Amidi leads the organization's work with forward-thinking partners and startups worldwide to facilitate collaboration, innovation, and growth.

Since its launch in 2006, Plug and Play has collaborated with thousands of startups, supported numerous investments, and contributed to the growth of several successful companies, including Dropbox, PayPal, Lending Club, N26, and Honey.

After moving to Silicon Valley in the late 1970s, Mr. Amidi became deeply familiar with the technology and venture capital industries. He holds over 30 years of industry experience, having successfully helped grow businesses across a diverse range of sectors, including real estate, bottled water, packaging, and technology investing.



Lisa Asare

President and CEO

New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

Lisa Asare is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (NJMIHIA), the first state-established authority in the United States solely dedicated to improving maternal and infant health outcomes. Appointed to this role in March 2024, Ms. Asare provides strategic leadership to a statewide effort focused on reducing disparities, advancing equity, and transforming systems of care for women, infants, and families. In January 2026, she was reappointed as President and Chief Executive Officer of NJMIHIA and selected to serve as a member of Governor Mikie Sherrill's Cabinet.

Ms. Asare brings over 25 years of executive experience in New Jersey state government, having held senior positions in both the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services. Her leadership has encompassed oversight of critical programs including the state's Medicaid system, mental health and addiction services, and family health services. Notably, she served as the Department of Health's lead for former First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ initiative, where she contributed to the development and implementation of the Nurture NJ Strategic Plan. Through this work, she helped mobilize multi-sector collaborations and secure public and private funding to address the root causes of poor maternal and infant health outcomes.

Widely respected for her policy expertise, strategic vision, and dedication to equity, Ms. Asara is known for cultivating strong partnerships across public, private, and community sectors to drive systemic change. In recognition of her contributions, she received the 2023 Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) Director's Award from the Health Resources and Services Administration.



Josh Barer

Managing Director

Astr Partners

Josh Barer is a Managing Director at Astr Partners, a biotechnology-focused strategic advisory firm. Mr. Barer is a seasoned company builder, investor, board member, and advisor focused on supporting the development of clinically relevant therapeutics, devices, and diagnostics for patients with significant unmet medical needs.

Prior to his work at Astr Partners, Mr. Barer worked at Hibiscus Capital Management and Barer & Son Capital and served as an Advisor and Banker at Trout Capital and Maxim Group. He previously served on the boards of AsclepiX Therapeutics and Neximmune, Inc. Mr. Barer earned his bachelor's degree at Rutgers University.



Bob Bullard

Associate VP, External Engagement & Economic Development Rowan University

Bob Bullard is a dedicated and results-driven higher education professional with nearly two decades of experience fostering strategic partnerships across industry, government, research, and workforce development sectors. In his current role as Associate Vice President of External Engagement & Economic Development at Rowan University, Mr. Bullard leads initiatives that drive institutional growth and impact through collaboration and innovation.

A frequent speaker at regional and national conferences, Mr. Bullard is recognized for his thought leadership in holistic career development and partnership building. His efforts have led to the successful acquisition of six-, seven-, and eight-figure grants, gifts, and funding to support transformative university programs—including the launch of the Autism PATH Program at Rowan.

Previously, Mr. Bullard served as Assistant Vice President for Professional Success and Director of Career Advancement at Rowan University, where he championed student success through integrated career and academic engagement strategies. He was also part of the team awarded the NCAA Innovations in Research Grant, contributing to the development of mindfulness training and holistic career support for student-athletes.

A proud double alumnus of Rowan University, Mr. Bullard holds both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the institution.



Mike Chen

Chief Executive Officer Bell Labs Venture Studio (BLVS)

Mike Chen, CEO of Bell Labs Venture Studio (BLVS), is a veteran technology executive, entrepreneur, and venture builder with a track record of transforming breakthrough technologies into scalable businesses. Prior to leading BLVS, Mr. Chen served as Vice President of Ventures and Partnerships at Nokia, where he co-authored Nokia Innovation Framework 2.0 and helped reshape the company's approach to venture creation, strategic partnerships, and technology commercialization. He successfully built and spun-out multiple ventures from Nokia and previously led businesses exceeding \$1 billion in annual revenue.

Mr. Chen co-founded Nokia WiFi, which grew into an important part of Nokia's home broadband business, and has led acquisitions and strategic transactions that generated significant returns for the organization. Prior to joining Nokia, Mr. Chen led the global Linksys business and played a key role in the 2013 acquisition of Linksys from Cisco and its subsequent integration into Belkin International.

At Belkin, he helped launch and scale several businesses, including Belkin WeMo, connected cameras, Bluetooth, and Linksys SMB. Mr. Chen brings a combination of corporate leadership, entrepreneurship, venture creation, and technology commercialization to BLVS, where he is focused on building the next generation of technology companies from breakthrough research and intellectual property originating from Bell Labs and New Jersey's broader innovation ecosystem.

Mr. Chen holds an MBA from the University of California, Irvine, and a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of California, Santa Barbara.



Jeff Cherry

Founder, CEO, and
Executive Director

Conscious Venture Lab

Over the last 35 years, Jeff Cherry has built award-winning companies in engineering, design, strategic consulting, and investment management. He has been a trusted advisor to Fortune 500 executives, government agencies, and startups, with a focus on helping teams understand customers and build dynamic, high-performing organizational cultures.

As the managing general partner of the Conscious Venture Fund, Mr. Cherry has helped launch more than 100 early-stage venture backed companies. He currently serves on the Compensation Committee of the McKean Defense Group board, a \$100MM engineering services company, where he advises the company on organizational culture and technology trends.

Mr. Cherry also sits on the board of Hungry Harvest, LLC, a food delivery startup where he recently assisted with the closing of their \$13.7MM Series A financing. Mr. Cherry has been honored as one of the top ten people in technology in Baltimore by the Baltimore Business Journal. In 2018, the Vatican awarded him the inaugural Laudato Si Challenge Impact award for entrepreneurs who are working to change the relationship between business and society.

More recently, the tech journal Technical.ly named Mr. Cherry their 2020 Baltimore Impact Leader of the Year, and the Conscious Venture Lab accelerator, which he founded in 2013, was named one of the ten greatest social impact programs in the world in 2019.



Kathleen Coviello

Chief Economic Transformation Officer

New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)

Kathleen Coviello currently serves as the Chief Economic Transformation Officer at the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's (NJEDA). In this role, she leads the division responsible for driving economic growth through initiatives that enhance New Jersey's long-term competitiveness and establish the state as a hub for innovation. The division focuses on high-growth sectors such as film, technology, manufacturing, clean energy, venture capital, real estate, and strategic innovation centers. Ms. Coviello has also spearheaded the NJEDA's innovation center initiative, forging public-private partnerships that have led to the announcement of twelve centers statewide over the past three years.

Prior to her current role, Ms. Coviello served as NJEDA's Executive Vice President for Technology, Life Sciences & Entrepreneurship, where she worked closely with emerging tech and life sciences companies, as well as investors. She joined the NJEDA in 2005 as an individual contributor and has steadily advanced within the organization. Before that, she spent over 17 years in the banking industry, with the last eight focused on New Jersey's technology venture lending market. Her experience includes roles at Silicon Valley Bank, Comerica Bank, and Progress TechBanc. Ms. Coviello holds a bachelor's in business from Albright College and a master's in business administration from LaSalle University.



Nina Edwards

Vice President of Emerging Technology & Applied Innovation

Prudential Financial

Nina Edwards is Vice President of Emerging Technology & Applied Innovation at Prudential Financial, where she leads efforts to identify, evaluate, and implement transformative technologies that align with enterprise strategy. Her work focuses on the intersection of innovation, strategic partnerships and applied AI, ultimately guiding the organization's adoption of future-facing capabilities across financial services.

Prior to joining Prudential, Ms. Edwards was a Senior Leader in Accenture's Global Applied Intelligence and Growth & Strategy teams. There, she drove major innovation programs, including the firmwide refresh of its innovation strategy. Earlier in her career, Ms. Edwards held strategic roles at top-tier investment banks, where she focused on operational excellence through automation, data-driven decisioning, and scalable platforms. She currently serves on a variety of advisory boards, including Reuters Future of Insurance, Momentum AI, Insurtech Insights and CyberEd.io. She is a recent Innovation 100 Honoree and was named to the Women in Fintech Power list.



Mahako Etta

Chief of Innovation

Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center

Mahako Etta comes with over 15 years of experience in areas of economic development, research and policy with a focus on community health, higher education, and workforce development. In her current role, Ms. Etta leads the Authority's innovation initiatives which aims to grow public-private investments in order to catalyze new innovations and burgeoning industries that improve maternal and infant health outcomes across the State of New Jersey. She oversees strategic partnerships, start-up projects, budget and planning. She fosters strong relationships with multi-sector partners, community leaders, key industry stakeholders, senior government, and private-sector networks. Ms. Etta will also support innovation projects launched out of the new Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center currently being built in the City of Trenton, NJ. The state-of-the-art facility will support maternal health services, workforce development, and innovation.

In her previous role Ms. Etta served as a Manager at the New Jersey Commission on Science, Innovation, and Technology (CSIT). She managed the planning and implementation of the Commission's R&D grant products that helped early-stage NJ-based companies develop lifesaving technologies and therapeutics from ideation to commercialization.

Prior to State Government, Ms. Etta served as Assistant Director and Lecturer at Rutgers University School of Public Affairs and Administration and Senior Research Associate at the Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies at Rutgers – Newark.



Todd Fisher

Senior Director Strategic Initiatives and Economic Opportunity State of New Jersey

Todd Fisher has served in a variety of leadership roles in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. He currently serves as Senior Director Strategic Initiatives and Economic Opportunity for Governor Sherrill in the State of New Jersey, responsible for implementing her priorities in energy, housing, and permitting reform, as well as economic strategy and private sector engagement. Prior to this role, he worked at the US Department of Commerce as the founding Chief Investment Officer for the CHIPS Program Office, responsible for creating the investment office and investing \$39 billion to strengthen the US semiconductor industry.

He was previously Program Director for the \$3 billion American Rescue Plan programs at the Economic Development Administration. Prior to joining the US government, Fisher had a 30-year career in the investment industry, including 25 at KKR, a global publicly traded investment firm, where he was a longstanding private equity partner, Chief Administrative Officer, chair of the Management and Risk Committees, and founder of KKR's Real Estate business. He made a proactive shift in his career to public and non-profit sector work in 2018, becoming a fellow at Harvard's Advanced Leadership Initiative and then a Managing Director at Year Up, a workforce-oriented non-profit. He has a BA from Brown University, an MA from Johns Hopkins SAIS, and an MBA from the Wharton School.

He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has served on many boards, including 12 private sector boards, the Brown University Corporation, the SAIS Board of Advisors (chair), the US Holocaust Memorial Council, OPIC (the predecessor to the DFC), and multiple education oriented organizations. In 2025, he was a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Institute for Progress (co-writing a sub stack called Factory Settings) and a Research Fellow at the Center for Business and Government at Harvard's Kennedy School.



John Flavin

Founder and CEO

Portal Innovations

John Flavin is the Founder and CEO of Portal Innovations, a premier venture development engine that builds and invests in life sciences ventures. Our differentiated mix of crafted capital drives companies from scientific ideation to business creation, helping entrepreneurs translate cutting-edge technology into sustainable, global businesses with breakthrough products to help patients.

Prior to launching Portal, Mr. Flavin founded and built several life sciences companies including Pyxis Oncology and civic incubators MATTER and the Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University of Chicago



Aisha Glover

Vice President,
Urban Innovation

Audible

Aisha Glover joined Audible, Inc. as the VP of Urban Innovation in 2020, focusing on Audible's investment in advancing equitable development, racial justice and economic empowerment in its corporate hometown of Newark, N.J. and in cities worldwide.

Ms. Glover has nearly 20 years of experience as a convener, champion and agent for economic empowerment and social justice. She's served in leadership economic development positions in both Newark and New York City including as President & CEO of Invest Newark under Mayor Ras J. Baraka, as President & CEO of the Newark Alliance and as VP of External Affairs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Hunter College of the City University of New York, a Masters of Public Administration from Baruch College of the City University of New York and an executive leadership certificate from the Columbia Business School, School of Social Enterprise. She was appointed to the Board of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority in 2020 and is an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., National Medical Fellows and Mayor Ras J. Baraka's Equitable Growth Commission.



Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM

**Founder, President and Chief
Executive Officer African
American Chamber of
Commerce of New Jersey**

Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr. IOM has served as the Founder, President and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), since 2007. In this role he has the responsibility of establishing, implementing and executing the mission, as well as the fiduciary oversight and governance of AACCNJ in accordance with its Bylaws. In addition, he works to identify strategic partnerships in both the public and private sector to connect AACCNJ members and supporters to resources and opportunities to grow and sustain their goals and objectives. Moreover, Dr. Harmon serves as an advocate on behalf of the 1.1 million African American residents and the over 70,000 black owned businesses statewide to ensure that policy at the municipal, county, and federal level provides fairness, equity and access to a level playing field in the market place.

Dr. Harmon is the former President and CEO of the Metropolitan Trenton African American Chamber of Commerce (MTAACC). Under his guidance, MTAACC grew its membership substantially, forged alliances with business associations/organizations and government, and forged strategic partnerships in the public and private sectors to benefit African American businesses throughout New Jersey.

Dr. Harmon is a Board Member and the Former Chairman of the Board for the National Black Chamber of Commerce; there are 150 Affiliate Chapters of the NBCC and over fifteen international affiliates. Dr. Harmon was recently appointed to the US Chamber of Commerce – Board of Directors, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's Economic Community Advisory Council (ECAC), Investors Bank Board of Directors, Hackensack Meridian Health Board of Directors. Dr. Harmon is also a Board Member of Digital Place Based Advertising Association, and is a member of the US Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100.

He is the Founder and Chairman of the New York State Black Chamber of Commerce (NYSBCC). Additionally, John is a Board member of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce (NJCC), New Jersey BPU, Supplier Diversity Development Council (SDDC), Opportunity New Jersey, Chairman of Crime Stoppers of Greater Trenton and a former Board Member of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), First Book, Minding Our Business (MOB), a youth entrepreneurial initiative in affiliation with Rider University.



Amy Herbold

President and Chief Executive Officer

Choose New Jersey

Amy Herbold brings more than 20 years of experience across government and the private sector to her role as President and Chief Executive Officer of Choose New Jersey, the state's leading nonprofit economic development organization. Amy is widely recognized for her expertise in complex stakeholder engagement, large-scale project delivery, and intergovernmental coordination.

Prior to joining Choose New Jersey, Amy served as Senior Vice President of Corporate & Regulatory Affairs at Triple Five Group, where she oversaw the expansion and repositioning of one of the region's most ambitious multibillion-dollar public-private developments into a year-round global destination. In this role, she led a range of high-profile initiatives, including regional economic development projects that supported job creation and strengthened New Jersey's global standing.

Previously, she served as Deputy Executive Director of New Jersey Transit, managing key administrative divisions including Human Resources, Procurement, and Civil Rights/EEO, and supporting infrastructure initiatives such as the Gateway Development Program and Northeast Corridor agreements. She also served as Senior Counsel in the Authorities Unit within the Office of the Governor of New Jersey, advising on governance across state and bi-state authorities.

Amy began her legal career as a commercial litigation associate at Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, P.A. She holds a Juris Doctor, cum laude, from Seton Hall University School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Trinity University.



Paul Hoffman

President and CEO

Liberty Science Center

Paul Hoffman currently serves as the President and CEO of Liberty Science Center (LSC), a position he has held since 2011. In this position, Paul leads the center's mission of inspiring the next generation of scientists and engineers.

An elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Paul has previously advised NASA, the National Science Foundation, the National Academy of Engineering, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Additionally, Paul is the author of eleven books and has prior experience as a top media executive. He has previously served as President and Editor-in-Chief of Discover Magazine at the Walt Disney Company, as President and Publisher of Encyclopedia Britannica, and as the Editorial Chairman of the video-interview website BigThink.com.



Jean-Pierre Issa, MD

President and CEO

**Coriell Institute for
Medical Research**

Dr. Issa is a Physician-Scientist and the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Coriell Institute for Medical Research in Camden, NJ. Prior to joining Coriell, he held faculty appointments at the Johns Hopkins Oncology Center in Baltimore, the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, and Temple University in Philadelphia, where he was director of the Fels Institute for Cancer Research.

His laboratory and clinical research efforts in the fields of cancer, aging, epigenetics and drug development have earned him world-wide recognition and numerous awards such as election to the American Society of Clinical Investigation in 2003, the Rosenthal Award from the American Association for Cancer Research in 2011, and election to the American Association of Physicians in 2015.

As CEO of The Coriell Institute, he steered the center towards an unprecedented expansion, including the creation of the Camden Cancer Research Center in 2023, a collaboration with the Cooper Medical School at Rowan University and the Cooper University Hospital.

In October 2025, the Institute will break ground for a new Health Sciences Campus in Camden, and a new building that will serve as headquarters for Coriell as well as for a Strategic Innovation Center in collaboration with the NJEDA.



Michael Johnson, PhD

President

New Jersey Innovation Institute (NJII)

Dr. Michael Johnson currently serves as president of the New Jersey Innovation Institute (NJII). As president, Dr. Johnson leads key innovation strategies that drive development and commercialization of paradigm-shifting technologies. He has been recognized and featured as an industry leader in well-known publications such as Forbes Magazine and NJBIZ.

Prior to his work at NJII, Dr. Johnson founded the advanced cell culture and imaging contract research business, Visikol, where he led all scientific, commercial, strategic, operational and financial efforts. Following the successful integration of Visikol into BICO, Dr. Johnson served as the Chief Commercial Officer within BICO's publicly traded life sciences group.



Chris Jones, PhD

Vice President of Strategic Partnerships Nokia

Chris Jones is the Vice President of Strategic Partnerships at Nokia, where he leads the initiative on driving external corporate partnerships and ecosystem building to enhance innovation and business value. Dr. Jones leads Nokia's innovation framework, realizing strategic and commercial impact of internal incubation, external spinouts, and venture capital investment.

Dr. Jones began his career as a Bell Labs researcher and has now worked over 25 years in the Nokia/Alcatel-Lucent portfolio of companies. He sits on the investment committee of NGP Capital, Nokia's venture capital arm, and is a board member of the Bell Labs Venture Studio in New Jersey. He received his PhD from Cornell University.



Leo Jose

Vice President of Innovation

Coriell Institute for Medical Research

Leo Jose, MBA, is Coriell's Vice President of Innovation. In this role, Mr. Jose focuses on the institute's growth by fostering innovation and identifying growth opportunities.

Mr. Jose is also currently overseeing the launch of Coriell's new life sciences campus in Camden, which will include the NJ Coriell Labs Innovation Center, an NJEDA-designated Strategic Innovation Center (SIC).



Howard J. Kyle

President

National Aerospace Research & Technology Park (NARTP)

Howard J. Kyle serves as President of the National Aerospace Research & Technology Park (NARTP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located adjacent to the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey. In this role, Mr. Kyle provides executive leadership for NARTP's mission to advance aerospace research, technology development, and innovation. He oversees federal contract execution, strategic partnerships, and the development of the Atlantic County NJ Aerospace Strategic Innovation Center (SIC).

Mr. Kyle brings extensive experience in program management, government relations, and organizational leadership. He works closely with federal agencies including the FAA, the Port Authority of NY/NJ, the NJEDA, and academic and industry partners across the aerospace and advanced air mobility ecosystem. He has more than 30 years of substantive experience in economic development policy and public administration. He served in the United States Air Force. He is a graduate of Rutgers University - Camden where he also earned a master's degree in public policy.



Liat Krawczyk

Founding Executive Director

NJ AI Hub

Ms. Krawczyk is the founding Executive Director of the New Jersey AI Hub, a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership between Princeton University, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), Microsoft, and CoreWeave, designed to accelerate innovation in artificial intelligence and position New Jersey as a global leader in the field. Its aim is to bring together AI researchers, entrepreneurs, industry, educational institutions, and the public sector to advance world-class research and development; drive transformative AI innovation; empower the workforce for the AI era; and shape the future of responsible AI deployment.

Previously, she served as Senior Advisor for Workforce Strategy and Head of Child Care at the U.S. Department of Commerce's CHIPS Program Office, supporting the rollout of a \$300M workforce effort aligned with \$37B in semiconductor investments and shaping the care economy strategy. Before that, Ms. Krawczyk was Vice President of Innovation Industries at the NYC Economic Development Corporation, where she led workforce strategy across emerging tech, the green economy, and life sciences. She founded the NYCEDC Childcare Innovation Lab and co-led Cyber NYC, a \$100M public-private initiative focused on inclusive talent pipelines and R&D to grow NYC's cybersecurity ecosystem. She also served as Head of Strategy for a machine learning PropTech startup.

Ms. Krawczyk brings experience across government, startups, and nonprofits at the intersection of technology, workforce, the care economy and industrial policy, driving the creation of inclusive innovation ecosystems



Tyler Lange

Director

Plug and Play

Tyler Lange is the Director of Plug and Play New Jersey. He started his career as the eighth hire for Plug and Play's Silicon Valley Insurtech practice, which quickly grew to be the largest vertical in Plug and Play's global ecosystem. He led the East Coast market for the practice, working closely with partners across the insurance value chain including Cigna, The Hartford, Guy Carpenter, AXIS, and many more.

Following this role, Mr. Lange led insurance go-to-market for unicorn fintech startup, Array, before returning to Plug and Play to lead the firm's first Northeast accelerator, NJ FAST. Since launching NJ FAST, Mr. Lange has led additional Plug and Play efforts in the state including the NJ AI Hub Accelerator and the NJ AI Innovation Challenge.



Tony Lowman, PhD

Inaugural Chancellor Rowan University

Tony Lowman currently serves as the Inaugural Chancellor of Rowan University, where he leads efforts to advance academic excellence, student success, and workforce development. Under his leadership, Rowan University has launched both the Virtua Health College of Medical & Life Sciences and New Jersey's first veterinary school, expanded health-related academic offerings, and integrated innovative practices across disciplines. Prior to becoming Chancellor, he served as the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and as Dean of the Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering.

Before joining Rowan University, Dr. Lowman was the Vice Provost for research and business development and a professor of bioengineering at Temple University. Additionally, he spent fifteen years at Drexel University in numerous roles, including Professor and Associate Dean in the College of Engineering. Dr. Lowman is currently a member of the National Academy of Inventors, as well as the recipient of two awards from the Research & Development Council of New Jersey: Educator of the Year (2024) and the Edison Patent award (2022).



Dr. Victoria Manax, M.D

Partner Eckuity Capital

Dr. Victoria Manax, M.D. is an accomplished medical oncologist with over two decades of expertise in the pharmaceutical/biotech industry with a focus on global drug/device development, medical affairs, and patient advocacy. Dr. Manax has made indelible contributions to the field with her expertise in shaping clinical trial landscapes, particularly in adaptive platform designs with biomarker integration.

Renowned for these innovative clinical trial designs, Dr. Manax has played a pivotal role in the development, approval, and launch of billion-dollar products, including the standard of care for pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Manax has effectively overseen numerous multimillion-dollar global clinical trial programs, earning her recognition as a respected panelist among regulatory agencies worldwide. She holds multiple clinical advisories, chair positions, and patents, exemplifying her commitment to advancing medical science and patient well-being.

In addition to her exceptional career, Dr. Manax is a proud Belfast Ambassador recipient and was recently named as a government advisor to Northern Ireland for Health and Life Sciences, embodying her dedication to advancing healthcare on a global scale.



Rocco Mancuso

Director of Technology & Operations National Aerospace Research & Technology Park (NARTP)

Rocco Mancuso serves as Director of Technology & Operations at the National Aerospace Research & Technology Park (NARTP), where he manages federal contract execution, technical operations, board governance, grant programs, subcontractor oversight, and stakeholder relations. Mr. Mancuso coordinates across partners including ARA, NCMS, AIRDE, ERAU, Rowan University, and COAST Autonomous in support of NARTP's aerospace and advanced air mobility (AAM) mission. He plays a central role in the development and operationalization of the Atlantic County NJ Aerospace Strategic Innovation Center.

Mr. Mancuso holds a Master of Science in Electronics Engineering from Norfolk State University, a Bachelor of Science in Applied Physics from Stockton University, and an Associate of Science in Aviation Studies from Atlantic Cape Community College. He also holds an FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certificate and a Machine Learning certificate from MIT xPRO.



Viraj Mane, PhD

NJII Venture Studio

Venture Studio Director

Viraj Mane, PhD, is the Venture Studio Director at NJII. In his role, Dr. Mane leads the identification, evaluation, and development of early-stage ventures emerging from NJIT and the broader innovation ecosystem. Dr. Mane delivers both scientific depth and commercialization experience: he is a nine-time patent holder with 19 publications, and the co-founder and Chief Scientific Officer of Lactiga, a biotechnology/immunology company that achieved FDA Orphan Drug and Rare Pediatric Disease designations.

Prior to joining NJII, Dr. Mane held business development and technology commercialization roles with the US Dept. of Defense as well as the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Toronto, Canada. He holds a PhD in Molecular and Human Genetics from Baylor College of Medicine and completed postdoctoral fellowships at the US FDA and the University of Maryland.



Timothy Meyer, PhD

**Deputy Director for
Operations and Chief
Operating Officer**

**Princeton Plasma
Physics Laboratory**

Timothy Meyer currently serves as the Deputy Director for Operations and Chief Operating Officer for Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL). Dr. Meyer supports the lab in all aspects of operations to implement the PPPL Laboratory Plan and agenda.

Dr. Meyer most recently served as Deputy Project Director of the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory's project in South Dakota and Illinois, focusing on neutrino physics. He also served a five-year term as Fermilab's Chief Operating Officer. Prior to Fermilab, he worked at the TRIUMF laboratory, Canada's national particle accelerator center, as Head of Strategic Planning and Communication. Dr. Meyer holds a PhD in experimental particle physics from Stanford University.



Michael Olmstead

Chief Revenue Officer Plug and Play

Michael Olmstead is the Chief Revenue Officer and a Partner at Plug and Play, leading global sales and corporate partnerships with a portfolio of more than 500 major companies. He oversees market expansion efforts and played a key role in opening the first offices in Paris, Munich, Amsterdam, and Africa.

He also serves as Managing Partner of the Plug and Play Future Commerce Fund, which focuses on commerce investments and includes partners such as Kohl's, PVH, and TJX. In 2013, he launched the Brand & Retail program, the company's first industry-focused accelerator.

Through this program, he sourced and led over 50 early-stage commerce investments, including Honey, Kustomer, and Rappi. His work helped set the foundation for 17 additional industry-focused programs across areas like finance, mobility, sustainability, and smart cities.

Before joining Plug and Play, Mr. Olmstead was VP of Marketing at Zuli, a Bluetooth automation startup backed by Menlo Ventures and Logitech. He graduated Cum Laude from Whittier College with a degree in Business Administration and concentrations in Marketing and International Business, earning several top academic and leadership honors.



Terence M. “Terry” O’Toole

Chairman

New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) Board

Terry O’Toole is the chair of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, a position he has held since 2023. He also currently serves as co-chair of the O’Toole Family Foundation, vice chair of the Board of the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS), and chair of the HSS Florida Board.

Mr. O’Toole is the founder of Macanta Investments and was previously a partner at Goldman, Sachs & Co. He is a graduate of Villanova University, where he served on the Board of Trustees (including as board chair), and received his MBA from Stanford University. Mr. O’Toole is a long-time resident of Essex County, NJ.



Christopher Paladino

President

New Brunswick Development Corp.

Christopher Paladino currently serves as the President of the New Brunswick Development Corporation (DEVCO), a non-profit real estate development company founded in the mid-1970s to help drive the revitalization of New Brunswick. Mr. Paladino first assumed this role in 1994 and has led DEVCO to develop 8.3 million square feet in residential, commercial, academic, and institutional development projects.

Prior projects completed under Mr. Paladino's stewardship have included the development of the new Atlantic City campus for Stockton University, the South Jersey Gas headquarters, the College Avenue Redevelopment Initiative on the Rutgers-New Brunswick campus, and the renovation of the former Rutgers Law School in Newark as university housing. Mr. Paladino is currently a Trustee of the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Board and as a Director of South Jersey Industries. He previously served as a Member of the Rutgers Business School Real Estate Executive Committee. Mr. Paladino received his bachelor's and JD from Rutgers University.



Marie Pryor, PhD

Leader of Microsoft's TechSpark Initiative

NJ AI Hub

Dr. Marie Pryor leads Microsoft's TechSpark initiative at the NJ AI Hub, and works to accelerate innovation and economic opportunity across New Jersey. Dr. Pryor leads strategic future of work initiatives that advance AI innovation and skilling, while fostering economic growth and opportunity. Her efforts focus on increasing access to digital skills and employment opportunities, particularly through public-private partnerships that scale workforce programs.

As a seasoned leader in workforce innovation and technology strategy, with a career deeply anchored in New Jersey, her previous work spans corporate, public sector, and nonprofit domains. Dr. Pryor has worked extensively to leverage Federal WIOA funding to expand nonprofit workforce programs, helping underserved populations gain access to training and meaningful employment. She has applied innovative technology tools and data systems to streamline service coordination, assess policy interventions, and foster continuous improvement across sectors.

Dr. Pryor holds a PhD in Public Affairs from the University of Central Florida, a Masters in Criminal Justice from John Jay College CUNY, and is a graduate of Rutgers University.



Scarlett Rajski

Vice President of State Government Affairs Prudential

Scarlett Rajski joined Prudential as Vice President of State Government Affairs in July 2026, where she oversees governmental activity in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Michigan, and Indiana. She most recently served as the Director of Government Affairs at the New Jersey Schools Development Authority, an independent authority in the State of New Jersey, and she started her state service as Governor Phil Murphy's first Director of Appointments in 2018.

Ms. Rajski has experience working in the private and nonprofit sectors, including time at Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, Gibbons PC, the American Institute of CPAs, MWW, and the United States Senate. She holds a degree in Political Science and American Studies from Boston University and a Master of Public Affairs and Politics from the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University.



Alex Richter

Executive Director

SciTech Innovation Hub

Alex Richter is the Executive Director and Head of SciTech Innovation Hub. He joined Liberty Science Center in 2022 on secondment from the Boston Consulting Group and has been working on developing SciTech Scity's partnerships and programming.

He recently launched SciTech Scity's Healthcare Innovation Engine, a multi-stakeholder initiative of government, industry, academic, and community partners including EY, RWJBarnabas Health, BMS, NJ Department of Health and Princeton University among others, to advance digital-first home health technologies.

Prior to his work at SciTech Scity, Mr. Richter spent 10 years working at Boston Consulting Group with Fortune 500 companies in healthcare innovation. Born and raised in Austria, Mr. Richter has an MBA from Columbia Business School and a BA in Business Administration from the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland.



Corey Sanders

Senior Vice President of Strategy

CoreWeave

Corey Sanders has been appointed as the Senior Vice President of Strategy at CoreWeave, the AI Hyperscaler™. In this role, he will lead the development and execution of CoreWeave's strategic initiatives, focusing on scaling innovation, enhancing market leadership, partnering with customers for purpose-built solutions, and driving sustainable growth in the rapidly evolving AI ecosystem. Sanders' extensive experience at Microsoft, including his most recent role as Corporate Vice President of Microsoft's Cloud for Industry business, positions him well to contribute to CoreWeave's mission.

His career at Microsoft also included significant leadership roles where he shaped sales strategies across various areas, implementing solutions like Azure Data and AI, Cybersecurity, and Modern Workplace, among others. Notably, Sanders was pivotal in establishing the Microsoft Azure Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) business, where he directed strategies and product developments for core Azure compute services.



Susan Schofer, PhD

Partner

SOSV; HAX

Susan Schofer currently serves as a Partner at SOSV, a global venture capital firm that specializes in investing in early-stage startups. Additionally, Dr. Schofer is the Chief Science Officer at HAX, a premier accelerator for early-stage hard tech startups. Prior to joining SOSV, Dr. Schofer has spent her career commercializing technology in research and development, product, and business development roles at startup companies in Silicon Valley and New York City. Dr. Schofer holds a PhD in chemistry from the California Institute of Technology.



Rena Sherman

Director of Research and Strategic Partnerships

Choose New Jersey

Rena Sherman is the Director of Research and Strategic Partnerships at Choose New Jersey, New Jersey's leading nonprofit economic development organization.

Ms. Sherman oversees the organization's economic data and analytics. She conducts detailed market assessments for companies interested in a New Jersey location, identifies areas of opportunity for industry and geographic targets, and implements strategic outreach in collaboration with state agencies and partners.

Ms. Sherman has extensive experience in the nonprofit world, specifically in public policy, social services and housing and community development. Prior to joining Choose New Jersey, she served as the Director of Communications at the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, the Social Impact Analyst at New Jersey Community Capital, and Community Scholar at the Garden State Episcopal Community Development Corporation.

Ms. Sherman began her career in marketing and communications, helping position corporate clients as industry experts as a Senior Account Executive at 5W Public Relations.

Rena earned a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from University of Maryland, College Park. She went on to receive a Masters in Public Policy from Rutgers University where she completed a fellowship at the Eagleton Institute of Politics and Government.



Sean O'Sullivan

Managing General Partner

SOSV

Sean O'Sullivan currently serves as a Managing General Partner at SOSV. After his first startup went public in 1994, he founded SOSV in 1995 as a "super angel." In 2007, based off the success of two dozen investments that had done remarkably well, Mr. O'Sullivan began expanding SOSV and transitioning it from a personal investment vehicle into an organization which today has over 80 staff supporting investments into 70 startups at inception (their first investment) every year, as well as follow-on investments in another 200+ deep-tech SOSV startups that went through IndieBio or HAX.

Mr. O'Sullivan got his entrepreneurial start in 1985 as a founder of MapInfo, inventing street mapping technology for personal computers. In 1996, while at the helm of his second company, NetCentric, he created "software for inside the Internet" and is credited with co-creating the term "cloud computing" alongside George Favaloro from Compaq. Mr. O'Sullivan holds a bachelor's in electrical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a master's in film production from the University of Southern California.



Gina Tedesco

Managing Member

Amala Ventures

Gina Tedesco, an active investor, and serial entrepreneur, is the Managing Member of Amala Ventures, which invests in early-stage companies with diverse teams and innovative and disruptive technology in the USA and Brazil. She is a Managing Director and NJ Chapter Lead of Golden Seeds, a national network of angel investors dedicated to investing in early-stage companies founded and led by women.

Her career of 30 years includes co-founding three successful start-up ventures as well as overseas postings in finance and M&A with a global pharmaceutical company in Paris, France and Sao Paulo, Brazil. She has industry expertise in hard tech, healthcare, B2B SaaS technologies and education.

Ms. Tedesco serves on the boards of several private companies and is a Trustee and the Treasurer of Deirdre's House, a non-profit child advocacy center. She teaches as an Adjunct Professor at Fairleigh Dickinson University and frequently guest lectures on various topics including entrepreneurial finance, angel investing, innovation and leadership at various NJ ecosystem events and universities.

Fluent in English, French and Portuguese, Ms. Tedesco earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (Pi Tau Sigma) and an MBA in International Business with a concentration in Finance from The George Washington University (Magna cum Laude) as well as an additional post-MBA concentration certificate in Entrepreneurial Studies from Fairleigh Dickinson University.



Duncan Turner

**General Partner; Global
Managing Director**

SOSV; HAX

Duncan Turner is currently a General Partner at SOSV and the Global Managing Director of HAX, an accelerator for early-stage hard tech companies. At HAX, Mr. Turner oversees investments in over 100 hard tech companies spanning climate, industrial, healthcare, robotics, and digital health sectors. At SOSV, Mr. Turner plays an active role in guiding startups through fundraising, scaling, and product commercialization.

Mr. Turner has extensive experience in investing, entrepreneurship, and bringing hardware and technology products to market. Prior to joining SOSV, he led design and engineering strategy projects for Fortune 500 companies at IDEO, a global innovation and design firm.



Nancy Tyrrell

**Director of Academic
Partnerships
on the Growth and
Expansion Team**

Portal Innovations

Nancy Tyrrell is the Director of Academic Partnerships on the Growth and Expansion team at Portal Innovations. She brings more than 25 years of business development experience in entrepreneurial life sciences, having supported early-stage companies from formation through IPO.

Prior to joining Portal, Ms. Tyrrell worked with the Chicago Biomedical Consortium and Northwestern University, where she helped researchers translate early-stage discoveries into commercial opportunities and start-up ventures. Earlier in her career, she held business development roles with several Chicago-based biotech companies, two of which successfully went public on NASDAQ.

Ms. Tyrrell has been deeply engaged in leadership and community service throughout her career. She previously served as President of Women In Bio and continues to serve on its Board of Directors. She has also served on the Board of Directors for the Illinois Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association



Steve Van Kuiken

Senior Partner
Emeritus | Chair

McKinsey & Company |
SIC Advisory Council

Steve Van Kuiken currently serves as Senior Partner Emeritus at McKinsey & Company, and as Chair of the Strategic Innovation Center (SIC) Advisory Council. While at McKinsey, Mr. Van Kuiken founded and led McKinsey Technology, the firm's global enterprise technology practice. Under Mr. Van Kuiken's leadership, McKinsey Technology was one of McKinsey's largest and fastest-growing global practices, helping large companies transform their technology functions to competitively enter the modern AI and digital cloud market.

Prior to establishing McKinsey Technology, he led the North American Digital Practice and founded and led the firm's global Healthcare Technology Practice. Additionally, Mr. Van Kuiken is a board member and advisor to five different technology companies in the healthcare and enterprise technology segments.



Michael van Ter Sluis

Vice President of Entrepreneurship

New Jersey Innovation Institute (NJII)

Mr. van Ter Sluis is a university innovation professional with a track record of enabling scientific breakthroughs to achieve societal and commercial impact. This work is underpinned by nearly a decade of professional engineering experience, combined with expertise in federal and state science, technology, and innovation public policy. He brings skills in new venture formation, early-stage investment, IP assessment, patent processing, IP licensing and license administration, and industry-university collaboration to his current role as the Vice President of Entrepreneurship at the New Jersey Innovation Institute, a nonprofit corporation of the New Jersey Institute of Technology.



Evan Weiss

Chief Executive Officer

New Jersey Economic
Development
Authority (NJEDA)

Evan Weiss became Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the NJEDA in January 2026. As CEO, Mr. Weiss works with Governor Mikie Sherrill and Lieutenant Governor Dr. Dale Caldwell, across state government, and with key industry and community partners to accelerate economic opportunity, make New Jersey the home of the world's most innovative companies, expand access to capital for small and minority-owned businesses, and help ensure that economic growth delivers affordability and opportunity for families across the state.

From 2021 until his move to NJEDA, Mr. Weiss was President and CEO of the Newark Alliance, a premier private sector-led economic, community, and workforce development organization. He also served as CEO of the Newark Downtown District, one of the nation's largest Special Improvement Districts, responsible for keeping downtown Newark clean, safe, green, and fun. He was a Member of the Board of Directors of New Jersey Transit, the largest statewide public transit agency in the United States.



Sandra Gilot West

Chief of Staff

New Jersey Office of
the Secretary of Higher
Education (OHSE)

Sandra Gilot West serves as a leader within the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OHSE), where she supports statewide initiatives that strengthen higher education and workforce alignment. Her work focuses on advancing policies and programs that promote access, affordability, and student success across New Jersey's colleges and universities.

With experience in higher education and public service, she collaborates with institutional leaders, government partners, and stakeholders to drive innovation and ensure that New Jersey's higher education system meets the evolving needs of students and the workforce.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY