

October 14, 2015

Assistant Secretary Jay Williams
Economic Development Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Williams:

I am pleased to write in support of the application submitted by the Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development (MCED) to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Regional Innovation Strategies Program. Their proposal entitled the “Top Gun Rural Accelerator Network Expansion” will accelerate efforts that support entrepreneurship and high-growth companies in Maine, and builds on a vibrant public-private collaboration spanning innovation stakeholders statewide.

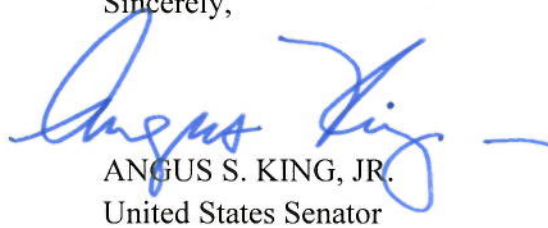
The vibrancy of Maine’s startup community is receiving national attention, as demonstrated by the recent visit by Steve Case’s Rise of the Rest tour to Portland, Maine. MCED has played a significant role in this success by providing support to entrepreneurs via a Rural Accelerator Network that has leveraged a mix of state and federal funding, private partnerships and a major grant from the Blackstone Charitable Foundation. The positive results exemplified in Maine in advancing the startup ecosystem reinforces the importance of collaboration and what rural states like Maine can achieve when innovation stakeholders work together. MCED has helped bring together Maine’s entrepreneurial community and connect them with technical and educational resources from the University of Maine, funding support from the Maine Technology Institute and Maine Angels, and innovation support from organizations ranging from SCORE, SBDC and Maine-based groups such as Coastal Enterprise Inc., and Women, Work and Community among others.

With support from the Regional Innovation Strategies Program, MCED and its partners will enhance the existing success of their Top Gun program by expanding its geographical reach, the populations served, and the services provided to Maine graduates. While the Top Gun program has already expanded from one to three simultaneous locations, reaching out further into industrial regions such as the Lewiston-Auburn area and other parts of the state will bring critical resources to more communities and entrepreneurs in rural Maine. MCED plans to continue to connect interns with startups in Maine and to better integrate the emerging entrepreneurship

programs at Maine's colleges with the growing statewide entrepreneur community. By doing so, students across Maine will be exposed to opportunities in the innovation economy and recognize viable pathways to start exciting growth-oriented business.

MCED has consistently and tirelessly worked to support entrepreneurs and growth-oriented strategies that support Maine's innovation economy. I appreciate your time on their behalf of MCED and ask that you carefully consider their proposal, subject to all applicable laws and regulations. Please notify Adam Lachman in my office at (202) 244-5344 when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Angus King, Jr.", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator