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For Immediate Release

**QUEENS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF
QUEENS INNOVATION FOUNDATION**

***The Queens Innovation Foundation will support the work of the Queens Tech Council and the Queens Tech Incubator Program, and establish Queens as the epicenter of AI, emerging tech and innovation***

[***For photos, click here***](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/zlsvz6x70r4bcvd36zr3l/AEfheOEuMF_rI-ESa4ufhwk?rlkey=21nhbj7ujyrge1juwser0m8jf&st=unz8fwai&dl=0) ***(photo credit: Dominick Totino)***

(QUEENS, NY) June 5, 2024— Yesterday, the Queens Chamber of Commerce, Queens’ oldest and largest business association, announced the launch of the Queens Innovation Foundation, a nonprofit foundation that will accelerate the growth of the tech sector in Queens and establish the borough as the epicenter of AI-fueled start ups, emerging tech and innovation. The announcement took place at the Chamber’s annual Queens Business Expo at Citi Field.

The focus of the Queens Innovation Foundation will be building on the work of the Queens Tech Council and the Queens Tech Incubator program. The Queens Tech Incubator program currently operates five incubators across the borough housing fifteen businesses, 70 percent of which are Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises.

The foundation aims to raise $40 million to launch the World Innovation Center, a collection of programs that will help expand the incubator program, and offer capital and programmatic support to participating start-ups. Additional programs will be created to help and incentivize international and domestic companies seeking to relocate to Queens, create events for world’s leading tech innovators to network and gather, and upskill Queens residents for jobs in the sector.

“With our rich diversity, transportation infrastructure, world-class colleges and universities, and thriving arts and culture scene -- Queens is uniquely positioned to serve as the hub for tech innovation,” said **Tom Grech**, President and CEO of the Queens Chamber of Commerce. “The Queens Innovation Foundation will support the growth of the tech sector in our borough by attracting new tech businesses to Queens, and ensuring the innovative start-ups we have in our borough continue to grow and thrive here. Sixty years after the World’s Fair, we are primed to reestablish Queens as the global hub for innovation and entrepreneurship.”

The Queens Tech Council launched in February 2021, with a focus on building an economy that embraces innovation and promotes tech adoption. This includes supporting tech companies from existing giants in established industries to startups working doing cutting edge work. Council members include representatives from Google, Facebook, Amazon, Pursuit, LIC Partnership, Greater Jamaica Development Corporation, Crown Castle, JetBlue Ventures, Cornell Tech, and The Business Incubator Association of New York State.

This year’s Queens Business Expo featured over 140 exhibitors, including all fifteen startups in the Queens Tech Incubator program in a pavilion sponsored by Google. There were also two panel discussions focused on AI. The first focused on leveraging AI to reduce costs and increase revenue in business, featuring Arvind Rajagopalan of Verizon, Marjorie Velazquez of Tech:NYC, Bozanka Vitanova of TeamLift, Bob Knakal of BKREA, and Linda Essumai of KPMG.

The second panel featured the Women in AI Award winners – which were announced at the expo – on key strategies for launching AI startups.

The five winners of the Women in AI Awards were also announced. They are:

* [Andreea Plesea - DRUID AI (Bucharest, Romania)](https://www.druidai.com/?utm_term=druid%20ai&utm_campaign=%5BCA%5D+S+Brand+Protect+-+US&utm_source=adwords&utm_medium=ppc&hsa_acc=7643889682&hsa_cam=17628458093&hsa_grp=146792655508&hsa_ad=657242254959&hsa_src=g&hsa_tgt=kwd-1269061698897&hsa_kw=druid%20ai&hsa_mt=p&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_ver=3&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw9vqyBhCKARIsAIIcLMEqO2lyl1g7Ge2nNFwj8dIWDovXVuU3jwEX1w3AgXNe1Du4LuVJM_0aAkGsEALw_wcB)
* [Michaela Jamelska - NOVA (Cambridge, Massachusetts)](https://www.novavirtualworld.com/?utm_source=coda&utm_medium=iframely)
* [Sequoia Blodgett - FRAME ME (Atlanta, Georgia)](https://frameme.io/)
* [Viviana Siless - QUIPU BANK](https://quipu.com.co/) (Argentina and Colombia)
* [Yazmin Topia - SOCIATE.AI](https://sociate.ai/) (Romania)

Empire State Development President, CEO and Commissioner **Hope Knight** said, “Empire State Development celebrates the Queens Chamber of Commerce's new Queens Innovation Foundation, which will have a positive, profound impact for the borough's economy and beyond. By providing the support needed for next gen businesses, the Chamber's fund will ensure Queens is creating the cutting-edge ecosystem that expands economic opportunity and promotes job growth in the high-growth tech sector.”

"For over 100 years the Queens Chamber of Commerce has been making an impact on the entire city by attracting new businesses and fostering entrepreneurship," said NYC Department of Small Business Services Commissioner **Kevin D. Kim**. "The launch of the new Queens Innovation Foundation will supercharge that impact. I want to congratulate President Thomas Grech and everyone at the Queens Chamber of Commerce on this achievement, and look forward to continue working towards our shared goal of building the City of Yes for small business."

"It has been beyond impressive to see the progress the Queens Chamber's Queens Tech Council has made in the past couple of years in pulling together all of the elements necessary for a vibrant entrepreneurial innovation ecosystem. Tom Grech has pulled together some of the top names in tech, launched five incubators, attracted entrepreneurial talent from around the world, and now the final piece of making this all come together, is launching this investment fund. Now when people talk about the tech scene in NYC, they will not only be talking about Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn, but Queens will be a part of that conversation as well,” said **Marc Alessi**, Executive Director of the Business Incubator Association of New York State.

"Historically Queens has been the borough of strivers - from all over the world. As such the Queens Economic Development Corporation welcomes the launch of the Queens Innovation Foundation. We look forward to working with the Queens Chamber of Commerce in working together to provide resources for our borough's emerging entrepreneurs,” said **Seth Bornstein**, Executive Director, Queens Economic Development Corporation.

“The tech sector in the borough is thriving, yet still growing as AI creates new possibilities. The tremendous work by the Queens Tech Council to position Queens as a nurturing environment for companies cannot be overstated. Now with the Queens Innovation Foundation, the incentive for tech firms to bring their talents here will have an additional economic impact in communities,” said **Justin Rodgers**, President & CEO of the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation. “Thanks to Tom Grech and the Queens Chamber of Commerce for spearheading these vital initiatives.”

“Queens, and Long Island City, is already an important hub for the tech sector, and the launch of the Queens Innovation Foundation will accelerate the growth of our local startups,” said **Laura Rothrock**, President of the Long Island City Partnership. “This initiative will cement Queens as a leader in global innovation and technology, attracting cutting-edge businesses and talent to our borough. I am excited to support this mission, which will drive economic growth and create new opportunities for residents across Queens. Our diverse community and rich cultural offerings make Queens an ideal place for tech companies to thrive, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact of this initiative."

“The Queens Innovation Foundation is the next step in New York's tech renaissance,” said **Marjorie Velázquez,** Vice President of Policy at Tech:NYC. “Tech incubators like this are exactly how we solidify New York’s position as a tech hub while ensuring that the jobs it creates are available to all. Queens is one of the most diverse spots in America, and embracing and harnessing that diversity is crucial to how we grow our tech scene. We’re excited to see what new innovators and entrepreneurs will come up with as a result of this program.”

**About the Queens Chamber of Commerce:**

The Queens Chamber of Commerce is the oldest and largest business association in Queens, representing more than 1,400 businesses and more than 150,000 Queens-based employees. Its mission is to foster connections, educate for success, develop/implement programs and advocate for members’ interests. [www.queenschamber.org](http://www.queenschamber.org/)

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