

The Sum of the Parts: Building an Innovation Ecosystem

Discussion Questions

1. Most would agree that all of the pieces (see diagram) of an innovation ecosystem are important—and interdependent—in creating the greater whole. If you were tasked with developing an innovation ecosystem in another region, which piece would you focus on first? Why did you choose that one?
2. Do you believe an innovation ecosystem can be intentionally constructed through policy and planning or must it emerge organically? What do you think must be present to lay the foundation?
3. Other than entrepreneurs, funders, customers, competitors, and suppliers, what other elements do you believe contribute to the ecosystem? What is (or could be) the role of schools, the built environment, government, the arts community, etc. in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship?
4. Do you believe there's something inherent in the ecosystem that shapes the nature of the relationship between companies and their customers, or is this type of behavior more specifically attributable to the cultures or conditions of the two?



5. Some pundits have likened Silicon Valley's influx of people to a modern-day gold rush. What are the implications—both positive and negative—of being such a magnet for talent? This question can set up debates about municipal implications (e.g., housing affordability, transportation infrastructure) and cultural implications (e.g., transient populations, materialistic behaviors).
6. As other regions seek to create and/or strengthen their own innovation ecosystems, they often focus on attracting or developing the necessary constituent segments—the capital, the talent, and so forth. What can be done, if anything, to foster a culture that ties together those segments?