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\$51 million federal tech grant could bring up to 56,000 new jobs to Tulsa

Jul 2, 2024



Federal funding will be used to create up to 56,000 jobs in the next 10 years in Tulsa, with annual average wages of about \$7,000 more than regional averages. Courtesy, Tulsa Hub for Equitable & Trustworthy Autonomy

By Michael Dekker
Tulsa World Business Writer

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Michael Dekker

Tulsa will receive about \$51 million from the federal government for tech innovations and production projected to create up to 56,000 additional jobs in the next 10 years, officials said.

Tulsa was one of 12 cities that will receive funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration — out of 31 cities **initially designated "tech hubs"** last year.

A formal announcement of the funding is expected Tuesday by federal and local officials.

The roughly \$51 million will go to the **Tulsa Hub for Equitable & Trustworthy Autonomy**, a consortium led by **Tulsa Innovation Labs**.

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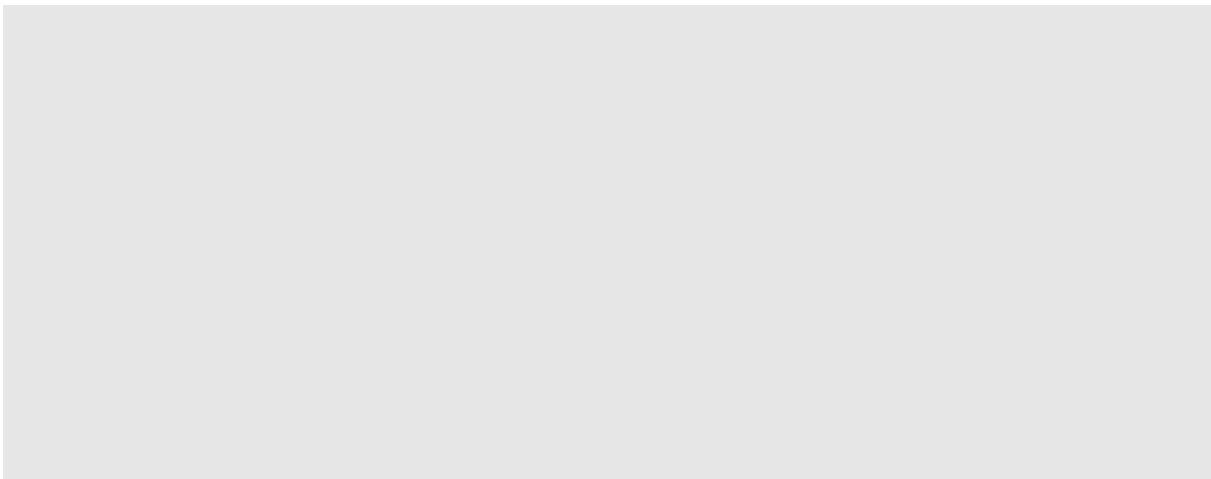
"It's a defining moment" for Tulsa, Jennifer Hankins, managing director of Tulsa Innovation Labs, told the Tulsa World in an exclusive interview.

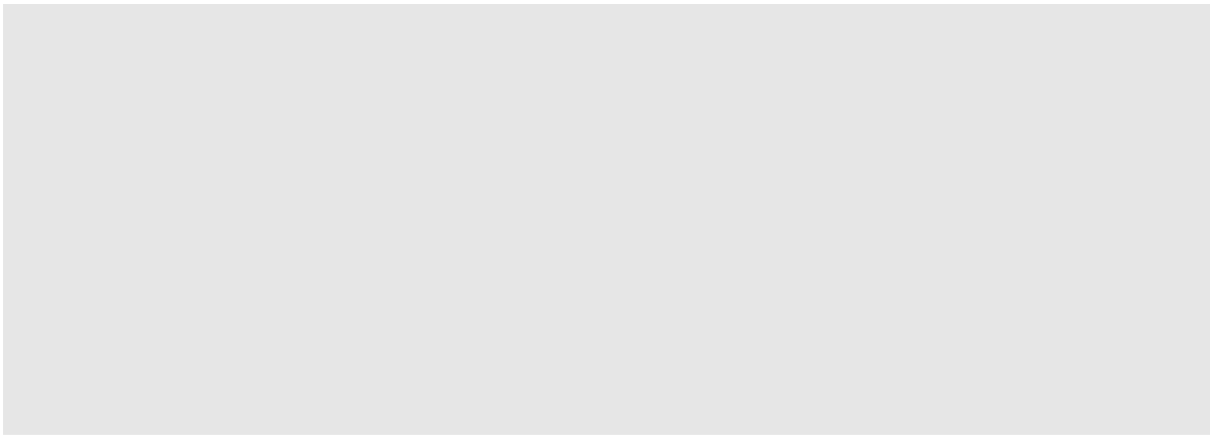
"It shows that not only are we a great city — we're a great city that is contributing to significant global issues," she said. "It signifies that we have a right to lead in some of these advanced industries. And I think for me — especially as an economic developer — it signifies that we have all of the great ingredients we need, right here in Tulsa. We have all of the talent and the people that we need.

"We're on a global scale now. And that's just huge," Hankins said.

Entities that will benefit include:

- Black Tech Street
- Cherokee Nation Businesses
- L3Harris Aeromet
- Madison Strategies Group
- Nordam
- Oklahoma State University
- Osage LLC
- Partner Tulsa
- Radius Capital
- TEDC Creative Capital
- The University of Tulsa
- Tulsa Community College
- Tulsa Innovation Labs





The Skyway 36 drone port, located northwest of downtown Tulsa, is operated by Osage LLC, one of several entities that will receive funding from a new federal "tech hub" grant.

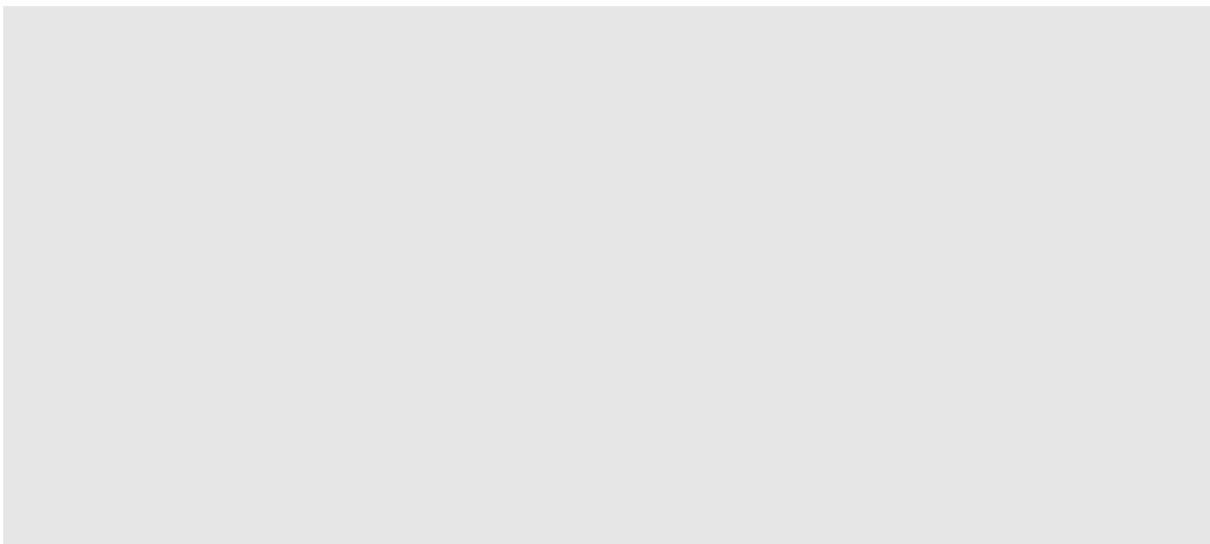
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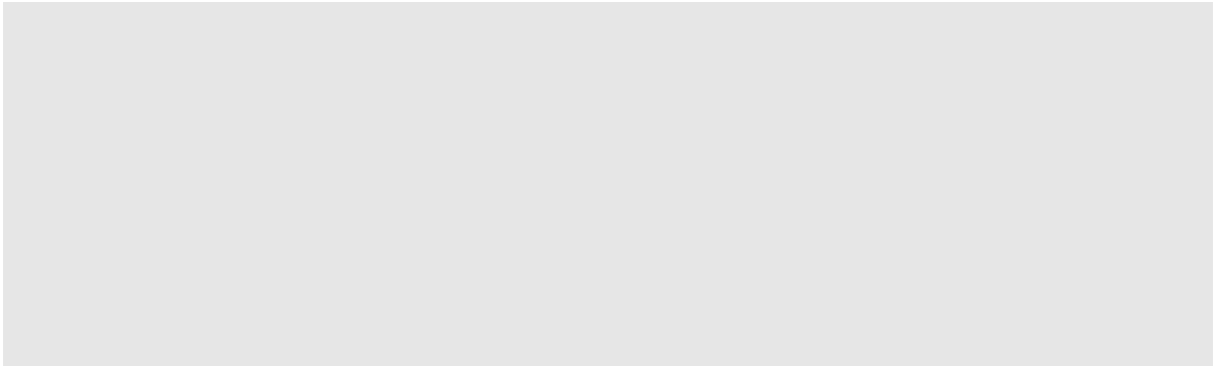
A steering committee composed of representatives from those entities will decide how much of the funding will go toward each, Hankins said.

The Tulsa Hub for Equitable & Trustworthy Autonomy will leverage funding to support projects that will:

- Increase coordination on commercialization strategies among universities and the startups they support;
- Build a state-of-the-art testing and simulation environment — with a focus on cyber and data management — for companies, researchers and regulatory entities to address barriers to commercial adoption;
- Develop programs to identify opportunities for manufacturers in supply chains and build out a manufacturing demonstration center where small companies can scale their capabilities;
- Create an artificial intelligence center of excellence to expand opportunities and increase exposure to technology for underserved communities;
- Expand workforce programs to align training with industry needs, provide upskilling and offer on-the-job training opportunities; and
- Establish governance structures to execute projects, pursue additional funding and drive the hub's strategy.

The exact grant amount will be finalized in the coming months, officials said.





Jennifer Hankins, managing director of Tulsa Innovation Labs, was named to the Tulsa World's People to Watch list in 2023. [Read her story.](#)
Stephen Pingry, Tulsa World

Tulsa Innovation Labs **has spent 18 months preparing and writing its grant proposal.** The city had the potential for up to at least \$70 million in funding, but officials earlier this year told the Tulsa World that the maximum amount was unlikely.

Nonetheless, Hankins said, “Our team does a great job making these things look easy. This was a Herculean task.”

Ken Levit, executive director of the George Kaiser Family Foundation, which led the effort to establish Tulsa Innovation Labs, told the Tulsa World that “a diverse, resilient and inclusive industry base that harnesses the talents of many ensures that benefits are shared widely.”

“Thanks to the leadership of Tulsa Innovation Labs and to visionary partners such as the EDA, this investment in Tulsa’s regional economy will amplify our local efforts to ensure Tulsa is a thriving community that affords opportunities to all,” he said in a statement to the Tulsa World.

Local officials said Monday that they still did not know which cities other than Tulsa received funding through the federal program. That and other details are expected to be announced on Tuesday.

On the projection of up to 56,000 jobs in the next 10 years, “this is about the long run for Tulsa,” Hankins said “If you can get these things up and going — as you can imagine — just standing these things up is going to take several years. So we’re projecting out.”

The annual average wages of those jobs will be about \$7,000 more than regional averages, she said.

“Most importantly for us — and our work and our mission at Tulsa Innovation Labs — (is) increased opportunities, especially for women and our communities of color, so we’ve been really intentional about how are we engaging community in all of these opportunities.”

