Next Street Launches the Next Street Institute to Advance Research on America's Small Business Economy

The Institute will provide research, data, and insights to help public and private leaders strengthen small businesses and expand economic opportunity.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, August 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Next Street today announced the launch of the Next Street Institute , a new economics and business research arm dedicated to advancing understanding of the forces shaping America's small business economy.

> The launch of the Institute marks an important chapter for our firm, expanding upon our foundational research capabilities and tech-enabled solutions, thereby deepening our impact nationally”
>
> *Charisse Conanan Johnson, CEO of Next Street*

As the United States enters a new era defined by AI, reindustrialization, demographic shifts, and new patterns of investment, the Institute will examine how these trends are reshaping the businesses and communities that power the nation's economy.

Through applied research, data and insights, and convenings, the Institute will bring forward evidence and perspectives to help business leaders, policymakers, investors, and practitioners make better decisions that strengthen small businesses and expand economic opportunities.

"For more than two decades, Next Street has partnered with corporations, governments, philanthropies, and small businesses to strengthen local economies," said Charisse Conanan Johnson, CEO of Next Street. "The launch of the Institute marks an important next chapter for our firm, expanding upon our foundational research capabilities and augmenting our tech-enabled solutions, thereby deepening our impact nationally. By bringing together research, data, and practical insights, the Institute will not only deepen the understanding of the critical role small businesses play in America's economy, but also shape policy, inform investment, and inspire action that begets wealth and opportunity in America."

Small businesses are central to America's economic future. Beyond creating jobs, they drive innovation, strengthen supply chains, build community wealth, and connect public and private investments to local opportunity and growth. Yet demographic and technological changes, evolving industries, and shifting capital markets are raising new questions about how entrepreneurs and small businesses will compete and grow.

The Institute will explore these questions through rigorous research focused on five interconnected areas shaping the future of the small business economy:

Pathways to Entrepreneurship: Helping more entrepreneurs start, own, and grow businesses.

Small Business & Society: Exploring how small businesses create jobs, build wealth, and strengthen local economies.

Small Business & Supply Chains: Strengthening the role of suppliers within America's critical industries.

Small Business Finance: Expanding access to the capital businesses need to start, grow, and scale.

The Future of Small Business: Examining how technology, demographic shifts, and changing markets will shape the next generation of entrepreneurship.

"Small businesses offer a unique lens into many of the forces reshaping the U.S. economy," said Spencer Lau, Head of the Next Street Institute. "Questions about emerging technology, capital investments, supply chains, and regional development are deeply interconnected at the business level. The Institute aims to study those connections and provide corporate and government leaders with a clearer view of where the economy is changing, where opportunities are emerging, and what those shifts mean for long-term growth."

The Institute represents an important strategic milestone for Next Street and will serve as the firm’s hub for data and insights, capturing and sharing knowledge and lessons from across the organization. Reflecting its strategic role, the Institute will sit within Next Street’s newly formed Strategy & Transformation group, led by Katie Robins, Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer.

As part of the launch, the Institute will also become the new home of the Industrial Supply Chain Forum, expanding its work through a broader platform for research, thought leadership, and engagement. Established in 2024, the Forum brings together leaders from the public, private, and civic sectors to advance dialogue and action around strengthening America’s industrial base.

The Institute will also continue publishing Building America's Industrial Base, an ongoing research series examining how small and medium-sized suppliers can grow amid America’s reindustrialization. Recent publications, Investing in America's Supplier Base, which explores the role suppliers play in strengthening U.S. manufacturing competitiveness, and the case study, How Michigan Manufacturing is Evolving Through Industrial Transition, which examines how public-private collaboration is helping manufacturers adapt to Michigan's changing industrial landscape.

Together, these publications reflect the series' focus on the opportunities and challenges shaping America's industrial and economic future. Over the coming year, the Institute will publish additional essays, case studies, and industry insights across five sectors critical to long-term U.S. competitiveness: AI and frontier technologies, aerospace and defense, energy and utilities, semiconductors and microelectronics, and pharmaceuticals and health technology.

The launch of the Next Street Institute reflects the firm's belief that understanding the future of America's economy begins with understanding the small businesses that drive it every day.

About the Next Street Institute
The Next Street Institute is the economics and business research arm of Next Street. Through applied research, data, and insights, the Institute helps business, government, and philanthropic leaders better understand the forces shaping America's small business economy and develop strategies that expand economic opportunity.

About Next Street
Next Street is a certified B Corporation and employee-owned firm that helps corporations, governments, and philanthropies strengthen small businesses and supplier ecosystems. For more than 20 years, we've delivered end-to-end solutions from data-driven strategy and proprietary technology to national networks and implementation expertise to help clients expand access to capital, resources, and market opportunities expand access to capital, resources, and market opportunities, building stronger local economies, more resilient supply chains, and lasting economic impact.

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