

Good morning and welcome to all of you!

Diane, thank you for your introduction...

First off, let me start by thanking Manny Medina for the foresight that helped bring this conference to fruition.

Manny, you have done a great job and we are all proud and grateful for your efforts!

Diane, I know that no conference of this magnitude is put together without strong leadership, and you and your entire team deserve a big round of applause for all your work!

[pause]

Just this Saturday, I had the honor of hosting the Mayoral Innovation Summit as part of the eMerge conference.

I gathered with some of my fellow mayors representing cities from all over, ranging from Madrid, Barcelona, Buenos Aires and Mexico City, to Santo Domingo and Kingston.

We all shared the ways in which we are using technology and innovation to move our cities forward.

Why are mayors so interested?

I like to say that mayors are on the front lines, we're the government closest to the people.

We deal with the day to day realities of running a city, and we work to address the issues that matter and affect people the most.

This is especially true in a world that is becoming increasingly urbanized at a rapid pace.

Before mid-century, over 60% of the world's population will live in cities.

And in Latin America, the numbers are even higher, with over 85% of the population projected to be living in urban centers.

We know that the future success of our cities rests on our ability to change, adapt, to innovate.

One of the speakers at the summit was Richard Florida, who we all know from his work promoting the impact of the “creative class...”

Professor Florida has stated how “the real key to unleashing our creativity lies in humanity's greatest invention – the city.”

Cities are the centers for creativity and innovation.

Which is why I am so pleased you have chosen to gather in Miami – our city.

We are a global center for trade and commerce, tourism, and banking.

We are also an incredibly diverse community, with 60% of our people foreign born.

Due to our geographic position and close ties as a commercial and cultural crossroads to and from Latin America, Miami has long been known as the Gateway to the Americas...

Today, we want to become the Gateway to Innovation.

Our efforts are already starting to bear fruit.

Here in Miami, I am proud to be known as a Tech mayor.

EARLY ON IN MY ADMINISTRATION, WE MADE AN INVESTMENT IN VENTURE HIVE, IN SUPPORT OF THEIR INITIATIVE TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN TECH ENTREPRENEURS.

Venture Hive has already been responsible for the relocation of more than 20 startups from all over the globe and is changing the way the world views South Florida as the next great tech hub.

Well, just this Friday, Microsoft announced the first ever Microsoft Innovation Center in the United States would be launched here, at Venture Hive, in Miami.

This energy is spreading. And it's confirmed by your presence here with us today.

Let me briefly share with you some of the ways we are positioning ourselves as a center for entrepreneurial innovation.

First, it all starts with people.

Human capital is the foundation of any transformative movement. For innovators, you need the ability to recruit and work with top talent.

You need to work in community, and you need access to others who will challenge you to think higher, and more creatively. This is why we are also investing quality of life areas – education, parks and green spaces, arts and culture – that attract talented people.

Many of you may also be surprised that with over 380,000 students in the metropolitan area, Miami is among the top ten college town in America.

We are partnering with our local universities to make sure these students have the skills required to compete and innovate in the future economy.

Through our economic development agency, The Beacon Council, I chair the One community / One Goal initiative, where we connect business and government with education, and work toward one goal. This creates a continuum of education that aligns with the One Community / One Goal target industries.

Through internship opportunities in County Government, and our investment in University based technology labs and incubators, our students are getting an early start on obtaining the knowledge to become part of tomorrow's workforce.

Next, we must become centers of connectivity and convergence.

Here in Miami, are open to newcomers who bring new ideas. When you open yourselves as a center for thinkers and innovators to gather, everything else flows in. You also need access to markets, clients, suppliers, all the essentials for commercial interaction. This also includes investing in technology that allows for the free flow of data in our community.

Finally, government must stop being a barrier, and instead becoming an enabler.

Government is often seen as a barrier to success, we need to change that.

We need to be enablers. We need to support accelerators and incubators, our colleges and universities, and all the places that serve as creation centers for innovation.

We must also use technology for open data and a more accessible and accountable government. Can any of us imagine attracting innovators if we are not innovative ourselves?

In Miami-Dade County government, we're using technology in all our functions to do things smarter, better, faster, and cheaper.

But we need to do much more.

And this is where I need your help.

We are always seeking to work with you - the innovation community - to solve the issues we face.

There is an old saying that government doesn't have all the solutions - well, we don't!

Many of the solutions to our challenges will come from the creativity of those of you in this room.

You have a friend in County Hall, and someone who is open to any idea that will help move our community forward.

I want to invite you to partner with us in helping to find solutions to urban challenges, through the innovative power that comes from technology.