

# BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## *Making Massachusetts more competitive*

**M**ajor sports teams in Massachusetts have won seven world championships in the last dozen years. Competing at the highest levels each year requires continuous improvement and investment.

The same can be said for our economy in Massachusetts. With unemployment levels below the national average and diverse industries growing here, the state has enjoyed tremendous success in a challenging national climate. However, rival states and nations continue to up their game. The “innovate-or-die” mentality being adopted by many leading businesses is one that must also be applied to state public policy.

The Massachusetts Business Roundtable, a nonprofit public policy organization comprised of senior business leaders from industries across the commonwealth, convened a special task force on competitiveness and adopted a series of principles to help strengthen the state’s long-term economic vitality.

- Supporting strengths, addressing weaknesses. Massachusetts should aggressively invest in its competitive advantages and reverse its disadvantages through collaborative efforts and meaningful reforms on issues such as energy and health care costs.

- Recognize regional differences. Economic development policy must be inclusive of all regions of the state. Each region of the commonwealth has unique economic needs and strengths that must be optimized to provide widespread economic growth and prosperity.

- Job retention is important. The state should focus policy efforts to ensure businesses keep jobs in Massachusetts. Employers are receiving offers from competitor states and nations to expand there instead of here. Public officials must continually evaluate how competitive the state is in areas such as talent, energy costs, taxation, regulation and ease of doing business.

- Economic development for the entire ecosystem. Small business and big business are closely linked through supply-chain relationships, training efforts, and financing and mentoring support.

- Focus on talent. Cited by employers as Massachusetts’ most important competitive advantage, the state should pursue both short- and long-term strategies to strengthen the talent pipeline and retain the talent we train. Making investments in STEM (science, technology, engineering & math) education, starting early with high-quality preschool, as well as enhancing access to computer science education, will help build the talent pipeline employers need and better position Massachusetts for success.

Business leaders are teaming up with public leaders to ensure that the Massachusetts economy continues to sharpen its competitive edge.

*Donna C. Cupelo is region president for Verizon New England and has served as chairwoman of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable for the past four years. Michael P. Hogan is president and CEO of A.D. Makepeace Co. and is the new chairman of the Roundtable.*