

Lesko brings clout to Accelerate Long Island

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Mark Lesko, tapped yesterday to lead Accelerate Long Island, brings clout and a reputation for pulling people together to a nascent organization charged with a herculean task: transforming the region's economy.

The 45-year-old [Brookhaven](#) Town supervisor was among the leaders who mobilized local research institutions and

others to launch the nonprofit organization, which strives to make Long Island a launchpad for technology startups. As its first executive director, he will be at the center of a disparate universe of business, political and academic players necessary to foster fledgling companies.

"We need a guy who can bring entrepreneurs, investors and researchers together -- and Mark is perfect for that," said Mark Fasciano, a venture capitalist and Accelerate Long Island board member.

Long Island already has several key ingredients for a technology hub, Lesko said. It has software maker [CA Technologies](#) Inc., world-class research institutions and access to venture capital both locally and in Manhattan. The trick, Lesko said, is leveraging those assets to build a culture of entrepreneurs who have the gumption and know-how to start and nurture companies.

"This is the future of Long Island," Lesko said. "If we pull this off, it could be a game changer."

A former federal prosecutor, Lesko has never launched a business. And he is not a scientist. But he does have experience knitting together public and private interests. As Brookhaven Town supervisor, he has championed an effort to build offices, shops and homes at the [Ronkonkoma](#) Hub. He launched a program giving developers incentives to build in blighted areas. And he sits on the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council.

"He understands what it takes to create an innovation economy," said Kevin Law, president of the Long Island Association, the region's largest business group.



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Local leaders have long hoped startups from Brookhaven National Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, the Feinstein Institute, and Stony Brook and Hofstra universities would do for Long Island what technology did for [Silicon Valley](#). Accelerate Long Island has given the idea renewed hope since being launched last year as a project of the Long Island Association. Lesko's job is to bring it to the next level. "Mark Lesko really knows how to cut through red tape and get things done," [Stony Brook University](#) president Dr. Samuel L. Stanley Jr. said.

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