

Growing Florida's Technology Economy

The Florida Technology Council, Cyndy Loomis

Technology is the foundation of the new worldwide economy and is critical for extending Florida's growth beyond tourism and agriculture. Every Florida business, citizen, and the 27,000 registered technology companies rely on technology for business innovation, growth, and prosperity. Focused technology policies by Florida's government can exponentially grow our state's economy in four ways.

Technology-Based Economic Growth Plans – Other states that are growing more rapidly than Florida are investing in knowledge-based economies, globalization, entrepreneurship, technology, workforce development in technology, and innovation. According to a 2017 report by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF), Florida ranked 24th among the 50 states on these dimensions. Similar to Florida's efforts for agriculture and tourism, strong government policies to foster technological growth can provide new economic opportunities for our state. <http://www2.itif.org/2017-state-new-economy-index.pdf>

E-Government Citizen Services – Florida lags behind other states (e.g., North Carolina, New Jersey, and Michigan) in its use of technology for citizen services. Through the use of new technologies commonly found in the private sector, governments at all levels can increase self-service tools for its citizens. Government can streamline its activities through technologies such as data analytics for fraud prevention, IoT for fleet management, or rerouting traffic when accidents occur. Investing in government technologies has an exponential effect: governments can become highly efficient in their service delivery, public employees can provide higher value services, and roadblocks are removed for Florida businesses and citizens to boost their productivity.

Skilled IT Workers - Information technology will drive economic development in all business sectors as companies find new ways to use technology to innovate, develop new products and services, and use data for business decisions. This change can only occur if there are sufficient skilled technology workers. According to a study by the *Journal of Monetary Economics*, IT-intensive occupations grew by 19.5% between 2004 to 2017, with this pace expected to continue into the next decade. Florida's economy can only grow as fast as companies are able to find the technology talent to fuel their needs. With 15,000+ technology jobs open in Florida, there is a growing disparity between the number of available skilled workers and employer needs. While Florida has made great strides in developing STEM programs, the projected deficiency of skilled IT workers may soon cap Florida's economic growth. New and creative training solutions must be implemented, along with ongoing investments in technology education for our K-12, college, university, and workforce sectors. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/08/180830122212.htm>

Invest in the Knowledge Economy – Florida government is poised to grow our state's knowledge economy. With strong leadership initiatives such as providing non-sensitive data for business consumption, investing in cross-agency data sharing to provide holistic services to vulnerable citizens, and the use of smart city technologies are well within Florida's grasp.

FTC, as a 501(c)6 educational non-profit, is playing a pivotal role in defining Florida's technology initiatives by providing meaningful information and sharing best practices from other states and from within Florida. Continue to watch this space as FTC explores topics such as data sharing, technology workforce needs, IT security, cloud-computing, innovation, and other technology topics that impact our state.