

Washington Technology Industry Association (WTIA)

Washington Technology Industry Association (WTIA) is a non-profit dedicated to fostering a robust, equity-centered technology sector that empowers thriving communities. WTIA welcomes opportunities to partner with policymakers and our members to identify actionable solutions to pressing policy challenges.

Invest in education and reskilling

Washington's technology sector is the state's fastest-growing private sector employer. Seattle-area tech job postings grew by more than 30% between 2016 and 2021. The regional talent pipelines are not keeping up with that job growth, which means these jobs are filled with talent recruited from other parts of the country and outside the U.S. Industry is unable to solve this workforce development shortage alone. Additional investment is necessary to increase opportunities for Washingtonians to access the family-wage tech jobs created in this region.

WTIA will therefore continue to advocate for increased public and private investment in education and reskilling programs. This includes increased investment in K-12 computer science programs and additional funding to implement the state computer science strategy, as well as increased investment in community college and university computer science and cybersecurity programs. It means supporting expansion of STEM and digital literacy programs in underserved and marginalized communities. Additionally, increased investment in registered technology apprenticeship is a critical pathway to help reskill the regional workforce, particularly for women, veterans, and members of the Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) community.

Enable innovation and growth across the technology sector

WTIA will continue to provide expertise to policymakers to inform the development of policies that foster innovation, advance equity and inclusion in the use of technology, promote a strong and healthy business climate, and strengthen consumer trust. In many cases, WTIA supports legislation at the federal level

to avoid a burdensome and contradictory patchwork of state regulations. Across these efforts, WTIA will work with policymakers to identify opportunities to leverage innovative technologies — with a particular focus on blockchain and quantum computing through the Washington Department of Commerce ICAP Advanced Technology Council.

Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the technology sector

Building on the work of the WTIA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Center of Excellence, WTIA leads concrete efforts to advance anti-racist and equitable policies in the tech industry for BIPOC, disabled, and LGBTQ+ employees in the workplace. WTIA will continue to seek partnership with policymakers to craft legislation that ensures equitable access and treatment of these and other underrepresented groups.

Affordability and livability

Policymakers must continue to make investments into our cities and communities to make them attractive places to start and grow a business. This includes critical affordability and livability considerations, as well as steps to ensure communities can support new companies and jobs. Key areas of focus include transportation investments, public safety, affordable housing, climate change and sustainability, civil liberties and social justice, quality public schools, and the crisis of homelessness. WTIA will actively partner with other nonprofits, policymakers, and our members to accelerate solutions to strengthen our cities and communities. This is central to our economic vitality.

Enact sensible online privacy regulations

Consumer confidence in the tech sector — and therefore our economic well-being — is contingent on how personal data is stored, used, and shared by the private and public sectors. WTIA has been supportive of reasonable privacy regulations and at the federal level to avoid a patchwork of state regulations. Yet, in the absence of national leadership, states increasingly are advancing consumer data privacy frameworks. Five states have already passed their own form of data privacy legislation, with several using previous drafts of Washington state proposals as the model. Emerging technologies, applications, and national policy changes further demonstrate the need for federal, comprehensive data privacy legislation. Against this dynamic backdrop, WTIA will work with members to present an industry consensus position in response to any proposed legislation.

Foster a robust startup ecosystem

Startups are the foundational pillar of Washington's innovation ecosystem. Increasing competition among emerging tech hubs and the new realities of remote work have accelerated the imperative for policymakers in Washington state to take steps to attract and retain startup teams that drive economic growth and job creation. WTIA will work as a partner with policymakers to make the state more attractive to entrepreneurs and private investors. Some key considerations in this effort include assessing the new realities of geographic flexibility and supporting policies that encourage access to investment capital, strengthening access to the startup sector for women, immigrants, and the BIPOC community, and encouraging entrepreneurs to build and operate their companies in Washington state.

Bridge the digital divide

The global pandemic exacerbated the digital divide across Washington state. It resulted in unequal access to or adoption of technologies and digital literacy education, as well as brought to the surface long-existing disparities in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for BIPOC, lower income, and rural communities. WTIA will continue to partner with and facilitate collaboration among industry and policymakers to identify opportunities to narrow the digital divide, drive internet adoption, support development of public-private partnerships, and advance equal access for all Washingtonians to technology and its benefits.

Advance immigration reform

Immigration has fostered the growth of the technology sector for decades. More than 50% of venture-backed tech companies are founded by immigrants, leading to millions of jobs for Americans. WTIA will continue to advocate for meaningful reform to the U.S. immigration system, including the creation of new visa programs for immigrant entrepreneurs, improvements to programs that help the U.S. economy meet its need for highly skilled talent, and reforms to address the growing permanent resident backlog. Attracting the best and brightest from around the world is critical to the continued economic growth of the tech sector in Washington state and the U.S.