

# STRONG ECONOMIES, RESILIENT COUNTIES

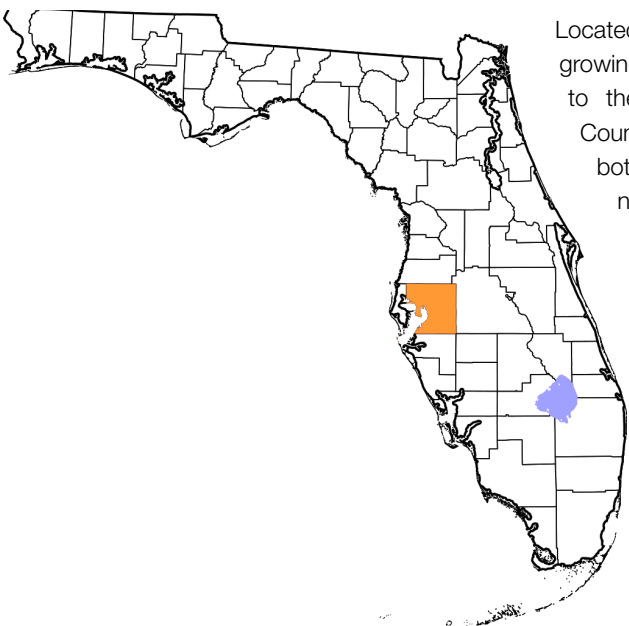
The Role of Counties in Economic Development



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## HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FLORIDA

Creating New Opportunities through Innovative, Effective Leadership



Located in the center of Florida's west coast, Hillsborough County, Fla., is a fast growing county with an educated labor force. One of the large counties central to the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater metropolitan area, Hillsborough County added almost 300,000 residents since 2000, at a faster pace than both Florida and the nation. The county workforce is well-educated, with nearly 30 percent of Hillsborough County residents age 25 and older possessing a Bachelor's degree or higher, more than the Florida average. As of April 2014, Hillsborough County enjoyed an unemployment rate (5.6 percent) lower than the overall Florida rate.

The county government focuses on economic diversification, building upon the substantial existing resources of the community to develop and deliver new opportunities for employment and business growth. This case study offers some of the latest examples in county leadership in economic development, including the Economic Development Innovation Initiative (EDI2), Manufacturing Academy and Apprenticeship and Internship Program, the Economic Development Innovation Initiative (EDI2) and the Competitive Sites efforts. While the Hillsborough County Economic

Development Department leads these initiatives, the county also leverages the expertise and resources of other county agencies, departments and other organizations.

Hillsborough County's economic development strategy hinges on strong local, regional and statewide relationships. At the county level, seven elected County Commissioners and an appointed County Administrator govern the county government, with the Administrator acting as the chief executive officer. The County Administrator implements the policies adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and is responsible for a multitude of services, ranging from preparing the county's annual operating budget to overseeing the 4,000 county employees. The County Economic Development Department leads the effort on specific initiatives, as determined by the Board of County Commissioners. With 28 employees and an operating budget of \$2.9 million, the department covers a wide

- Population, 2013: 1.3 million
- County Board size: 7
- County Administrator

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range of economic activities from corporate business development, minority business enterprise, small business development, tourism development, agribusiness development to technology and innovation initiatives, business intelligence, compliance and competitive sites.

When efficient and appropriate, the county collaborates with specialized public-private partners. Based on their primary economic development activities, the county partners range from the Tampa-Hillsborough Economic Development Corporation for business recruitment and retention, Tampa Bay WaVE and USF CONNECT for entrepreneurship support, CareerSource Tampa Bay for workforce development and the Tampa Bay Partnership for regional marketing/ branding to Visit Tampa Bay for tourism development and Tampa Bay Trade and Protocol Council for international economic development.

In the past two years, county leaders empowered staff to develop and implement programs that deviate substantially from historic “business as usual” methods.

## Manufacturing Academy and Apprenticeship/Internship Program (MAAIP)

In response to research examining a perceived regional manufacturing workforce skills gap, Hillsborough County is leading an effort to promote manufacturing as a career not only for students, but also the current workforce in the county, especially veterans, women, minorities and underserved communities. The MAAIP provides more relevant curriculum at early ages through a Manufacturing Academy, connects students with meaningful work-learn experiences and actively engages the private sector partners, students and their families in these training programs. The Manufacturing Academy will provide training for middle and high school students and military veterans. Students who complete the program will be credentialed through the Manufacturing Skills Standard Council's Certified Production Technician (CPT) certification. Through the Apprenticeship/Internship program, the county plans to create an ongoing commitment from the manufacturing community to engage Manufacturing Academy students in meaningful on-the-job-training opportunities in the form of apprenticeships and internships. The county collaborates with the CareerSource Tampa Bay for finding and enrolling manufacturers to participate in the program. Funded by a \$1-million allocation from Hillsborough County, the two-year program will be administered by the County Economic Development Department for the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners.

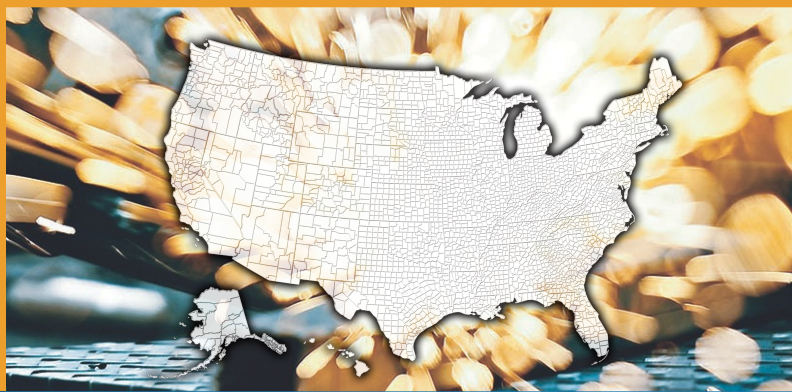
## Competitive Sites

In a fast-paced business world, the Hillsborough County's Competitive Sites program aims to provide immediate information on development opportunities, regulatory assistance and strategic public sector investments. In this



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way, the county is prepared for large-scale business expansions and relocations. The Competitive Sites program, led by the County Economic Development Department, identified, inventoried and analyzed the sites throughout the county with the capacity to support targeted industry development. As of June 2014, the initiative is in the process of crafting policies and programs to guide public sector engagement and investment.

Hillsborough County secures its economic future through planning, leadership and – where appropriate – partnerships. The county government plays multiple roles in economic development in the county, as a thought leader, convener and funder. While the county entrusts partner organizations throughout the county, region and state with the implementation of certain initiatives, it maintains fiscal oversight and assumes ultimate responsibility for the outcomes. Thoughtful decisions on partnerships increase the likelihood of a prosperous outcome for Hillsborough County's residents and businesses.



Local technology businesses nurtured at FirstWaVE accelerator, funded in part by Hillsborough County's Economic Development Innovation Initiative (EDI2).



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## The Economic Development Innovation Initiative (EDI2)

The Economic Development Innovation Initiative (EDI2) is a comprehensive program to help the growth of technology and innovative start-ups and small businesses within the county. The goals of the initiative include the increased recognition of the existing assets for the growth of technology companies, the enhancement of the local system of assistance for technology businesses (resources, mentors and accelerators and incubators) and acting as a clearinghouse for organizations and resources that could assist these entrepreneurs. The county plans to sponsor events that would increase awareness of this segment of the local economy and attract talent and businesses to this sector, to align its current resources to be supportive of this industry and to assist non-profits that help the innovation ecosystem. The County Economic Development Department administers the two-year program for the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and received a \$2-million allocation from Hillsborough County. As of June 2014, 56 ecosystem-building projects received nearly \$600,000 of this amount and leveraged a similar amount of private funds.



Citizens participate in the Hillsborough County Hackathon, using open data to improve communities and governments.