



PASCO EDC
NORTH TAMPA BAY, FLORIDA.

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE

TASK FORCE REPORT

AUGUST 2025

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

- **Co-Chair: Andrea Brvenik, Pasco-Hernando State College**
- **Co-Chair: Jordan Alexander, CLA**
- Emily Dubel, Metro Development Group
- David Garcia, Charter Communications
- Lisa Gibbings, Metro Development Group
- Vyas Krishnan, Saint Leo University
- Derek Mohammed, Saint Leo University
- Michael Spinelli, Suncoast Credit Union
- Charles Thybulle, Fifth Third Bank
- Vicki Wiggins, Greater East Pasco Chamber of Commerce
- Amber Lake, Pasco EDC
- Deanna Sourk, Pasco EDC
- Dan Mitchell, Pasco EDC

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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A PASCO EDC PROGRAM®

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INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pasco Economic Development Council's Innovation & Technology Task Force was convened to promote economic growth by fostering technological advancement across Pasco County. Comprised of leaders from education, finance, technology, and business development sectors, the Task Force met regularly from November 2024 through July 2025 to address the evolving landscape of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Automation, and broader innovation initiatives.

The Task Force identified five primary areas of focus:

1. Innovation Hubs in collaboration with local colleges, universities and community partners.
2. Tech Talent through enhanced educational pathways, internships, and real-world project collaborations.
3. Small Business Technology Adoption, especially related to AI tools, ERP/CRM systems, and digital readiness.
4. Ethical AI Use by promoting human oversight, responsible adoption, and local standards for ethical practices.
5. Startup Acceleration through recommending the launch of the various accelerator and innovation programs.

Over the course of its work, the Task Force conducted original research, including a chamber-led survey on AI adoption, reviewed national AI and data ecosystem landscapes, and engaged with regional educational and business leaders to identify opportunities and barriers. Key initiatives such as the proposed AI Challenge Lab, web-based business resources, and innovation internships are designed to create tangible economic and workforce benefits for Pasco County.

The Task Force's recommendations emphasize proactive collaboration between businesses, educational institutions, investors, and local government to position Pasco County as a thriving, future-ready hub for innovation and technology leadership.

MEETING SCHEDULE

1. Wednesday, November 19, 2024, Virtual
2. Tuesday, January 21, 2025, Pasco EDC HQ/Hybrid
3. Tuesday, February 18, 2025, PHSC West Campus
4. Tuesday, March 18, 2025, Pasco EDC/Hybrid



5. Tuesday, April 15, 2025, Saint Leo University
6. Tuesday, May 20, 2025, Angeline Academy of Innovation
7. Tuesday, June 17, 2025, Pasco EDC Hybrid
8. Tuesday, July 15, 2025, Pasco EDC Hybrid

TASK FORCE BACKGROUND

The Innovation and Technology Task Force was established to promote economic growth by fostering technological innovation. Focus areas include:

- Creating innovation hubs
- Developing tech talent through educational partnerships
- Supporting research and development (R&D) activities
- Organizing technology events such as hackathons

By collaborating with technology companies, universities, venture capitalists, and research institutions, the Task Force seeks to position Pasco County and the surrounding region as a recognized tech hub to drive technological advancement.

Primary Goals:

- Bring technology innovation to small businesses, workforce partners, and employer salesforces
- Bridge education and workforce needs through curriculum alignment and experiential learning
- Help small businesses embrace AI and digital tools
- Foster ethical and responsible AI adoption

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

The Task Force engaged in the following research activities:

- Development and distribution of a survey by the East Pasco Chamber of Commerce to assess business adoption of AI, robotics, and automation
- Strategic meetings with Pasco-Hernando State College and Saint Leo University to align educational programs with workforce demand
- Identification of high-tech companies for best-practice interviews
- Review of national models and tools using the 2024 MAD Landscape (Machine learning, AI & Data)
- Evaluation of innovation hubs and university collaboration frameworks
- Guest Speaker, Thomas Hill, CIO, Pasco-Hernando State College
- Guest Speaker, Calvin Levy, representing Yaraa Assist by Dasinfomedia
- Guest Speaker, Joanne Glenn, Angeline Academy
- Attained two quotes for AI chat agents from Dasinfomedia and Yotomations
- Attained quote for custom AI automation learning management course for small businesses from Startup Support Center

Additional topics explored:

- Cybersecurity preparedness and small business digital risk mitigation
- AI tutors for academic support
- Citizen self-service portals for local government
- AI data center requirements for institutions

SCOPE OF WORK

November 2024: Initial kickoff, selection of co-chairs, mission setting, and stakeholder brainstorming. Jordan Alexander (CLA) and Andrea Brvenik (PHSC) named as Co-Chairs. Defined core mission to bring innovation to main street and small businesses.

January 2025: Identified local gaps in innovation resources, business AI skepticism, and the need to reframe AI as “Augmented Intelligence.” Outlined scope for a business survey and began framework for formal recommendations. Discussions emphasized PHSC and Saint Leo University as critical partners.

February 2025: Guest speaker Thomas Hill (CIO, PHSC) presented on AI applications in education and operations. Broader implications of AI discussed including healthcare, digital twins, and job displacement fears. Initiated proposal for an innovation hub. Calvin Levy introduced the concept of small-scale AI infrastructure and digital assistants.

March 2025: Survey results reviewed by the Task Force show AI usage among local businesses is fragmented. Ethics and responsible use emerged as a key theme. Recommendations refined to include an AI Challenge Lab, web-based resources, and an education-first approach. Saint Leo University confirmed as the next meeting host.

April 2025: Site visit and campus tour hosted by Vyas Krishnan at Saint Leo University. Discussions focused on capstone project alignment, business student collaboration models, and role of academia in applied AI development. Ethical frameworks revisited.

May 2025: Joanne Glenn led a tour and discussion at Angeline Academy of Innovation. The group explored educational innovation, future-of-work curriculum, and workforce alignment. Accelerator partnership plans advanced with Metro Development Group.

June 2025: Final working meeting to integrate all recommendations, action items, and research into a draft report. Frameworks reviewed and final suggestions submitted for future continuation or implementation planning.

July 2025: Finalization, editing, and submission of the full Task Force Recommendations Report for internal review and external distribution.

GOALS, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL 1: INNOVATION HUBS

Findings:

- Pasco lacks a central resource hub for innovation, especially in AI
- There is high potential for university-business collaboration

Recommendations:

- Encourage organizations to cross-support one another with letters of support for state and federal appropriations requests
- Launch AI Challenge Labs—One-week events hosted at colleges and universities with students, professors, and local business owners
- Collaborate with institutions like Pasco-Hernando State College and Saint Leo University to co-host innovation events and applied research initiatives

GOAL 2: TECH TALENT

Findings:

- Talent pipeline needs better alignment with local business needs
- Colleges and universities have existing capacity for innovation-aligned programming

Recommendations:

- Create a regional internship and capstone project platform within our college and university ecosystem
- Establish “Speed Internship” model during employer-student meetups during preexisting events such as seminars, hackathons, and career fairs
- Offer short-format courses in AI, ERP, CRM, and other systems at colleges and universities as well as through industry partners

GOAL 3: SMALL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Findings:

- Many businesses are unaware or hesitant to adopt AI
- Common tools used include ChatGPT, Copilot, Zapier, and website tools

Recommendations:

- Publish a Printed AI Guide and launch a Digital Readiness Toolkit
- Develop a web resource of AI case studies and tools
- Offer free workshops and webinars hosted by partners like colleges, universities, chambers of commerce, and entrepreneur support organizations
- Create an AI Support Directory
- Rebrand AI as "Augmented Intelligence" to promote adoption
- Provide AI learning modules and resources to area businesses as a self-service tool
- Install an AI Chat Agent on the SMARTstart Pasco website as a demo and use case scenario for small business engagement

GOAL 4: ETHICAL AI USE

Findings:

- AI adoption raises concerns about bias, privacy, and automation impacts
- Increased tech adoption by businesses causes increased exposure for cybersecurity risks

Recommendations:

- Promote ethical standards and human oversight
- Host panels and training on AI risk and governance
- County government to explore the creation of a Tech Policy Advisory Council to guide AI use and regulation
- Engage Think Tanks or Policy Institutes in existing events or workshops
- Conduct an AI Policy Roundtable at future GROW Pasco events

GOAL 5: STARTUP ACCELERATION

Findings:

- Local startups need structured support to grow in place

Recommendations:

- The Pasco EDC to launch the Innovation Enterprise Fund Accelerator with Metro Development Group
 - Focus on tech companies in the Connected City Special Planning Area
 - Include AI as a priority sector
 - Provide lab/incubator space in Connected City Special Planning Area
 - Brand events as "Powered by SMARTstart" and "Sponsored by Metro"
- Explore other opportunities to provide structured support to expanding businesses in the realm of digital transformation