

An analysis of tech workforce
and entrepreneurship

STATE OF THE DELAWARE TECH ECONOMY

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technical.ly





WELCOME

Delaware has always challenged us at Technical.ly, the news organization that will celebrate in 2024 our 15th year of reporting on local tech economies — including an even decade in Delaware. Our business journalism and economic storytelling has otherwise focused on metro regions, with special preference for big cities — Philadelphia and Washington DC, Baltimore and Pittsburgh, alongside series in Brooklyn, Chicago, Miami, Atlanta, Denver and Milwaukee, among others. In all those places, state identities, but none of them look quite like Delaware.

Most of the First State's economic activity is part of the Philadelphia region, which makes sense given the thousands of workers who sit on trains and in traffic between the two places. More than 30,000 residents of Philadelphia and its surrounding Pennsylvania counties commute to jobs in New Castle County, according to a Technical.ly analysis, and nearly that many do the reverse.

Yet Delaware leaders were late to join the popular post-Great Recession economic development strategy of fostering a community of entrepreneurs and technologists.

That boom started with millennials in cities, and Delaware's biggest city Wilmington isn't all that big. Delaware residents travel easily to New York, Washington DC, Philadelphia and Baltimore, yet the tech-startup efforts of those cities came later to Delaware.

Late or not, on the eve of the pandemic, it had begun. North Market Street, which serves as Wilmington's urban spine, from a valuable train station to the pretty Brandywine Creek, had true momentum. A new generation of restaurant concepts and retail co-mingled with a gaggle of tech companies and a few financial services heavyweights. Not far away, big shiny innovation spaces and important research hubs at the University of Delaware and other consortia were in the mix. As other states in the old mid-Atlantic lost population, Delaware saw a population increase, albeit aided largely by retirees. The pandemic shook all of these efforts.

This inaugural State of the Delaware Tech Economy, published by news organization Technical.ly, seeks to establish an annual analysis of what is working and what is not. We start here.



Across all our analysis, you'll find five broad categories that Technical.ly identifies as contributing to a tech economy: Invention (Research), Commercialization (Business Formation); Development (Workforce); Livability (Quality of Life) and Reputation, or how what is true and what is known aligns.

For this report, like our own reporting, we at Technical.ly spent considerable time with word choice. This is a report on Delaware's tech economy, which encompasses both the tech industry and all tech work. These concepts overlap but are not the same. A 150-person tech firm will likely employ professionals in sales and marketing, operations, and accounting – jobs within the tech industry but not tech occupations. Inversely, a 150,000-person telecom company will employ hundreds of software developers, data scientists and cybersecurity professionals – tech occupations not within the tech industry.

This report both celebrates Delaware's vibrancy, and offers a challenge for collective action. This, then, has both a review of what is true today, and what could be true in the future.

Much of the data presented in this report is for that which is physically situated within Delaware statewide, excluding, for example, businesses incorporated here without offices, but including tech workers who now travel infrequently to an office here but may live in another state. We at Technical.ly do present a transparent bias: Delaware benefits from a statewide identity, but we believe Wilmington specifically is an important if underperforming asset within that identity. Delaware cannot thrive without Wilmington, and Wilmington cannot thrive without Delaware.

Over the next dozens of pages, Technical.ly presents a way to understand Delaware's tech economy. We share data, highlight people and collect important trends. In the spirit of directness, we can also answer here: What is the state of the Delaware tech economy? Delaware is a well-managed state with a reputation for effective, business-friendly, centrist leadership that effectively retained corporate offices of big financial services firms – but perhaps predictably, not at fostering entrepreneurial-powered creative destruction. Before the pandemic, civic leaders briefly boasted of the opportunity to create a true fintech hub that would benefit from nearby corporate leaders and accessible policymakers, but most corporate executives and centrist politicians prize stability over disruption. The fintech hub idea never gained much serious ground.



The state's relatively small size is always its strength and challenge. You can access almost anyone, but run afoul of a few key connectors and you won't get far. To mix metaphors: Over the small pond, there are fewer bridges to burn.

It's telling that Delaware was part of the Greater Philadelphia coalition that was short-listed by the federal Economic Development Administration's Tech Hubs program. The state's workforce, research community and congressional delegation gives greater heft to Philadelphia's case, making Delaware an important component, but it's unlikely Delaware could have gotten there on its own.

As a final point, late into the development of this report, versions of which we are producing in each of the five mid-Atlantic markets we cover, we identified that these reports might well serve also as a check in on Technical.ly as an organization and a community actor too. News organizations have historically pretended we were neutral and invisible actors, which was likely never true and is certainly not true today.

So though the focus throughout the report is on Delaware, you'll also see that we see ourselves as responsible for the direction of this tech economy as much as any other organization. More than ever after the pandemic, Technical.ly is in the business of economic storytelling. Delaware's story has so much more left to be told.

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THIS REPORT MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO



LONGWOOD *foundation*

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Find our full client list in the back of this report. What can we do for you?

Your need	Storytelling packages	Advertising campaigns	Events	Research
Tell my community’s innovation story.	Yes!	Yes!	Yes!	Yes!
Promote my products and services to SMB and tech leaders.	Yes!	Yes!	Yes!	
Establish or support my company’s employer brand marketing strategy.	Yes!		Yes!	



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TO SUPPORT OUR WORK**

2023: THE DELAWARE TECH ECONOMY YEAR IN REVIEW

The Mill begins renovations on its first downstate coworking space in Seaford

Tech Council of Delaware launches

Inflation-targeted interest rate increases crushed sky-high tech company valuations. The transition from growth-at-all-costs to capital efficiency brought waves of tech layoffs, including at high-profile startups.

Bronze Valley launches startup accelerator in Wilmington



Tech Council launches American Dream Academy to build and expand inclusive tech talent pipelines

Compact Membrane Systems raises \$16.5M in an oversubscribed Series A

The FinTech Innovation Hub officially opens on UD's STAR Campus

NIH grants \$3.2 million to three Delaware orgs for I-RED University, an online entrepreneurship education platform for scientists

NASA and FedTech choose the Innovation Space in Wilmington for the NASA Climate Tech Startup Studio powered by FedTech

JAN

Technical.ly unveils our first rebrand in a decade, ahead of our 15th anniversary in 2024.

MAR

Roddy Flynn named executive director of the newly-formed DE Broadband Office



APR

Startup302 pitch competition from Delaware Prosperity Partnership returns

JUN

Delaware Coastal Society launches blue tech accelerator

JUL

NERDit Cares officially opens its downtown Wilmington workforce development location

AUG

SEP



OCT

Delaware included in Greater Philadelphia's EDA Tech Hubs designation

ChristianaCare's first spinout, gene editing startup CorriXR, names Deborah Moorad as CEO

TOP STORIES IN DELAWARE TECH IN 2023



Delaware nabbed part of a regional EDA Tech Hubs designation

Wilmington is part of the Greater Philadelphia Region Precision Medicine Tech Hub, led by Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern PA. Here's what comes next.



READ THE FULL ARTICLE

If you build downstate amenities for Delaware's remote workers and entrepreneurs, will they come?

Workers in search of better connections are hoping to find them nearby as housing developments pop up, The Mill prepares to open a coworking hub, and the state expands broadband infrastructure.



READ THE FULL ARTICLE



Meet Delaware's new M&T Bank president

Mark Hutton opened the first M&T Bank location in Delaware and was involved with the Wilmington Trust acquisition.



READ THE FULL ARTICLE

TRENDS & NATIONAL TECH STORIES IN 2023



The remote work scam that's blowing up in the recruiting industry

One design firm's tale of identity theft, and how companies and jobseekers alike can protect themselves from deception.



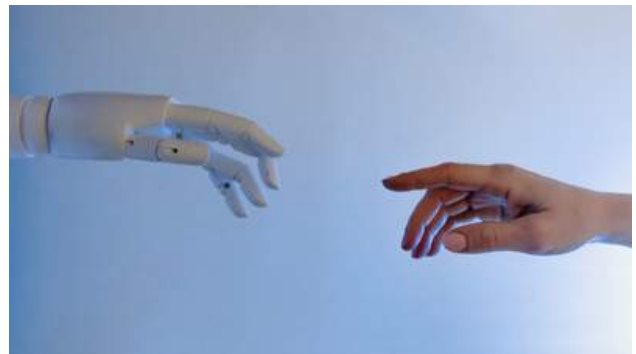
[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

How to go deeper with ChatGPT using prompt engineering

You've probably already done your share of prompt engineering. Here's how it applies to OpenAI's DALL-E and ChatGPT — which could, maybe, become Google's successor.



[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)



You've heard the term 'valuation' on 'Shark Tank.' What does it actually mean?

Have entrepreneurial dreams? Here's a concept you'll need to understand, especially if you plan to take venture capital at some point.



[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

Tech layoffs aren't likely to ease up after Microsoft and Amazon. Here's what to expect if you're affected

What's causing this shift, and what do former employees need to know about severance packages, vested stocks and other next steps?



[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)



A man in a dark suit, blue shirt, and red tie is speaking and gesturing with his right hand showing three fingers. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred cityscape.

WATCH THE FULL
KEYNOTE ADDRESS



At the Technical.ly Builders Conference held May 2023, our founder-CEO Chris Wink identified three macro trends that are shaping the tech, startup and innovation communities we follow.

3 BIG TRENDS

BUILDERS CONFERENCE
RETURNS
MAY 9, 2024!

Entrepreneurship is booming.

After decades of declines, Americans started businesses during the pandemic at a faster rate than seen in generations. The business incorporation boom is led by women, many of whom are prioritizing flexibility over salary. Half of young workers now do some freelance work. Hiring managers will compete for workers with entrepreneurship – and that’s a good thing.

Demography is destiny.

The American labor force is getting older and shifting geographically to the South and Southwest. Cities that retain college graduates and attract immigrants do best. All should take seriously fun and dynamic tech and entrepreneurship communities. Parties matter.

The Age of AI is real.

The digital transformation era is winding down. The Age of AI is a paradigm shift, far more than 3D printing, Blockchain, augmented reality – though they all remain impressive technologies. The urgency of retooling our workforce grows. Hiring managers must recognize the HR tech arms race; one-click apply ruined hiring. Instead, like those promoting their cities, your best asset isn’t more tech but your people. Tell their stories.

DELAWARE'S TECH ECONOMY BY THE NUMBERS

Made Possible By
LONGWOOD foundation

Delaware boosters have a strong state identity, even while its economy is part of the greater Philadelphia region. Here we look at statewide data, contrasted when appropriate to regional figures (including for Philadelphia itself).

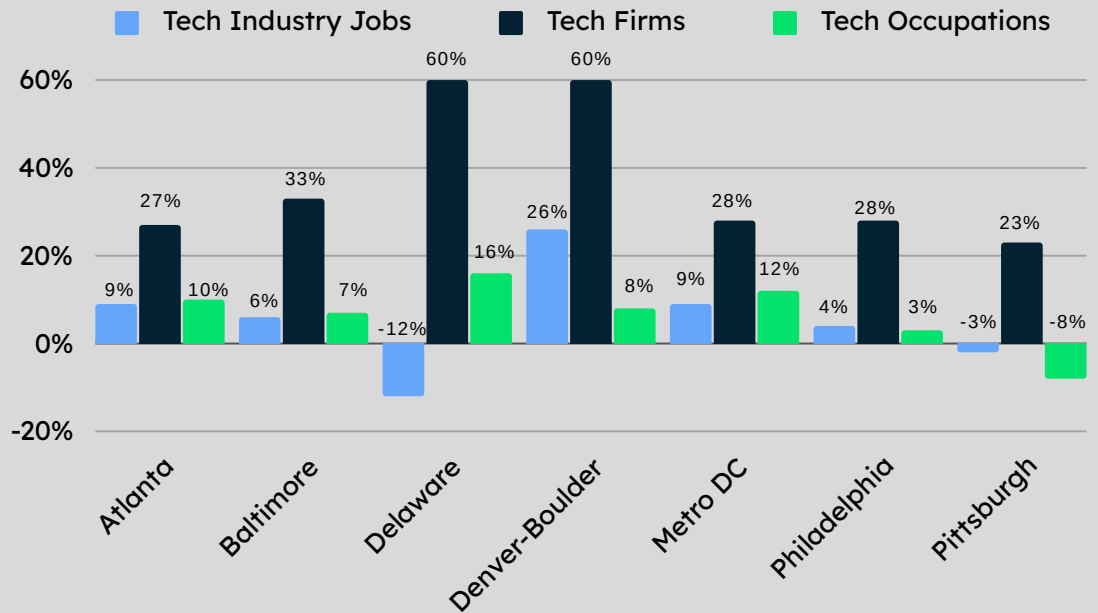
Technical.ly evaluates a tech economy in advanced research, business and workforce. Clients are given further access and quarterly tech economy trends and analysis.

STATEWIDE

3,817
TECH FIRMS
10,971
JOBS AT TECH
INDUSTRY FIRMS
21,534
TECH OCCUPATIONS
AT ALL FIRMS

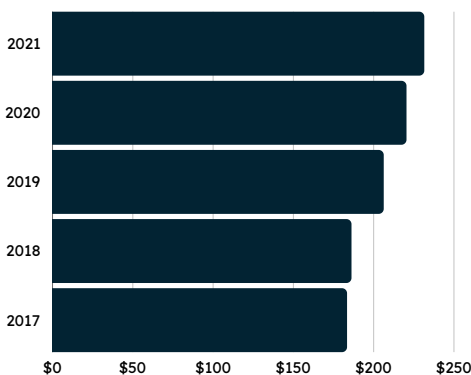
PERCENTAGE CHANGE: AUG. 2018-2023

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST VIA TECHNICAL.LY TECH ECONOMY DASHBOARD



R&D EXPENDITURES

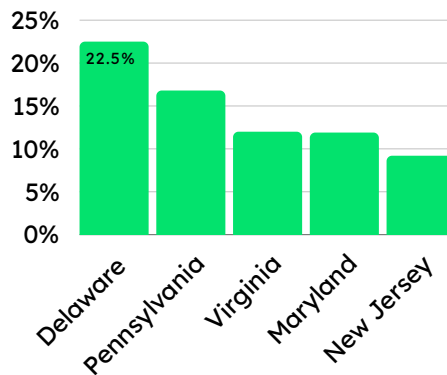
University of Delaware R&D spending ranked 109th among U.S. academic institutions in 2021, with \$231m



SOURCE: NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

NEW BUSINESS STARTS OF MID-ATLANTIC STATES

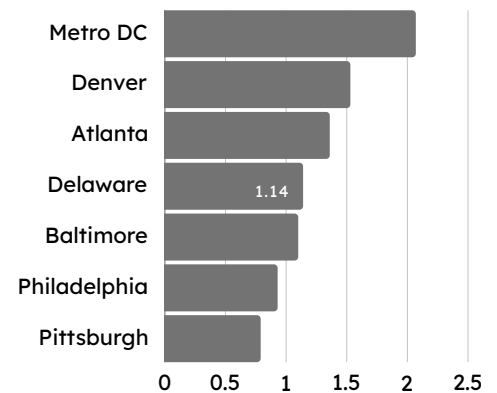
Change From October 2022 to October 2023 of High-Propensity New Business Applications



SOURCE: TECHNICAL.LY ANALYSIS OF US CENSUS BUREAU (SEASONALLY ADJUSTED)

CONCENTRATION OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS

Employment concentration reflects employment relative to the U.S. as a whole. An LQ greater than 1 indicates an a greater share than nationwide.



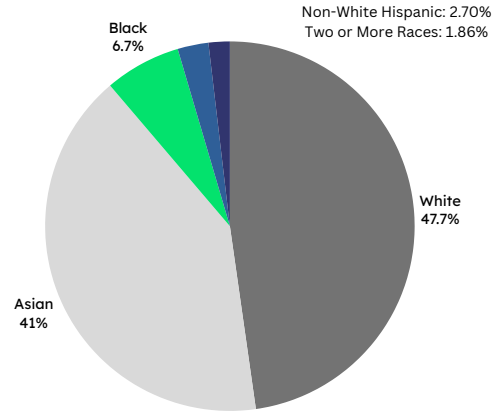
SOURCE: LIGHTCAST VIA TECHNICAL.LY TECH ECONOMY DASHBOARD

EMPLOYERS WITH 10 MOST TECH OPENINGS IN DELAWARE

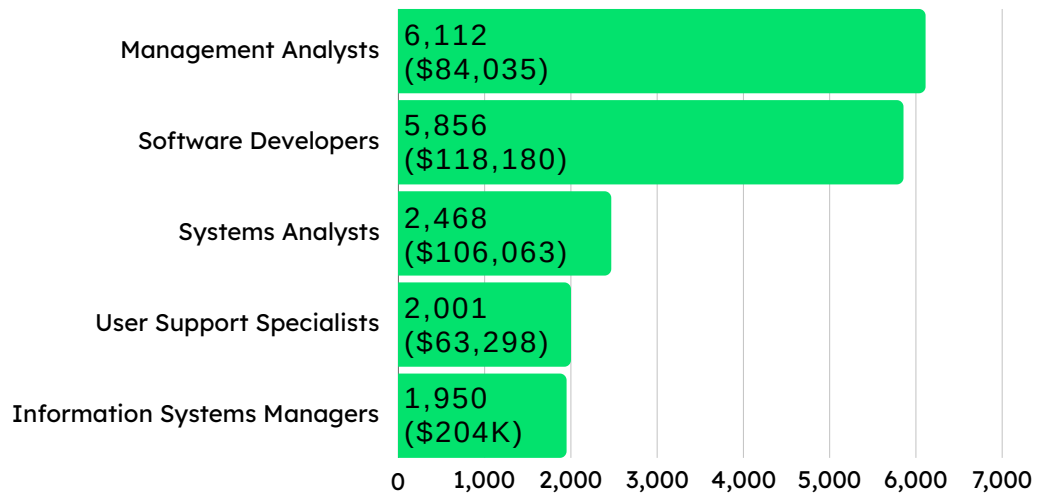
SOURCE: LIGHTCAST VIA TECHNICAL.LY TECH ECONOMY DASHBOARD (UNIQUE POSTINGS IN OCTOBER 2023)

JPMorgan Chase	172
Capital One	167
Citigroup	60
University of Delaware	35
Wells Fargo	24
Royal Bank of Canada	23
Refresco	20
College Board	18
Lockheed Martin	17

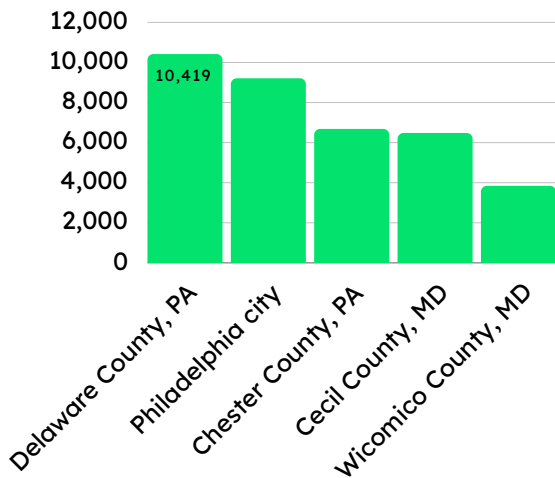
RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS IN DELAWARE



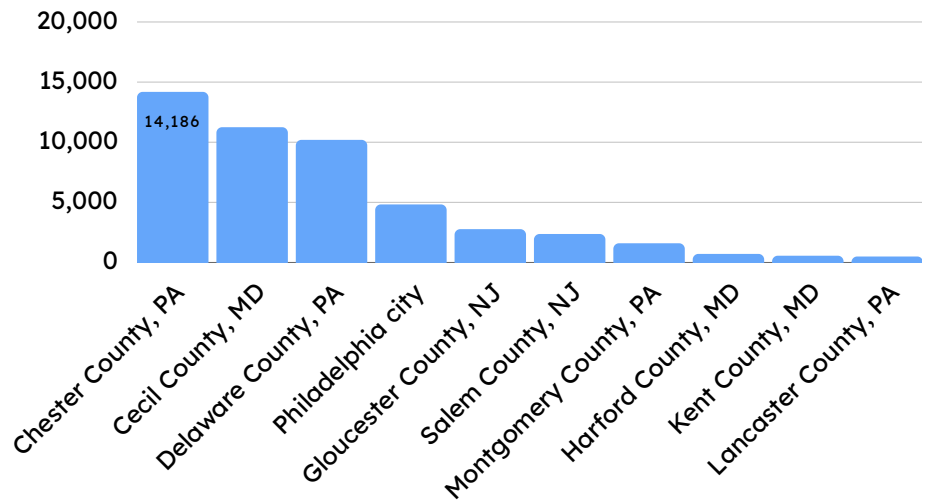
DELAWARE'S FIVE MOST COMMON TECH JOBS



WHERE DO DELAWARE RESIDENTS COMMUTE TO?



WHERE DO OUT-OF-STATE DELAWARE WORKERS COMMUTE FROM?



SOURCE: TECHNICAL.LY ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY COMMUTING FLOWS (2016-2020)

HOW DOES DELAWARE STACK?

This is Technical.ly's inaugural Tech Economy Report Card, produced for each of our daily markets using a range of quantitative sources. The goal is to highlight strengths to highlight and opportunities for improvement. Find details on methodology on Technical.ly's report announcement.

Category	Component	Grade
Invention (Research)	Research Community	C
	Advanced Research	B
	Tech Transfer	C
Commercialization (Business Formation)	Entrepreneurship Community	C
	Ease of Business (ASU)	A
	Access to Capital + Services	C
Development (Talent)	Technologist Community	C
	Tech training programs	B
	Large Employers	B
Lifestyle (Livability)	Cost of Living	A
	Live/Work/Play Amenities	B
	Population Growth	B
Reputation (Brand)	What Insiders Say	B
	What Locals Say	C
	What Others Say	C

Invention (Research)

The University of Delaware is the state's only serious academic R&D provider, and it hasn't cracked the top 100 largest spenders. The state's history in chemical science and mid-Atlantic density means it does have credible private sector activity but size constrains it.

Commercialization

Delaware is a national leader in business friendliness, especially in the US Northeast – though Wilmington city has obstacles. Few longterm investments in a credible entrepreneurial community exist, though econ dev groups contribute. Services are nearby but not within state.

Development (Workforce)

Relative to size, Delaware has high density of tech workers and tech workforce programs. The state lacks the social community that other tech hubs boast, though many event organizers and civic boosters contribute where they can.

Lifestyle (Quality of Life)

Delaware is a tiny state that has a genuine, if small, city with real culture (Wilmington), beloved beaches, preserved wilderness and a robust agricultural region. It is relatively affordable, aided by its business-incorporation services, credibly situated in the middle of one of the world's most economically important corridors. Its population is growing, but more retirees than prime-age workers. Big employers are plentiful, though "cool" jobs are fewer.

Reputation (Brand)

Delaware boosters have true pride, and have made real progress rallying together around a unified flag. Yet locals have limited knowledge of its tech economy outside finance, and the rest of the country's knowledge of Delaware is near nonexistent.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO **THRIVE** TODAY?

This report is part of Thriving, a yearlong storytelling initiative from Technical.ly focused on the lived experiences of Philadelphia. The project culminates with a 10-part audio documentary that follows 10 Philadelphians live now.

Read and listen to the series by visiting technical.ly/series/thriving

Ghulam Danesh and his family fled Kabul as the US military withdrew from Afghanistan. He now lives in the Oxford Circle neighborhood of Northeast Philadelphia, where he's trying to piece together a new life.

Linda Hines has lived in South Philly her entire life, working childcare jobs on a high school education. A nationwide labor shortage in early childhood education means she's an older worker that the American economy needs to retain — but she needs new certifications.

Colombia-born Gisselle Poveda is expanding her family's North Philadelphia restaurant, and Michael Tan is still recovering his Old City pastry shop from the wreckage of the pandemic.

Dorianna Diaz is trying to mix gig work with her life as an artist, and Jaquan Fields has a dream of growing the birthday clown business he's grown out of Frankford where he lives now into a fully-fledged traveling circus.

These stories are remarkable and yet so commonplace. These people are a few of the 10 Philadelphians whose economic journey Technical.ly has followed for more than a year as part of our Thriving project — which has featured more than a hundred interviews from a dozen US cities and focus groups. The goal? Add lived experience to the rich data we have about what it takes to economically thrive in the United States.

The project is culminating with an audio documentary that we're releasing as a 10-part podcast. We at Technical.ly led the project and produced the audio doc with Rowhome Productions, thanks to support from the William Penn Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts and the Knight Foundation.



Thriving

THRIVING WAS MADE POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE SUPPORT OF



WILLIAM PENN
FOUNDATION



Pew



KNIGHT
FOUNDATION



NOVEMBER 2023



Technical.ly

HAVE INCLUSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP INVESTMENTS DONE **ANYTHING?**

READ THE
FULL REPORT



With support from UBS, Technical.ly released “The Inclusion Edge: Powering an Entrepreneurial Renaissance”, a landmark report on the past, present and future of inclusive entrepreneurship.

Kelly Burton launched her tech-based apparel company Bodyology in 2014. She developed a product, added customers and grew revenue.

Three years later, she wasn't where she wanted to be.

Burton, a Black woman and first-time tech founder, felt excluded from the network of investors that specialized in her industry – a common challenge among founders of color. Short of the growth rate other startup apparel brands sought, she closed the business. Then she decided to focus on helping other entrepreneurs overcome the obstacles she had faced.

Burton is now the CEO of the Black Innovation Alliance (BIA), and she represents a range of trends in “inclusive entrepreneurship,” an advocacy priority that has grown over the last 20 years into a major economic policy objective.

Burton is one of dozens of entrepreneurs Technical.ly interviewed for a new landmark report we're publishing today, with support from the Community Impact, Americas team from UBS, entitled “The Inclusion Edge: Powering an Entrepreneurial Renaissance.” The report looks at the past, present and future of inclusive entrepreneurship.

NOVEMBER 2023

August 2023

The Inclusion Edge:

Powering an Entrepreneurial Renaissance

A Special Report On The Past, Present and Future of Inclusive Entrepreneurship



Entrepreneurship boomed in the United States after the immediate pandemic shock, and Black women have helped lead the effort. Higher rates of immigration contributed, too. Though the demographics of those who start companies in the United States have become more representative of the country's population as a whole, those who grow companies haven't changed as much. Put another way: Most American demographic groups start companies but not as many grow them.

Burton felt she didn't have the network to grow a tech company a decade ago. Now she's part of a wave of programs to make it easier for others. A decade of investments in inclusive entrepreneurship may have met the pandemic moment. Now there's a whole new stage of inclusive entrepreneurship priorities.

Informing those who set those priorities is the goal for this report.

Find the full report at technical.ly/become-a-client/research/



Technical.ly



REALLIST STARTUPS 2023: MEET 10 OF DELAWARE'S MOST EXCITING YOUNG COMPANIES

This year's cohort is making waves in healthcare tech, environmental tech, education and esports.

In the six years since the inaugural Delaware ReaLIST Startups, Technical.ly's annual roundup of the First State's most promising young tech companies, we've seen the local ecosystem expand, especially in areas such as green tech, blue tech and healthtech. Esports and gaming have held a ReaLIST presence over the past couple of years, as well as a few apps and platforms designed to help the ecosystem grow.

Last year's ReaLIST Startups was very STEM-focused, with the top two startups — Desikant and Hx Innovations — based on new technologies in smart garments and athletic footwear, respectively. Another three of the 10 on the 2022 list — Elyte Energy, CM Materials and the now-Philly-based Carbon Reform — focus on environment-prioritizing green technology.

For 2023, we looked to our own reporting, networking and toward startup-focused events such as the Delaware Prosperity Partnership-led Startup302 pitch competition and the State of Delaware's EDGE Grant to find this year's crop of promising startups. As in 2022, we're seeing a lot of STEM startups, especially in greentech and healthtech, as well as ecosystem-building startups that are working to support entrepreneurs and technologists in Delaware and beyond.

Technical.ly started the ReaLIST as a yearly look at the exciting early-stage tech companies in each of our markets. Its name comes from a question that has often been debated in our newsroom: Is that startup real? Is the team serious? Is the product interesting?

Since there's no single definition for what a startup even is, we needed to lay down some rules for what qualifies as a "real" startup in our eyes:

- Founded no earlier than 2020 (though we know founding dates can be tricky)
- Most of its revenue comes from an innovative product — so, no agencies
- Has shown some track record of success
- Remains independent, meaning it's not been acquired, merged or gone public
- Headquartered and primarily staffed in Delaware — especially important in a state where many of the companies incorporated here don't live here

As we say every year: These rankings are not scientific. This is merely a list of 10 companies we're most excited to follow in 2023.

Without further ado, meet Technical.ly's 2023 ReaLIST Startups for Delaware.

Enetor

Founded in 2020 by José Salazar, Wilmington's Enetor develops online engineering simulators to help intensive projects troubleshoot while meeting their budgets. The 2021 Swim With Sharks people's choice award winner has plans to hire 150 employees.

Backyard Gig

Technical.ly has followed Backyard Gig since it started as a University of Delaware Summer Founders project during the pandemic. The localist task app is aimed at connecting college students with members of the community looking for help with chores, tutoring or help with creative tasks. It was an honorable mention in 2022, and it's met some of its goals for the year, including adding ads to the platform. Founder Suryanuj Gupta was also honored as Collegiate Entrepreneurs' 2022 Organization CEO of the Year.

Better Puzzles

Cofounded by Bryce Fender — who is also cofounder of 2019 ReaLLIST Startups honoree Wilminvest — and Wilmington filmmaker Moises Velazquez in 2020, this creative startup helps support visual artists by turning paintings into framable puzzles that pay artists 20% of every piece sold, compared to as little as 3% for retail puzzle art. Why puzzles? During the height of the pandemic, stores couldn't keep puzzles in stock as families looked for lockdown activities that didn't involve devices.



Synnovation Therapeutics

This young but growing Wilmington-based healthtech startup (and 2022 ReaLLIST honorable mention) focuses on small molecule therapies that target cancers. Executive Director Hui Wang previously worked for Incyte, including as its associate director of small molecule therapy oncology programs.

Enhanced Edge

This Dover-based mental health startup — a spinoff of the Mental Edge clinic — was a recipient of a 2022 EDGE grant for its advanced, drug-free treatments for trauma-based disorders that uses neurofeedback, biofeedback and brain mapping. Co-owned and run by John Vander Ven, Jr., Kenneth Phillips, Julia Pritchett and Hunter Melson, its biggest advancement is a "dry" QEEG brain scanning cap (meaning it uses no gel or saline for conductivity) which will allow the company to increase the number of patients it serves.



Cybersecurity Marketing Society

When the Cybersecurity Marketing Society was first cofounded by Newark-based Gianna Whitver and Connecticut's Maria Velasquez, it was simply a Slack channel for cybersecurity marketers to network. It's since evolved into a national-reaching startup that organizes events — including Cyber Marketing Con '22 in Arlington, Virginia — plus industry surveys, a job board and the podcast called "Breaking Through in Cybersecurity Marketing."

CompSciLib

Founded in August 2021 by University of Delaware students Genpei “John” Ye and David Bichara with Boston University alum NJ Umoh, CompSciLib was a finalist in the 2022 Hen Hatch competition in the post-revenue track for its online edtech platform for computer science majors. The platform for computer science students in every stage offers tools, support and a global community of CompSci students and educators. In addition to subscription access, CompSciLab offers free events including the recent Instagram live event, “The Secrets to Landing a Tech Internship.”



Launch Point Labs

Founded in 2021 by partners Delaware-based Eric Smith as well as Kyra Gilmore, Travis King, Damon Martin and Brandon Mahoney, Launch Point Labs is a startup studio that build small businesses and nonprofits across the country, offering a pool of over 100 carefully selected designers, marketers, sales pros, project managers and advisors to help fill talent gaps and give funding and investment help. Last year, the team started building a \$5 million fund to invest in startups directly – something that could be especially valuable to Delaware’s startup ecosystem, which is light on VC investments.

OmniPotential Energy Partners

Though its founding date is in the fall of 2019, curbside electric vehicle charging startup OmniPotential Energy has had its biggest milestones since 2020, including the development of its Curbstar product – a publicly shared residential charger, and the passage of Delaware legislation that would allow installation of EV chargers in residential areas. SBI-87, written by OmniPotential Energy founder Cora Castle and passed in June 2022, requires large municipalities in the state to issue permits for the installation of EV charging stations.



Tangia

Keeping up with Delaware’s esports trend, Tangia was founded by UD engineering students Dan Goodman and Alex Pickett in the summer of 2020. Then known as Ultimate Tournament, the company had a virtual arcade, but ultimately pivoted to creating a platform to help streamers increase engagement. The evolving startup was accepted into Y Combinator’s summer 2022 cohort, and in October, Tangia raised \$1.2 million, bringing its total amount raised to \$2.1 million.





REALLIST CONNECTORS 2023: MEET 20 (MORE) DELAWAREANS LEADING THE TECH AND STARTUP COMMUNITY INTO THE FUTURE

New to the local tech scene? Looking to expand your network? Here are some of the most connective leaders you should know to get involved in the First State.

If you've ever felt unsure of who to connect with to get deeper into the Delaware tech and business community, keep reading.

In 2020, when the world felt the most disconnected, Technical.ly launched RealLIST Connectors, a now-annual roundup of people working to build their local tech, entrepreneurship and innovation community through the power of connection, whether linking others to networks, jobs or resources.

Delaware's RealLIST Connectors are forward-looking innovators with an eye on inclusion, ecosystem building

and making things better for future generations. Each year, we add a new batch of connectors to the cohort.

This year's contribution includes nominations from the community, as well as newsroom picks based on reporting over the last couple of years by Delaware reporter Holly Quinn, with contributions from Managing Editor Julie Zeglen. So, here it is – the 2023 edition, and a peek into our source book at some of the most future-facing, highly impactful connectors you should know, in alphabetical order.

The RealLIST

Zakiyyah Ali

- Executive director, Tech Council of Delaware
- In March 2023, Tech Council of Delaware officially launched, with Zakiyyah Ali as its official inaugural executive director. As far as the tech ecosystem goes, the Council is all about connection and building a sustainable tech hub with an inclusive talent pipeline in Delaware. A long-term regional connector, Ali previously served as senior director of workforce development for the City of Philadelphia.



ZAKIYYAH ALI SPEAKING AT THE PODIUM AT THE TECH COUNCIL OF DELAWARE'S LAUNCH EVENT. (PHOTO BY HOLLY QUINN)

Cora Castle

- President, OmniPotential Energy Partners
- As a cofounder of OmniPotential, a greentech startup that places electric car charging stations (and helps push through legislation to make their placement possible), Castle gives to the community through environmentalism. But she doesn't stop there: She is an advocate for social justice and equal access who often shares her expertise as an entrepreneur as part of the MILLSUMMIT and other events.

Jason Clarke

- Chief information officer, Delaware Department of Technology and Information
- From expanding wireless broadband access to making sure Delaware's digital resources are accessible, Clarke is a people-focused CIO who can be found connecting with the tech community, advocates and high school students on the tech topics that concern them, including how AI is being implemented in the state.

Erica Crell

- Manager of innovation, Delaware Prosperity Partnership
- Erica Crell is nearing one year at DPP, where she helps to find and foster the most innovative companies through initiatives like Startup 302, and drawing growing out-of-state companies to Delaware. She's no newbie to economic development in the state, though — Crell served as program coordinator at the Emerging Enterprise Center from 2015 to 2020.

Doneene Damon

- Chief diversity director, Richards, Layton & Finger
- Damon holds the distinction of being the first Black woman president of a law firm in Delaware. She is still with that firm, Richards, Layton & Finger, now as chief diversity director, a role that allows her to mentor high school and college students considering a career in law and showing them that the field has a place for them, even if they don't look like the majority of law professionals.



DONEENE DAMON. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Gayle Dillman

- CEO, Gable Music Ventures
- Dillman cofounded Gable in the '90s to bolster a Delaware music scene that only really worked for cover bands. If you're seeing an original band of artist in Delaware, there's a good chance Dillman had a hand in it. Beyond that vital service for the arts, she is also committed to economic development in the state by partnering with small local businesses across industries. And, of course, there would be no Ladybug Festival without her.

Jessica Gibson Brokenbaugh

- Executive director, NERDiT Cares
- NERDiT Cares, the community foundation of tech repair and recycling company NERDiT Now, has been donating refurbished devices to individuals and families for years now. A new location in downtown Wilmington led by Gibson Brokenbaugh connects people with technology by offering free tech training and apprenticeships.



JESSICA GIBSON BROKENBAUGH. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Greg Godbout

- Director, Delaware Coastal Society
- Most tech accelerators in Delaware are in Wilmington or Newark. The Delaware Coastal Society, led by Godbout, is committed to creating a thriving tech ecosystem in Sussex County by focusing on its biggest potential: the ocean. Potential startups include data analysis and AI, robotics and environmental technology. In his day job, the Rehoboth Beach resident is also the chief growth officer of Baltimore-headquartered digital services firm Fearless.

Alexis Harris

- Founder, First State Destinations
- Are social media influencers community connectors? They are when they run Instagram accounts like Harris' First State Destinations. Looking for a place to get brunch? A B&B near the beach? A tour of the new apartments downtown? Harris has got you. No one makes Delaware look more like a place you want to be.

Lillian Harrison

- President and CEO, Elevated Community Development Corporation
- Seaford-based Harrison launched Elevated CDC five years ago as a workforce development opportunity for Delawareans on probation, parole or work release, as well as veterans and homeless residents. Harrison has supported the community as an entrepreneurship coach, business builder and grant writer, and is also a real estate agent in Sussex County.



GREG GODBOUT. (COURTESY PHOTO)



JIM LEE. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Isheta Kulshreshtha

- President, Delaware Entrepreneurship League
- DEL is Delaware's first entrepreneurial network created for and by youth, building programs that connect high school students throughout the state to further their ventures and foster personal development. Kulshreshtha led the DEL leadership team to host the successful DelawareLaunch, a "Shark Tank"-style pitch competition featuring high school students from Sussex, Kent and New Castle counties, with much more on the horizon. Her nominator wrote: "Isheta is an innovative connector, empowering those around her to employ their networks to succeed in developing their initiatives. Even outside of DEL, she seeks to build meaningful relationships with those around her."

Katie LeCocq

- Kitchen manager, Wilmington Kitchen Collective
- As manager of the Kitchen Collective, LeCocq helps food-based entrepreneurs launch businesses out of its two updated commercial kitchens at Grace Church and First & Central Church in Wilmington. A visual artist, LeCocq previously served as communications manager at Servian Girls Academy Delaware.

Jim Lee

- Futurist and founder, Stratfi
- Delaware's futurist, Lee shares his insights on the investments and the economy through his strategic investments company and via talks, panels and articles, some of which we've published on Technical.ly as guest posts.

The **RealLIST**

Kevin Palladinetti

- Principal, Al du Pont High School
- As the first public school principal in Delaware to turn a classroom into an esports arena and commit to launching an esports industry Pathway with partner Futures First Gaming, students are learning about the many careers in the growing industry, including design and development, coaching, management and marketing.

Mike Pfeifer

- Founder, 1440 Film Co.
- If you're somewhere where things are happening in Delaware, especially if those things involve economic development or community growth activity, don't be surprised if you see Pfeifer and his video team there. 1440 stays busy with contracts, but it also does a community project each year for free.

Eric Smith

- CEO, Launch Point Labs
- This former VP of Carvertise — once a Delaware startup itself before becoming an international company — cofounded the startup studio Launch Point Labs with Kyra Gilmore, Travis King, Damon Martin and Brandon Mahoney in 2021, and has established himself as a valuable Technical.ly community stakeholder. By its nature, a startup studio is all about connections, with a pool of designers, marketers and advisors ready to help startups fill talent gaps as they grow.



MARIA VELASQUEZ AND GIANNA WHITVER (RIGHT).
(COURTESY PHOTO)

Darren Stephenson

- Program manager, gALPHA Bronze Valley VentureLab Delaware
- As Bronze Valley Ventures moves to bring more VC funding and startup support to Delaware, Stephenson manages its new gener8or-powered accelerator, now in its inaugural cohort. The program aims to mirror the success of Bronze Valley's work in Birmingham, and could be a game changer for the First State.

Nick Strickland

- Technology business advisor, Delaware Small Business Development Center
- As a DuPont chemical engineer who previously developed and spun out a new brand from the company, Strickland supports upcoming entrepreneurs by mentoring them through his SBDC position, and through speaking engagements including the 2023 MILLSUMMIT.

Gianna Whitver

- Cofounder, Cybersecurity Marketing Society
- A relatively recent transplant to Delaware, Newark-based Whitver is a connector extraordinaire in her industry of cybersecurity marketing well beyond locally. The growing Society has hubs and events across the country, but Whitver is committed to being an active part of the Delaware ecosystem as well.

Leonard Young

- Founder, DelawareBlack
- Young started DelawareBlack as an online news site that shared events and stories geared toward the state's Black communities that were often overlooked by mainstream local media. It's evolved into a national network connecting Black communities across the country — but locally focused DelawareBlack is still thriving, especially on its active Instagram.



REALLIST ENGINEERS 2023: MEET 15 TECHNOLOGISTS BUILDING A BETTER DELAWARE

Finance, education, healthcare, startups – this year's batch of influential tech pros making a difference represent a variety of industries in the First State.

Technologists are the backbone of most industries today – they're the core of tech, of course, but they're also vital in finance, healthcare, academics and commerce.

Technical.ly started the RealLIST Engineers in Delaware in 2020 as a way to recognize and highlight some of the state's most influential technologists: the problem solvers, community leaders and, ultimately, impressive software and IT professionals.

As always, the search for our 2023 RealLIST Engineers began with a public call for nominations (and for the record, our RealLIST nomination form is open year round, so if you think we missed someone this year, you can nominate them at any time). We reached out to past RealLIST Engineers and local institutions and looked back through

our own coverage. We considered how the person in mind was influential within their organization and community, the impact they made and the (usually unsung) work they do.

Now, in alphabetical order, here are Technical.ly's 2023 RealLIST Engineers for Delaware.

The RealLIST

Joshua Austin, enterprise desktop LAN manager, Delaware Department of Technology and Information

As EDL manager at Delaware DTI, Austin and his teams support agencies across the state – and his work hasn't gone unnoticed. According to his nominator, the IT pro is an "incredible asset" to the State of Delaware's tech team. Why?

"He is an exceptional leader with a wealth of technical expertise and a commitment to excellence," his nominator wrote. "Josh sets high standards for himself and his team, ensuring that the support they provide exceeds expectations. His meticulous attention to detail and dedication to delivering exceptional service has positively impacted many Delaware agencies' overall effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. Josh fosters a positive work environment and encourages innovation, collaboration, continuous improvement practices, and professional growth. He is an excellent communicator and problem solver who consistently finds solutions with minimal resources. He is a true leader who leads by example and whose contributions to the State of Delaware are undeniable."



KATE BAYARD. (COURTESY KATE BAYARD)

Kate Bayard, software developer II, M&T Bank Wilmington

In 2019, Bayard became a Zip Code Wilmington software developer-in-training, pivoting after spending more than a decade at real estate company McConnell Johnson, eventually moving on to marketing and communications work in the energy sector. She landed her first position as software engineer I the same year, and was promoted to software engineer II in November 2022.

Bayard is an example for mid-career changers in Delaware (and those who want to be).

Aundre Chambers, system engineer, WSFS

Chambers was a member of social impact technology nonprofit Tech Impact’s IT Works cohort back in 2015, and has been with WSFS for more than seven years, from service desk analyst intern to his current position as system engineer. Nowadays, Chambers gives back to Tech Impact as a member of the org’s board of directors, and as a mentor to a new generation of IT Works students.

Chambers has been called a “great ambassador” and a “role model for others.”

Sunita Chandrasekaran, professor, University of Delaware

Chandrasekaran is associate professor at UD’s Department of Computer and Information Sciences and co-director at its AI Center of Excellence, which aims to advance artificial intelligence research across the university.

In July, Chandrasekaran co-chaired the first joint hackathon between UD’s Data Science Institute and the AI Center of Excellence, a collaboration that brought together two widely used disciplines and got students focusing on the two areas working together to address real-world problems like climate change and mental health.



SUNITA CHANDRASEKARAN. (COURTESY SUNITA CHANDRASEKARAN).

Len Damico, head of design, Arcweb Technologies

Damico may be a Philly tech guy as head of design at software firm Arcweb, but he lives in the First State and is active in the Working Families Party of Delaware. He also cofounded the “Roar Lions Roar” podcast about sports at his alma mater, Penn State.

“Len is a highly sought-after User Experience Architect and Designer by leading companies around the country,” his nominator wrote.

Rahul Deore, VP of software engineering, JPMorgan Chase

After landing a developer and analyst internship at Bank of America in 2015 while earning an MCS at the University of Delaware, Deore spent the next seven-plus years working his way up the developer ladder before landing the role of vice president, software engineer at JPMorgan Chase. He counts expertise in backend infrastructure and is active on GitHub.

John Evans, software engineer, ChristianaCare

Coming from the world of health technology, Evans works to develop tech that can be truly impactful. In his current role, he's in "a unique position that he extends beyond traditional software development and into the physical world of prototyping," his nominator wrote.

"As part of the Health & Technology Innovation Center, he works side by side with inventors, helping create solutions, centered around caring for our community," they said. "Where a typical day might include anything from coding an app to 3D modeling silicone molds, or upcycling cedar planks to house a custom touch interface, John leans on his innate curiosity and maker mentality to find ways to iteratively fabricate meaningful delivery mechanisms for cutting edge solutions designed to change people's lives."

Christina Hipkins, software engineer I, Comcast

Wilmington-based Hipkins started at Comcast in the billing department at its New Castle location. A vocational school graduate, she wasn't unfamiliar with coding, so she tested for the opportunity to go through the Comcast Grow to Code program, and was accepted. Hipkins is now coming up on two years as a software engineer at the telecom giant in Philadelphia.

"She's an inspiration for other black and brown girls to join the technology field," her nominator added.

Amanda Jackson, senior technology auditor, Comcast

Described as a "rising star at Comcast, with experience in risk and cybersecurity," Jackson earned her MS in cybersecurity at Wilmington University and was a cybersecurity intern for the State of Delaware before working in cybersecurity at CSC, and ultimately the Philadelphia-headquartered corporation.

Jackson pivoted her career from social work for the State, and she stays engaged in initiatives geared toward introducing urban youth to cybersecurity career pathways and helping small businesses become more secure.

Diamond "DJ" Johnson, instructor, NERDiT Cares

While most on this list are software-focused, Johnson's work focuses on hardware, as an instructor for NERDiT Cares, where students both learn device repair and prepare for certifications such as ITF Fundamentals, CompTIA A+ and AWS Cloud Practitioner. The tuition-free program is more than a hard skills program: Underemployed students of all ages, including justice-involved students, form a community of learning and support.



CHRISTINA HIPKINS. (COURTESY CIERRA HALL HIPKINS)



CHRIS MORRIS. (COURTESY CHRIS MORRIS)

Ariane Keundjou, data science senior associate, JPMorgan Chase

Keundjou came highly recommended as a data science engineer (and former software engineer). She's made an impact as a mentor for the company's Data for Good hackathon, for which teams compete to come up with a solution for an assigned charity. Keundjou mentored a team that collaborated for 24 hours developing a data-driven strategy for the Black wellness nonprofit Starting With Today.

Chris Morris, founder, Rush Roto

Some startup founders come up with great ideas and find developers to make them reality. In Morris' case, he was a professional videographer in Smyrna who decided to use the programming skills he'd learned over the years in that profession to create a program to make it easier to take professional photos for his wife's Etsy shop. That led to the development of the Rush Roto app, which uses two kinds of AI to make photos,

animations and short ads with no editing experience needed.

Rush Roto was one of five startups selected for the inaugural Delaware cohort of the gBETA Bronze Valley VentureLab.

John Royer, CEO, InSiteHub

It's been a big year for Royer, whose small, 13-year-old tech company InSiteHub was awarded a three-year, \$3.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, along with the University of Delaware and the Delaware Sustainable Chemistry Alliance. The three entities will collaborate on a project called I-RED University, an online education platform aimed at helping scientists and biomedical researchers commercialize innovations.

Royer and InSiteHub were one of the very first winners of a Delaware Innovation Award (an early version of the Delaware Technical.ly Awards) in 2015 with the sales coaching tool ConnectHub.

Bernardo Tiburcio, director of digital innovation, data and analytics, DuPont

Tiburcio has over 25 years of experience developing and deploying value creation technology solutions. That includes artificial intelligence: Much of DuPont’s machinery is monitored by AI, a type of digital innovation Tiburcio calls “smart demand forecasting.” Tiburcio shared this behind-the-scenes look at DuPont tech at the Tech Forum’s “AI in DE” event in March.

Part of DuPont’s digital innovation strategy is to devote funds and resources to ensuring that Tiburcio and his team stay on top of what’s next in technology through shared knowledge with peer groups, industry groups and customers.

Stephen Williamson, CTO and chief solutions architect, Tapp Network

Williamson has led the software solutions team at Tapp Network and helped thousands of nonprofits for over

eight years. That includes API development that powers custom web and mobile applications for TrafficCast’s framework, and building platforms for student-teacher ID with CleverID integration for easy login to Chromebooks with COVID temperature sensors, his nominator told Technical.ly. More examples of his work:

“Steve and team built a venue/band listing website with features such as ‘book your own tour’ for a Tapp client,” his nominator wrote. “He led the growth of the software with new features for over 13 years. For another client at Tapp Network, Steve automated the manual VHS process for commercial detection. He migrated from MS access to AWS for real-time detections, created a customer portal to display data that allowed clients to do competitive analysis on brands in the DR and Spot commercial space. Steve consistently demonstrates a deep understanding of complex technical concepts, coupled with a passion for innovation and problem-solving.”



BERNARDO TIBURCIO SPEAKS AT TECH FORUM’S “AI IN DE” EVENT, MARCH 2023. (TECHNICAL.LY/HOLLY QUINN)



TECHNICALLY'S DELAWARE 2023 AWARDS

It's your chance to shout out the success of local tech businesses, as well as the dedication of professional, technical and impact leaders. Who's making your community better? What products and companies will most shape the future? Who's done the most work this year to widen tech's tent?

The categories are:

- **Invention of the Year** – What product, project or release this year is best poised to change their industry?
- **Tech Community Leader of the Year** – Who has most made this community better through coalition building, nonprofit work, access-minded initiatives, policymaking or other pathways?
- **CTO of the Year** – Who is leading groundbreaking technical work within their company or organization? (Similar titles beyond CTO will be accepted.)
- **Tech Company of the Year** – What promising startup or growth-stage company is tackling an interesting problem, shaping its industry or inspiring a brighter collective future?
- **Culture Builder of the Year** – What empathetic leader or organizer is making their workplace or professional group more inclusive, resilient or engaging? ("Leader" doesn't need to mean they hold a leadership title.)

Winners will be announced December 2023.

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THROUGH THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM, VERIZON IS CONNECTING UNDERSERVED RESIDENTS TO THE INTERNET

BY ABBY LEE MOSCONI



SPONSORED CONTENT



In 2020, when the pandemic had us confined to our homes, access to high-speed internet became a critical tool for all Americans. Whether needing reliable connectivity for school, health care, banking, or government benefits and services, it was clear that those who could not afford or confidently navigate the internet would be at a grave disadvantage.

In Philly, that disadvantage is pervasive. Research shows that in 2021, one in six Philadelphians lacked home broadband service and 32% were “subscription vulnerable,” meaning they dealt with service interruptions or relied on discount programs to stay connected. The main barrier to access was affordability: More than 90% of Philly residents with broadband service stated that over \$20 per month for internet access was too high. Also noted was the need to acquire the skills to use the internet effectively.

For Eric Reed, VP of state government affairs for Pennsylvania and Delaware at Verizon Communications, building digital equality in the region is mission critical.

“At Verizon, we’re being very intentional about creating programs and shaping public policy that enables us to invest in better broadband access for the un- and underserved residents of Philly,” Reed said. “One thing we know is that public-private partnerships do work. We have to roll up our sleeves, be vulnerable, engage in conversations with stakeholders and tackle the tough questions for better outcomes.”

To ensure everyone had equal access to broadband connectivity during the pandemic, the FCC created the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The program continues to provide eligible households with a discount of up to \$30 per month toward their internet service, making access, in some cases, free or close to it.

NOVEMBER 2023





PREVIEW: TECHNICALLY IN 2024

	Editorial Calendar	Key Initiatives
Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech Careers Pathways • Early Employees • Future Research 	<p>The RealLIST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RealLIST Startups
Q2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertainment Tech • Thriving Tech Communities • Future of Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RealLIST Connectors • Philly Tech Week (May 3-11) • Builders Conference (May 9) • Developers Conference • NET/WORK tech jobs fair
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Manufacturing • Senior Technologists • Life Sciences 	<p>The RealLIST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RealLIST Engineers
Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cybersecurity • State of Local Tech Economy • 150 Years in the Future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical.ly Awards • State of the Tech Economy report

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