



Idaho to lead nation in application economy

By: Sharon Fisher April 27, 2018 0



Farm machinery in a field of wheat. Idaho's agricultural economy offers potential for many new applications, according to Morgan Reed, president of a national association that encourages development of apps. Reed noted modern farmers use satellite radio, global positioning system, connections to databases, and commodity price monitors. File photo.

The state projected to lead the nation in app economy job growth by 2024 is...Idaho?

That's the finding of the sixth edition of the *State of the App Economy* study, from ACT | The App Association, released on April 16, which showed Idaho with 52.24 percent growth.

"It was an interesting and surprising finding," said Morgan Reed, president of the Washington, D.C. organization. "Idaho was really in a position that a lot of readers around the country wouldn't expect."

Idaho's not alone. "People are surprised to see states like Idaho and Kentucky and Louisiana as areas where we're seeing a lot of opportunity," said Roya Stephens, director of communications at ACT | The App Association. The organization is reaching out to economic development offices to encourage them to dedicate resources to help develop this market, she said.

"The information in the ACT report illustrates the exciting opportunity ahead for Idaho's fast-growing technology and software industries and workforce," said Bobbi-Jo Meuleman, director of the Idaho Department of Commerce, which was briefed on the contents of the report.

"Idaho has long been home to a number of global technology leaders. As this industry continues its rapid evolution, partners all across Idaho will continue to focus on developing a skilled workforce to support employers and entrepreneurs in developing next generation technology whether software, semiconductors or the app industry."



Bobbi-Jo Meuleman



Roya Stephens

The organization compiled the numbers by looking at the codes used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics from its 2016, 2018, and 2024 data, Stephens said. "We specifically looked at occupations that contribute to the app economy."

The growth rate reflects Idaho's size, where even a small numerical increase can result in a large percentage change. But some of the raw numbers are perfectly respectable as well, Reed said. "For the number of direct application developers, growth is scheduled to move from 1,770 in 2018 to 3,220 in 2024," he said. In addition, for every coder, there is an infrastructure that supports them, including managers and the sales team. "When you see these numbers, all the workers that go around this are critical," he said.

Another number Reed found significant was that of information security analysts. "That goes from frankly fairly low, 170 in 2018, to a more reasonable 540 in 2024," he said. "For your population, that's not a terrible number. These are very specific, very highly trained jobs that end up being an engine for a lot of other work." The web developer workforce is projected to grow from 800 in 2018 to 1,470 in 2024.

Jobs in the app economy tend to be higher paying than the average Idaho salary. The Bureau of Labor Statistics lists the average salary in this field as \$73,538, Reed said.

While Idaho has been criticized for the lack of broadband access in its rural area, the upside is that the expansion of broadband will give the industry more potential as those areas gain access, Reed said. "The ability for your state to grow is real because you have a significant one-third of the population that's under- or un-served," he said.



Morgan Reed

Idaho's agricultural economy offers potential for applications, Reed said. "If you talk to the modern-day farmer, the connections in the cab of the combine are insane," he said, such as satellite radio, global positioning system, connections to databases, and commodity price monitors. "The connected farmer isn't a joke. It's the norm for a lot of these communities." Developers could write applications to improve outcomes in shipping, or delivering supplies such as fertilizer. "It becomes really valuable for the farmer to get his product to market at the right time at the right price."

Another potential is drone applications, Reed said. "Drones are becoming very valuable to other industries you have," such as forestry, land management, and first responders for fighting forest fires. "Those are the kinds of jobs where Idaho already has key knowledge," he said. "It can grow what you already know very well, and make it mobile."

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