



## Incentives, Education Investments Help Video Games Revitalize Local Economies

### News

[Press Releases](#)  
[Event Announcements](#)  
[CCT Weekly](#)  
[Grants and Funding](#)  
[Student News](#)  
[Archived News](#)

[ESA Newsletter](#) (Entertainment, Software Association)

The video game industry is helping revitalize and diversify local economies across the country, such as those in Louisiana, Georgia and New York, through a mix of economic incentives and investments in higher education.

Following the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana and, in particular, the city of New Orleans turned to the video game industry to help rebuild. Through its JumpStart program, the state has offered as much as 35 percent tax incentives for game developers interested in starting up new studios or expanding existing ones.

Jobs created by these studios bring tax dollars and young, skilled workers, diversifying the local economy and causing a ripple effect in other sectors such as tourism. Major League Gaming, for example, hosted its 2015 World Finals in New Orleans in October, in part because of the industry's strong presence in the state.

According to Michael Hecht, president and CEO of Greater New Orleans Inc., Louisiana and New Orleans have traditionally been dependent on oil and gas. However, 10 years ago a digital media incentive program specifically for video games helped jumpstart the local creative economy.

"Over the past 10 years we have focused on diversifying our economy and growing new clusters," Hecht told [Fortune](#). "Our digital media incentive has since been broadened to include all software development, but video games continue to be a focus. We feel our low-cost and high-culture value proposition is perfect for these types of companies. We were recently named the fastest growing market for IT job growth in the country according to Forbes, so our economy continues to shift toward knowledge industries."

Louisiana has also been busy building out an educational infrastructure that can support new game studios. Electronic Arts (EA) partnered with Louisiana State University (LSU) to build a new \$29 million Digital Arts Center on campus, which offers facilities for students and houses EA Baton Rouge. LSU is also offering a master's in digital media arts and engineering for aspiring game developers taught by former EA executive producer Marc Aubanel.

Other cities have followed the example set by New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Eight years ago there were only six video game companies in all of metro-Atlanta. Today, there are more than 70. Brooklyn has also become a hub for video game developers, in part by building talent from local universities and technical colleges.

Two schools ranked by the Princeton Review among the top schools for game design – The Savannah College of Art & Design and Georgia Tech, located in Savannah and Atlanta, respectively – in large part helped grow Georgia's new creative economy. A popular film tax credit, which incentivizes video game development and was recently renewed, also encouraged developers to take residence in the Peach State.

In Brooklyn, New York University recently opened a new interdisciplinary center – the Media and Games Network, or Magnet – to train budding game makers in the design, coding and artistic theory of the rapidly growing game industry. The center houses various programs, from a master's degree in game design to a doctorate in educational communications and technology, and hopes to draw on the city's vibrant artistic background to attract technology companies.

"Downtown Brooklyn is one of those places where space is cheaper," Katherine Isbister, research director of NYU-Poly's Center of Innovation for Technology and Entertainment Game Innovation Lab, told [The Wall Street Journal](#). "There's an intersection of worlds and a quirkiness that was there 20 years ago in Manhattan, but is getting harder and harder to find."

**Publish Date:**  
01-28-2016

