

Florida

Senior citizens get first crack at new tech

The Villages, a sprawling retirement community that houses 125,000 residents over more than 30 square miles, will soon feature a handful of self-driving cars. Voyage, a California-based startup, plans to roll out self-driving taxis to serve passengers along more than 750 miles of community roadway.

Oliver Cameron, CEO of Voyage, credits Florida's welcoming attitude towards self-driving vehicles for the company's decision to come east.

Florida leaders are removing barriers to the deployment of self-driving vehicles. In 2012, the state legislature passed a law allowing anyone with a valid driver's license to operate one of the vehicles. Then, in 2016, state leaders increased their commitment to the technology by easing a handful of other requirements.

Voyage is not alone in choosing the Sunshine State to launch new technology, as Florida boasts a booming startup sector. Miami has become a magnet for international startups, thanks to its strong entrepreneurial spirit and its role as a gateway to Latin American markets. In 2017, the Miami-Dade Beacon Council, the economic development organization for the county, reported an uptick in the number of foreign companies exploring the possibility of investing in or establishing businesses in Miami.

Sources: [\(The Verge\)](#) [\(Voyage\)](#) [\(Politifact\)](#) [\(Kauffman\)](#) [\(Miami Herald\)](#) [\(Miami Herald\)](#)

WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

Florida welcomes self-driving vehicles, and a law that went into effect in 2017 allows commercial drone use.

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

Florida can create consistent statewide rules on short-term rentals and preempt municipalities from regulating the properties.

WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

Gov. Rick Scott signed a bill setting statewide rules for ridesharing companies and preempting local rules.

Best & Brightest	B
Fast Internet	A-
Grants Advanced Degrees	C+
Tech Workforce	C-
Tax Friendly	A
Attracts Investment	C
Entrepreneurial Activity	C-
Ridesharing	A
Short-Term Rentals	C
Sustainable Policies	B
Self-Driving Vehicles	A
Drones	B



Grants Advanced Degrees

10 percent of Florida residents over the age of 24 have advanced degrees, a rate on par with that of most other states.



Tech Workforce

Florida's tech workforce accounts for fewer than 30 jobs per 1,000 people, placing it a step behind many other states.



Fast Internet

More than 80 percent of Floridian households have internet connections of at least 10 mbps, and 63 percent enjoy speeds of 25 mbps or more.



Best & Brightest

Florida is a Right-to-Work state, but lacks a state law protecting workers from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

College to Offer Free Hands-on Courses in Technology Skills

A partnership between nonprofit Generation and Miami Dade College will give Floridians free 16-week IT course. Students can earn up to two IT certificates and 12 college credits.

The program, which is geared toward the unemployed and underemployed, grew out of a federal grant program announced by the White House in 2015 to train young people in tech professions.

Students take classes that cover technical and practical lessons, and incorporate hands-on learning from IT professionals. In addition to the technical skills needed for their new professions, the program teaches soft skills to help them land jobs and succeed in the workplace. As soon as they finish the program, graduates are ready to take on jobs as IT help desk staff or network administrators.

So far, the program has an 88 percent graduation rate and has sent about 75 percent, or 115 graduates, into the workforce, at companies including Apple, GE and Mastercard.

PHOTO CREDIT: Miami Dade College | Sources: [\(WLRN\)](#) [\(The Idea Center\)](#)

