

Kansas

Jumping to the top

Kansas was one of the only states on the Scorecard to improve its ranking from Innovation Leader to Innovation Champion this year.

Still, wide swaths of the state lack high-speed internet connections. “The digital divide is holding back small, rural communities in states like Kansas,” said Janae Tallbot, director of Russell County Economic Development. “Our businesses and our people don’t have the same connectivity and access to the Internet as urban population centers, so we can’t compete.”

Connect Americans Now, a nationwide initiative supported by Microsoft, aims to bring broadband internet access to rural areas by 2022 using TV “white spaces” — unused portions of wireless spectrum. The expansion would have wide-reaching implications for rural residents, including improving access to healthcare. More than 60 percent of Kansas hospitals are in rural areas, and the application of telemedicine could save residents hours-long trips to see specialists.

That reality is already playing out elsewhere in the state. In late 2017, the Wichita County Health Center partnered with Avera eCare to launch a telemedicine service that enables healthcare providers to consult with emergency room physicians and trauma nurses at Avera’s South Dakota headquarters. “It gives us the opportunity to give the most appropriate treatment as quickly as possible,” says Teresa Clark, CEO of the Wichita center, “with a specialist right there.”

Sources: (GovTech) (Avera eCare) (KRSL)

WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

Kansas City officials postponed a vote that could have imposed zoning rules on short-term rental owners. The platforms are otherwise operational statewide.

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

Kansas should increase its internet speeds. Relatively few households have connections of at least 25 mbps.

WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

Kansas is now home to more than 100,000 tech jobs, roughly 22 per 1,000 people.

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



Grants Advanced Degrees

With 11.4 percent of Kansans holding advanced degrees, the state tops many others in the category.



Attracts Investment

In 2017, Kansas attracted \$13,58 per capita in VC investment — a 210-percent year-over-year increase — and more than \$730 per capita in research and development funding.



Tax Friendly

At 7 percent, Kansas’ top corporate tax rate is moderate, and its other taxes allow businesses to operate without major difficulties.



Ridesharing

Ridesharing operates freely throughout Kansas without restrictive rules.

Kansas Pairs Education with Business Growth to Foster Local Talent

An expansion by Wichita’s largest employer will bring new investment and new jobs to the city.

Spirit AeroSystems plans to hire 1,000 workers over the next two years and invest \$1 billion over the next five.

Most of the positions will require technical training, and to fill them, the company is casting a wide net, considering applicants ranging all the way from high school students to retirees.

Wichita State University Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology, a local technical college, has revamped its programs to offer students training to help fill the new jobs.

High school students in the city can also earn credit for sheet metal training courses and, upon graduation, become eligible to go straight into jobs at Spirit.

“We are expanding and accelerating non-traditional opportunities to create a pipeline to meet that need both today and in the future,” said Sheree Utash, president of WSU Tech.

PHOTO CREDIT: WSU Tech | Sources: (Wichita Eagle) (Wichita Business Journal) (Wichita Eagle)

