

# Mississippi

## Building networks to bolster entrepreneurial success

Once again a Modest Innovator, Mississippi lagged behind most other states with failing grades in several categories, including Attracts Investment. But a new state program hopes to turn that around.

An Entrepreneur in Residence program will pair Mississippi-grown startups with mentors in hopes of forging the kinds of connections that can make a fledgling company succeed. “The Entrepreneur in Residence program is important because it gives Mississippi business builders quick access to an experienced, additional perspective on their startup idea and plans,” said Rich Sun, who is leading business development for participating startups. “We expect that this program will enable Mississippi to produce more successful startups and help them achieve their growth targets.”

Other programs aim to help up-and-coming companies grow. The University of Southern Mississippi is home to The Garden, a 521-acre innovation park to support entrepreneurs developing and testing products.

Within the innovation center, The Accelerator offers businesses development space and access to professional advice for tech startups. Like a high-tech nesting doll, the Mississippi Polymer Institute housed within The Accelerator offers startups access to prototyping and development of polymer-based products.

Sources: (State Scoop) (Innovate Mississippi) (PwC) (USM) (The Accelerator)

## WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

In 2017, Mississippi reached an agreement with Airbnb to collect a seven percent hotel tax from hosts and pass some of those funds back to the state.

## WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

The state can invest in research and development and promote enrollment towards advanced degrees.

## WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

Mississippi added more than 168,000 jobs between Q2/2011 and Q4/2016.

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



### Fast Internet

More than 40 percent of Mississippi households have internet connections of at least 10 mbps, and 22 percent enjoy speeds of 25 mbps or more.



### Ridesharing

Ridesharing is operational statewide.



### Self-Driving Vehicles

Mississippi took a hands-off approach to regulating self-driving vehicles, subjecting them only to NHTSA's rules.



## Best & Brightest

Mississippi has a Right-to-Work law but lacks legislation protecting workers from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

## Revamping Retail Space into a Training Center for Skilled Workers

Job seekers in the Jackson area will soon be able to build skills — from welding to robotics — at a local mall, thanks to a push from Hinds Community College.

The college announced plans to move its workforce training center to a two-story, 160,000-square foot area of Metrocenter Mall. “We’ve got about 80,000 people in the Jackson metro area who could benefit from this kind of help,” said Hinds Community College President Clyde Muse.

The center will train students taking part in the college’s advanced manufacturing, transportation and hospitality and tourism courses.

Another Jackson training center — this one for tire manufacturing — is also expected to open soon. The Continental Tire Employee Training Center will focus on energy efficiency and sustainability. Under the deal, the company anticipates adding as many as 500 jobs by 2019, when a new plant will be finished, and to continue hiring through 2028, bringing a total of 2,500 jobs to the state.

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