



Montana

Drones take to the skies – and the mines – in the Big Sky Country

Home to glacial lakes and soaring peaks, Montana has scenery that has been millennia in the making. Now brand-new technologies are making it easier to manage and sustain the Big Sky Country.

In central Montana, researchers are using drones to help save prairie dogs from deadly plague outbreaks that can decimate an entire colony in less than a month. Operators fly the drones over prairie dog colonies and drop peanut butter pellets, delivering treats infused with vaccines to protect them from a deadly disease.

These efforts go hand-in-hand with ensuring the survival of the endangered black-footed ferrets that feed on the prairie dogs. Using drones, conservationists can vaccinate up to 4,000 prairie dogs a day, covering more ground than using traditional methods.

To the west, another set of drone operators is turning its attention 100 feet below the ground to protect the state’s miners and underground construction workers. In the nation’s only underground mine research lab, students at Montana Tech are testing devices specially equipped to find potentially unstable areas that are inaccessible to human workers.

Montana’s top marks in the Drones category, however, are offset by its lackluster grades elsewhere, including in Short-Term Rentals. The state lacks statewide regulations for short-term rental operations and, as a result, the services face harmful restrictions at the local level.

Sources: (MTPR) (NBC Montana)

WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

Montana has common-sense regulations that don’t unduly restrict drone use.

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

The state can pass a Right-to-Work law and a bill to protect workers from discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

Montana attracted \$45 million in VC and spent roughly \$216 per capita in R&D investment.

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



Fast Internet

Over half of Montana households have internet connections of at least 10 mbps, and 44 percent enjoy speeds of 25 mbps or more.



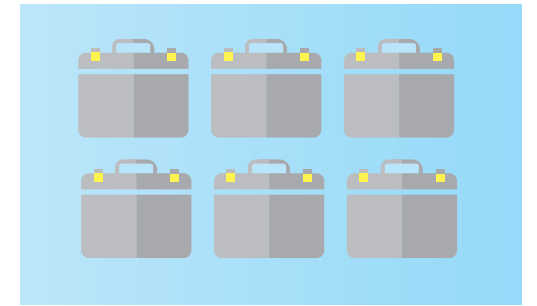
Ridesharing

Ridesharing is operational statewide.



Tax Friendly

Business-friendly sales and property taxes complement a relatively low corporate tax rate of 6.75 percent.



Entrepreneurial Activity

Montana saw 71,349 net jobs created between Q2/2011 and Q4/2016, a rate of 68.44 jobs per 1,000 residents.

A Plan for Medical Innovation Aims to Spur Rural Advancement

Two Butte natives are launching the nation’s first independently-owned, non-profit medical training center dedicated to rural health care.

The \$35 million Praxis Center for Innovative Learning will be equipped to train up to 4,000 medical professionals with virtual reality scenarios and imaging simulators. The center will also add 70 new jobs to the local workforce.

The facility will have recording equipment in each room to enable trainees to watch and evaluate simulations. The founders of the center have plans to offer distance-education opportunities and other courses for healthcare professionals, as well.

In addition, the center will host a conference center and accelerator with more than two dozen offices for local startups. Those businesses will be paired with mentoring opportunities in IT, accounting and other areas. “The goal, of course, is to spin them off into our economy to create more businesses in Butte,” said Co-founder Ray Rogers.

PHOTO CREDIT: Jasperado, Flickr | Sources: (Montana Standard)

