North Carolina

A race to keep up with breakneck tech growth

A repeat Innovation Leader, North Carolina faces an enviable problem: how to handle the rapid growth of its technology industry. In 2017, North Carolina's tech sector took off, adding 2,500 new businesses and growing by 28 percent over the course of the year, double the national rate.

Even as state leaders celebrate the industry's growth and the economic impacts that accompany it, they're grappling with a new problem — growing a workforce that can meet the demands of the tech sector. "When I'm talking to CEOs who are considering expanding or relocating jobs to North Carolina, they want to know if we've got the educated workforce that can do the jobs they want to create. We want to make sure we have the workforce needed to meet those hiring demands," Governor Roy Cooper said in an address to the North Carolina Business Committee for Education in 2017.

Colleges like North Carolina Central University are working on ideas to help meet those demands. Campus administrators are developing plans for students that directly respond to what local businesses say they need. And their efforts have proven fruitful — nearly 80 percent of the university's graduates remain in the surrounding county.

Other universities around the state are taking a similarly proactive approach, making inroads with the businesses around them to feed the demands for skilled employees.

Sources: (WRAL) (WRAL) (Star News)

WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

The state addressed self-driving vehicles with a new, commonsense law that establishes rules for operating fully self-driving vehicles on state highways.

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

North Carolina can remove duplicative commercial drone rules that overlap with federal guidelines.

WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

The state now boasts a sizeable percentage of households enjoying internet speeds of at least 10 mbps.

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

Short-Term Rentals

Short-term rentals are generally allowed, and companies can collect and remit taxes, but cities such as Asheville impose onerous regulations.
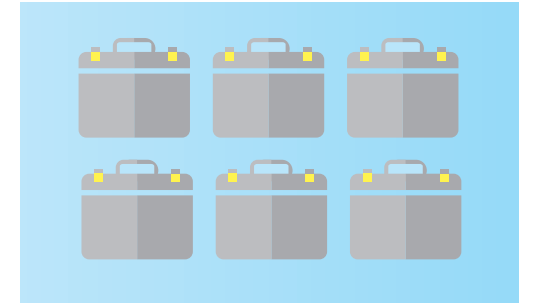
Ridesharing

Ridesharing operates freely throughout North Carolina.

Grants Advanced Degrees

Slightly more than 10 percent of residents over the age of 24 have an advanced degree.

Entrepreneurial Activity

Saw a net increase of 658,177 jobs from Q2/2011 to Q4/2016, a rate of about 65 jobs per 1,000 residents.

Laying Out the Welcome Mat for Job Seekers in the Tar Heel State

Charlotte and Raleigh both ranked among Glassdoor's top 25 cities for jobs.

And Raleigh's tech workforce continues to grow, with India-based software company Infosys planning to hire 2,000 workers there by 2021. The new innovation hub will focus on development in artificial intelligence, machine learning and data analytics.

Infosys will partner with the North Carolina Community College System to customize the curriculum used to fill the skilled positions for which it hires at its Raleigh center. That program will also include pre-employement training to teach students important soft skills.

And North Carolina will offer another $3 million in funds to help Infosys train its Tar Heel State residents. "Our top-flight workforce, commitment to education, and exceptional quality of life help businesses of all sizes recruit and retain excellent employees," says Governor Roy Cooper.

Sources: (The News & Observer) (Infosys)