INNOVATION CHAMPION

Virginia

Turning a skilled workforce into a thriving tech sector

A four-time Innovation Champion, Virginia boasts the second-largest per capita tech workforce in the country, second only to Massachusetts.

Though the Washington, DC metro area tends to get the lion's share of attention, startup communities in Charlottesville and Richmond are also thriving. Lighthouse Labs, a Richmond-based startup accelerator, was named one of the top 30 accelerators in the country in 2017 by the Seed Accelerator Rankings Project. Lighthouse provides mentorship, funding and connections for Central Virginia startups — all while taking no equity — and its 27 alumni companies have raised more than $9.5 million in just four years.

Virginia also has one of the most educated workforces in the country: 15.7 percent of residents over the age of 24 have an advanced degree. The University of Virginia (UVA) helps provide support and funding opportunities for budding entrepreneurs in the student body and local community. Charlottesville-based HackCville offers 10-week classes to any UVA student or Charlottesville resident in subjects ranging from software development to data science to social entrepreneurship.

Nevertheless, Virginia has room to improve in a handful of categories, including Short-Term Rentals. Local authorities are allowed under current law to set short-term rental rules, a practice that would be improved with consistent, statewide regulations.

Sources: (Bloomberg) (Migration Policy) (Lighthouse Labs) (Seed Rankings) (UVA) (Hackville) (UVA)

WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

Virginia ranks in the top five states for Grants Advanced Degrees.

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

Per capita, VC investment grew to $120.71, a nearly 69-percent year-over-year increase, but R&D investment dropped by 9 percent year-over-year to $533.30.

WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

Business-friendly policies improved the state's grade in the Tax Friendly category from a 'C+' to a 'B-'.

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

Ridesharing
A 2017 law removed several rideshare-specific vehicle requirements for drivers.
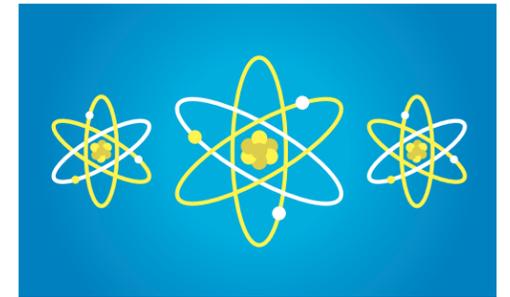
Fast Internet
70 percent of households have internet connections of at least 10 mbps, and 62 percent enjoy speeds of 25 mbps or more.

Drones
The Virginia legislature passed common-sense regulations on drone use that encourage innovation.

Grants Advanced Degrees
Nearly 16 percent of Virginians over the age of 24 have an advanced degree, ranking the state in the top five in the category.

Equipping Teachers to Train the Next Generation of Computer Science Employees

Virginia's computer science industry is growing at an astonishing four times the national average. To ensure that students are ready to meet that demand, a Richmond-based non-profit is trying to make computer science education more commonplace in the state.

Launched in 2014, CodeVA combines teacher training, district outreach and legislative efforts to expand Virginia's computer science programs. So far CodeVA's workshops, which are led by current Virginia school teachers, have trained more than 1,700 teachers. The nonprofit offers workshops for instructors of all grade levels, from kindergarten through high school.

In 2016, Virginia became the first state in the country to pass a law requiring every child in the state to receive K-12 computer science classes. In 2017, the state also passed a bill to require Northern Virginia Community College to offer computer science training and professional development opportunities for public school teachers.

PHOTO CREDIT: Virginia Department of Education | Sources: (CodeVA) (CodeVA) (Virginia LIS)