

# Washington

## Building on a history of robust tech talent

More than 30 years after Microsoft put down its roots in Redmond, new companies are continuing to grow Washington's tech workforce — one of the largest per capita in the country.

Blokable, a Seattle startup founded by a former Amazon manager, makes high-tech, compact housing modules that start at \$58,000. The units can be customized and stacked on top of each other, helping meet demand in urban areas where housing stock is limited and expensive.

Vicis, co-founded by a University of Washington neurology professor, is on a mission to make football safer. The company redesigned the football helmet from the ground up to better protect players from head injury. The new helmet is now being used in college football and by the National Football League.

Washington's strong research universities have long played a role in cultivating innovation. Since 1981, the Washington Research Organization has invested in the commercialization of new ideas based on the most promising research projects at state universities. Last year, the organization upped its game, investing even more money into more early-stage ideas. The CoMotion Innovation Fund, a partnership between the WRO and the University of Washington, will invest \$1 million per year in awards of up to \$40,000 per project — money that can help bridge the gap between academic grants and VC investment.

Sources: (Curbed) (Geekwire) (Seattle Business Magazine) (UW)

## WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

Small firms created more than 76 new jobs per 1,000 people from Q2/2011 through 2016.

## WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

The state can legalize ridesharing to preempt local rules, which create hurdles in Seattle, and improve materials restrictions that impede innovation and don't protect the environment.

## WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

An executive order established a working group and mandated state agencies support testing and operation of SDVs.

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



## Grants Advanced Degrees

More than 12 percent of residents over the age of 24 have a graduate or professional degree, a step above most other states.



## Fast Internet

Washington received stellar marks for the 70 percent of households with internet speeds of at least 10 mbps and the 64 percent with broadband speeds of 25 mbps or greater.



## Entrepreneurial Activity

Created a net of 557,396 new jobs at small firms between Q2/2011 and Q4/2016, a rate of about 76.48 jobs per 1,000 residents.



## Tech Workforce

Outpaced most other states in Tech Workforce with roughly 48 tech jobs per 1,000 people.

## Manufacturing Machines in the Silicon Forest

A Vancouver-based electronic service manufacturing company is dedicating its time and resources to combating a lack of interest in manufacturing jobs.

Silicon Forest Electronics is reaching out to young professionals to convince them that lucrative opportunities are available in the field. Jay Schmidt, executive vice president and general manager, proudly cites a recent stand-out employee. "In less than 24 months, he's gone from not knowing anything in our industry to becoming one of our key manufacturing technicians."

At the same time, state groups are building on legacy industries to bring in new blood. When it needed workers experienced with industrial machinery, automation and robotics, the aerospace giant Boeing turned to the Washington State Center of Excellence for Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing. At the time, the state's community colleges weren't even offering those courses. "We brought in subject matter experts and looked at the curriculum and relied on our industry partners to vet it," said Mary Kaye Bredeson, executive director of the center. "Then we applied for a Department of Labor TechHire grant and received just under \$4 million to build that capacity."

Sources: (Area Development)

