

# Step Aside, Silicon Valley: 7 Startups to Watch in the South

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Southern hospitality mixed with drive and an entrepreneurial spirit has made the lower half of the U.S. a mecca for startups. Location matters, but there's more prime real estate than just Silicon Valley and New York City. For startups that don't want to waste budgets on overpriced overhead, nothing beats the southern states. In fact, there are so many promising businesses to watch in 2014 that it can be tough to narrow down the top contenders.

Huntsville, Ala. is the 14th best city in the country for tech startups, an impressive title. The report comes from tech policy coalition Engine in conjunction with the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. It only makes sense, then, to kick off the top seven with an Alabama startup with ambition to spare. Sweet home, and sweet business, indeed.

**1. Paperless PCS LLC, Alabama.** This web platform aims to green up and streamline the Medicare billing process to help ambulance companies cut down on time and money wasted. It incorporates document management technology, such as e-sign, to save medical companies thousands of dollars each year while upping security. This Birmingham startup says it improves efficiency, the bottom line and safety. One of the top three winners of the Alabama Launchpad contest, the founders just won \$24,000 for this promising endeavor.

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**2. Oh Baby Foods, Arkansas.** Fran Free started Oh Baby Foods in 2009 with \$50,000 of her own saved cash. Free learned with her own daughter, Lucy, how important both [health](#) and [convenience](#) needs to play a big role in baby's and children's foods. When Whole Foods picked up her brand of frozen baby food, and an angel investor stepped up with some serious capital, the company took off. "Sales are up 1,113 percent in our Whole Foods business since we went to the squeeze packets in September (2013)," she says. Its home base is Fayetteville, but products can be found around the country.

**3. Fox Fire Printing & Packaging, Delaware.** Don't confuse Delaware's Fox Fire with Firefox. Fox Fire is a thriving startup that offers integrated business-to-business answers for those in the printing, data and marketing industries. Doing everything from design/production to implementation, it aims to be a one-stop shop for numerous manufacturers and retailers. Located in Newark, Fox Fire delivers to customers on a global scale.

**4. Modernizing Medicine, Florida.** Florida boasts the country's second highest rate of new businesses, is number three for annual revenue per startup, and has an impressive ranking on Fundable for venture capital. There are countless impressive startups in this state, but one that really shines is Modernizing Medicine. Nestled in Boca Raton, it's offering the latest in electronic medical records (EMR) technology for healthcare professionals. Check out the Electronic Medical Assistant, an iPad cloud-based app to [save physicians precious time](#) (a current hot topic).

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**5. Scoutmob, Georgia.** Everyone is so over daily deal sites, but Scoutmob changes all that. It offers only local (to you, not necessarily Atlanta), hand-crafted items with exclusive mobile coupons daily. Full of wit and plenty of local flair, there are 13 cities available and counting. Backed with \$5 million from a number of investors including AOL Ventures, CEO Ben Lerer says the company plans to expand to many more cities in 2014. While the company calls Atlanta home, there are city experts hired locally to customize each geo-specific market.

**6. Earthineer, Kentucky.** The latest in social networking, Earthineer is self-described as a "Kentucky-based company, but we live in the cloud." It's [all about sustainable living](#) melding with a social media platform. The purpose is to bolster sharing, community and even bartering. Featured on Startups KSTC, Earthineer has harvested a rich online community with resources for homesteading and is taking off grandly. The Examiner describes it as a Facebook-Craigslist hybrid, and that's a lovechild anyone can get on board with.

**7. Justice and Accountability Center of Louisiana.** The goal of the center is to get expungements for those who

were incarcerated for non-violent crimes to break down the barriers of finding work after serving prison time. Founded by Ameca Reali and Adrienne Wheeler, the duo say a lack of resources leads to the inability to effectively re-enter society. JAC aids in record requests as well as relief applications. New Orleans is the founding city, but JAC serves all of Louisiana.

Southern comfort comes in many forms, including a little more warmth and empathy than some startups in other parts of the country. These startups' compassion may just be the secret ingredient to ensuring their success.

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