



The Huntsville Entrepreneurship & Innovation Ecosystem

Your Guide to Community and State Resources

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About this guide



Mayor Tommy Battle created his Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship to better understand how the City of Huntsville can become a location of choice for startups. The Advisory Council suggested a guide of resources to entrepreneurs to bring together the many community assets available. The Council noted a barrier to success is knowing what is out there.

This guide serves as a one-stop information resource to help entrepreneurs in Huntsville. This guide is by no means all-inclusive, but should get entrepreneurs on the right path to finding the sources of information, finance, and networking opportunities needed to help them become successful.

The guide is divided into six sections: education (e.g. schools and universities), meet-ups (e.g. networking events), incubators/accelerators, mentoring assistance, investors (e.g. angels, VC), and R&D Centers.

Contributors: Mayor Battle's Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Harrison Diamond (Business Relations Officer) and Carson May (City Intern).

The Huntsville Entrepreneurship & Innovation Ecosystem

Education

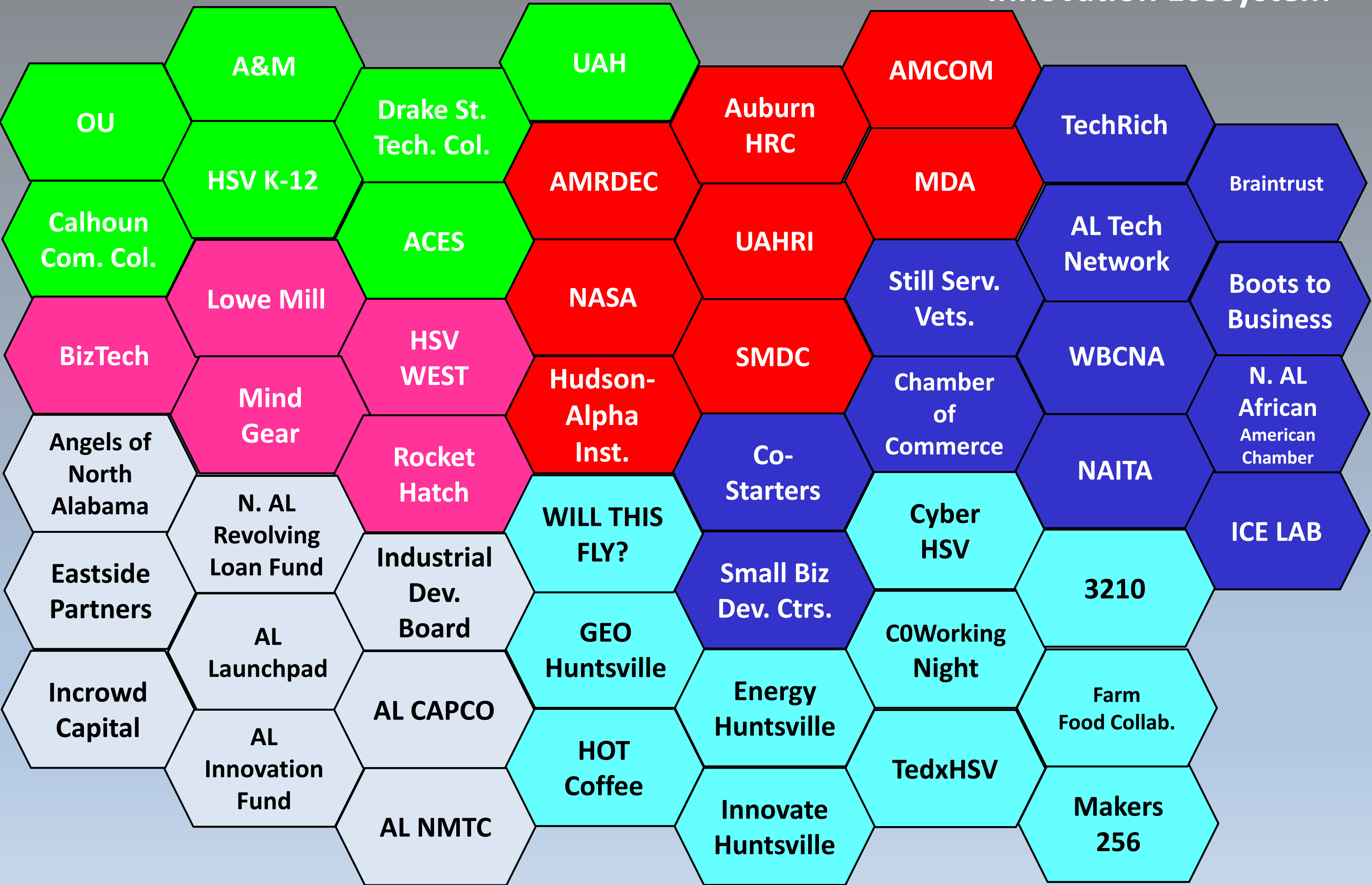
Incubator Accelerator

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Meet-ups



Education

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- Drake State Technical & Community College
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- Costarters
- ICE Lab
- North Alabama African American Chamber of Commerce
- North Alabama International Trade Association
- Small Biz Dev. Centers
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- TechRich
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Investors

- Alabama Capital Company Program
- Alabama New Market Tax Credit Program
- Angels of North Alabama
- Alabama Innovation Fund
- Alabama Launchpad
- Eastside Partners
- Incrowd Capital
- Industrial Development Board
- North Alabama Revolving Loan Program

R&D Centers

- Army Aviation and Missile Command
- Army Space and Missile Defense Command
- Aviation and Missile Research Development and Engineering Center
- HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology
- NASA
- Missile Defense Agency
- UAH Research Institute

For more information on these categories and organizations, click on these icons.



Education



Meet-ups



Incubators/
Accelerators



Mentoring
Assistance



Investors



R&D Centers

Education

[Alabama A&M University](#)

A&M is a Historically Black College and University and land-grant institution that has responded to the needs of the community since its founding in 1875. A&M offers 41 degrees ranging from bachelors to doctorates. A&M is noted for research in nano applications and agriculture. Alabama A&M University, in cooperation with businesses, industrial and governmental agencies, and other institutions, provides a laboratory where theory is put into practice in a productive environment. A&M is ranked 2nd in the nation in awarding doctorates to minorities in agriculture-related fields and a Top 10 producer of undergraduate degrees to minorities in engineering.

[Alabama Cooperative Extension Service](#)

ACES collaborates with many partners to help people and communities improve their quality of life and economic well-being. It provides educational opportunities and information grounded in research-based science to farmers as well as entrepreneurs in any industry.

[Calhoun Community College](#)

Calhoun Community College is the state's largest two year college. Calhoun's Huntsville/Cummings Research Park campus is the only two-year college campus in the nation located in a major research park. It also was the first two-year college to offer programs in biotechnology. Calhoun's Renewable Energy associate's degree program is the state's first and only such program of its kind. Calhoun's main campus is home to the State of Alabama's Robotics Technology Park, which provides training on a variety of robotic platforms and an area for companies to prototype new robotics technology

[Drake State Technical & Community College](#)

Drake State is a two year college training students for current and future employment in technical, industrial and vocational careers. Most of the programs offer options for an associate of technology degree or a certificate program allowing for immediate entry into the workforce in a diverse range of fields from hospitality to advanced manufacturing. Drake launched a non-credit certificate class in craft beer brewing in 2015 to meet the demand spurred by Huntsville's growing craft beer industry. The program is expanding to a full degree program within the culinary arts and hospitality program.

[Huntsville City Schools](#)

Huntsville City Schools inspires innovation from day one in Huntsville's students. Every student in the system is given an electronic device used as part of the curriculum (iPads for students in k-2 and laptop computers for grades 3-12) which helps close the digital divide and allows students access to learning outside the classroom. Students also get first-hand experience in the technologies that are driving innovation in the workplace. Every high school and middle school now has a cyber security team. Huntsville City Schools have been successful in national tournaments, including the US Air Force-sponsored Cyber Patriot games, which Grissom High School has won and New Century Technology High School was a leading school in the JROTC program. Students also have access to the latest manufacturing technology such as 3-D printing allowing students to design hardware used by NASA. Huntsville City Schools is home to the American chapter of the international Green Power Car competition. Green Power USA students compete to research, design, engineer, build and race a green powered car. For their efforts, Huntsville students won a Siemens Innovation Award.

[Oakwood University](#)

Oakwood University is a historically black private university affiliated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Oakwood graduates a number of students who go on to many medical fields as well as those who seek to take leadership roles in the faith community. Oakwood signed a mentor-protégé agreement with tech company SAIC that will aid the university with technology enhancement, contract management and business administration. It will also increase the viability of Oakwood University as a business partner and potential prime contractor for future NASA projects and also allow students interested in pursuing technical or engineering careers to gain experience through SAIC internships and provide potential opportunities for graduates in technical fields at NASA

[University of Alabama in Huntsville](#)

UAH is a member of the University of Alabama System and in integral part of technology development in Huntsville. Located in Cummings Research Park, UAH faculty, staff, and students are able to conduct research side by side with world-class experts from NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, the U.S. Army, the Missile Defense Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and other important Department of Defense partners. UAH regularly ranks among the Top 20 Universities in research funded by NASA and by the Department of Defense, but UAH also performs cutting-edge research for the National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Energy, and the National Institutes of Health. Classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a "Very High Research" university – the highest ranking achievable – UAH augments scholarly research in its colleges with its interdisciplinary research centers, ranging from Modeling & Simulation, to Information Assurance, to Aerospace and Systems Engineering. Our robust capabilities in Astrophysics, Cybersecurity, Data Analytics, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Optical Systems and Engineering, Reliability and Failure Analysis, Rotorcraft and Unmanned Systems, Severe Weather, Space Propulsion, and many others are nationally and internationally known.



Meet-Ups

[3210](#)

3210 is a social club for young professionals who are interested in startups and entrepreneurship. It brings high-caliber speakers and deep-dives innovative concepts at its events.

[Coworking Night](#)

Coworking Night is a community collaboration space for creative professionals. 75-100 members meet every Wednesday at al.com to work on startups, side projects, and to socialize.

[Cyber Huntsville](#)

Cyber Huntsville, a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization made up of industry, government and academic institutions dedicated to making Huntsville and the Tennessee Valley region a Nationally and Internationally recognized Cyber leader. In doing this, it focuses on building upon Huntsville's recognized talent pool and experience in the areas of Systems Engineering, Research and Development, Modeling and Simulation, Cyber Security, Experimentation, and Test and Evaluation to tackle cyber problems. Cyber Huntsville hosts a number of events during the year, including table top exercise and an annual Cyber Summit attended by hundreds.

[Energy Huntsville](#)

Energy Huntsville (EH) aims to diversify the region's research and test portfolio, workforce and economy to include energy applications and innovations. EH links the systems engineering, modeling and simulation, test, and technology strengths of the Northern Alabama region with key customer requirements and national policy directives for advanced energy systems and applications. The goal will establish Huntsville as the go-to technology center for solutions oriented energy programs and projects. Monthly meetings are held as well as an annual summit. The Initiative's ongoing activity is focused on supporting companies in three primary areas: Education, Opportunities, and Networking.

[Farm Food Collaborative](#)

The Farm Food Collaborative is a local food hub comprised of local farmers, buyers and support agencies who have come together to Help family farmers sell fresh, local foods to public schools, hospitals, grocery stores, restaurants, and workplace cafeterias in our region with the aim of providing more food locally and to keep those food dollars in Huntsville. The Farm Food Collaborative is facilitated by the Food Bank of North Alabama.

[GEO Huntsville](#)

GEO Huntsville is a collaborative effort among businesses, academia, and government entities in the Huntsville region working to support workforce growth and economic development through identifying job opportunities, business opportunities and product development opportunities in geospatial technology.

[HOT Coffee](#)

HOT Coffee is a biweekly gathering of startups and startup enthusiasts who meet to share best practices on forming companies and share ideas in an open, inclusive environment. Participants run the gamut from no-tech and low-tech to high-tech as well as social entrepreneurs.

[Innovate Huntsville](#)

Innovate Huntsville is a week of scheduled events, panels, and social activities including the region's brightest entrepreneurs, investors, strategic advisors, and community supporters.

[Makers 256](#)

Makers 256 is a group of gear-heads, inventors, techies, and artists who meet to get their hands dirty and fabricate projects rather than shelling out the big bucks for the store bought equivalent.

[TedxHuntsville](#)

TEDxHuntsville is a local derivative of TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design), a nonprofit organization known for online talks. Since 2009, local professionals and residents excited about Ideas Worth Spreading have volunteered to bring TED to the Tennessee Valley area.

[Will This Fly?](#)

Will This Fly? is a pitch competition where local startups can compete for funding from VC firms from throughout the South East.



Incubators/Accelerators

[BizTech](#)

BizTech fosters innovation and entrepreneurship by turning ideas into investable businesses as Huntsville's high tech incubator located in Cummings Research Park. It offers office space, conference rooms, and labs for growing companies. In addition to space to work, it offers mentoring opportunities as well as opportunities to network with likeminded companies.

[Huntsville West](#)

Huntsville West is a small business incubator located in what used to be West Huntsville Elementary School. The incubator offers "wantrepreneurs" co-working space with a low barrier to entry, which means work surfaces and fast internet 24/7, for \$50 to \$100 a month.

[Lowe Mill](#)

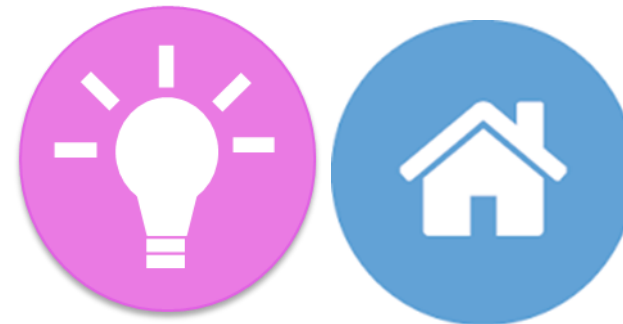
Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment is America's largest independent center for the arts. With over 120 working artists, small businesses, restaurants, and live performance venues, this huge historic textile mill is now a rising home for music, art, and culture.

[Mind Gear Labs](#)

Mind Gear Labs, LLC supports the Huntsville/Madison community by providing fab lab equipment for use by the general public and local businesses. Their lab is open to anyone who has a great idea and wants to build it. They are committed to providing a relaxing environment where members can share ideas, work on their projects, take classes and attend seminars, do research, and just hang out.

[Rocket Hatch](#)

Rocket Hatch supports the entrepreneurs of North Alabama surrounding them with the resources they need to be successful. Through networking events, their CO.STARTERS program, their Will This Fly competition, and more, Rocket Hatch encourages collaboration and nurtures upcoming ideas and businesses from the ground up.



Mentoring Assistance

[Alabama Technology Network](#)

ATN's team of experts helps solve the needs of industry and business through innovative, sustainable, cost-effective solutions. ATN can conduct detailed needs assessments, outline potential solutions based on the results, and then provide technical assistance to help you solve those problems or identify those who can.

[Boots to Business](#)

Boots to Business is an entrepreneurial education and training program offered by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as part of the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program (TAP). The curriculum continuum includes steps for evaluating business concepts, the foundational knowledge required to develop a business plan and information on SBA resources available.

[Brain Trust](#)

The Brain Trust is a Rocket Hatch community initiative that aims to engage experienced and emerging entrepreneurs within a collaboration framework designed to maximize the success rate of new and growing businesses.

[Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County](#)

The Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County seeks to promote and protect the interests of Huntsville's diverse economy. It serves as the lead agency for economic development in Huntsville. Through events, training seminars, and more, the Chamber is able to promote Huntsville's strong workforce and business environment.

[CO.STARTERS](#)

CO.STARTERS is a 9-week program that helps aspiring and seasoned entrepreneurs examine assumptions and turn business ideas into action. Created by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs, and used at over 40 locations across the US, CO.STARTERS walks creative small-business owners through lean, effective business modeling methods in a simple and intuitive way, and with the help of a supportive community.

[ICE Lab](#)

The mission of the Innovation, Commercialization, and Entrepreneurship Lab at UAH is twofold: First, to build the entrepreneurial ecosystem and promote a culture of innovation, commercialization, and entrepreneurship in the greater Huntsville area, and second, to provide hands-on learning opportunities for students to engage in this process.

[North Alabama African American Chamber of Commerce](#)

The NAAACC serves as a vehicle to enhance African American Businesses and other historically underutilized businesses by identifying business opportunities, providing a resource base, and encouraging members to do business with each other. The NAAACC is affiliated with the National Black Chamber of Commerce, which is headquartered in Washington, DC.

[North Alabama International Trade Association](#)

NAITA is a business-driven organization with the mission to promote economic growth through international trade education, training and networking. NAITA, a non-profit membership organization, provides an international networking forum, education on trade issues, and prepares business for global success. NAITA's vision is to be the regional resource for international trade development.

[Small Business Development Centers](#)

The SBDC network is a statewide, inter-institutional program to enhance economic growth in Alabama by providing management and technical assistance. The SBDC serving Huntsville affiliated with the UAH. The local SBDC provides training seminars, counseling, as well as support for companies looking to do business with the government through the Procurement Technical Assistance Center.

[Still Serving Vets](#)

Still Serving Veterans connects vets to other vital Veteran support resources within their community, and significantly expanding their career opportunities. They accomplish these goals through empowerment and expert, case management; education assistance and training.

[TechRich](#)

TechRich's goal is to diversify the economy, sustain economic growth, create new jobs and firms, frame new initiatives to accelerate, business growth, capitalize on the region's defense and space technology assets, and enable small businesses to pursue new and emerging markets. They offer many core and specialized services, as well as resources, to help achieve these economic ideals.

[Women's Business Center of North Alabama](#)

The mission of the WBCNA is to help women and men start and grow a business and generate economic growth for the region. This is accomplished by serving as the premier source for information and access to resources; facilitating their self-discovery and personal development; and providing a mentoring process to support, nurture and advocate the development of their business.



Investors

[Alabama Capital Company Program](#)

The Alabama Certified Capital Company program, commonly referred to as CAPCO, is bringing new investments, jobs and opportunity to small businesses and communities across the state. CAPCO financing, an alternative to conventional bank financing, can accommodate a slightly higher risk profile and provide a more flexible structure for growing businesses. This program is administered through the Alabama Department of Commerce.

[Alabama New Market Tax Credit Program](#)

The Alabama New Market Tax Credit program provides generous tax credits for businesses in Alabama that locate in challenged Census tracts. This program is administered through the Alabama Department of Commerce.

[Alabama Innovation Fund](#)

As part of the implementation of Alabama Governor Bentley's "Accelerate Alabama" Program, the State of Alabama has created the Alabama Innovation Fund (AIF). The purpose of this fund is to maximize the use of the State's economic development resources by leveraging annual research and development expenditures by public institutions of higher education to generate high technology resources which can be used to support economic development activities.

[Alabama Launchpad](#)

Alabama Launchpad helps high growth companies start, stay and grow in Alabama while supporting, advocating, and recognizing entrepreneurship statewide. Alabama Launchpad is a program of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama. Its startup competition gives up to \$250,000 annually to winning teams.

[Eastside Partners](#)

Eastside's team has been together since Eastside's predecessor, Southeastern Technology Fund, was founded in 1998. Since then, they have invested more than \$130 million in over 50 companies across six funds. Along the way, they have developed a reputation as a valued source of capital with an extensive network of industry relationships. They have built and maintained strong ties with leading healthcare and technology executives, industry thought-leaders and medical research centers, many of which have proven to be valuable resources for their portfolio companies.

Angels of North Alabama

ANA forums allow local investors to review and invest in early stage, innovative companies here in north Alabama, further adding to the positive economic growth in the area.

[Industrial Development Board](#)

Huntsville's Industrial Development board seeks to encourage manufacturing and production oriented companies. The IDB approves all statutory incentives within the City of Huntsville.

[InCrowd Capital](#)

InCrowd focuses primarily on companies that have graduated from incubator, accelerator or university-based programs. InCrowd also hosts local educational seminars focused on angel investing and, for entrepreneurs, how to raise early-stage capital.

[North Alabama Revolving Loan Program](#)

The North Alabama Revolving Loan Program provides access to capital for entrepreneurs and small businesses so North Alabama communities can flourish. Tailor-made for small start-ups or small businesses needing a microloan to expand, the new program makes "microloans," from as little as \$2,500 to as much as \$100,000.



Research and Development Centers

[Army Aviation and Missile Command](#)

The Army Aviation and Missile Command supports Joint Warfighters and Allies, assuring aviation and missile readiness with seamless transition to combat operations; supports Program Executive Officers and Project Managers to enable the development, acquisition and fielding of superior aviation and missile systems; and assures the integration of aviation and missile technology in partnership with Program Executives Officers (Aviation / Missiles & Space) and Project Managers. As a Life Cycle Management Command, AMCOM is dedicated to providing integrated engineering, logistics and contracting to more than 90 major systems - about half the systems in the U.S. Army. Their headquarters are located on Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

[Army Space and Missile Defense Command](#)

The SMDC/ARSTRAT is built upon a lengthy history of achievement in space and missile defense. Since 1957, when the Army created the first program office for ballistic missile defense, the command has dedicated itself to missile defense research, development and deployment. Their headquarters are located on Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

[Aviation and Missile Research Development and Engineering Center](#)

The U. S. Army Aviation and Missile Research Development and Engineering Center (AMRDEC), a subordinate organization to the Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM), is the Army's focal point for providing research, development, and engineering technology and services for aviation and missile platforms across the lifecycle. Their headquarters is located on Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

[HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology](#)

HudsonAlpha, a staple of Cummings Research park, houses both the Genome Sequencing Center and CLIA-certified Genomic Services Lab, as well as highly efficient and flexibly reconfigurable research space for incubation, wet chemistry, freezer farms, vivarium, biology stability testing, tissue culture, cell culture, microbiology, analytical chemistry, and bioscience clean labs.

[NASA' Marshall Space Flight Center](#)

NASA/MSFC maintains a broad spectrum of design, development, and testing capabilities. Marshall also works together across scientific and engineering disciplines to design, develop, integrate, test and operate complex systems utilizing unique facilities, expertise and capabilities. Propulsion, materials and manufacturing, space transportation systems, space systems, and scientific research are its core focus. Marshall developed the Saturn V Rocket that took man to the Moon, Today, Marshall is home to development of the Space Launch System, the most powerful rocket ever designed to carry human explorers, their equipment and science payloads deeper into space than ever before, to an asteroid and to Mars.

[Missile Defense Agency](#)

The Missile Defense Agency's (MDA) mission is to develop, test, and field an integrated, layered, ballistic missile defense system (BMDS) to defend the United States, its deployed forces, allies, and friends against all ranges of enemy ballistic missiles in all phases of flight. Their headquarters are located on Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

[UAH Research Institute](#)

The Research Institute carries out applied research and engineering programs, principally to meet the needs of Department of Defense customers, but with significant related work for NASA and private industry. Some Research Institute efforts are carried out in close cooperation with customers, on site at government laboratories. The Institute staff has expertise in covering the life cycle of aerospace and defense systems.

