



COMMENTARY: SOUTHERN STATES CONTINUE TO LEAD THE PACK; MIDWEST GAINS GROUND

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[Commentary: Southern States Continue to Lead the Pack; Midwest Gains Ground](#)

Although strong economic development teams and business-friendly policies have helped to draw companies to the Southern States, all states must continue to adapt to the changing site selection environment.

While the top five states are not surprising — as the South continues to dominate in corporate location — it is interesting that the top five states are all adjacent to each other geographically from North Carolina to Alabama. This proves that the South continues to have the reputation of being business-friendly, as well as having strong economic development tools. One of the items that comes to mind with all five of these states is that they have strong economic development teams from the state level down to the locals as well as utilities and workforce partners. The one category where the South generally has the most room for improvement is access to capital and project funding.

Georgia once again comes in first and, interestingly, the lowest it was ranked in any category was third. Site selection projects are comprehensive and consider many factors such as property, workforce, cost, and business climate. Georgia understands this and has developed its programs and policies to be comprehensive and pro-business, but they are also consistent and stable year after year. Having the biggest southern city, a strong eastern deepwater port, and one of the world's busiest airports adds to Georgia's attractive traits. The state has the whole package and is able to compete for various types of projects including manufacturing, distribution/logistics, and headquarters.

Over the years, the Southern States have established policies and programs to ensure that they are competitive and pro-business, but other states are beginning to catch up. While Southern States still dominate the list, the Midwest and Central States are gaining ground, with Ohio and Indiana staying in the top 10, but others such as Oklahoma, Iowa, Michigan, and Missouri making the top 20.

Looking forward, the Southern States must continuously adapt their strategies to the changing site selection environment in order to maintain their competitive position and reputation. If they don't adapt, then the Midwest and Central States will move up the list more quickly, as they are creating policies and tools that are business-friendly and focused on promoting economic growth.

AREA DEVELOPMENT'S TOP STATES FOR DOING BUSINESS 2019

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| 1. Georgia | 10T. Virginia |
| 2. Tennessee | 12. Kentucky |
| 3. South Carolina | 12T. Florida |
| 4. Alabama | 14. Arkansas |
| 5. North Carolina | 15. Oklahoma |
| 6. Texas | 16. Arizona |
| 7. Mississippi | 17. Iowa |
| 8. Louisiana | 18. New York |
| 9. Ohio | 19. Michigan |
| 10. Indiana | 20. Missouri |