

2026 Best Places for Aerospace & Defense

INDUSTRY OUTLOOK AND
COMPETITIVE MSA LEVEL
BREAKDOWN



Letter from the founder

FOR DECADES competitive advantage in aerospace and defense was defined by technological superiority. Engineering innovation, proprietary systems, and advanced R&D determined which companies led and which fell behind. That calculus is changing.

The defining challenge today is not innovation. It is execution. **The ability to scale production, secure supply chains, and expand industrial capacity fast enough to meet rapidly evolving defense requirements has become the primary basis for competitive advantage.**

For manufacturers and the regions that support them, this shift has direct consequences for where the next generation of aerospace and defense investment will land.

The data confirms what our clients are telling us in the field. Since 2022, announced aerospace and defense manufacturing investment in the United States has **more than doubled**. Project counts have **nearly tripled**.

The driver is not a single policy decision or geopolitical event. It is a structural reorientation of the defense industrial base toward production readiness, supply chain resilience, and long-term manufacturing scale.

This report is built around four findings that reflect that reorientation.

1. **Defense spending is entering a sustained expansion cycle concentrated in strategic modernization priorities:** missiles, munitions, autonomous systems, space technologies, and advanced electronics.
2. **Workforce and supplier constraints** have replaced demand uncertainty as the industry's primary growth barrier.
3. **The strongest regions compete as integrated ecosystems, not on individual assets.** Engineering talent, advanced manufacturing, supplier depth, and mission infrastructure must reinforce one another.
4. **Investment is expanding outward from established hubs,** not because those hubs are losing ground, but because the scale of current demand exceeds their available capacity.

Aerospace and defense investment is not spreading evenly. It is concentrating in places that have already built the industrial depth, workforce pipeline, and infrastructure readiness to support long-term production growth. This report identifies where those places are and what separates them from the rest.



Didi Caldwell
President + CEO

table of contents

FAST FACTS 04

RECENT ANNOUNCEMENTS 05

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS 07

Industrial Scale Reshaping A&D	10
Capacity Constraints	16
Rise of Integrated Ecosystems	26
Expanding Footprint	34
Final Word	42

METHODOLOGY 44

TOP REGIONS 55

TOP 10 MSAs 58

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN 68

East North Central	69
East South Central	71
Northeast	73
Northwest	75
South Atlantic	77
Southwest	79
West North Central	81
West South Central	83

NATIONAL MAP 85

STRATEGIC RECCOMENDATIONS 87

FULL RANKING LIST 88

fast facts

THE AEROSPACE & DEFENSE (A&D)

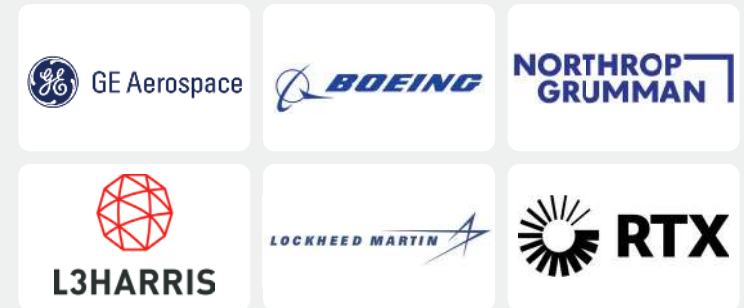
manufacturing sector includes companies that design, build, test, and maintain aircraft, engines, aerospace parts, missile systems, space vehicles, propulsion systems, and advanced defense electronics like navigation and control systems. These industries support both commercial and defense needs and depend on specialized engineering, manufacturing, and supply chain skills.

This report focuses on aerospace, missile, space, propulsion, and defense electronics manufacturing. While some trends apply to the wider defense industry, areas like naval shipbuilding, military vehicles, and munitions are not covered here because they have different workforce, supply chain, and location needs. However, some broader trends may still impact those sectors.

INDUSTRY GROUPS:

- + Guided Missile and Space Vehicle Manufacturing Group
- + Guided Missile and Space Vehicle Propulsion Manufacturing
- + Other Guided Missile and Space Vehicle Parts Manufacturing
- + Search, Detection, Navigation, Guidance, Aeronautical Systems
- + Aircraft Engine and Engine Parts Manufacturing
- + Aircraft Manufacturing

ACTIVE INVESTORS:

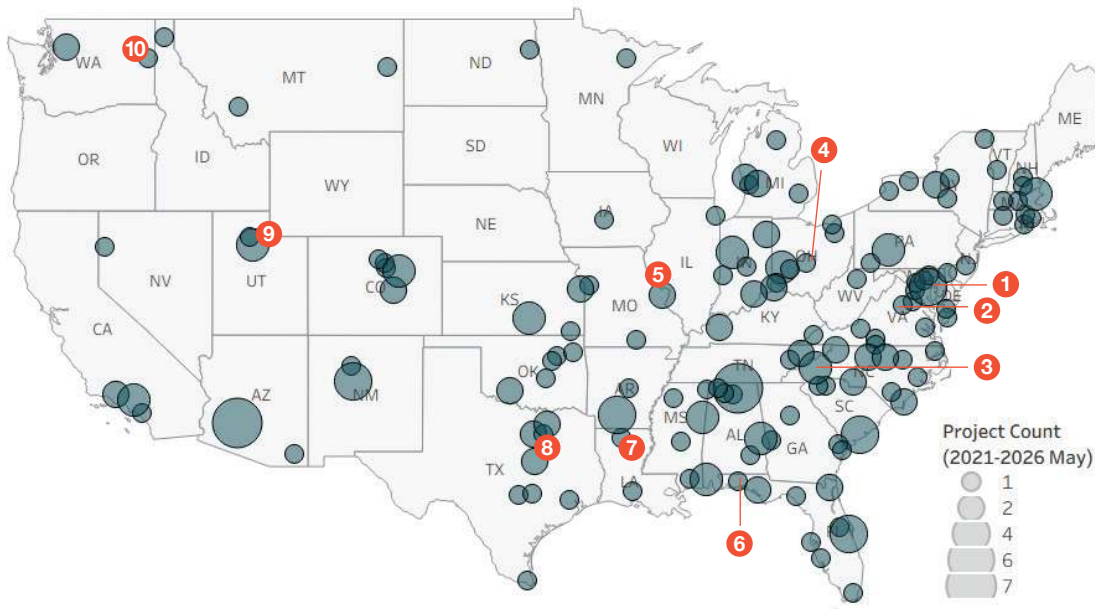


RECENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recent project activity is concentrated in established corridors, but the scale of announced investment signals demand that no single region can absorb alone. However, the **Southeast** accounts for the largest share of project activity.

recent announcements

THE MAP BELOW HIGHLIGHTS recently announced Aerospace & Defense investment activity across the U.S.



- 1 NORTHROP GRUMMAN** ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MD
Expansion: Other: Space & Defense (2025)
\$452MM Investment, 1,574 Jobs
- 2 L3HARRIS TECHNOLOGIES** ORANGE, VA
Expansion: Guided Missile & Space Vehicles (2026)
\$1.27B Investment, 350 Jobs
- 3 PRATT & WHITNEY** ASHEVILLE, NC
Expansion: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2025)
\$285MM Investment, 325 Jobs
- 4 ANDURIL** COLUMBUS, OH
New Facility: Guided Missiles & Space Vehicles (2025)
\$910MM Investment, 4,008 Jobs
- 5 BOEING** ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MO
Expansion: Aircraft (2023)
\$1.8B Investment, 500 Jobs
- 6 WILLIAMS INTERNATIONAL** CRESTVIEW, FL
New Facility: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2025)
\$1.08B Investment, 330 Jobs
- 7 RADIANCE TECHNOLOGIES** RUSTON, LA
New Facility: Other: Space & Defense (2025)
\$370MM Investment, 150 Jobs
- 8 BELL (TEXTRON)** FORTH WORTH, TX
New Facility: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2024)
\$632MM Investment, 520 Jobs
- 9 AEROVIRONMENT** SALT LAKE CITY, UT
New Facility: Guided Missile & Space Vehicles (2025)
\$42MM Investment, 500 Jobs
- 10 COLLINS AEROSPACE (RTX CORP)** SPOKANE, WA
Expansion: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2024)
\$200MM Investment, 80 Jobs

The background of the slide is a dark teal color with a subtle, intricate pattern of light-colored, wavy lines that resemble topographic map contour lines. These lines flow across the entire frame, creating a sense of depth and texture.

+ Industry Insights

Industry insights

U.S. AEROSPACE AND DEFENSE

is experiencing a period of accelerated growth marked by rising investment activity, increasing project scale, and a renewed emphasis on expanding production capacity.

This growth is being driven primarily by domestic investment, with U.S.-based companies accounting for the majority of announced projects.

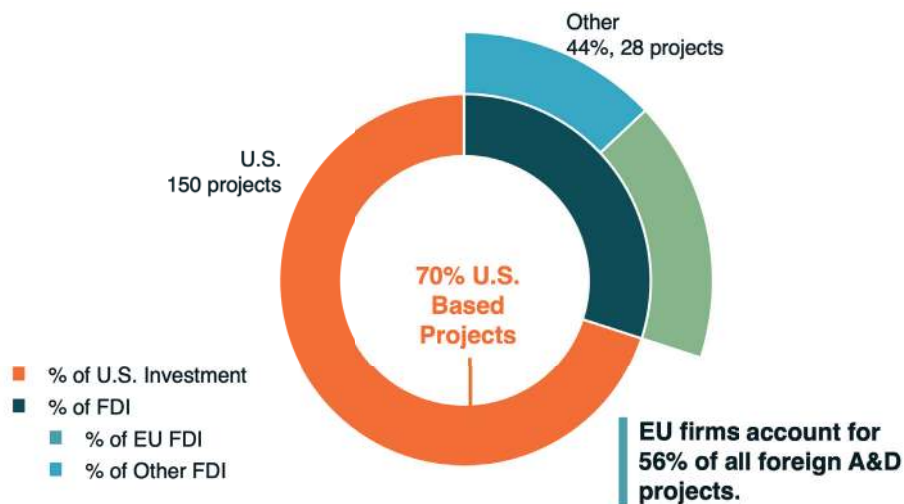
Among foreign investors, European Union firms account for more than **50%** of foreign direct investment in the United States and **17%** of all announced investment projects, underscoring both the attractiveness of the U.S. market and the strategic importance many foreign firms place on maintaining a domestic manufacturing presence.

Recent A&D manufacturing investment activity surged in 2024 and 2025. Compared to 2022 and 2023, **announced capital investment and job creation more than doubled while project activity nearly tripled**, signaling the start of a new defense-driven growth cycle despite continuing labor, supplier, and production constraints across the broader aerospace manufacturing environment¹.



Industry insights

U.S. Firms Account for 70% of Domestic A&D Investment Activity



Source: fDi Markets, aerospace and defense projects announced in the United States, 2021-2025.

Unlike previous investment cycles driven primarily by commercial aviation demand or traditional defense spending, **the current cycle combines defense modernization with industrial policy initiatives aimed at strengthening the defense industrial base.**

Through Defense Production Act investments, multi-year procurement

authorities, semiconductor incentives, and early production contracts, the federal government is playing a more active role in accelerating production capacity and supply chain resilience across critical sectors.

The industry is increasingly being shaped by a single defining challenge: the ability to scale production, secure supply chains, and sustain industrial readiness in an environment defined by geopolitical competition and rapidly evolving defense requirements. Production readiness is now a strategic advantage.

The industry is increasingly being shaped by a single defining challenge: the ability to scale production, secure supply chains, and sustain industrial readiness

The four insights that follow explain what is driving that shift and what it means for location decisions today.

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**+ 01 Industrial Scale
is Reshaping Aerospace &
Defense**

Industrial scale

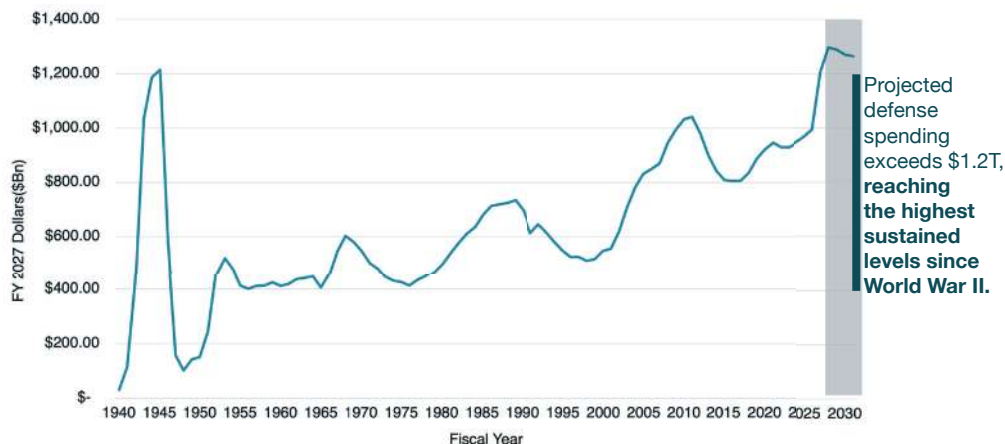
A NEW DEFENSE INVESTMENT CYCLE DRIVING EXPANSION

The aerospace and defense industry is growing again, thanks to higher defense spending, modernization efforts, and more investment in manufacturing.

This has created strong demand for manufacturers. Now, success depends not just on innovation, but also on being able to scale up production and support long-term growth.

Defense Spending has Entered a New Expansion Cycle

U.S. National Defense Outlays in FY2027 Dollars



Source: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), *Unpacking the \$1.5 Trillion FY 2027 Defense Budget Topline*.

INSIGHT AT A GLANCE

1

The aerospace and defense industry is entering a new defense-driven expansion cycle centered on manufacturing scale-up, industrial resilience, and modernization.

2

Federal spending is increasingly concentrated in high-priority segments such as missiles, munitions, space systems, autonomous technologies, and advanced electronics.

3

Investment decisions are becoming more production-focused, favoring locations capable of supporting advanced manufacturing, secure supply chains, and long-term industrial expansion.

While yearly defense budgets can change with world events and priorities, U.S. defense spending has stayed fairly steady as a share of GDP. This stability gives aerospace and defense manufacturers more certainty for planning investments, hiring, expanding suppliers, and production.

Industrial scale

In recent years, that stable demand foundation has strengthened further. Following a period of relatively modest growth during much of the 2010s, **U.S. defense spending has accelerated since 2021** as policymakers respond to evolving security challenges, military modernization requirements, munitions replenishment needs, and increasing strategic competition.

What matters for decision-makers is not just the increase in overall spending, but the shift in priorities. Over the past decade, the share of defense expenditures allocated to Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) has risen from approximately **12% to 17%²**.

This sustained increase signals a deliberate prioritization of innovation, advanced technology, and next-gen military capabilities¹.

For industry leaders, the implication is clear: **future competitiveness will be defined by the ability to deliver next-generation capabilities at scale.**

Procurement strategy is evolving as well. While procurement spending remains a stable share of total Department of Defense outlays, the department is now leveraging procurement mechanisms to accelerate the movement of emerging technologies from development into full-scale production.



“The U.S. Government, and especially the Department of War, is aggressively using federal procurement and investment as strategic tools for accelerating innovation, scaling the industrial base, and achieving national strategic objectives.”

- Hunter Voegel, Managing Director, Ankura

This shift is reshaping timelines and expectations for suppliers.

Initiatives such as Commercial Solutions Openings (CSOs), early production contracts, and other demand-signaling efforts are providing defense technology companies with clearer paths to commercialization and scale.

Policymakers are now supporting innovation by:

- + Creating market demand
- + Reducing commercialization risk
- + Accelerating the deployment of proven technologies

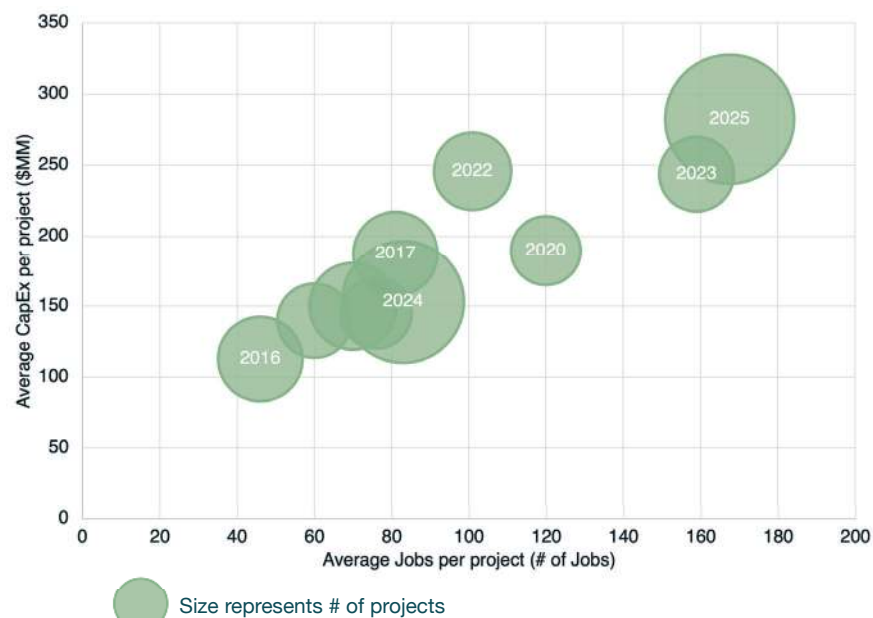
This represents a departure from policy that relied solely on traditional research programs.

Industrial scale

Private-sector investment now reflects these changes in demand, procurement, and industrial policy.

Aerospace and defense projects are increasing in size and capital intensity, with a focus on building long-term production capacity over short-term output.

Recent A&D Investments Reflect Growing Production



Source: fDi Markets, Financial Times Ltd., aerospace and defense projects announced in the United States, 2016-2025, Inflation-adjusted.

A&D projects are becoming larger and more capital-intensive.

Average capital investment per project has increased significantly since 2016, while project activity accelerated sharply between 2023 and 2025. Although average job creation per project has increased, capital investment has grown even faster, underscoring the sector's rising capital intensity.

This recent investment activity signals a structural shift. After a period of modest growth from 2016 to 2023, project announcements surged in 2024 and 2025, with a clear pivot toward expanding manufacturing capacity and advancing modernization.

fDi Markets data confirm that growth is now concentrated in the broader supply chain. Aircraft engines, components, and auxiliary equipment lead project activity, while **guided missile and space vehicle manufacturing projects have quadrupled since 2023**.

The focus is on building durable capacity across the value chain, not just final assembly.

In the future, defense investment is expected to focus more on specific priorities instead of broad spending.

While overall spending will likely stay high, most new investments will target key modernization needs related to military readiness and competition with other major powers. This means investment will concentrate on a few strategic capabilities seen as critical for future defense.

Industrial scale

A&D Manufacturing Growth is Increasingly Driven by Supply Chain and Strategic Defense Segments



From 2021 to 2025:

Guided missile & space vehicles: 3 → 16 projects +433%	Aircraft engines and components: 5 → 28 projects +460%	Aircraft: 3 → 9 projects +200%
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Source: fDi Markets, Financial Times Ltd., aerospace and defense projects announced in the United States, 2021-2025.

RANKINGS TAKEAWAY

The report's benchmarking results reinforce the industry's shift toward production-focused competitiveness.

The highest-performing markets combine:

- + Advanced manufacturing capacity
- + Engineering talent
- + Mission infrastructure
- + Supplier depth

Established ecosystems such as Huntsville, Dallas-Fort Worth, Phoenix, and Florida's Space Coast continue to perform strongly, while emerging regions including North Carolina and portions of the Midwest are gaining momentum by demonstrating the industrial scalability and manufacturing depth needed to support long-term growth.

Industrial scale

SITE SELECTION IMPLICATIONS

- + The current defense expansion cycle is generating opportunities across the industry, but growth will be uneven.
- + Capital flows toward strategic modernization priorities, and data shows locations with established advanced manufacturing, proven defense technology ecosystems, and infrastructure to support large-scale capital-intensive projects are positioned to capture most new investment.
- + As project size and complexity increase, the margin for error in location decisions narrows. Sites must demonstrate baseline capacity and the ability to support sustained growth, future expansion, and reliable long-term operations under real-world constraints.
- + Resilience and risk mitigation are now central to location strategy.

Manufacturers are recalibrating site selection in response to:

- + Persistent supply chain disruptions
- + Shifting geopolitical dynamics
- + Heightened defense readiness requirements

The focus moves from theoretical advantages to measurable factors:

- + Depth and reliability of the supplier base
- + Proven workforce pipelines
- + Ability to maintain production continuity under stress

Locations that cannot demonstrate these fundamentals are increasingly falling out of contention.

For economic developers, the opportunity is not limited to landing individual projects.

The most competitive regions will be those that prove alignment with high-growth defense segments:

- + Missiles and munitions
- + Autonomous systems
- + Space technologies
- + Advanced electronics
- + Semiconductors
- + Next-generation platforms

As manufacturers look for locations that can scale with evolving defense requirements, **the ability to demonstrate long-term workforce pipelines, infrastructure readiness, and a track record of supporting complex projects will separate leaders from the rest.**

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+ 02 Capacity Constraints Become the Bottleneck

capacity constraints

WORKFORCE AND SUPPLIER CONSTRAINTS ARE LIMITING INDUSTRY EXPANSION

Workforce and supplier constraints are now the main barriers to growth in the aerospace and defense industry. Even as defense spending, manufacturing investment, and production needs rise, many companies struggle to expand because of labor shortages, skills gaps, and issues in key supplier networks.

Multiple indicators show these challenges are structural, not temporary, and will likely remain a major issue for the industry over the next decade.

WORKFORCE CONSTRAINTS ARE THE PRIMARY BOTTLENECK

Labor shortages in aerospace and defense are now seen as ongoing problems. Research shows that **76%** of companies in the sector say engineering jobs are both the most needed and the hardest to fill, and skilled manufacturing roles face similar challenges³.

Mechanical and electrical engineers, software developers, and advanced manufacturing workers are especially hard to find as competition for technical talent grows in both industry and tech.

INSIGHT AT A GLANCE

- 1 **Demand is no longer the industry's primary challenge;** workforce shortages and supplier bottlenecks are increasingly constraining production growth.
- 2 **Clearance requirements, engineering shortages, and limited supplier capacity** are reducing the industry's ability to scale rapidly.
- 3 **Bottlenecks are becoming especially acute in critical segments** such as propulsion systems, energetics, microelectronics, precision machining, and advanced materials.
- 4 **Regions with qualified suppliers, advanced manufacturing ecosystems, and defense-oriented labor pools** are gaining a significant competitive advantage.

capacity constraints

These issues are expected to last through at least 2033 because of retirements, not enough new talent, and continued demand for specialized skills⁴.

The industry faces both a lack of workers and a lack of needed skills.

Aerospace and defense employers have fewer available workers because of:

- + Demographic changes
- + Retirements
- + Higher turnover

At the same time, these employers compete for a small group of engineers, technicians, skilled tradespeople, and advanced manufacturing specialists who are in demand in many industries.



As production becomes more advanced, **the challenge is finding workers with the right specialized skills for modern manufacturing and defense programs.**

“On the engineering side, it’s more complicated because employers are often recruiting talent from across the region, state, or nation.”

- Edgar Campa-Palafox, Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast



Workforce challenges differ by job type. Many regions have grown their technician and skilled trades pipelines through:

- + Community colleges
- + Technical schools
- + Apprenticeships
- + Partnerships with employers

capacity constraints

However, engineering talent is still a national market. **Aerospace and defense companies now compete across the country for experienced mechanical, electrical, aerospace, software, and systems engineers.**

Attracting and keeping engineering talent is becoming a key way for locations to stand out.

Workforce turnover is still high, with industry rates close to **15%** in 2024, and some skilled trades seeing even higher turnover⁵.

On top of this, about **a quarter of the aerospace and defense workforce is over 55**, which means many workers will need to be replaced due to retirement in the next decade⁶.

Capacity constraints extend beyond operational labor. Many regions are also trying to build semiconductor plants, energy infrastructure, data centers, and advanced manufacturing facilities at the same time.

This increases competition for construction workers and specialized trades needed to deliver these new projects.

CLEARANCE CONSTRAINTS FURTHER TIGHTEN LABOR MARKETS

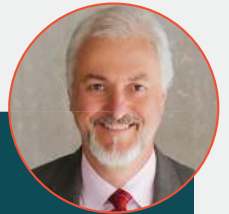
Security clearance and citizenship requirements make it even harder to find workers, especially for classified and mission-critical programs.

Many aerospace and defense employers prefer to hire people who already have clearances to avoid long background checks, which has made competition for cleared engineers, technicians, software developers, and advanced manufacturing workers even tougher.

Many defense programs now rely more on talent found near established defense hubs, military bases, key federal assets, and areas with strong defense employment.

Places without access to these talent pools may struggle to support classified programs and advanced defense manufacturing.

“A&D manufacturers are competing for the same engineering talent as the broader technology economy, but with the added constraint of a limited clearance-eligible workforce” - Phil Schneider, Principal, Global Location Strategies



capacity constraints

DEMAND CONTINUES TO OUTPACE LABOR SUPPLY

These **structural workforce challenges** are happening at a time when labor demand keeps growing.

Weekly job postings in aerospace and defense almost **doubled** from just over 11,000 positions in January 2025 to more than **21,000** in May 2026⁷.

By comparison, total job postings across all industries stayed stable during the same period, highlighting the sector's growing demand for talent.

This steady increase in hiring shows the growing need for engineers, technicians, skilled trades workers, and cleared personnel to support defense modernization and production expansion.

Aerospace and defense employment has grown by about **11%** since 2021, while manufacturing overall increased by roughly **4%**. This shows the sector's ongoing workforce expansion⁸.



capacity constraints

Wage growth shows how competitive the labor market is. Since 2021, wages in aerospace and defense have gone up by about **17%**, reflecting steady demand for skilled workers⁹.

Despite these gains, employers still face challenges recruiting for many technical and engineering jobs.

Compensation is not the only workforce constraint. **Other key factors include:**

- + Specialized skill requirements
- + Security clearance needs
- + Competition for a limited pool of qualified talent

Many of the industry's most sought-after occupations are also in high demand within sectors that frequently compete for the same engineering and technical talent such as:

- + Artificial intelligence
- + Software
- + Digital infrastructure
- + Semiconductors
- + Advanced manufacturing

These industries often have fewer clearance requirements and, in some cases, greater flexibility or compensation opportunities.

CAPITAL INTENSITY IS INCREASING

Aerospace and defense manufacturing is becoming increasingly capital-intensive, resulting in even greater pressure on recruitment for specialty positions.

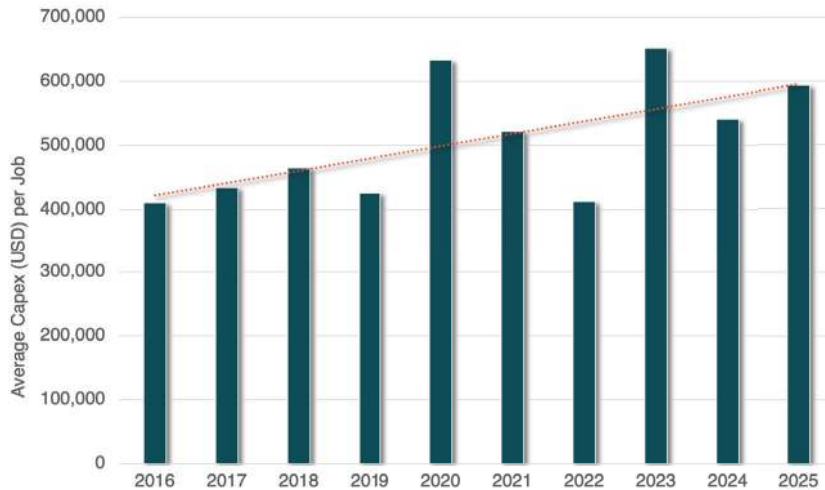
Recent investments are focused on large-scale, capital-heavy projects. Average capital investment per announced job went from about **\$400,000 in 2016** to nearly **\$600,000 in 2025** (inflation-adjusted), **showing more spending on:**

- + Automation
- + Advanced manufacturing technologies
- + Specialized equipment
- + Highly engineered facilities¹⁰

This move toward specialty equipment and automation has not reduced the need for workers. Instead, it has increased demand for a smaller group of highly skilled engineers, technicians, programmers, and advanced manufacturing specialists who can operate and maintain complex production environments.

capacity constraints

A&D Manufacturing Shifts Toward Capital-Intensive, Lower Labor-per-Investment Projects



Average capital investment per job increased by nearly 50% between 2016 and 2025, highlighting the industry's shift toward more capital-intensive manufacturing.

fDi Markets, Financial Times Ltd., aerospace and defense projects announced in the United States, 2016-2025, Inflation-adjusted.

These trends are also leading to greater reliance on advanced supplier networks, manufacturing equipment, and specialized industrial capabilities across the defense industry.

SUPPLIER BOTTLENECKS ARE EMERGING IN CRITICAL SEGMENTS

Supplier bottlenecks are becoming a secondary but important constraint in the aerospace and defense supply chain. Although overall supply chain conditions have improved recently, capacity limits still exist, especially among suppliers making:

- + Castings
- + Forgings
- + Propulsion systems
- + Energetics
- + Precision-machined parts
- + Microelectronics
- + Other specialized components

Limited production capacity, aging infrastructure, and fewer qualified vendors keep restricting the industry's ability to scale up. **Many key defense programs still rely on fragile lower-tier supplier networks that were not built for sustained surge production or quick replenishment cycles.**

capacity constraints

These challenges are getting more serious as federal defense priorities focus on missile production, munitions replenishment, naval expansion, and overall growth of the defense industrial base.

Some priorities go beyond aerospace and defense, but they still increase demand for the same materials, suppliers, manufacturing capabilities, and skilled workers.

As a result, **long lead times for critical inputs and specialized manufacturing processes are becoming major constraints** on production ramp-up, supply chain resilience, and program execution across the industry.



“Aerospace supply chains are uniquely vulnerable to single-source disruptions because materials and components often require lengthy qualification processes. In advanced composites, even upstream chemical inputs may have only one or two approved suppliers worldwide.”

*- Didi Caldwell, President & CEO,
Global Location Strategies*

The underlying structure of the defense supply chain amplifies the challenge. While the Department of Defense sources from a global base of over **200,000** suppliers that support weapons systems and essential industrial inputs, **the reality is that most programs rely on a much smaller pool of qualified suppliers¹¹.**

Stringent certification, compliance, and security protocols mean that, for critical components, only one or two suppliers may be authorized to produce at scale. **This concentration creates hard bottlenecks** when demand surges, limiting the system’s ability to respond quickly or flexibly.

These constraints are most severe in specialized segments where qualifying a new supplier involves extensive testing, certification, audits, and customer approvals—a process that can extend to 18 months or more¹².

In practice, replacing a supplier is rarely a quick fix; timelines often stretch into years, not months. This reality **limits the industry’s ability to scale production or recover from shocks**, even when technical manufacturing capacity exists elsewhere.

For decision-makers, the implication is clear: **supply chain flexibility is not just a function of available capacity, but of qualification lead times and regulatory hurdles that cannot be bypassed.**

capacity constraints

GROWTH IS EXPANDING BEYOND TRADITIONAL PRIME CONTRACTOR NETWORKS

Defense contracting is entering a period of structural change. Lower-tier suppliers, historically reliant on multi-year agreements with major primes, are now operating in a market where **federal investment is moving toward emerging technology firms and nontraditional contractors.**

This shift is already reshaping procurement patterns and competitive dynamics. **Suppliers are being forced to confront new realities:**

- + Reassess customer concentration risk
- + Invest in production flexibility
- + Evaluate their geographic footprint



“Defense suppliers can no longer rely solely on the Primes for government business. The Department of War is actively reorienting its procurement functions, and start-ups and challenger firms are capturing a growing share of federal funds as a result.” - Hunter Voegel, Managing Director, Ankura

In practical terms, suppliers are:

- + Prioritizing diversification of their customer base
- + Increasing domestic sourcing
- + Building redundancy into production lines to mitigate supply chain risk

Federal procurement is now focused on rebuilding munitions inventories, scaling missile output, and expanding naval assets.

These priorities are driving demand beyond the traditional prime contractor network, opening new growth channels for suppliers able to align capabilities with these evolving requirements. The opportunity is real, but so are the operational and capital demands required to capture it.

RANKINGS TAKEAWAY

Several of the top-performing aerospace and defense markets do not offer the lowest operating costs.

Their advantage lies in the concentration of engineering talent, supplier networks, advanced manufacturing, and defense infrastructure.

In a market where workforce shortages are intensifying, access to specialized talent is now a more decisive factor than marginal differences in cost structure.

capacity constraints

SITE SELECTION IMPLICATIONS

As workforce and supplier constraints become increasingly important barriers to industry expansion, access to talent, supplier networks, and industrial **capacity is becoming an even more critical consideration in aerospace and defense location decisions.**

Operating costs remain important, but the industry's location choices have long been influenced by factors such as workforce capabilities, ecosystem strength, and the ability to support long-term program execution.

- + **Talent Availability Matters More Than Labor Cost.** Access to engineers, technicians, skilled trades workers, and clearance-eligible talent is becoming one of the most important site selection factors for many aerospace and defense projects.
- + **Defense Hubs Maintain Structural Advantages.** Locations near military installations, federal research assets, major contractors, and established defense employers often benefit from deeper pools of experienced and clearance-eligible workers, creating a competitive advantage for classified and mission-critical programs.
- + **Supplier Ecosystems Reduce Execution Risk.** Proximity to qualified suppliers can shorten lead times, improve production continuity, and reduce exposure to lower-tier supply chain disruptions, particularly in qualification-intensive segments.
- + **Ecosystem Depth Will Separate Winning Markets.** Regions that combine workforce availability, supplier depth, manufacturing excellence, and defense-sector specialization are likely to be better positioned to capture future investment than locations competing primarily on cost.



03 The Rise of Integrated **Aerospace & Defense Ecosystems**

integrated ecosystem

LEGACY HUBS CONTINUE TO SHAPE INDUSTRY GROWTH

Aerospace and defense is one of the most concentrated industries in the U.S. Years of focused investment have built ecosystems where engineering talent, specialized suppliers, advanced manufacturing, military bases, research centers, and federal assets work closely together.

These **clusters deliver measurable advantages** in workforce depth, supply chain resilience, and program execution.

Advantages that are not easily replicated and continue to shape the flow of new investment.

As the sector moves toward higher-volume production, more advanced systems, and stronger supply chains, choosing a location has become more complicated.

More and more, a region's success depends on:

- + Ability to support long-term production
- + Fill specialized workforce gaps
- + Connect suppliers
- + Manage security
- + Deliver on important programs

INSIGHT AT A GLANCE

1

Despite ongoing geographic diversification, aerospace and defense remains one of the most highly clustered industries in the U.S. economy, with legacy hubs retaining significant competitive

2

Regional competitiveness and long-term ecosystem development are shaped by military installations, federal mission assets, testing environments, research centers, and major defense commands development.

3

Future investment will increasingly favor integrated defense ecosystems that combine engineering talent, advanced manufacturing capabilities, supplier depth, and mission-critical infrastructure.

These are not just theoretical issues; they are real challenges that affect where companies invest.

Decision-makers now have to look at not just whether a region has the right mix of workforce, suppliers, manufacturing, research, and mission infrastructure, but also how well these parts work together.

integrated ecosystem

FEDERAL MISSION ASSETS REMAIN POWERFUL ECOSYSTEM ANCHORS

Federal mission assets remain some of the strongest forces shaping aerospace and defense ecosystems, even as the industry spreads out across more locations.

Long term anchor assets include:

- + Military bases
- + Space Force sites
- + Testing grounds
- + Federal labs
- + Shipyards
- + Major defense commands

They attract suppliers, engineering talent, research, and private investment. For this reason, **federal decisions about where to place or expand these assets can impact a region's competitiveness for years to come.**

The long-running competition between Colorado Springs, CO and Huntsville, AL for the permanent headquarters of U.S. Space Command shows how important major federal mission assets are to local economies.

The decision affected more than just jobs at the command. It influenced contractor growth, supplier investments, the ability to attract engineering talent, and the long-term future of aerospace and defense in the area.



“The Congressional delegation should absolutely be a factor in any site selection, and especially for the Defense industry. Congressional leadership can help reinforce state and local competitiveness by helping steer federal investment into the area’s infrastructure and directly supporting programs that create jobs for their constituents.”

- Hunter Voegel, Managing Director, Ankura

Congressional delegations also help keep established aerospace and defense clusters competitive. By supporting military bases, research funding, infrastructure projects, procurement programs, and new missions, elected officials can bring federal resources to their regions and strengthen local aerospace and defense industries.

integrated ecosystem

Even though decisions about procurement, basing, and headquarters follow formal processes, **regions with influential congressional members—especially those on key defense committees—often receive steady federal investment over time.**

This pattern has helped top hubs like **Huntsville, Colorado Springs, Hampton Roads, Dayton, and Florida's Space Coast** stay ahead.

Over time, federal mission assets, strong congressional support, research institutions, and defense contractors work together to build self-sustaining ecosystems that are hard for new markets to copy.



Source: greatruns.com

FLORIDA'S SPACE COAST

Florida's Space Coast is a great example of how long-term federal investment can shape a region's aerospace and defense industry.

With its launch sites, military missions, and workforce programs, the area has become one of the country's top aerospace and defense centers.

While it was once mainly known for launches, the **Space Coast is now growing into a full manufacturing and technology hub** that supports:

- + Spacecraft
- + Satellites
- + Launch vehicles
- + Missile systems
- + Defense electronics
- + Communications
- + Mission support

This growth shows a larger trend.

The most successful aerospace and defense regions now bring together defense, commercial space, advanced manufacturing, engineering talent, and key infrastructure in one place.

integrated ecosystem

LEGACY HUBS CONTINUE TO HOLD SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGES

Legacy aerospace and defense hubs have maintained their competitive positions for decades because of the cumulative advantages created by industrial clustering.

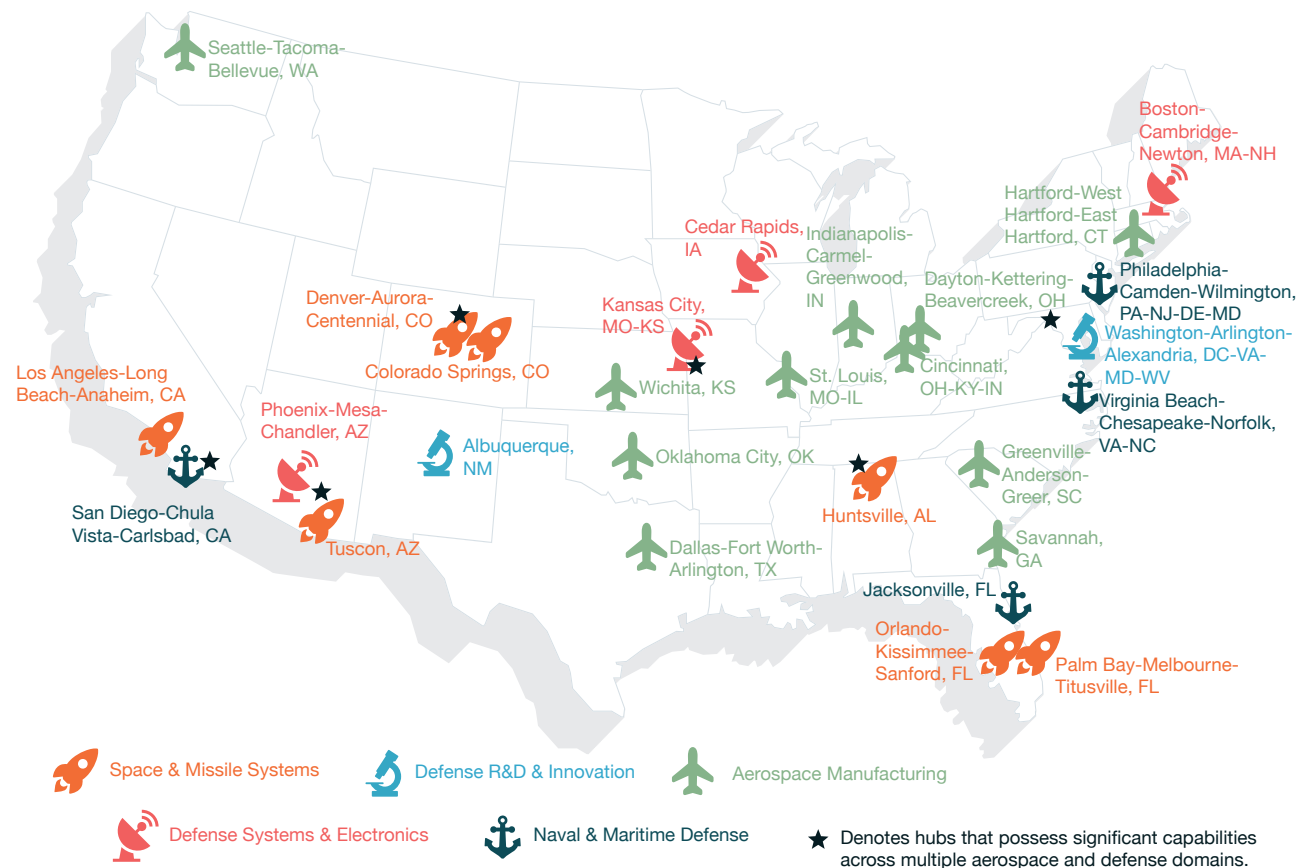
These ecosystems benefit from:

- + Dense supplier networks
- + Experienced workforces
- + Specialized infrastructure
- + Research institutions
- + Military installations
- + Established customer relationships
- + Strong connections to federal defense programs

The map highlights major hubs within the U.S. A&D industrial base. Classifications reflect each metro's dominant area of specialization based on its industry ecosystem, workforce, strategic assets, and defense-related activities.

Because many metros support multiple aerospace and defense segments, the classifications should be viewed as indicative of the primary area of strength rather than an exhaustive representation of all capabilities.

Major U.S. Aerospace & Defense Industrial Base Hubs and Core Specialization



integrated ecosystem

Each region in the U.S. aerospace and defense industry has its own specialty, but the industry as a whole relies on several important clusters across the country.

- + **Seattle, Wichita, St. Louis, Dayton, and Dallas Fort-Worth** are leading centers for aircraft manufacturing and aerospace production.
- + **Southern California, including Los Angeles and San Diego** is a major hub for aerospace engineering, defense innovation, space systems, and advanced manufacturing.
- + **Huntsville and Colorado Springs** focus on missile systems, military space, and defense engineering.
- + **Hartford and Cincinnati** are known worldwide for aircraft propulsion.
- + **Florida's Space Coast and Palm Bay** lead in launch operations, space, and defense electronics.
- + **Boston** is a center for defense innovation and dual-use technology.
- + **Northern Virginia** is the main location for defense procurement, federal contracting, military leadership, and intelligence activities.

These regions show that aerospace and defense clusters usually do not form around just one facility or employer. Instead, they grow over

many years through investments in manufacturing, engineering talent, suppliers, research, military assets, innovation, and federal funding.

Because of this, **the strongest regions now compete as integrated ecosystems** that support every stage of aerospace and defense technology.

GROWTH IS REINFORCING EXISTING ECOSYSTEMS

Established aerospace and defense hubs still have major advantages, but growth is now reaching nearby and new markets. Challenges like labor shortages, limited industrial capacity, and the need for more diverse supply chains are prompting manufacturers and suppliers to look beyond traditional industry centers.

This growth does not mean legacy hubs are being replaced. Many **new aerospace and defense locations are doing well because they connect with existing ecosystems** through shared workers, supplier networks, transportation, military resources, and research institutions.

So, **future industry growth will likely focus on expanding and specializing these ecosystems rather than spreading out** everywhere.

integrated ecosystem

These trends show that the strongest regions in the industry compete as integrated ecosystems, not just as single facilities or employers.

Even as new markets emerge, the benefits that build up over decades—like investment, federal assets, engineering talent, and supplier networks—are hard to match. Because of this, established aerospace and defense ecosystems will likely continue to shape industry growth for years to come.

“Companies increasingly want to be close to the primes, and we’re seeing a growing wave of small and mid-sized suppliers, including many from Europe, expanding into those ecosystems.” - Edgar Campa-Palafox, Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast



RANKINGS TAKEAWAY

Established aerospace and defense regions remain highly competitive. **Seven of the top 10 metropolitan** areas in the report are long-standing clusters, which benefit from strong supplier networks, specialized talent, research, military missions, and years of investment.

However, the results also show that **no single factor guarantees long-term success**. The best-performing markets combine engineering talent, manufacturing strength, mission infrastructure, supplier networks, and innovation, showing that integrated ecosystems matter more than individual advantages.

The rankings on the following pages reflect these findings. **Among the top 10 overall, seven are legacy clusters:**

1. Wichita, KS
3. Dayton-Kettering-Beavercreek, OH
5. Huntsville, AL
6. Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL
8. Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ
9. Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX
10. Indianapolis-Carmel-Greenwood, IN

integrated ecosystem

SITE SELECTION IMPLICATIONS

As A&D ecosystems continue to evolve, competitive advantage is increasingly shaped by the ability to connect to broader networks of talent, suppliers, customers, and mission infrastructure.

Established hubs continue to hold significant advantages, but growth opportunities are emerging for locations that can effectively participate in and support these ecosystems.

+ Federal Mission Assets Determine Long-Term Ecosystem Trajectory.

Military installations, federal laboratories, testing ranges, shipyards, defense commands, and other federal mission assets continue to shape regional competitiveness by attracting talent, suppliers, research activity, and long-term private investment.

+ Connectivity to Established Ecosystems Offsets the Absence of Scale.

Not all aerospace and defense investment will occur within traditional industry hubs. However, locations that can access the talent pools, supplier networks, prime contractors, and mission infrastructure associated with established ecosystems often benefit from many of the same competitive advantages.

+ Specialization Is How Emerging Markets Compete with Legacy Hubs.

As aerospace and defense ecosystems mature, many regions are developing specialized roles within broader industry networks, supporting areas such as advanced manufacturing, propulsion systems, defense electronics, autonomous systems, space technologies, and mission support activities.

+ **Integrated Ecosystems Remain Difficult to Replicate.** The industry's most competitive regions continue to benefit from decades of accumulated investment across workforce development, suppliers, research institutions, manufacturing capabilities, and federal assets. These interconnected advantages remain a significant factor in long-term location competitiveness



04 The Expanding Aerospace & Defense Footprint

expanding footprint

NEW SOURCES OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE ARE EMERGING

Established aerospace and defense hubs still hold strong advantages, but the industry's competitive landscape is expanding.

Companies are now considering more locations for future growth because of higher production needs, ongoing workforce shortages, limited industrial capacity, and a greater focus on supply chain resilience.

This means that future aerospace and defense centers may look different from the traditional ones.

Today, competitive advantage depends on a wider range of factors such as:

- + Engineering talent
- + Scalable manufacturing
- + Strong industry connections
- + Blending of commercial and defense technologies

INSIGHT AT A GLANCE

1

Aerospace and defense investment is becoming more geographically distributed as companies seek additional capacity, workforce availability, supply chain resilience, and long-term scalability. Emerging regions are strengthening their position through advanced capabilities, engineering talent, supplier networks, and industrial capacity.

2

Future industry growth is likely to be distributed across a broader set of markets, with emerging defense ecosystems complementing rather than replacing established aerospace and defense hubs.

3

Commercial aerospace, defense, and space activities are increasingly converging.

4

The Southeast has emerged as the industry's leading growth corridor, with North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and Alabama attracting significant aerospace and defense manufacturing investment.

expanding footprint

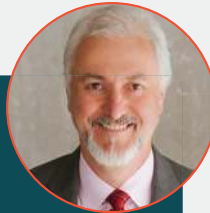
MORE MARKETS ARE PARTICIPATING IN INDUSTRY GROWTH

Recent investments show that aerospace and defense manufacturing is spreading out to more locations. From 2021 to 2025, about **84** U.S. metropolitan areas saw new aerospace and defense projects, up from around **60** areas between 2016 and 2020¹³.

This expansion suggests that companies are looking beyond traditional industry hubs to find more capacity, specialized talent, and greater flexibility.

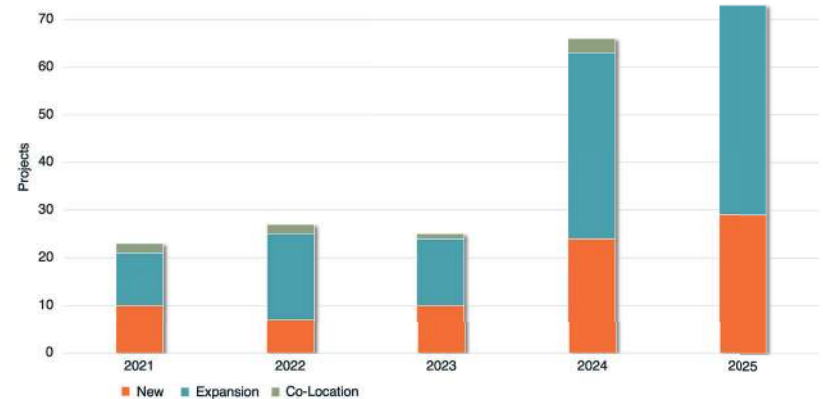
“The major A&D super clusters can no longer absorb all new investment, creating opportunities for adjacent regions with strong industrial and engineering foundations”

- Phil Schneider, Principal, Global Location Strategies



Most aerospace and defense investments remain focused on expanding existing operations, underscoring the value of established industry networks and skilled workers.

Expansion & New Projects Surge Amid Accelerating Industry Growth



Source: fDi Markets, Financial Times Ltd., aerospace and defense projects announced in the United States, 2021-2025.

The rise in new facility projects indicates that companies are more open to entering new markets when they can access additional labor, better infrastructure, or new supply chain options.

This wider investment activity can also be seen in the rising number of companies involved. According to fDi Markets data, the number of companies announcing A&D investments grew by about **50%** between 2016–2020 and 2021–2025, increasing from around **80** to more than **120** investors¹⁴.

expanding footprint

Established aerospace and defense manufacturers continued to drive industry growth by expanding and opening new locations. Since 2020, a wider range of participants has entered the market, extending beyond traditional leaders.

These trends indicate that **recent investments have reinforced existing clusters and created new markets** for aerospace and defense manufacturing.

COMMERCIAL AND DEFENSE CONVERGENCE IS CREATING NEW SOURCES OF COMPETITIVENESS

The industry is expanding into new regions as commercial aerospace, space, and defense activities become more connected. Now, technologies, suppliers, manufacturing platforms, and workforce needs often serve both commercial and national security purposes, **especially in areas such as:**

- + Launch systems
- + Satellites
- + Advanced electronics
- + Autonomous systems
- + Propulsion

Because of this, some emerging markets are building more diverse ecosystems that support commercial aerospace, defense, space, and dual-use technologies at the same time.

The overlap between these sectors is **opening up new ways for markets to compete**, especially for those that can support several industry segments as technologies, suppliers, and workforce needs become more connected.

“The technologies, workforce, and suppliers supporting commercial space increasingly overlap with those supporting national security missions.”

*- Edgar Campa-Palafox, Economic Development
Commission of Florida's Space Coast*



expanding footprint

TOMORROW'S WINNERS MAY NOT LOOK LIKE YESTERDAY'S

The next generation of aerospace and defense locations may not look like the last. While legacy hubs remain dominant, **a growing number of markets are developing competitive advantages through:**

- + Engineering talent
- + Advanced manufacturing capabilities
- + Industrial scalability
- + Connections to established defense ecosystems

The industry's most competitive locations are increasingly distinguished not by a single defining asset, but by their ability to combine multiple strengths.

Markets such as **Ogden, Salt Lake City, and Grand Rapids** rank among the nation's top-performing locations despite not traditionally being viewed among the country's premier aerospace and defense hubs.

Their strong performance demonstrates that competitive advantage is increasingly being shaped by factors beyond historical aerospace specialization.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IS EMERGING THROUGH DIFFERENT PATHWAYS

Rather than following a single model, many of the industry's most dynamic markets are developing distinct combinations of engineering talent, industrial capabilities, research assets, and ecosystem connectivity.

Between 2021 and 2025, **Baltimore-Columbia-Towson** saw project activity similar to other well-known aerospace and defense centers.

Ongoing investment from Northrop Grumman shows that being close to federal customers, having engineering talent, and established defense programs can give regions a competitive edge even if they are not traditional manufacturing hubs.



Source: [mainstreetmediatn.com](https://www.mainstreetmediatn.com)

expanding footprint

Albuquerque shows how strong national security and research backgrounds can grow into manufacturing ecosystems.

Castelion's plan for a **\$220** million defense manufacturing campus highlights how engineering, research, and production are coming together in new defense ecosystems¹⁵.

North Carolina is another example of competitiveness developing in different ways. Investment is now spread across cities like **Asheville**, **Wilmington**, **Durham-Chapel Hill**, and **Greensboro-High Point**.

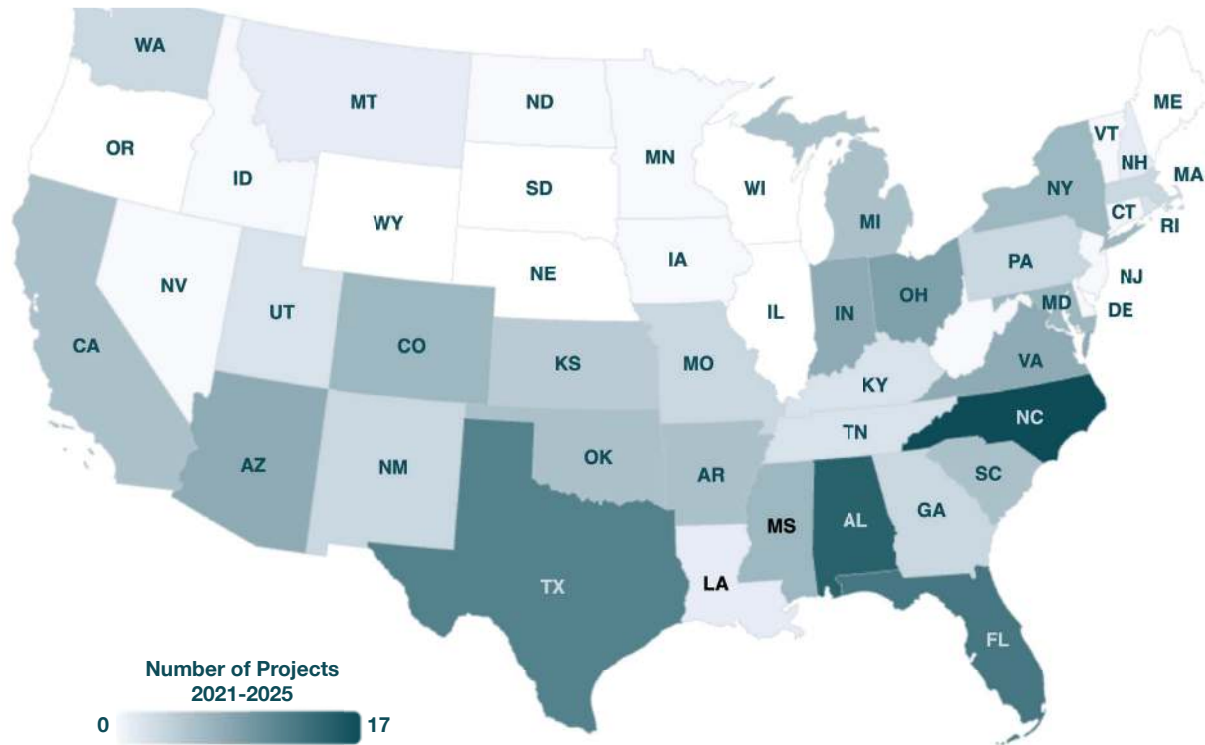
These areas benefit from strong engineering talent, expanding supplier networks, and links to larger aerospace and defense ecosystems.



Rendering of Castelion's new manufacturing campus. Source: castelion.com

expanding footprint

A&D Manufacturing Concentrates in Key Southeast and Midwest States (2021-2025)



Source: fDi Markets, Financial Times Ltd., aerospace and defense projects announced in the United States, 2021-2025.

State-level investment trends support this idea.

- + **North Carolina** saw the biggest rise in new aerospace and defense projects from 2021-2025.
- + **North Carolina's** growth is spread across many cities, thanks to its engineering talent, supplier networks, and industrial strength.
- + **Virginia, Colorado, Indiana, Texas, and several Midwestern states** drew major investments.
- + **Virginia** benefits from its focus on defense, intelligence, and federal contracts.
- + **Colorado's** growing role in military space and advanced technology shows the value of specialized skills.
- + **Texas and Midwestern states** continue to attract investment by combining aerospace and defense know-how with strong manufacturing capabilities.

expanding footprint

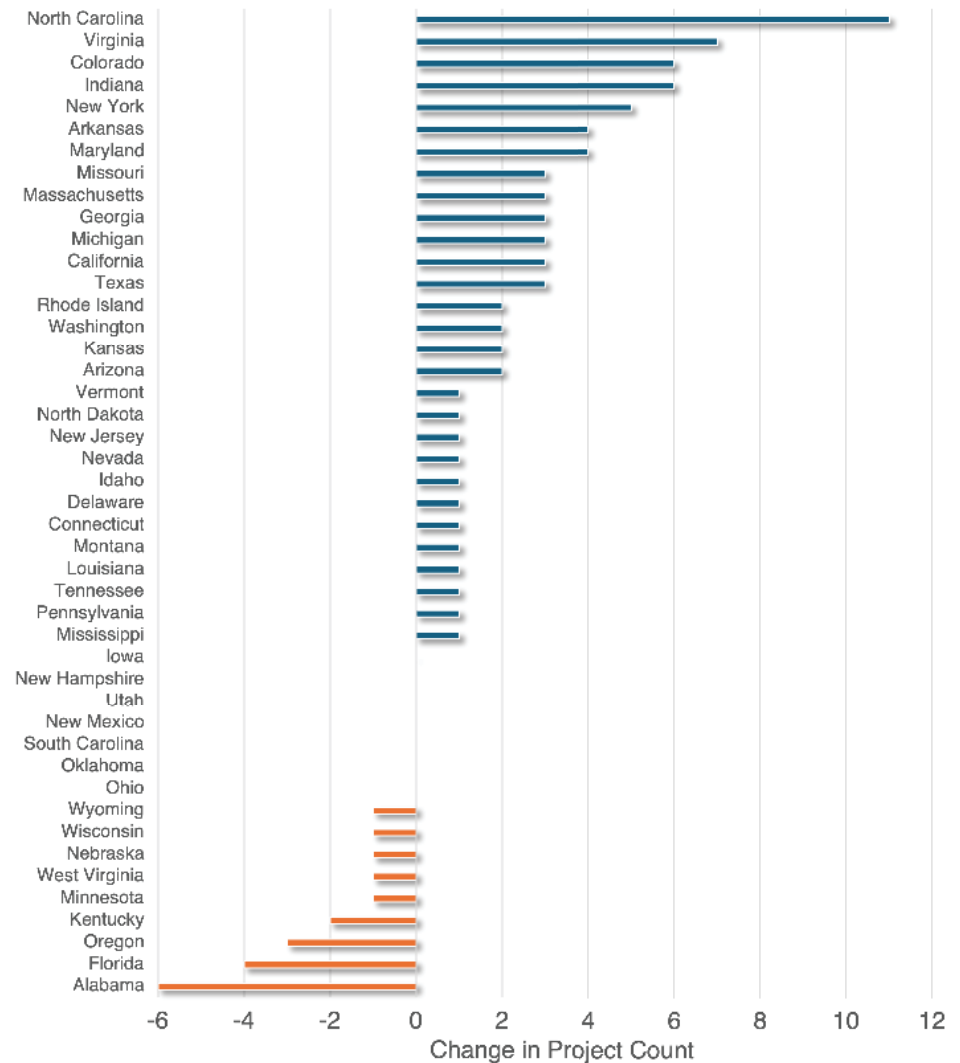
These examples show that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to future competitiveness.

Some regions focus on research and national security resources, others on engineering talent and industrial scalability, and still others on established customer relationships and ecosystem connectivity.

As a result, **the next generation of aerospace and defense locations may emerge through multiple pathways** rather than by simply replicating the characteristics of the industry's legacy clusters.

No state gained more A&D projects than North Carolina, reflecting the state's expanding manufacturing, engineering, and defense technology ecosystem.

Shifting State Competitiveness Reshapes the A&D Manufacturing Landscape 2016-2020 vs 2021-2025



expanding footprint

SITE SELECTION IMPLICATIONS

The next phase of aerospace and defense growth is likely to be more geographically distributed than previous investment cycles. While established hubs will continue to attract significant investment, a growing number of emerging markets are demonstrating the workforce, industrial capacity, and ecosystem connectivity needed to support aerospace and defense expansion.

- + **Ecosystem Connectivity Remains Important.** Many successful growth markets benefit from access to established aerospace and defense networks, including suppliers, engineering talent, prime contractors, military assets, and research institutions.
- + **Scalability is Becoming a Key Competitive Advantage.** Regions with available industrial sites, utility capacity, transportation infrastructure, and room for future growth are increasingly attractive as project sizes expand.
- + **Commercial and Defense Capabilities Are Converging.** Markets that support both commercial aerospace and defense production may be particularly well positioned to capture future investment as workforce, supplier, and technology ecosystems become more interconnected.
- + **Emerging Markets Are Complementing, Not Replacing, Legacy Hubs.** Future growth is likely to be distributed across a broader set of locations, but established aerospace and defense ecosystems will continue to play a central role in shaping industry investment patterns.



A render of JetZero's planned Greensboro NC campus. Source: JetZero

final word

THE FUTURE FOR A&D AND THE REGIONS THAT SUPPORT THEM

All these trends indicate that the aerospace and defense sector is undergoing a major shift. The main challenge is not just coming up with new technology, but turning those ideas into large-scale production.

Manufacturing speed, strong supplier relationships, a skilled workforce, and readiness to produce are now key advantages.

Governments are focusing more on:

- + Readiness to operate
- + Securing supply chains
- + Ensuring industries can handle disruptions
- + Developing new defense technologies

Meanwhile, the lines between commercial aerospace, space, and defense are blurring as their technologies, suppliers, and workforce needs come together.

To stay competitive, companies will need to build strong industrial networks that bring together skilled engineers, advanced manufacturing, reliable suppliers, key infrastructure, and the ability to scale up production.

Established industry centers are still strong, but more emerging regions are showing they have what it takes to join the next wave of growth in aerospace and defense.

In the end, the next stage of growth for aerospace and defense will depend less on new technology or how much is spent on defense. Instead, it will rely more on whether regions can translate demand into actual production by having enough skilled workers, strong suppliers, reliable infrastructure, and the capacity to scale up manufacturing.

While more places are joining the competition, growth is focusing on those that can move quickly from being ready to produce to actually producing.

For business leaders, economic planners, and policymakers, the key question is not just where aerospace and defense work is happening now, but **which regions have what it takes to support the industry's future growth.**

The background of the slide is a dark teal color with a pattern of light teal, wavy, concentric lines that resemble topographic map contour lines.

Methodology

methodology

GLS INSIGHTS IS A VISION

from the talented team at Global Location Strategies, an internationally-recognized location strategy firm with more than 100 years of location strategy experience and offices in the United States and Europe. Our reports exemplify the same rigor and transparency we bring to our site selection evaluations.

To produce our GLS Insights rankings, we combine data from more than a dozen public and private data providers to analyze over **120 criteria in categories including:**

- + Demographics
- + Workforce & Engineering Talent
- + Industry Ecosystem & Cluster Strength
- + Innovation
- + R&D & Defense Support Assets
- + Core Infrastructure & Connectivity
- + Operational Reliability & Risk
- + Business & Regulatory Environment
- + Talent Attractiveness & Livability
- + Operating costs



methodology

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

The GLS Aerospace & Defense Best Places Ranking is designed to **identify metropolitan areas that offer the strongest long-term competitive environment for aerospace and defense investment.**

As with any benchmarking exercise, several important methodological considerations should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

FOCUS ON LONG-TERM COMPETITIVENESS

The GLS Aerospace & Defense Best Places Ranking looks for metropolitan areas with the **best long-term potential** for aerospace and defense investment. It does not focus on the largest hubs, the places with the most jobs, or the cities getting the most investment right now.

Instead, the model looks at key factors that support long-term aerospace and defense growth. **These include:**

- + Workforce availability
- + Engineering talent
- + Educational pipeline
- + Innovation capacity

- + Industry ecosystem strength
- + Defense presence
- + Infrastructure
- + Operating environment
- + Location-dependent costs

Many **metrics are indexed or normalized rather than measured solely on absolute scale.** This approach prevents the largest metropolitan areas from automatically dominating the rankings and allows smaller, highly specialized aerospace and defense ecosystems to compete based on the concentration and quality of their assets.

Because of this, some well-known aerospace and defense centers might rank lower than expected, while smaller markets with strong fundamentals could rank higher even if their current industry is smaller.

These rankings are meant to show long-term competitiveness, not just current size or recent investments.

methodology

COMMERCIAL A&D ACTIVITY

A common challenge in aerospace benchmarking is that standard industry classifications do not distinguish between commercial aerospace and defense aerospace activity. Because of this, it is not possible to create a fully defense-focused aerospace benchmark using only employment and establishment data.

To solve this problem, the model uses a **weighted industry framework** that focuses on defense-related activities.

Highest weighted industries:

- + Guided Missile and Space Vehicle Manufacturing
- + Search
- + Detection
- + Navigation
- + Guidance
- + Aeronautical
- + Nautical Systems Manufacturing

Moderate weighted industries:

- + Aircraft Engine and Engine Parts Manufacturing
- + Aircraft Parts
- + Auxiliary Equipment Manufacturing

Aircraft Manufacturing gets a lower weight because it includes more commercial aerospace work.

The model also uses metrics like:

- + Defense spending
- + Military presence
- + Federal research assets
- + Defense contracting activity

The model also uses other defense ecosystem features to strengthen its focus on defense. **These changes help move the benchmark toward defense-oriented aerospace activity, while still acknowledging the limits of public industry data.**



methodology

SCOPE EXCLUSIONS

This ranking focuses primarily on aerospace manufacturing, space systems, missile systems, defense electronics, propulsion systems, advanced defense technologies, and related parts of the aerospace and defense industry. **It does not include naval shipbuilding, military vehicle and armored systems manufacturing, or munitions production.**

These sectors are important parts of the U.S. defense industry, but they have different workforce needs, supply chains, infrastructure, regulations, and reasons for choosing locations. Adding them would make the analysis too broad and reduce the focus on the shared location factors in aerospace and defense manufacturing.

This approach matches common definitions of aerospace and defense clusters.

PROJECT PROFILE

Every project is unique, even those within the same industry sector, and it is important to base location decisions on project-specific quality and cost considerations. However, many projects, especially those in the same sector, share common drivers.

For the purposes of this ranking analysis, GLS developed a representative Aerospace and Defense project profile based on 100 years of industry experience and the commonalities of recently announced Aerospace & Defense projects.

The location-dependent operating costs and quality scoring matrix for this analysis have been based on this profile.

The chart below reflects the project-specific analysis inputs. The **operation is assumed to run six days a week with two eight-hour shifts per day.**

In addition to the total number of employees, a labor profile has been developed that includes a mix of industry-specific white- and blue-collar occupations to measure labor quality, availability, and cost.

This analysis is designed to allow for a customization of inputs, which would result in a modified ranking according to the unique needs of a specific project.

methodology

REPRESENTATIVE PROJECT SCOPE



REAL ESTATE

Building: 275,000 SF



INITIAL INVESTMENT + EMPLOYMENT

Capital Investment: \$170MM

Employment: 250 Jobs



UTILITY DEMANDS

Electric: 5MW

Load Factor: 0.7

Natural Gas: 15 MCFPH

Water: 50,000 GPD

Wastewater: 35,000 GPD

ANALYSIS

This analysis evaluates the location quality and estimated annual location-dependent operating costs for a representative Aerospace & Defense manufacturing operation across the **387** metropolitan areas in the United States.

Metros, also referred to as **Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs)**, are defined by the US Census Bureau as regions with at least one urbanized area consisting of a city and its surrounding communities that are linked by social and economic factors with a minimum population of **50,000** residents.

The ranking consists of two components: **location quality score** and **location-dependent operating costs**. When combined, these factors identify metros with the **optimal cost-benefit outcome**.

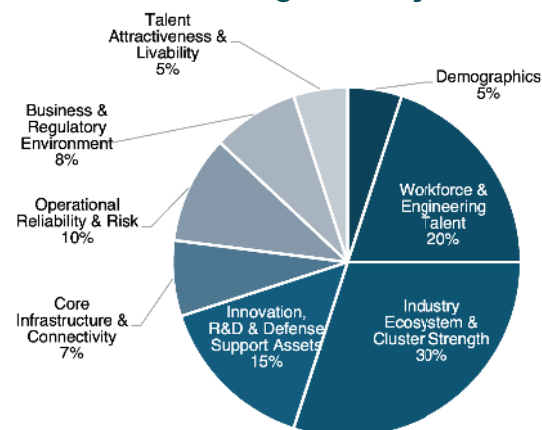
The location quality score, which contributes to **85%** of each location's final ranking, assesses more than **120** data points to measure the competitiveness of each metro for a representative Aerospace & Defense manufacturing operation.

methodology

The quality criteria included in the evaluation are grouped into the following primary categories:

- + **Demographics:** Assesses population size, growth, age distribution, and migration trends to evaluate the long-term labor force potential.
- + **Workforce & Engineering Talent:** Evaluates the availability, quality, and development of engineering, manufacturing, and technical talent.
- + **Industry Ecosystem & Cluster Strength:** Measures the strength, concentration, and growth of aerospace, defense, and supporting industry clusters.
- + **Innovation, R&D & Defense Support Assets:** Assesses research capacity, innovation activity, commercialization, and defense assets.
- + **Core Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Evaluates transportation networks, logistics capabilities, and critical infrastructure supporting business operations.
- + **Operational Reliability & Risk:** Examines infrastructure resilience, cybersecurity, power reliability, and exposure to operational and environmental risks.
- + **Business & Regulatory Environment:** Assesses the competitiveness of the business climate through taxes, incentives, labor policies, and regulatory conditions.
- + **Talent Attractiveness & Livability:** Evaluates affordability, quality of life, housing, education, healthcare, and other factors influencing talent attraction and retention.

Expansion & New Projects Surge Amid Accelerating Industry Growth



Each of the primary categories is comprised of a set of weighted secondary categories, which consist of a set of tertiary categories that are weighted and scored.

The cumulative result is a detailed, data-driven evaluation of non-financial factors that will impact the viability and success of an Aerospace & Defense manufacturing operation.

methodology

In addition to the quality analysis, the evaluation considers estimated, **location-dependent operating costs** that account for **15%** of the location's final ranking. Costs that are immaterial and/or not location-dependent are not included in this analysis.

While logistics considerations are important for Aerospace & Defense manufacturers, **logistics costs are highly project-specific and depend on:**

- + Product characteristics
- + Transportation requirements
- + Security considerations
- + Geographic distribution of suppliers and customers

Because these factors vary significantly across operations, **logistics costs** cannot be reliably benchmarked using a representative project profile and are therefore excluded from this analysis. However, logistics infrastructure and connectivity are incorporated into the location quality assessment.

The location-dependent cost criteria considered for this evaluation are grouped into the following primary categories:

- + **Labor Costs:** Payroll for an Aerospace & Defense staffing profile, including benefits
- + **Utilities:** Electricity, natural gas, water, and wastewater
- + **Industrial Lease Costs:** Estimated annual lease costs for an industrial facility

Operating Cost Breakdown

■ Labor Costs, ■ Lease Costs, ■ Utilities,



For this representative A&D project, an evaluation of indicative costs across U.S. metros shows:

- + Labor costs are expected to account for **85%** of the total location-dependent costs considered in this analysis.
- + Lease costs cumulatively account for **8%** of annual operating costs.
- + Utilities costs account for **7%** of the evaluated location-dependent operating costs.

Labor costs are expected to be the largest location-dependent operating expense for a typical Aerospace & Defense manufacturing operation.

methodology

Optimal locations are those that offer an above-average quality score at a lower-than average operating cost. The comparison of cost and quality metrics illuminates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each metro and allows corporations to make informed decisions about potential tradeoffs when choosing their location.

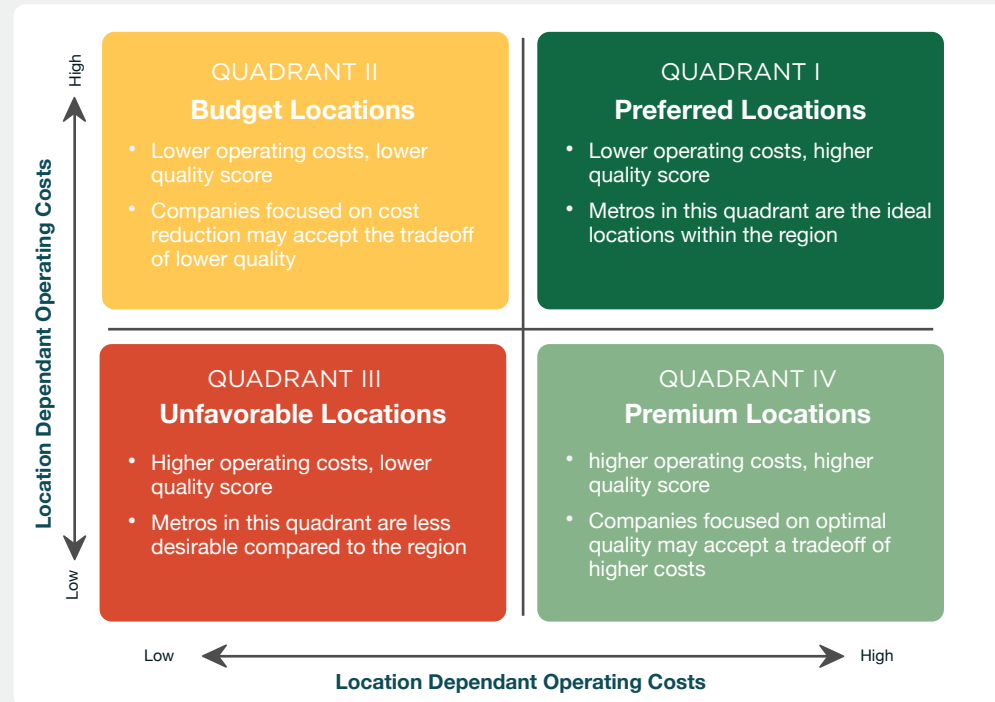
Focusing on the highest potential metros based on these rankings allows site selection efforts to be focused only on the regions that will be the most optimal for their unique project.

OPTIMIZING COST AND QUALITY

The GLS Insights composite model places each metro on a chart according to its **location quality score and operating costs tied to that location**. Where a location appears on the chart can change based on the project's needs and which other locations are being compared.

Quadrant I locations are the best options because they combine high quality scores with competitive operating costs for the region.

Quadrant II has locations with lower costs but also lower quality scores. Often, lower costs do not make up for lower quality, so these should be considered carefully.



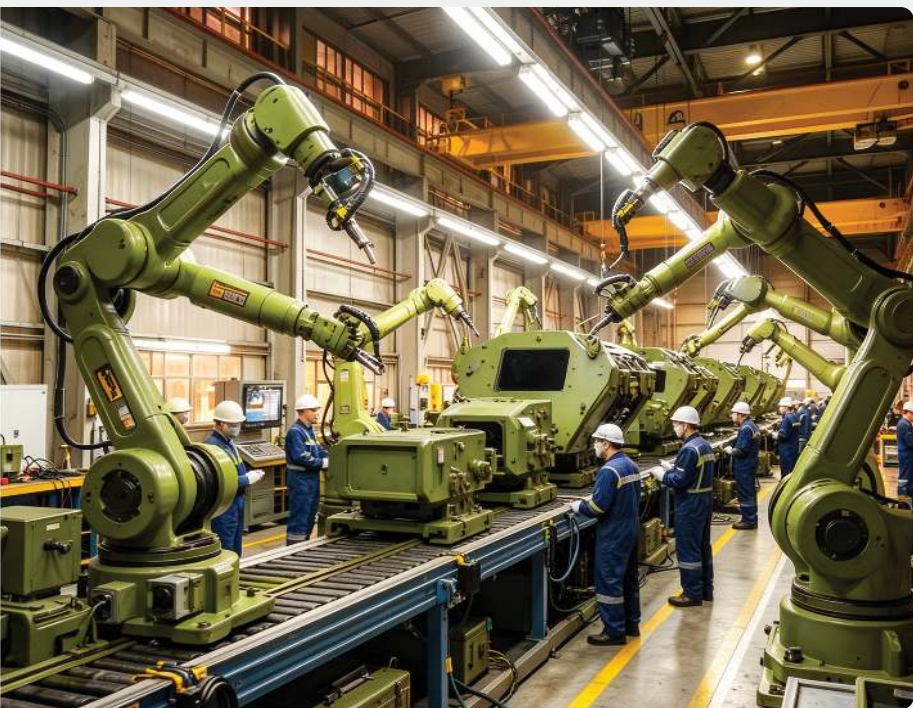
Quadrant III locations have lower quality and higher costs, so they are usually not chosen unless there is a specific reason, like a key supplier or customer nearby.

Quadrant IV includes locations with higher-than-average quality scores but also higher costs.

methodology

The **highest-ranking metros** are found in **Quadrant I** (Preferred Locations) and **Quadrant IV** (Premium Locations).

Premium Locations can still be a good choice even with higher costs, especially if incentives help reduce expenses or if the long-term benefits of higher quality, like lower employee turnover, are important.



DATA SOURCES

- + American Community Survey
- + American Council on Education
- + Bureau of Transportation Statistics
- + Cato Institute
- + CNBC
- + CoStar
- + County Health Rankings
- + Defense Manpower Data Center
- + Department of Consumer and Business Services
- + EIA
- + Electric Choice
- + Federal Aviation Administration
- + Federal Bureau of Investigation
- + Federal Emergency Management Agency
- + fDi Markets
- + Institute For Social Research - University of Michigan
- + IncentivesFlow
- + JobsEQ
- + Military One Source
- + National Center for Education Statistics
- + National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics
- + National Venture Capital Association
- + National Right to Work Legal Defense and Education Foundation
- + OpenICPSR
- + Tax Foundation
- + USA Spending
- + U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- + U.S. Census Bureau
- + U.S. Chamber Institute for Legal Reform
- + U.S. Energy Information Administration
- + U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- + U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
- + U.S. Small Business Administration
- + Women's Bureau - Department of Labor

methodology

REGIONS

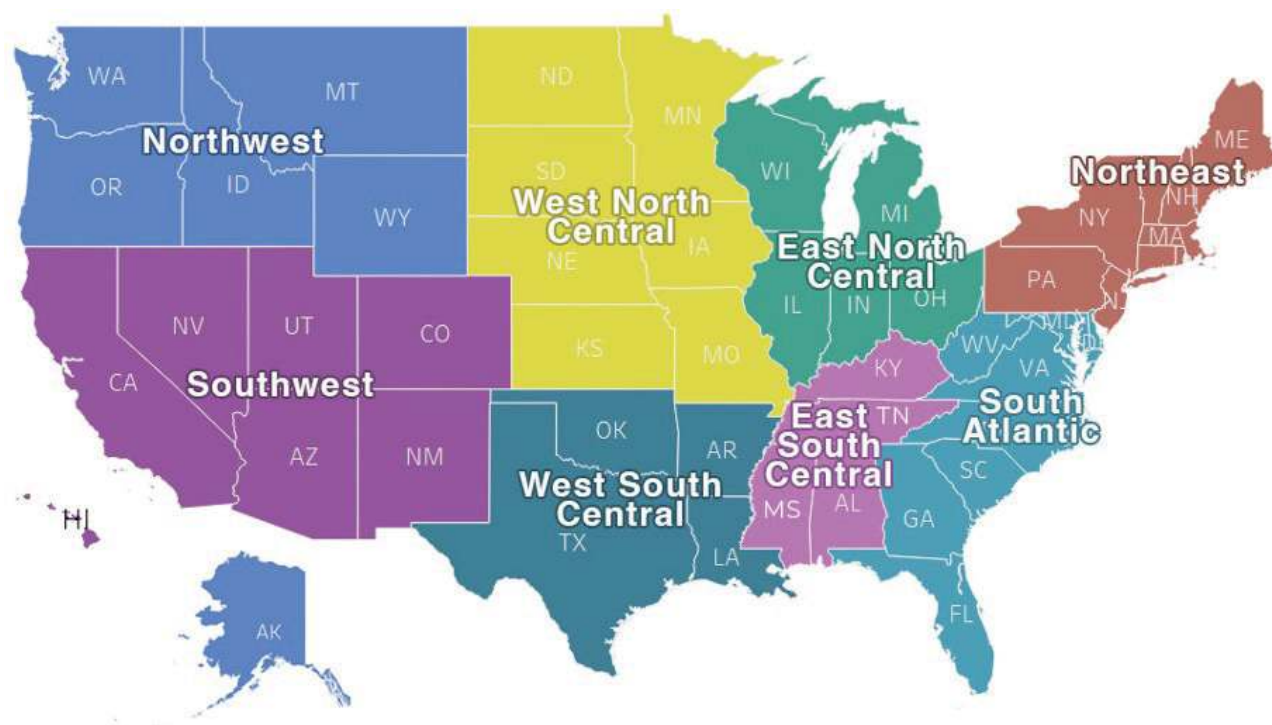
For benchmarking purposes, the US has been divided into **eight regions** based on their geographic localization and shared socio-economic characteristics.

It is understood that metros within each region may vary drastically, but they:

- + Share proximity to serve common markets
- + Are in similar time zones
- + Have similar business costs and climates.

In addition to the nationwide GLS Insights report, regional insights reveal localized strengths and weaknesses and are useful for identifying the most optimal metros for Aerospace & Defense manufacturing location decisions driven by regional supply chains.

GLS Regional Classifications



Metro Count per Region¹⁶

Northwest: 35	West North Central: 35	East North Central: 70	South Atlantic: 84
Southwest: 53	West South Central: 46	East South Central: 34	Northeast: 49

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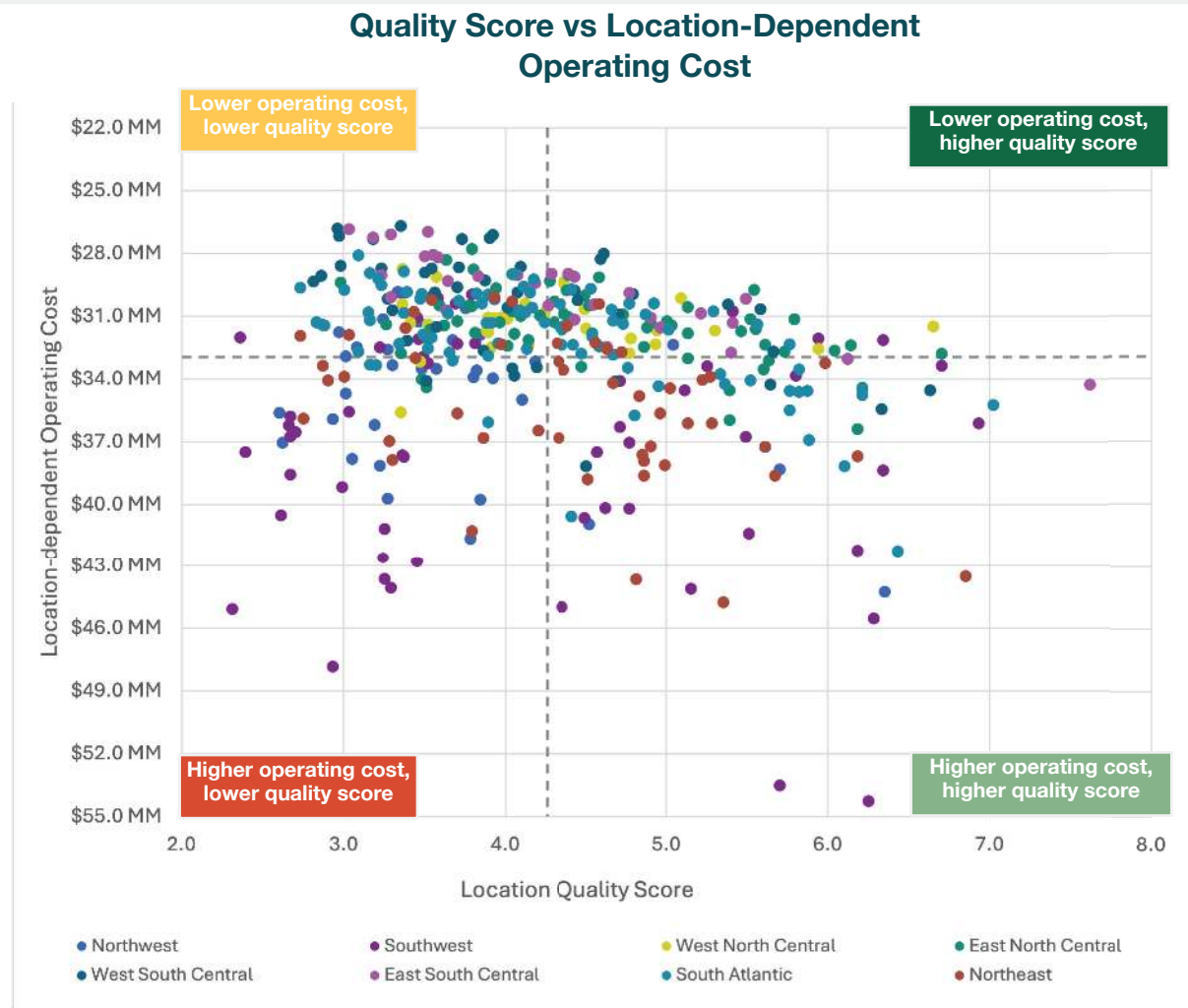
Top Regions

top regions

THE COMPOSITE CHART

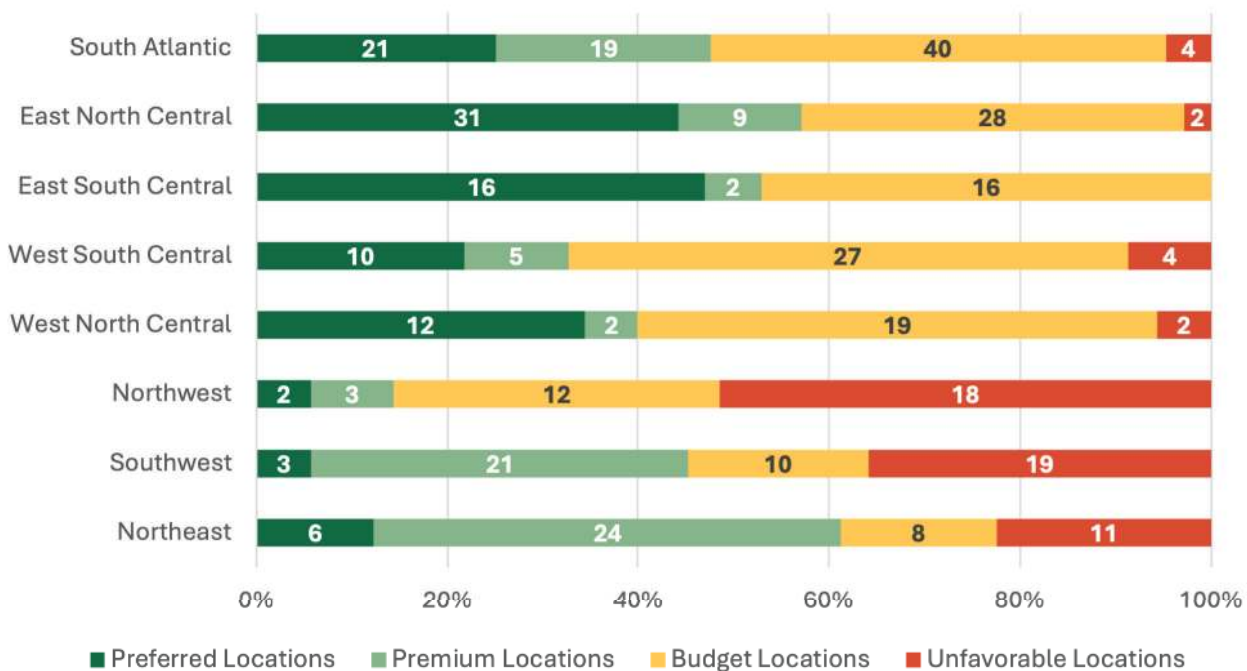
to the right shows the distribution of all metro areas based on location quality score and location-dependent operating cost.

Ranges for location quality scores indicate that all regions include both high- and low-quality locations; however, metros in the Southwest, Northwest, and Northeast are generally associated with higher operating costs.



top regions

National Quadrant Distribution by Region



Metros providing location quality scores above the national average and location-dependent operating costs below the national average offer the **optimal balance** between these two components.

Each region provides a number of high-quality Aerospace & Defense location opportunities.

However, in the **Northeast and Southwest**, the majority of top-performing locations are characterized by higher location-dependent operating costs, while the Northwest presents a comparatively smaller pool of competitive location options.

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Top 10 MSAs

#1 WICHITA, KS

WICHITA RANKS AS THE NATION'S TOP METROPOLITAN AREA FOR AEROSPACE AND DEFENSE INVESTMENT.

The city offers a strong business environment and competitive costs. Known as the “**Air Capital of the World**,” Wichita has more than a century of aerospace history, which has helped build one of the nation’s most established aerospace communities.

Major companies like **Textron Aviation** and **Spirit AeroSystems** are based here, and Wichita State University’s National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) is known across the country for its work in aerospace research, testing, certification, and workforce development.

With so many aerospace manufacturers, suppliers, and research institutions in one place, Wichita has **built a strong base of engineering and advanced manufacturing talent**.

Local education and workforce programs focus on aerospace, helping companies find skilled workers. These resources give aerospace and defense businesses access to specialized knowledge, reliable supply chains, and the support needed for complex projects.



Source: wichita.gov

Wichita’s advantages are even stronger thanks to its **competitive business environment**. The city has lower-than-average industrial occupancy costs, good utility rates, and reasonable labor costs.

This makes Wichita stand out for both quality and affordability among top aerospace markets. As more aerospace and defense companies look for places that support long-term production, workforce growth, and strong supply chains, **Wichita is well positioned for continued investment and growth**.

#2 OGDEN, UT

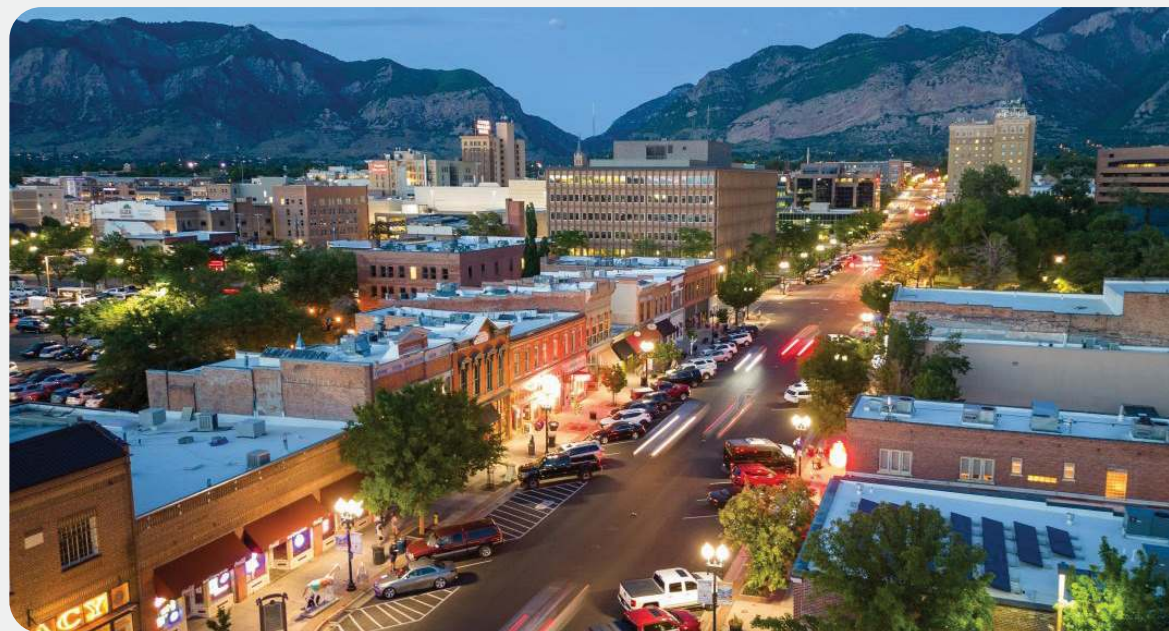
OGDEN STANDS OUT AS TOP A&D METRO WITH STRONG ECOSYSTEM & BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Thanks to its **strong defense ecosystem and competitive business environment**, Ogden is a standout metro. Hill Air Force Base plays a key role, serving as a major hub for aircraft sustainment, logistics, and defense operations. For decades, it has driven aerospace and defense investment across northern Utah.

Hill Air Force Base has helped build a strong base of engineering, technical, and advanced manufacturing talent in Ogden. It has also attracted many defense contractors, suppliers, and specialized manufacturers.

This industry concentration gives companies access to:

- + Skilled workers
- + Reliable suppliers
- + Deep defense expertise



Source: visitogden.com

Ogden's business climate is also highly competitive, with a favorable tax structure and business-friendly regulations.

Ogden also offers **competitive costs** for labor, utilities, and industrial space. For aerospace and defense manufacturers, the region's strong ecosystem, skilled workforce, supportive policies, and cost control make it an **attractive place for long-term investment, growth, and scaling up production**.

#3 DAYTON-KETTERING-BEAVERCREEK, OH

ONE OF THE NATION'S PREMIER CENTERS FOR AEROSPACE RESEARCH, ENGINEERING & INNOVATION

The metro's aerospace and defense identity is anchored by **Wright-Patterson Air Force Base**, one of the most significant Air Force installations in the United States and **home to major research, acquisition, logistics, and sustainment functions**.

This foundation has helped establish a uniquely deep concentration of aerospace engineers, scientists, technical professionals, and defense contractors throughout the region.

The region's main strengths are its skilled workforce and strong focus on innovation. Groups like the **Air Force Research Laboratory** and the **University of Dayton Research Institute** help drive a thriving research and development community.

Local defense contractors, advanced manufacturers, and tech companies offer specialized knowledge in aerospace systems, materials, propulsion, sensors, and defense technology.

This mix of talent and research makes the area one of the **top aerospace and defense job markets in the nation**.



Wright-Patterson Airforce Base. Source: wpafb.af.mil

For investors, Dayton provides access to **specialized engineering talent, strong defense connections, and a well-developed innovation scene**, all at costs that compete with other major aerospace hubs.

While skilled labor may cost more, lower facility and utility expenses help keep overall costs in check. This makes Dayton a great fit for A&D, and advanced manufacturing companies that rely on innovation, technical skill, and a stable workforce.

#4 SALT LAKE CITY-MURRAY, UT

SALT LAKE CITY-MURRAY IS QUICKLY BECOMING A TOP SPOT FOR A&D INVESTMENT

The area offers a well-educated workforce, a growing aerospace community, and a business-friendly environment. Utah has a long history with the defense sector thanks to **Hill Air Force Base**, but now the Salt Lake City region is also known for advanced manufacturing, engineering, and technology industries that support both aerospace and defense.

The area's main strengths are its **skilled workforce and solid infrastructure**. Many engineers, technical experts, and manufacturing workers are trained by the **University of Utah** and supported by a growing network of aerospace, defense, and tech companies along the Wasatch Front.

The business climate is also attractive, with:

- + Competitive taxes
- + Business-friendly rules
- + High workforce participation

The region's strong transportation network makes it easy to reach western U.S. markets and national supply chains.



Source: utah.com

For businesses, these advantages mean access to skilled workers, a growing network of suppliers, and supportive policies, all at a slightly higher cost than the national average.

Labor and space costs are a bit higher than in some other markets, but lower utility costs help balance out expenses. **Overall, Salt Lake City-Murray offers the talent, innovation, and business environment needed for long-term growth in aerospace and defense.**

#5 HUNTSVILLE, AL

RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE TOP A&D CENTERS IN THE COUNTRY

Huntsville is recognized as one of the top aerospace and defense centers in the country, thanks to its **strong mix of defense, space, and advanced technology resources**.

Redstone Arsenal, which hosts several Army commands and defense agencies, and **NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center**, a key player in U.S. space and missile programs for many years, are at the heart of this ecosystem. These organizations have helped build one of the **largest pools of aerospace and defense talent** in the nation.

Huntsville's main strengths are its engineering talent, research abilities, and the concentration of related industries. **The city is home to many:**

- + Defense contractors
- + Aerospace manufacturers
- + Tech companies
- + Research groups working on missile defense, space systems, advanced manufacturing, and new defense technologies

A well-educated workforce, a steady stream of graduates, and on-



NASA Marshall Space Flight Center. Source: nasa.gov

going population growth give companies access to both experienced workers and new talent.

For investors, these strengths make Huntsville an **excellent place for engineering-heavy, research-focused, and mission-critical work**.

While labor costs are higher because of the strong engineering workforce, lower utility and industrial space costs help balance things out. This means **companies can tap into a top-tier defense and aerospace community while keeping costs competitive with other leading innovation markets**.

#6 PALM BAY-MELBOURNE-TITUSVILLE, FL

A METRO CENTRAL TO U.S. SPACE AND
NATIOANL SECURITY FOR DECADES

Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville stands out as a major hub for aerospace, defense, and space industries in the United States, thanks to **Kennedy Space Center** and **Cape Canaveral Space Force Station**.

This MSA brings together a **unique mix of aerospace manufacturers, defense contractors, launch providers, and advanced technology companies that is hard to find anywhere else.**

The area's main strength comes from its **large pool of skilled engineers and technical workers**, supported by a well-established aerospace and defense community.

Leading organizations in these fields have helped build a workforce with experience in:

- + Spacecraft
- + Launch systems
- + Satellites
- + Missile systems
- + Advanced manufacturing
- + Defense technologies



Source: felixmizioznikov via Getty Images

Florida's business-friendly environment, with its competitive taxes, right-to-work laws, and ongoing support for aerospace and defense, makes this cluster even stronger.

These advantages give investors access to skilled talent, reliable supplier networks, and close connections to important government and commercial clients.

Although labor and facility costs are higher than the national average, these **higher prices mostly reflect the strong demand for engineering talent and specialized aerospace spaces.** Overall, this makes the region a great choice for aerospace, defense, and space companies that value talent, innovation, and industry connections over simply keeping costs low.

#7 GRAND RAPIDS-WYOMING-KENTWOOD, MI

RECOGNIZED FOR SKILLED WORKFORCE
AND STRONG MANUFACTURING NETWORK

Grand Rapids-Wyoming-Kentwood has become one of the **Midwest's top spots for advanced manufacturing and engineering investment, thanks to its strong industrial base and skilled workforce.**

Although it is not usually seen as a major defense center, the area has a **long history** in manufacturing and is home to many companies in precision manufacturing, automotive, metalworking, electronics, and industrial technology. These strengths make it **well suited to support aerospace and defense supply chains.**

The region stands out because of its skilled workforce and strong manufacturing network. **Grand Rapids** has many engineers, skilled tradespeople, and advanced manufacturing experts, supported by schools like **Grand Valley State University** and **Michigan State University**.

Local companies benefit from a wide range of suppliers, a culture of collaboration, and access to specialized production and precision machining.



Source: iStock.com/Craig Rinzema

All these factors make the area a **great choice for aerospace and defense manufacturers who want engineering talent, advanced production, and a strong supplier base without the high costs of bigger hubs.**

Even though defense work is less concentrated here than in some other places, Grand Rapids can support many different aerospace and defense supply chain needs.

#8 PHOENIX-MESA-CHANDLER, AZ

A LONG TRADITION OF AEROSPACE PRODUCTION AND ENGINEERING

Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler is now one of the top places in the country for aerospace and defense investment. Its **strong business climate and diverse advanced-manufacturing economy** attract major aerospace and defense manufacturers, electronics producers, and technology companies.

This broad industrial base supports both defense and commercial manufacturing. Arizona's military presence, including **Luke Air Force Base**, and a long tradition of aerospace production and engineering, make the region's ecosystem even stronger.

The area stands out because it has:

- + Skilled engineers
- + Strong industry clusters
- + Reliable operations

Arizona State University and other institutions help train a large and growing workforce of engineers, technicians, and manufacturing professionals.

The region also has many aerospace, defense, semiconductor, and



Source: visitarizona.com

advanced manufacturing firms, which create a **deep supply chain and many opportunities to collaborate**. Good freight infrastructure, dependable utilities, and a business-friendly environment make the region even more attractive for complex manufacturing.

For aerospace and defense investors, these advantages mean access to skilled workers, the ability to scale production, and a **well-developed industrial ecosystem that can support long-term growth**.

Although labor and industrial space costs have gone up as the region has grown, **Phoenix still offers strong value for engineering-heavy and mission-critical operations**. Here, the quality of the workforce, business climate, and depth of the ecosystem are more important than just low costs.

#9 DALLAS-FORT WORTH-ARLINGTON, TX

LARGE AND GROWING POPULATION PROVIDES ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST TALENT POOLS

The Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington area brings together a large engineering workforce, strong manufacturing capabilities, and excellent logistics connections.

Major companies like **Lockheed Martin Aeronautics**, one of the world's largest military aircraft producers, operate here, along with many defense suppliers, advanced manufacturers, and tech firms.

This cluster has made Dallas-Fort Worth **a key center for aircraft production, defense systems, and aerospace innovation**. The metro area's strength comes from its talent, industry size, and strong connections.

The large and growing population provides one of the country's biggest pools of **engineering, technical, and manufacturing talent**.

Schools like The **University of Texas at Arlington** and other local universities help keep a steady flow of skilled workers. The region's **transportation network**, with major highways, rail



Source: *clearancejobs.com*

lines, and air cargo facilities, also makes it a top spot for **complex manufacturing and supply chain work**.

These strengths make Dallas-Fort Worth a **great fit for aerospace and defense companies that need engineering talent, supplier networks, and large-scale production**. The area's mix of manufacturing know-how, logistics, and a deep workforce **supports both current defense programs and future growth**.

While labor and industrial space costs have gone up as the metro grows, lower utility costs and Texas' business-friendly climate help balance those expenses.

For companies looking for a place to handle complex manufacturing, engineering-heavy work, and long-term growth, Dallas-Fort Worth is **still one of the top aerospace and defense markets in the country**.

#10 INDIANAPOLIS-CARMEL-GREENWOOD, IN

HOME TO ONE OF THE MIDWEST'S
LEADING A&D HUBS

Indianapolis-Carmel-Greenwood offers a strong business environment and is home to one of the Midwest's leading aerospace and defense manufacturing hubs.

The area supports a wide range of activities including:

- + Aerospace propulsion
- + Military aviation
- + Advanced manufacturing
- + Defense engineering

Major employers like **Rolls-Royce North America**, along with many specialized suppliers, help create a **solid industrial base that can handle complex aerospace and defense projects**. Indiana's larger defense sector adds even more depth to the region's industry.

The area's main strengths come from its **business-friendly climate and strong infrastructure**. Indiana is often ranked as one of the top states for business, thanks to its good tax policies, competitive labor rules, and stable regulations.



Source: midwestliving.com Jesse Faatz

Indianapolis also benefits from its central location and excellent freight connections, with major highways, rail lines, and a **top air cargo hub** at Indianapolis International Airport. These advantages make it **easy for companies to reach suppliers, customers, and defense sites nationwide**.

These advantages make the region a great place for A&D companies, suppliers, and support operations.

Costs are competitive compared to other aerospace hubs, and **Indiana's business-friendly policies and incentives lower the risks for new investments**.

This makes the market ideal for aerospace manufacturing, propulsion systems, maintenance, logistics, and other advanced projects that need strong supply chains and reliable operations.

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Regional Breakdown

east north central

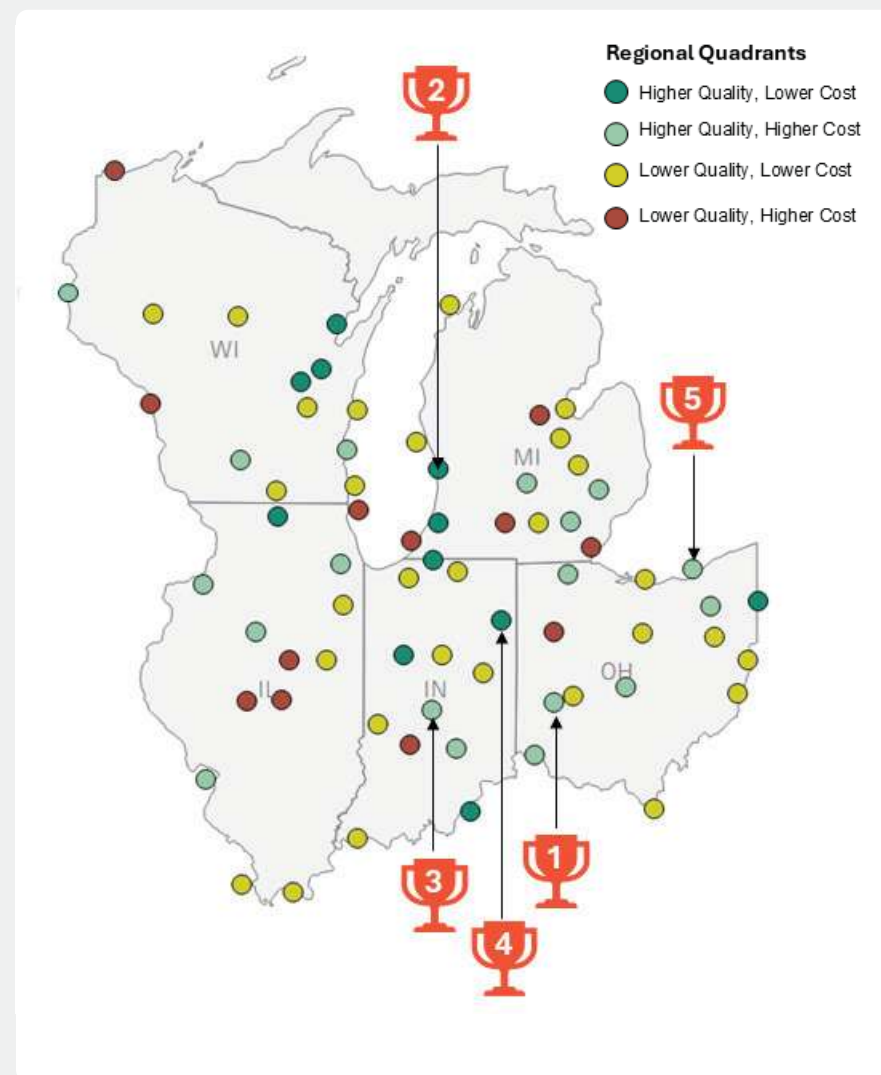
ILLINOIS, INDIANA, MICHIGAN, OHIO,
AND WISCONSIN

TOP PERFORMING: Dayton-Kettering-Beavercreek, OH

THE EAST NORTH CENTRAL REGION which includes **70** metros spanning from Wisconsin through Ohio, remains one of the strongest locations in the United States for aerospace and defense investment, combining a deep manufacturing heritage with a highly competitive operating environment.

The region benefits from competitive operating costs, supported by below-average industrial lease rates and moderate utility costs, while maintaining one of the nation's strongest engineering and advanced manufacturing workforces.

The region also performs well in business climate and operational reliability, providing a stable environment for long-term investment.



east north central

Regional Ranking	Metro	Score	National Ranking
1	Dayton-Kettering-Beavercreek, OH	89.69	3
2	Grand Rapids-Wyoming-Kentwood, MI	87.20	7
3	Indianapolis-Carmel-Greenwood, IN	86.88	10
4	Fort Wayne, IN	86.69	11
5	Cleveland, OH	85.71	13

RECENT PROJECTS:

- 1 ANDURIL COLUMBUS, OH**
New: Guided Missile & Space Vehicles (2025),
\$910MM, 4,008 Jobs¹⁷
- 2 L3HARRIS TECHNOLOGIES FORT WAYNE, IN**
Expansion: Other (Space & Defense) (2025)
\$125MM, 448 Jobs¹⁸
- 3 GE AEROSPACE (GE AVIATION) CINCINNATI, OH**
Expansion: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2024)
\$107MM, 238 Jobs¹⁹

East North Central is home to several nationally significant aerospace and defense hubs, including Indianapolis, Dayton, and Cincinnati.

These hubs support a diverse mix of:

- + Aerospace manufacturing
- + Propulsion technologies
- + Defense research and development
- + Advanced engineering
- + Defense supply chain activities

The region's capabilities are reinforced by major federal assets, including **NASA's Glenn Research Center** and the **Neil Armstrong Test Facility** in Ohio, as well as **Wright-Patterson Air Force Base** and the headquarters of the **Air Force Research Laboratory** near Dayton, creating one of the nation's most important concentrations of aerospace research, testing, and technology development.

While the region trails several Sun Belt competitors in demographic growth and broader aerospace and defense ecosystem concentration, its combination of **manufacturing talent, industrial depth, and cost competitiveness continues to make it an attractive destination for investment.**

Reflecting these strengths, **three of the nation's top ten** aerospace and defense metros are located within the region.

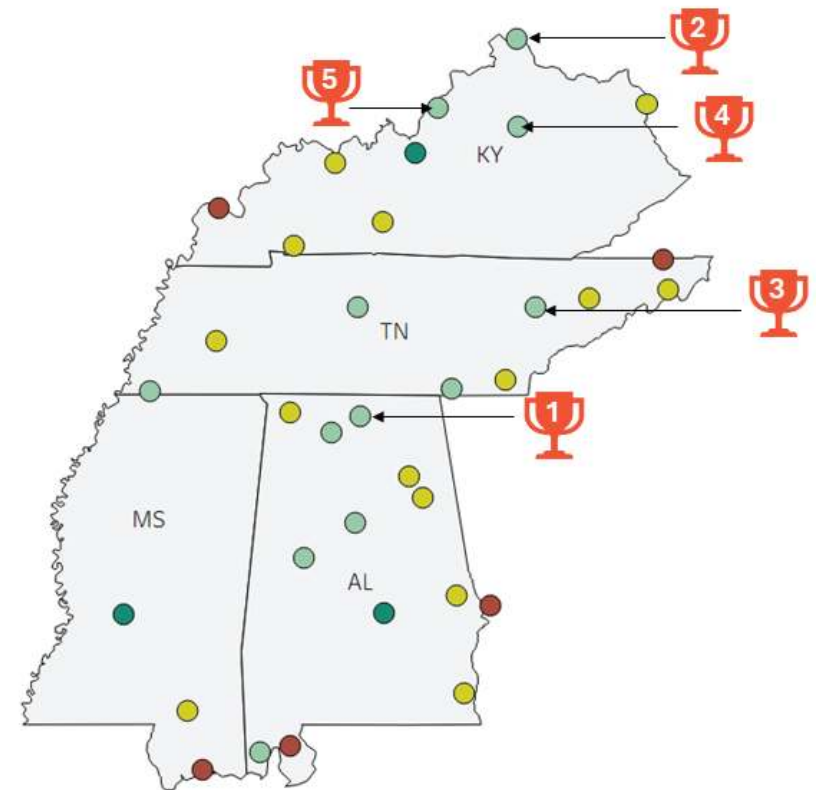
east south central

ALABAMA, KENTUCKY, MISSISSIPPI,
AND TENNESSEE.

TOP PERFORMING: Huntsville, AL

THE EAST SOUT CENTRAL REGION which includes 34 metros spanning from Kentucky through Mississippi, offers one of the most cost-effective operating environments in the country for aerospace and defense investment.

The region benefits from the lowest average operating costs, while posting above-average quality scores driven by strong demographics, industry ecosystem strength, workforce depth, and core infrastructure.



Regional Quadrants

- Higher Quality, Lower Cost
- Higher Quality, Higher Cost
- Lower Quality, Lower Cost
- Lower Quality, Higher Cost

east south central

Regional Ranking	Metro	Score	National Ranking
1	Huntsville, AL	88.77	5
2	Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	85.51	14
3	Knoxville, TN	84.61	21
4	Lexington-Fayette, KY	81.18	46
5	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	79.20	57

RECENT PROJECTS:

- 1 **HADRIAN AUTOMOTIVE** CHEROKEE, AL
New: Other (Space & Defense) (2026)
\$2400MM, 1000 Jobs²⁰
- 2 **LOCKHEED MARTIN** PIKE COUNTY, AL
Expansion: Guided Missile & Space Vehicles (2025)
\$150MM, 30 Jobs²¹
- 3 **RTX CORPORATION** HUNTSVILLE, AL
Expansion: Guided Missile & Space Vehicles (2024)
\$115MM, 185 Jobs²²

East South Central is anchored by **Huntsville, AL**, the nation's highest-quality location for the aerospace and defense industry and a leading space and missile systems hub, while also benefiting from **Cincinnati's** strength as a major aerospace manufacturing hub.

The region also benefits from a significant federal presence, anchored by:

- + NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and the
- + Redstone Test Center in Huntsville, AL, as well as
- + NASA's Stennis Space Center near Gulfport-Biloxi, MS,

These institutions reinforce the region's importance to the nation's aerospace and defense enterprise.

While the region does not score as strongly in innovation and R&D as some other leading regions, its **exceptional cost competitiveness, strong quality fundamentals, and concentration of nationally significant A&D assets** make East South Central an increasingly attractive destination for investment.

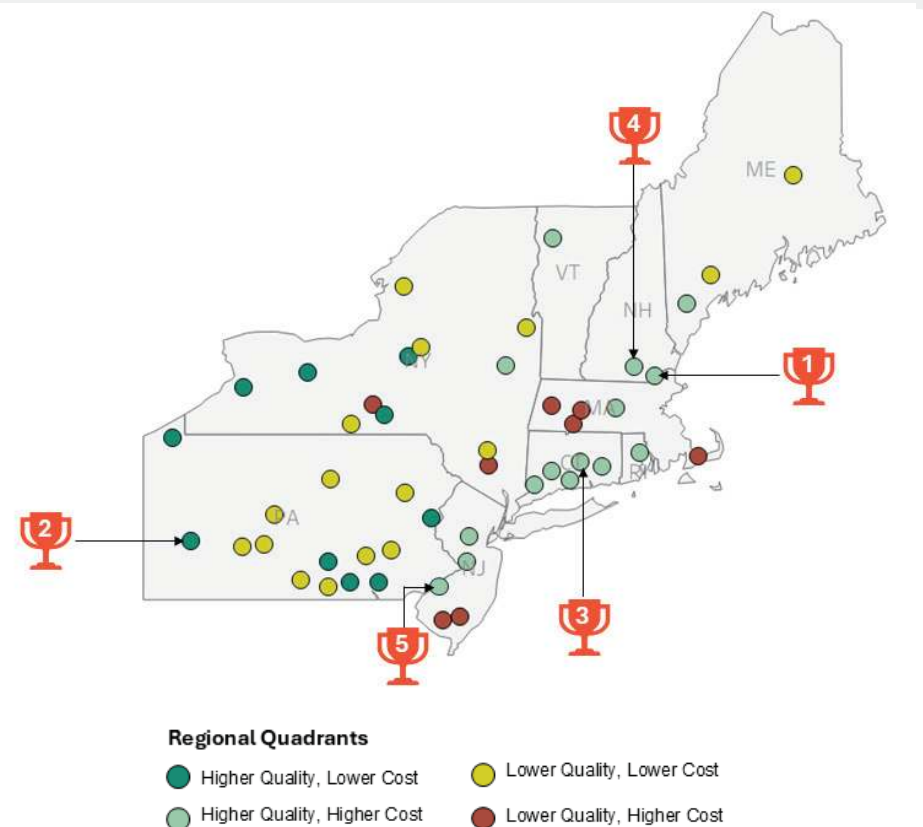
northeast

CONNECTICUT, MAINE, MASSACHUSETTS,
NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEW JERSEY, NEW
YORK, PENNSYLVANIA, RHODE ISLAND,
VERMONT

TOP PERFORMING: Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH

THE NORTHEAST REGION which includes **49** metros spanning from Maine through New Jersey, combines a **premium-cost operating environment with some of the strongest innovation and operational reliability scores in the country.**

The region's average operating costs rank among the highest nationally, driven by utility and labor costs well above the national average. However, these higher costs are supported by above-average overall quality, fueled by the region's exceptional innovation ecosystem, R&D capabilities, and operational reliability.



Regional Ranking	Metro	Score	National Ranking
1	Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	84.79	19
2	Pittsburgh, PA	84.56	22
3	Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT	82.28	37
4	Manchester-Nashua, NH	77.36	62
5	Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	76.95	63

RECENT PROJECTS:

- SAAB AB** SYRACUSE, NY
 Expansion: Other, Space & Defense (2025)
 \$55.8MM, 258 Jobs²³
- RTX CORPORATION** ANDOVER, MA
 Expansion: Other, Space & Defense (2025)
 \$53MM, 190 Jobs²⁴
- GE AEROSPACE (GE AVIATION)** LYNN, MA
 Expansion: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2026)
 \$42MM, 102 Jobs²⁵

Northeast is led by:

- + **Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH** a nationally significant defense systems & electronics hub anchored by advanced research institutions and federal laboratories.
- + **Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT** a globally significant aircraft engine and aerospace propulsion manufacturing center.
- + **Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD** adds further depth as a major center for defense engineering and naval and maritime defense.

Other higher-performing metros include Pittsburgh, PA, and Manchester-Nashua, NH.

The region is home to a number of **federally funded research and development centers** (FFRDCs), including **MIT Lincoln Laboratory in the Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH** metro, the **Software Engineering Institute in Pittsburgh, PA**, and the **Center for Communications Research in Princeton, NJ**, reinforcing the region's strength in defense innovation and advanced research.

While elevated operating costs and a comparatively weaker business and regulatory environment limit the region's cost competitiveness, its concentration of research institutions, propulsion manufacturing, and defense innovation assets makes it **a strong location for R&D-intensive, advanced-engineering-focused aerospace and defense investment.**

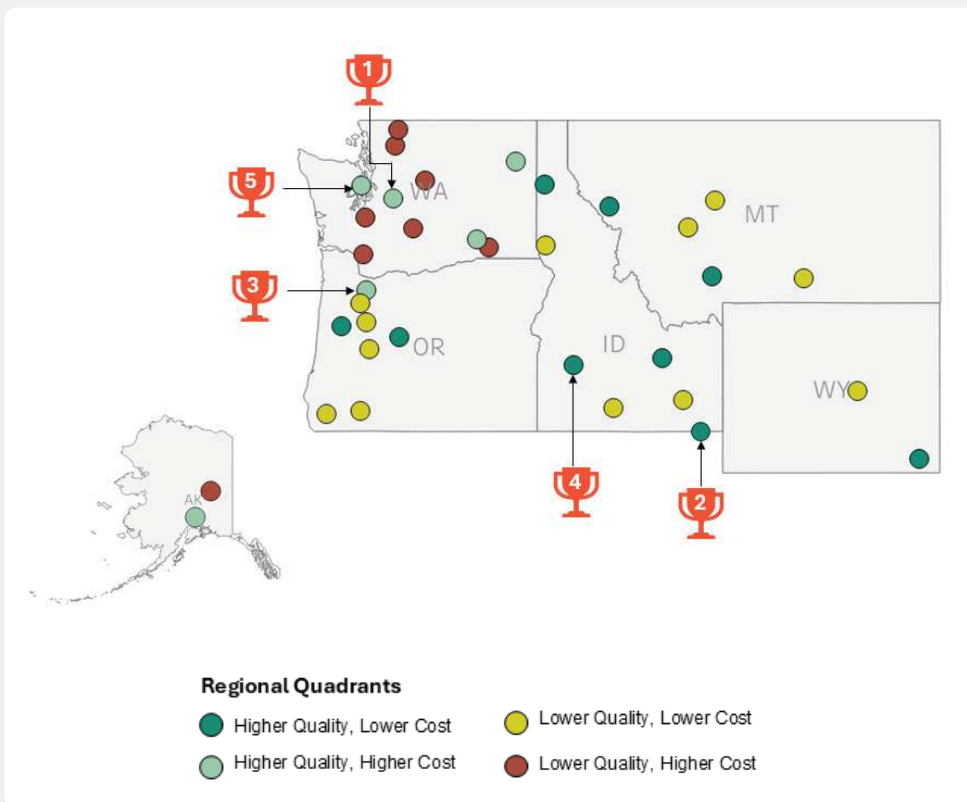
northwest

ALASKA, IDAHO, MONTANA, OREGON,
WASHINGTON, AND WYOMING

TOP PERFORMING: Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA

THE NORTHWEST REGION which includes 35 metros spanning from Washington through Wyoming and Alaska, presents a **mixed competitive profile for aerospace and defense investment**, combining one legacy aerospace manufacturing hub with a broader base of some higher-cost metros.

The region's average quality scores trail the national average, driven primarily by below-average workforce and industry ecosystem depth, while average operating costs run above the national average, reflecting elevated labor and lease costs across much of the region.



Regional Ranking	Metro	Score	National Ranking
1	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	83.23	27
2	Logan, UT-ID	82.61	33
3	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA	77.94	59
4	Boise City, ID	73.97	80
5	Bremerton-Silverdale-Port Orchard, WA	55.38	175

RECENT PROJECTS:

- 1 **COLLINS AEROSPACE** SPOKANE, WA
Expansion: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2024), \$200MM, 80 Jobs²⁶

The region's anchor is **Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA**, one of the world's largest aerospace manufacturing ecosystems with extensive engineering, production, and supplier capabilities, and **the only nationally significant A&D hub located within the region.**

The remainder of the region consists largely of smaller metros with limited established aerospace and defense industry presence, which is reflected in the region having the fewest Premium- and Preferred-tier locations of any region in the country.

While the Northwest's broader footprint lacks the depth of more established aerospace and defense regions, Seattle's scale and global manufacturing significance ensure the region remains strategically important, particularly for **large-scale aircraft manufacturing and supplier ecosystem investment.**

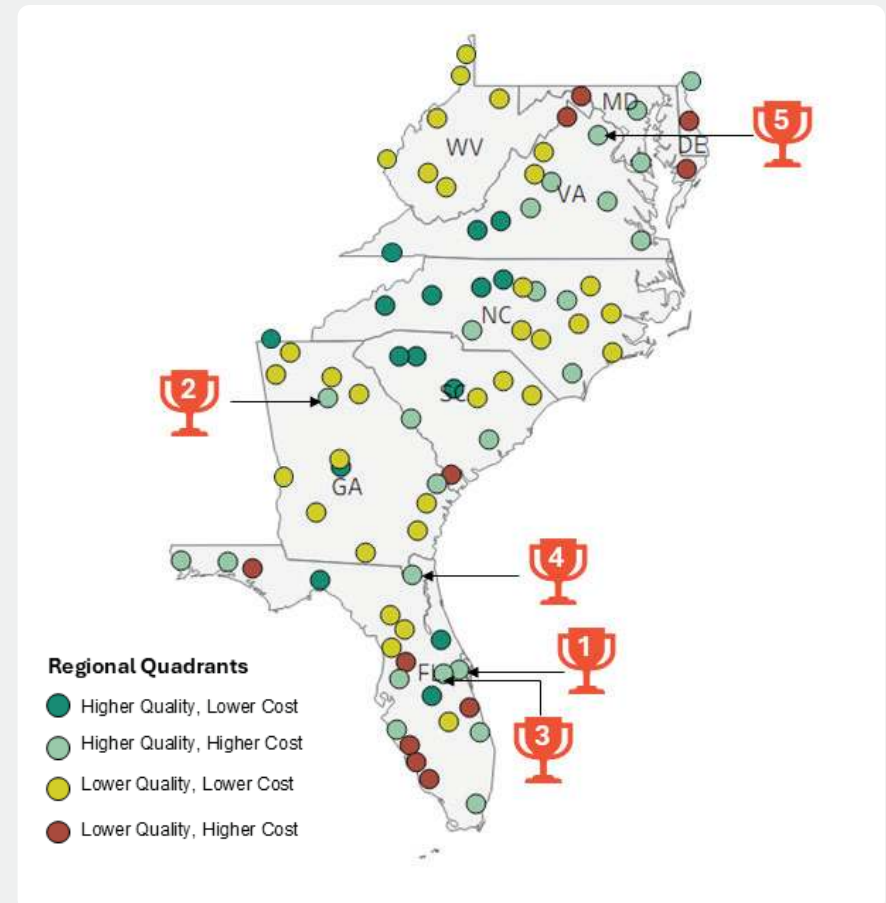
south atlantic

DELAWARE, FLORIDA, GEORGIA,
MARYLAND, NORTH CAROLINA,
SOUTH CAROLINA, VIRGINIA, AND
WEST VIRGINIA

TOP PERFORMING: Palm-Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION which includes **84** metros spanning from West Virginia through Georgia, is the **largest region in the country by metro count** and **one of the most balanced for aerospace and defense investment**.

The region posts above-average quality scores, supported by strong demographics, a favorable business and regulatory environment, and robust infrastructure and connectivity, while maintaining overall operating costs slightly below the national average despite higher costs in several major metros.



south atlantic

Regional Ranking	Metro	Score	National Ranking
1	Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL	87.88	6
2	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	84.75	20
3	Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	84.43	23
4	Jacksonville, FL	83.88	24
5	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	83.79	26

RECENT PROJECTS:

- 1 L3HARRIS** ORANGE, VA
Expansion: Guided Missile & Space Vehicles (2026)
\$1270MM, 350 Jobs²⁷
- 2 AVIO USA** HURT, VA
New: Guided Missile & Space Vehicles (2025)
\$500MM, 1,000 Jobs²⁸
- 3 PRATT & WHITNEY** ASHEVILLE, NC
Expansion: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2025),
\$285MM, 325 Jobs²⁹

South Atlantic is home to a deep bench of nationally significant aerospace and defense clusters.

- + **Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL and Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL** anchor one of the nation's leading space and missile systems ecosystems.
- + **Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV** serves as a premier center for defense R&D, innovation, and federal contracting.
- + **Jacksonville, FL and Virginia Beach-Chesapeake-Norfolk, VA-NC** support major naval and maritime defense activities.
- + **Greenville-Anderson-Greer, SC and Savannah, GA** continue to strengthen the region's aerospace manufacturing base.

The region's federal footprint is equally extensive, anchored by **Kennedy Space Center** and **Cape Canaveral Spaceport** in Florida, **Goddard Space Flight Center**, multiple FFRDCs concentrated in the Washington region, and several major military research, development, test, and evaluation installations.

With **nationally significant capabilities** spanning space systems, defense innovation, naval operations, and aerospace manufacturing, together with **one of the country's deepest concentrations of federal assets**, the South Atlantic **offers one of the broadest and most diversified aerospace and defense ecosystems in the United States**, making it attractive across a wide range of investment profiles.

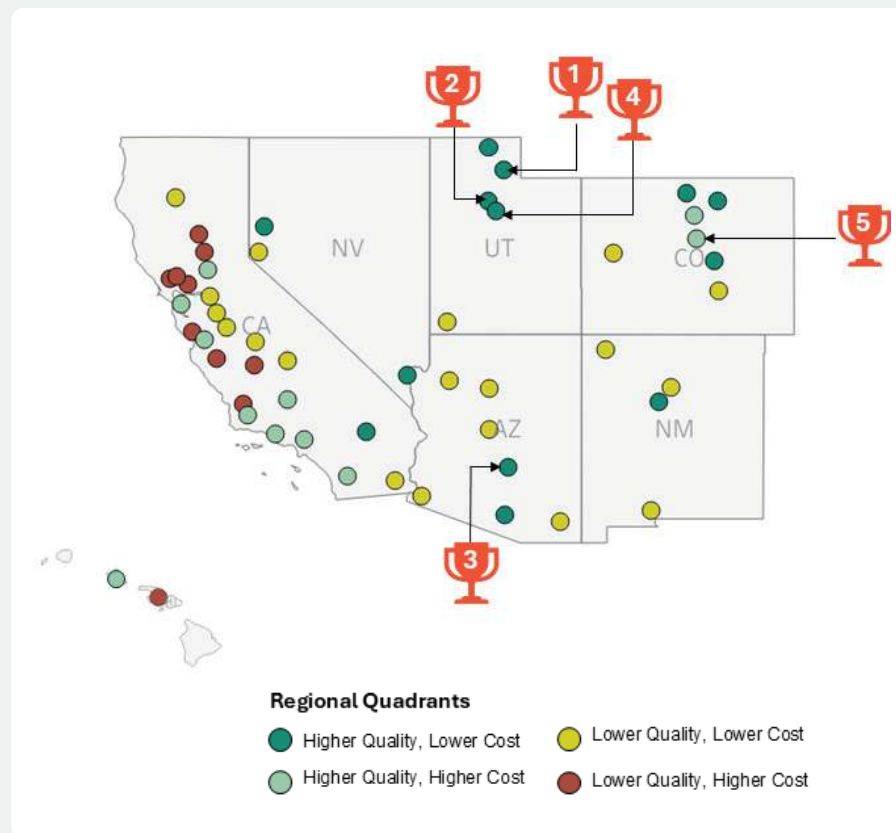
southwest

ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA, COLORADO,
HAWAII, NEVADA, NEW MEXICO, AND
UTAH

TOP PERFORMING: Ogden, UT

THE SOUTHWEST REGION which includes 53 metros spanning from Utah through Hawaii, combines some of the nation's strongest aerospace and defense ecosystems with the highest-cost operating environment of any region.

In exchange for these elevated costs, the region delivers the nation's strongest industry ecosystem and innovation scores, supported by an unparalleled concentration of established aerospace and defense clusters. The region contains three of the top ten national ranking MSAs.



Regional Ranking	Metro	Score	National Ranking
1	Ogden, UT	90.01	2
2	Salt Lake City-Murray, UT	88.79	4
3	Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ	87.04	8
4	Provo-Orem-Lehi, UT	86.46	12
5	Denver-Aurora-Centennial, CO	83.86	25

RECENT PROJECTS:

- HADRIAN AUTOMATION** MESA, AZ
 New: Other, Space & Defense, (2025)
 \$200MM, 350 Jobs³⁰
- CASTELION** RIO RANCHO, NM
 New: Guided Missile & Space Vehicles (2025)
 \$150MM, 300 Jobs³¹
- VOYAGER TECHNOLOGIES** LONG BEACH, CA
 New: Other, Space & Defense (2026)
 \$75MM, 152 Jobs³²

The Southwest is home to a diverse set of nationally significant hubs:

- + **Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ** anchors a major defense systems and electronics cluster.
- + **Denver-Aurora-Centennial, CO and Colorado Springs, CO** serve as key centers for military space operations and space and missile systems activity.
- + **Tucson, AZ** remains one of the country's leading space and missile systems centers.
- + **San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA** is a major naval and maritime defense hub.
- + **Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA** continues to serve as a historic aerospace powerhouse for space and defense technologies.
- + **Albuquerque, NM** plays a critical role in defense research and development.

The region contains the nation's **deepest concentration of federal aerospace and defense infrastructure**, including numerous NASA facilities, major military research, development, test, and evaluation installations, and several FFRDCs.

Although elevated costs and a less favorable business and regulatory environment weigh on overall competitiveness, the Southwest's unmatched concentration of aerospace and defense assets, particularly in space systems, missile technologies, and advanced research, makes it **one of the nation's premier destinations for innovation-driven investment**.

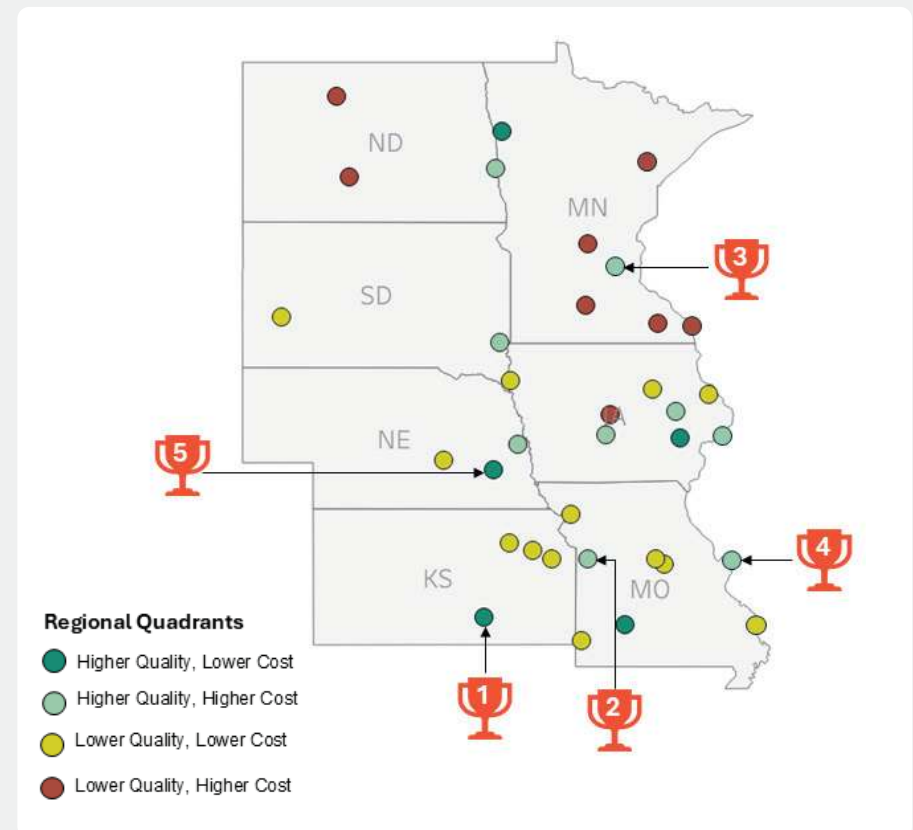
west north central

IOWA, KANSAS, MINNESOTA, MISSOURI,
NEBRASKA, NORTH DAKOTA, AND
SOUTH DAKOTA

TOP PERFORMING: Wichita, KS

THE WEST NORTH CENTRAL REGION which includes **35** metros spanning from North Dakota through Missouri, stands out as one of the **most cost-competitive and operationally reliable locations** in the country for aerospace and defense investment.

The region benefits from **below-average operating costs across every major category**, including labor, industrial lease, and utility costs, while posting the strongest operational reliability scores of **any region in the nation**.



West North Central

Regional Ranking	Metro	Score	National Ranking
1	Wichita, KS	92.18	1
2	Kansas City, MO-KS	85.39	T15*
3	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	82.95	30
4	St. Louis, MO-IL	80.76	48
5	Lincoln, NE	79.46	54

T = tied

RECENT PROJECTS:

- 1 **RB GROUP** KANSAS CITY, MO
New: Other, Space & Defense (2024),
\$16MM, 163 Jobs³³

West North Central is anchored by Wichita, KS, the **nation's top-ranked aerospace and defense metro** and long recognized as the **"Air Capital of the World"** for its aircraft manufacturing and aerostructures base.

The region also benefits from:

- + **Kansas City, MO-KS** a major defense systems and electronics center.
- + **St. Louis, MO-IL** one of the nation's leading aerospace manufacturing hubs.
- + **Cedar Rapids, IA** a nationally significant cluster for defense systems and electronics.

While some regions offer deeper industry ecosystems and stronger innovation capabilities, West North Central **combines exceptional cost competitiveness with a low-risk operating environment** and several nationally significant aerospace and defense clusters.

Anchored by the **nation's top-ranked metro in Wichita**, the region presents a compelling value proposition for cost-sensitive aerospace and defense investment.

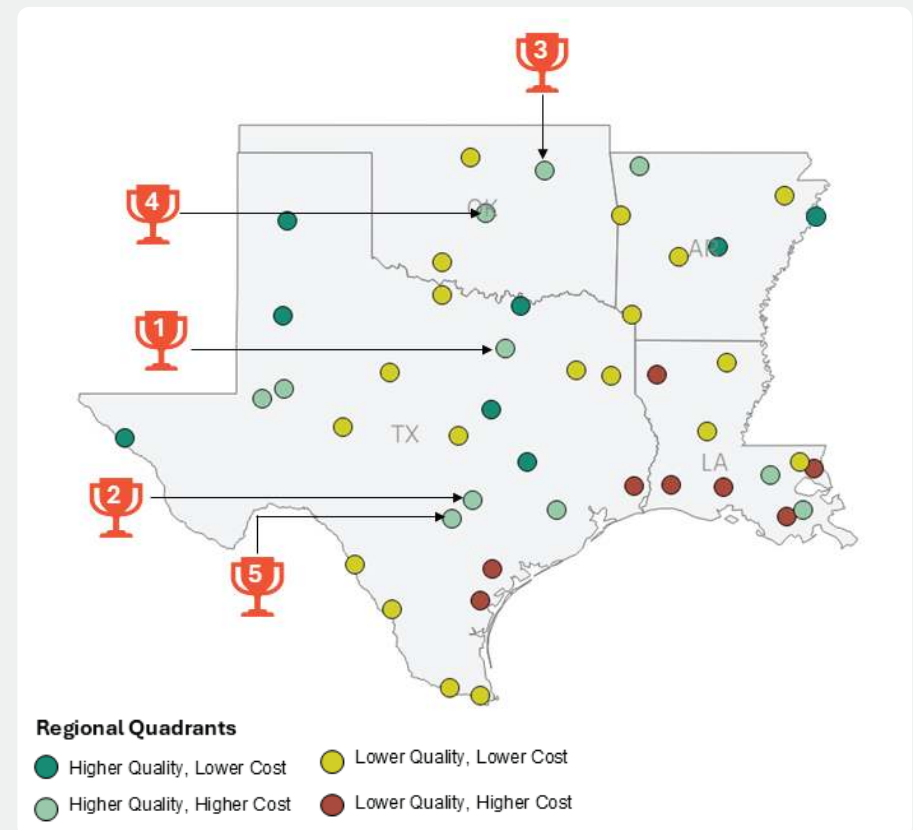
West south central

ARKANSAS, LOUISIANA, OKLAHOMA,
AND TEXAS

TOP PERFORMING: Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX

THE WEST NORTH CENTRAL REGION which includes **46** metros spanning from Oklahoma through Louisiana, offers the **second-lowest average operating costs** of any region in the country, driven by utility costs roughly **35%** below the national average and competitive labor and real estate costs.

This cost advantage comes alongside moderate overall quality scores, with relative weaknesses concentrated in demographic characteristics and industry ecosystem depth.



West South Central

Regional Ranking	Metro	Score	National Ranking
1	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	86.91	9
2	Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX	85.39	T15*
3	Tulsa, OK	85.31	17
4	Oklahoma City, OK	82.46	34
5	San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	81.88	40

T = tied

RECENT PROJECTS:

- BELL** FORTH WORTH, TX
New: Aircraft Engines, Other Parts & Auxiliary Equipment (2024)
\$632MM, 520 Jobs³⁴
- RADIANCE TECHNOLOGIES** RUSTON, LA
New: Other, Space & Defense (2025)
\$370.6MM, 150 Jobs³⁵
- COMPANHIA BRASILEIRA DE CARTUCHOS** PRYOR, OK
New: Other, Space & Defense (2025)
\$300MM, 350 Jobs³⁶

West South Central is anchored by **Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX**, one of the nation's largest aerospace manufacturing centers with strengths in military aviation and defense systems. **Oklahoma City, OK**, a leading aerospace manufacturing and aircraft sustainment hub.

The region also hosts several nationally significant space assets, including:

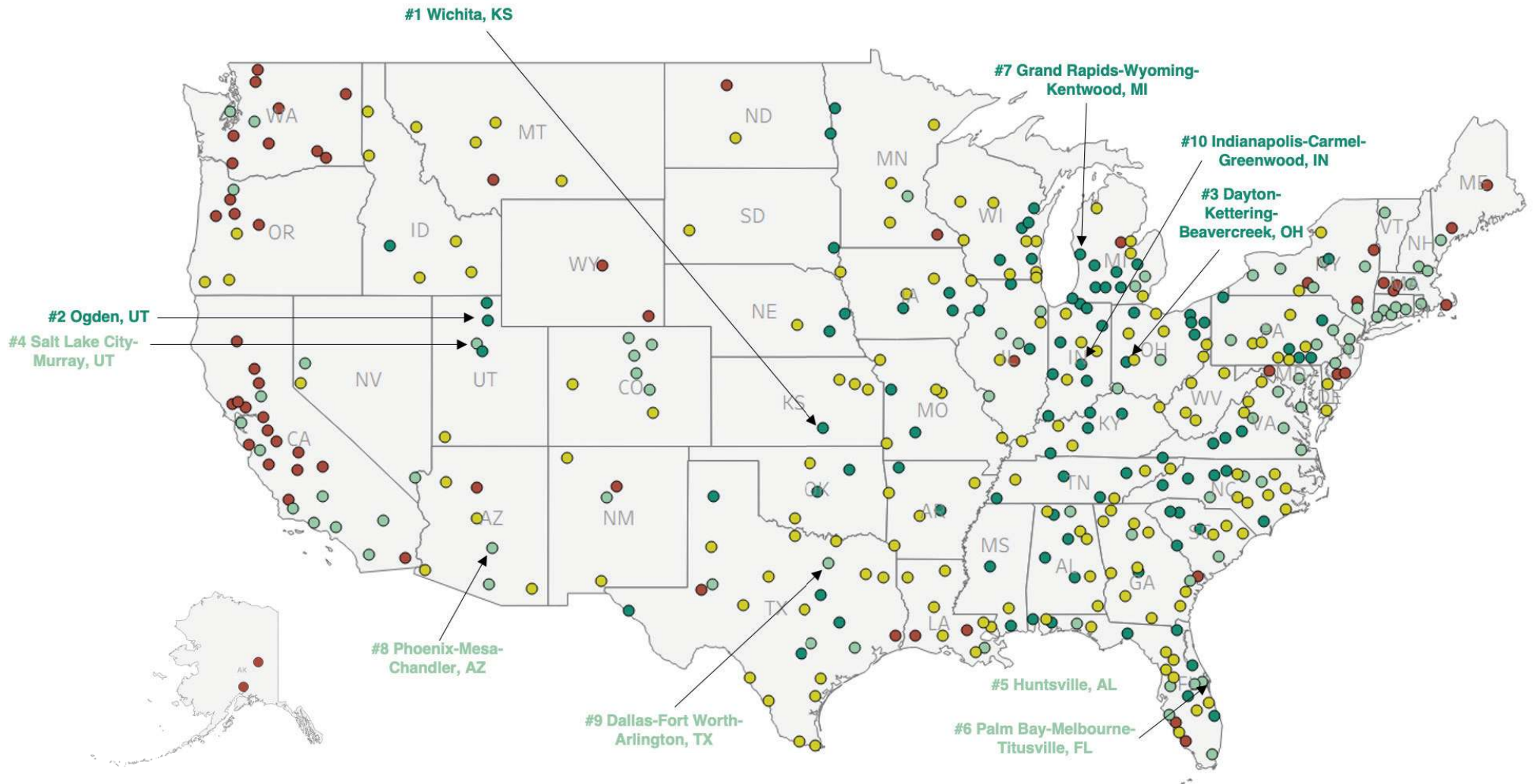
- + **Johnson Space Center and Houston Spaceport** in Houston
- + **Michoud Assembly Facility** near New Orleans
- + **Starbase Boca Chica in Brownsville and Midland International Air and Space Port**, which are emerging commercial space hubs

Together, these assets reinforce the region's growing role in commercial space alongside its traditional aerospace manufacturing base.

Although the region is less deeply concentrated in aerospace ecosystems and workforce resources than some leading aerospace regions, West South Central combines **very low operating costs with nationally significant aerospace manufacturing, maintenance, and space assets, making it an attractive destination for cost-driven aerospace and defense investment.**

national map

COMPOSITE MODEL NATIONAL QUADRANT MAP



The background of the slide is a dark teal color with a subtle, light-colored topographic map pattern consisting of concentric, wavy lines.

Strategic Considerations for Regions Seeking A&D Investment

considerations

Regions that currently lack supplier depth, industrial infrastructure, power availability, or advanced manufacturing workforce capacity may face growing difficulty competing for near-term aerospace and defense investment.

However, these limitations do not necessarily preclude participation in future growth opportunities.

To improve long-term competitiveness, regions should focus on strengthening the foundational elements of their industrial ecosystems:

- + **Assess** regional supplier capacity within a one-day trucking radius to identify existing aerospace, defense, and adjacent manufacturing capabilities.
- + **Evaluate** transferable industry strengths that may support defense-related production, including advanced manufacturing, automotive, electronics, chemicals, metals, and industrial machinery.
- + **Analyze** workforce and training capacity to determine the availability of critical technical skills and identify workforce gaps.
- + **Develop** targeted training, credentialing, and certification programs aligned with emerging aerospace and defense workforce requirements.
- + **Advance** site readiness and infrastructure planning, including power availability, transportation access, and development-ready industrial sites.
- + **Strengthen** industry and government relationships to improve visibility among prime contractors, suppliers, defense agencies, and key decision-makers.

Regions that proactively address these factors will be better positioned to compete for future aerospace and defense investment as production requirements, supply chain diversification efforts, and industrial base expansion continue to accelerate.



Aerospace & Defense Complete MSA Rankings

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
1	Wichita, KS	92.18	7	167	
2	Ogden, UT	90.01	11	201	
3	Dayton-Kettering-Beavercreek, OH	89.69	5	242	
4	Salt Lake City-Murray, UT	88.79	6	261	
5	Huntsville, AL	88.77	1	290	
6	Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL	87.88	2	306	
7	Grand Rapids-Wyoming-Kentwood, MI	87.20	34	142	
8	Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ	87.04	3	321	
9	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	86.91	8	296	
10	Indianapolis-Carmel-Greenwood, IN	86.88	22	218	
11	Fort Wayne, IN	86.69	51	59	
12	Provo-Orem-Lehi, UT	86.46	28	196	
13	Cleveland, OH	85.71	25	231	
14	Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	85.51	23	249	
T15	Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX	85.39	13	307	

 Preferred Locations
  Premium Locations
  Budget Locations
  Unfavorable Locations

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
T15	Kansas City, MO-KS	85.39	27	228	
17	Tulsa, OK	85.31	48	112	
18	Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	84.82	T16	293	
19	Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	84.79	4	375	
20	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	84.75	T16	295	
21	Knoxville, TN	84.61	56	84	
22	Pittsburgh, PA	84.56	26	256	
23	Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	84.43	T16	303	
24	Jacksonville, FL	83.88	T36	210	
25	Denver-Aurora-Centennial, CO	83.86	12	353	
26	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	83.79	9	372	
27	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	83.23	10	380	
28	Greenville-Anderson-Greer, SC	83.15	49	161	
29	Lafayette-West Lafayette, IN	83.11	T52	140	
30	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	82.95	T19	326	
31	Madison, WI	82.74	38	235	

 Preferred Locations
  Premium Locations
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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
32	Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	82.69	32	269	
33	Logan, UT-ID	82.61	T58	118	
34	Oklahoma City, OK	82.46	63	100	
35	Toledo, OH	82.44	50	175	
36	Tucson, AZ	82.30	33	275	
37	Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT	82.28	T19	343	
38	San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA	82.22	14	384	
39	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	81.92	30	300	
40	San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	81.88	42	233	
41	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	81.86	15	387	
42	Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI	81.81	T45	213	
43	Raleigh-Cary, NC	81.70	31	301	
44	Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	81.30	24	351	
45	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	81.20	T19	371	
46	Lexington-Fayette, KY	81.18	T58	155	
47	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	80.88	29	333	

 Preferred Locations
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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
48	St. Louis, MO-IL	80.76	44	251	
49	Greensboro-High Point, NC	80.62	68	119	
50	Akron, OH	80.56	57	182	
51	Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	80.50	35	308	
52	Charleston-North Charleston, SC	80.42	T36	299	
53	Houston-Pasadena-The Woodlands, TX	79.53	43	289	
54	Lincoln, NE	79.46	80	81	
55	Columbus, OH	79.35	47	270	
56	South Bend-Mishawaka, IN-MI	79.33	76	106	
57	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	79.20	73	127	
58	Cedar Rapids, IA	78.51	67	180	
59	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA	77.94	39	352	
60	Nashville-Davidson--Murfreesboro--Franklin, TN	77.82	60	237	
61	Virginia Beach-Chesapeake-Norfolk, VA-NC	77.56	T52	283	
62	Manchester-Nashua, NH	77.36	41	356	
63	Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	76.95	T45	338	

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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
64	Lansing-East Lansing, MI	76.48	75	186	
65	Winston-Salem, NC	76.40	92	92	
66	San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	76.36	40	386	
67	Oshkosh-Neenah, WI	75.85	82	163	
68	Kalamazoo-Portage, MI	75.83	85	146	
69	Colorado Springs, CO	75.31	55	330	
70	Ann Arbor, MI	75.24	61	297	
71	Savannah, GA	75.06	66	273	
72	Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin, FL	74.90	64	288	
73	Asheville, NC	74.83	84	176	
74	Mobile, AL	74.51	93	134	
75	Reno, NV	74.38	71	262	
76	Waco, TX	74.29	105	72	
77	Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN	74.16	62	318	
78	Birmingham, AL	74.13	T87	172	
79	Buffalo-Cheektowaga, NY	74.05	70	277	
80	Boise City, ID	73.97	81	216	
81	Boulder, CO	73.96	54	369	

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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
82	Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach, FL	73.81	97	130	
83	Rochester, NY	73.47	72	281	
84	Fargo, ND-MN	73.44	90	179	
85	Peoria, IL	73.40	T77	248	
86	Rockford, IL	73.31	95	154	
87	Montgomery, AL	73.17	T109	68	
88	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	72.48	69	322	
89	Columbus, IN	72.39	96	171	
90	Chattanooga, TN-GA	72.12	T109	95	
91	Omaha, NE-IA	71.94	91	211	
92	El Paso, TX	71.73	127	13	
93	Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR	71.28	128	18	
94	Albuquerque, NM	71.20	79	298	
95	New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ	71.12	65	381	
96	Portland-South Portland, ME	70.60	77	320	
97	Syracuse, NY	70.50	83	294	
98	Appleton, WI	70.15	114	128	
99	Davenport-Moline-Rock Island, IA-IL	69.82	98	222	

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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
100	Youngstown-Warren, OH	69.80	131	41	
101	Richmond, VA	69.34	89	291	
T102	Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR	69.18	118	129	
T102	Sioux Falls, SD-MN	69.18	106	197	
104	Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Radford, VA	69.16	113	158	
105	Santa Maria-Santa Barbara, CA	69.15	74	379	
106	Burlington-South Burlington, VT	68.70	87	312	
107	Roanoke, VA	68.69	123	113	
108	Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC	67.81	137	57	
109	Erie, PA	67.75	T129	98	
110	Providence-Warwick, RI-MA	67.73	86	348	
111	Columbia, SC	67.70	T121	145	
112	Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA	67.12	T107	239	
113	Memphis, TN-MS-AR	66.87	134	99	
114	New Haven, CT	66.45	94	337	
115	Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ	65.96	102	304	

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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
116	Jackson, MS	65.88	149	39	
117	Harrisburg-Carlisle, PA	65.71	115	236	
118	Green Bay, WI	65.57	T138	104	
119	Evansville, IN	65.29	T143	76	
120	North Port-Bradenton-Sarasota, FL	65.26	112	265	
121	Charlottesville, VA	65.14	104	314	
122	Norwich-New London-Willimantic, CT	64.96	T98	347	
123	Waterbury-Shelton, CT	64.69	101	341	
124	Elizabethtown, KY	64.62	T155	32	
125	Amarillo, TX	64.55	T150	62	
126	Muskegon-Norton Shores, MI	64.47	T155	36	
127	Worcester, MA	64.39	100	355	
128	College Station-Bryan, TX	64.27	148	87	
129	Decatur, AL	64.08	T124	221	
130	Tallahassee, FL	64.04	T153	58	
131	Iowa City, IA	63.94	T143	111	
132	Port St. Lucie, FL	63.91	T121	243	
133	York-Hanover, PA	63.77	T124	229	

 Preferred Locations
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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
134	Las Vegas-Henderson-North Las Vegas, NV	63.63	116	285	
135	Fort Collins-Loveland, CO	63.38	T107	335	
136	Springfield, MO	63.15	160	48	
137	Elkhart-Goshen, IN	63.07	158	61	
138	Lancaster, PA	63.04	133	204	
139	Warner Robins, GA	63.02	136	187	
140	Wilmington, NC	63.01	T129	220	
141	Spartanburg, SC	62.95	135	193	
142	New Orleans-Metairie, LA	62.91	119	286	
143	Bridgeport-Stamford-Danbury, CT	62.85	103	377	
144	Binghamton, NY	62.62	120	287	
145	Grand Forks, ND-MN	62.16	T141	174	
146	Greeley, CO	61.82	117	325	
147	Sacramento-Roseville-Folsom, CA	61.74	T109	362	
148	Tuscaloosa, AL	61.42	T150	143	
149	Clarksville, TN-KY	60.70	174	30	
150	Champaign-Urbana, IL	60.45	157	133	
151	Terre Haute, IN	59.96	175	45	
152	Kingsport-Bristol, TN-VA	59.49	T167	96	
153	Flint, MI	59.47	T162	125	

 Preferred Locations
  Premium Locations
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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
154	Canton-Massillon, OH	58.84	172	89	
155	Scranton--Wilkes-Barre, PA	58.73	159	166	
156	Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura, CA	58.47	126	361	
157	Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, FL	58.46	T146	241	
158	Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC	58.40	152	214	
159	Niles, MI	58.23	161	168	
160	Burlington, NC	57.99	184	43	
161	Auburn-Opelika, AL	57.98	183	50	
162	Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	57.96	132	339	
163	Bloomington, IL	57.60	T146	263	
164	Gulfport-Biloxi, MS	57.48	176	102	
165	Battle Creek, MI	57.16	164	178	
166	Joplin, MO-KS	56.96	187	54	
167	Ocala, FL	56.64	186	67	
168	Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL	56.63	T167	170	
169	Lawrence, KS	56.28	T177	122	
170	Jackson, MI	56.26	173	151	
171	Lubbock, TX	56.21	T195	21	
T172	Janesville-Beloit, WI	55.68	179	131	

 Preferred Locations
  Premium Locations
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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
T172	Huntington-Ashland, WV-KY-OH	55.68	193	52	
174	Trenton-Princeton, NJ	55.47	140	357	
175	Bremerton-Silverdale-Port Orchard, WA	55.38	T138	366	
176	Athens-Clarke County, GA	55.33	185	107	
177	Midland, TX	55.32	T141	350	
178	Lynchburg, VA	55.30	T165	215	
179	Fayetteville, NC	55.18	T177	150	
180	Bowling Green, KY	55.06	T198	35	
181	Utica-Rome, NY	54.58	171	205	
182	Dalton, GA	54.55	T200	31	
183	Manhattan, KS	54.42	T191	91	
184	Bakersfield-Delano, CA	54.05	T143	365	
185	Sherman-Denison, TX	53.86	T198	66	
186	State College, PA	53.80	T162	271	
187	Springfield, OH	53.54	T203	33	
188	Gainesville, FL	53.17	T191	123	
189	Reading, PA	52.98	T169	253	
190	Columbus, GA-AL	52.35	197	116	
191	Lexington Park, MD	52.14	T153	364	

 Preferred Locations
  Premium Locations
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National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
192	Eau Claire, WI	51.89	T195	132	
193	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX	51.78	T218	6	
194	Johnstown, PA	51.32	T203	90	
195	Brownsville-Harlingen, TX	50.98	222	9	
196	Kokomo, IN	50.94	214	56	
197	Monroe, MI	50.78	T188	200	
198	Bozeman, MT	50.30	182	254	
199	Racine-Mount Pleasant, WI	50.27	T203	117	
200	Ames, IA	50.12	T188	217	
201	Baton Rouge, LA	50.08	181	264	
202	Lafayette, LA	50.02	T207	108	
203	Kiryas Joel-Poughkeepsie-Newburgh, NY	49.95	T169	331	
204	Cape Coral-Fort Myers, FL	49.56	190	227	
205	Williamsport, PA	49.36	T216	79	
206	Coeur d'Alene, ID	49.13	T216	85	
207	Rapid City, SD	48.82	T207	139	
208	Urban Honolulu, HI	48.80	T165	382	
209	Bloomington, IN	48.44	T200	188	
210	Columbia, MO	48.38	211	137	

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
211	Springfield, MA	47.89	180	327	
212	Longview, TX	47.83	230	44	
213	Sheboygan, WI	47.63	212	152	
214	Waterloo-Cedar Falls, IA	47.50	215	138	
215	Macon-Bibb County, GA	47.39	T226	73	
216	Florence-Muscle Shoals, AL	46.80	236	38	
217	Mansfield, OH	45.90	T241	26	
218	Chambersburg, PA	45.73	210	212	
219	Duluth, MN-WI	45.71	T207	219	
220	Spokane-Spokane Valley, WA	45.68	194	305	
221	Muncie, IN	45.59	T243	12	
222	Staunton-Stuarts Draft, VA	45.52	T220	156	
223	Topeka, KS	45.37	T223	136	
224	Rocky Mount, NC	45.30	237	70	
225	Panama City-Panama City Beach, FL	45.27	213	206	
226	Florence, SC	45.25	233	93	
227	Odessa, TX	45.10	T200	274	
228	Fort Smith, AR-OK	44.70	250	11	
229	Beaumont-Port Arthur, TX	44.48	T203	266	

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
230	Wichita Falls, TX	43.84	252	22	
231	Gainesville, GA	43.69	T228	157	
232	St. George, UT	43.18	T243	74	
233	Mankato, MN	43.07	T226	184	
234	Bismarck, ND	42.91	T220	223	
235	St. Cloud, MN	42.76	T228	181	
236	Wausau, WI	41.98	T243	105	
237	Enid, OK	41.79	T254	53	
238	Saginaw, MI	41.70	248	101	
239	Sumter, SC	41.53	251	88	
240	Michigan City-La Porte, IN	41.33	T263	19	
241	Dover, DE	41.17	T223	244	
242	Bend, OR	41.16	T218	279	
243	Missoula, MT	41.10	249	110	
244	Idaho Falls, ID	41.01	T234	191	
245	Anniston-Oxford, AL	40.96	261	46	
246	Owensboro, KY	40.55	268	17	
247	Lima, OH	40.15	240	185	
248	Corpus Christi, TX	40.10	232	232	
249	Yuma, AZ	39.95	257	94	
250	Carson City, NV	39.55	239	207	

 Preferred Locations
  Premium Locations
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  Unfavorable Locations

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
251	Jackson, TN	39.31	274	14	
252	Grand Island, NE	39.23	T269	40	
253	Las Cruces, NM	38.28	267	80	
254	Naples-Marco Island, FL	38.26	T223	319	
255	Sandusky, OH	38.13	T254	147	
256	Texarkana, TX-AR	38.07	T276	24	
257	Daphne-Fairhope-Foley, AL	37.64	T263	114	
258	Bay City, MI	37.63	266	103	
259	Greenville, NC	37.60	262	126	
260	Tyler, TX	37.59	T272	65	
261	Morristown, TN	37.49	T282	4	
262	Corvallis, OR	37.27	238	272	
263	Killeen-Temple, TX	37.20	T272	75	
264	Amherst Town-Northampton, MA	36.47	231	332	
265	Prescott Valley-Prescott, AZ	36.44	253	208	
266	Altoona, PA	36.34	275	86	
267	Cleveland, TN	36.18	T287	16	
268	Cheyenne, WY	36.11	T241	278	
269	Traverse City, MI	36.02	T276	77	

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
270	Abilene, TX	35.71	T287	28	
271	Fond du Lac, WI	35.52	265	164	
272	Eugene-Springfield, OR	35.32	T258	202	
273	Kennewick-Richland, WA	34.44	T234	360	
274	Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux, LA	33.96	271	169	
275	Winchester, VA-WV	33.76	260	238	
276	Hagerstown-Martinsburg, MD-WV	33.45	T258	250	
277	Rome, GA	32.93	T291	71	
278	Pinehurst-Southern Pines, NC	32.25	294	82	
279	Dubuque, IA	32.14	T280	159	
280	Kenosha, WI	31.88	279	177	
281	Barnstable Town, MA	31.76	T243	368	
282	Ithaca, NY	31.68	T254	313	
283	Valdosta, GA	31.58	T306	27	
284	Morgantown, WV	31.47	T276	194	
285	Anchorage, AK	31.43	247	370	
286	Albany, GA	30.82	T303	64	
287	Jonesboro, AR	30.81	T314	1	
288	La Crosse-Onalaska, WI-MN	30.63	T280	198	

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
289	Jefferson City, MO	30.55	T310	25	
290	Salem, OR	30.38	T269	268	
291	Pocatello, ID	29.52	309	69	
292	Lebanon, PA	29.24	301	120	
293	Helena, MT	29.09	T296	148	
294	Lake Havasu City-Kingman, AZ	29.08	299	135	
295	Harrisonburg, VA	29.02	290	189	
296	Salisbury, MD	28.87	T282	226	
297	Gadsden, AL	28.86	T322	5	
298	Twin Falls, ID	27.97	317	63	
299	Jacksonville, NC	27.81	T306	124	
300	Sioux City, IA-NE-SD	27.79	302	153	
301	St. Joseph, MO-KS	27.76	T310	97	
302	Flagstaff, AZ	27.73	T282	255	
303	Sierra Vista-Douglas, AZ	27.11	T296	199	
304	Pueblo, CO	26.98	289	246	
305	Paducah, KY-IL	26.45	321	78	
306	Gettysburg, PA	26.33	305	173	
307	Lake Charles, LA	26.18	286	284	

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
308	Decatur, IL	26.13	285	292	
309	San Angelo, TX	25.54	T333	23	
310	Minot, ND	25.47	295	252	
311	Slidell-Mandeville-Covington, LA	25.42	T303	203	
312	Casper, WY	25.31	T291	267	
313	Shreveport-Bossier City, LA	25.27	T319	115	
314	Lawton, OK	25.24	326	83	
315	Dothan, AL	25.10	T333	34	
316	Midland, MI	24.81	T291	280	
317	Laredo, TX	24.76	341	10	
318	Johnson City, TN	24.58	342	8	
319	Bangor, ME	24.56	300	247	
320	Hinesville, GA	24.44	T333	51	
321	Myrtle Beach-Conway-North Myrtle Beach, SC	24.11	338	42	
322	Goldsboro, NC	23.51	343	29	
323	Sebring, FL	23.03	T347	15	
324	Hattiesburg, MS	22.56	T351	3	
325	Sebastian-Vero Beach-West Vero Corridor, FL	22.47	316	209	
326	Springfield, IL	21.94	313	240	

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
327	Kankakee, IL	21.74	328	160	
328	Great Falls, MT	21.63	T331	141	
329	Monroe, LA	20.37	359	20	
330	Hot Springs, AR	20.23	363	2	
331	Eagle Pass, TX	20.20	T361	7	
332	Albany, OR	20.14	318	258	
333	Vallejo, CA	20.05	298	374	
334	Billings, MT	19.69	325	230	
335	Brunswick-St. Simons, GA	19.35	346	121	
336	Homosassa Springs, FL	19.25	T356	60	
337	Stockton-Lodi, CA	83.88	308	344	
338	Cape Girardeau, MO-IL	83.86	360	49	
339	Rochester, MN	86.91	T314	310	
340	Charleston, WV	86.88	345	144	
341	Fresno, CA	86.69	T310	342	
342	Grand Junction, CO	86.46	T336	225	
343	Hammond, LA	85.71	371	37	
344	Pittsfield, MA	85.51	T319	346	
345	Alexandria, LA	85.39	373	47	
346	Atlantic City-Hammonton, NJ	85.39	324	334	

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
347	Beckley, WV	85.31	375	55	
348	Punta Gorda, FL	84.82	339	259	
349	Victoria, TX	84.79	367	109	
350	Elmira, NY	84.75	353	190	
351	Medford, OR	84.61	349	224	
352	Wildwood-The Villages, FL	84.56	T347	234	
353	Hilton Head Island- Bluffton-Port Royal, SC	84.43	344	257	
354	Santa Cruz-Watsonville, CA		T322	378	
355	Fairbanks-College, AK		327	359	
356	Lewiston, ID-WA		T361	183	
357	Salinas, CA	13.26	T329	367	
358	Santa Rosa-Petaluma, CA	12.92	T329	376	
359	Parkersburg-Vienna, WV	12.79	368	165	
360	Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater, WA	12.76	340	323	
361	Wheeling, WV-OH	12.64	369	162	
362	San Luis Obispo-Paso Robles, CA	12.61	T331	373	
363	Grants Pass, OR	12.48	355	245	
364	Weirton-Steubenville, WV- OH	12.47	372	149	
365	Bellingham, WA	12.44	T336	349	

 Preferred Locations
  Premium Locations
  Budget Locations
  Unfavorable Locations

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
366	Glens Falls, NY	10.85	T356	276	
367	Santa Fe, NM	10.68	T351	309	
368	Yakima, WA	10.53	354	302	
369	Watertown-Fort Drum, NY	9.96	376	192	
370	Mount Vernon-Anacortes, WA	9.70	350	345	
371	Lewiston-Auburn, ME	8.68	370	260	
372	Kingston, NY	8.67	366	282	
373	Farmington, NM	7.63	386	195	
374	Yuba City, CA	7.50	358	358	
375	Walla Walla, WA	7.48	365	317	
376	Vineland, NJ	5.55	374	316	
377	Kahului-Wailuku, HI	5.09	364	385	
378	Merced, CA	4.75	378	315	
379	Visalia, CA	4.41	377	328	
380	El Centro, CA	3.78	T379	329	
381	Modesto, CA	3.72	381	324	
382	Wenatchee-East Wenatchee, WA	3.54	384	311	
383	Longview-Kelso, WA	3.00	382	336	
384	Chico, CA	2.81	T379	354	

National Ranking	Metro	Score	Quality Ranking	Cost Ranking	National Quadrant
385	Redding, CA	2.24	385	340	
386	Hanford-Corcoran, CA	1.78	383	363	
387	Napa, CA	0.15	387	383	

end notes

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- ⁷ JobsEQ, Chmura Economics & Analytics.
- ⁸ JobsEQ, Chmura Economics & Analytics.
- ⁹ JobsEQ, Chmura Economics & Analytics.
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- ¹⁴ fDi Markets, Financial Times Ltd., project announcement database.
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- ²⁰ Hadrian. “Hadrian Opens Advanced Manufacturing Facility in Alabama to Support Columbia- and Virginia-Class Submarine Production.”
- ²¹ Alabama Department of Commerce. Incentives Records. Montgomery, AL: Alabama Department of Commerce.
- ²² The Defense Post. “Raytheon Expands Missile Factory in Alabama.”
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end notes

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