Tulane University researchers, Louisiana Innovation unveil inaugural statewide Louisiana Startup Report

October 30, 2026 Roger Dunaway
roger@tulane.edu

The 2026 Louisiana Startup Report, the first comprehensive survey of startup activity in the state, found increased venture capital activity in recent years and encouraging feedback regarding expected job growth and commitment to Louisiana. (Photo by Shutterstock)

Louisiana’s startup businesses are optimistic about their future, with two-thirds planning to hire more workers in the coming year. But access to investment capital and a shortage of skilled employees remain significant obstacles to growth, according to the newly released 2026 Louisiana Startup Report.

The report — produced by the Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Tulane University's A. B. Freeman School of Business and Louisiana Innovation, a division of Louisiana Economic Development — is the first comprehensive survey of startup activity in the state. It builds on more than seven years of research by the Lepage Center, which first launched the study to measure early-stage business activity in the Greater New Orleans region.

Tulane and LA.IO worked together to expand the research statewide to give entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers and economic development leaders a more complete picture of startup activity, capital access, workforce trends and emerging technology adoption across Louisiana.

"By capturing the challenges and opportunities facing founders across the state, the Louisiana Startup Report provides data-driven insights with the potential to empower entrepreneurs, inform policymakers and accelerate business growth," said Freeman School Dean Paulo Goes. "We are proud to collaborate with Louisiana Innovation to fuel a vibrant, resilient and geographically varied entrepreneurial ecosystem."

The report draws on survey responses from 143 startups and small businesses across 27 Louisiana parishes, including the New Orleans, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Shreveport-Bossier City and Monroe areas. Participating businesses included for-profit startups or small businesses located in Louisiana that have an annual revenue below $60 million or are less than five years old or self-identify as participating in Louisiana's entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem.

"Measurement is only the beginning," said Rob Lalka, professor of practice and executive director of the Albert Lepage Center. "The data we are now gathering will inform the direct assistance the Lepage Center can provide founders through programs like the Lepage Entrepreneurial Assistance Program, and it will give economic development agencies and entrepreneur support organizations the insights they'll need to make the best possible decisions for the companies they're supporting. This is a breakthrough moment for our ongoing research project, but it's also a major opportunity to improve how we build great homegrown companies. We are grateful to LA.IO for helping us expand our efforts statewide."

The expanded report comes as Louisiana works to attract more investment in innovative businesses and strengthen its economy through entrepreneurship.

Venture capital activity has increased statewide in recent years, with 38 deals totaling $83.9 million in 2025 and 23 deals during the first half of 2026, tying the state's highest first-half deal count since 2016, according to industry data cited in the report.

"For years, Louisiana has had strong startup communities doing important work in different parts of the state, but we haven't had a single source of data that allows us to see the full picture," said Josh Fleig, chief innovation officer at Louisiana Economic Development. "Taking this report statewide gives us a common baseline to understand what's working, where the gaps are and how we can make smarter decisions about where to invest."

The report's key findings include:

- Hiring and growth: About 66% of respondents expect to add employees in the next 12 months, including 86% of companies that identify as high-growth startups. Fewer than 1% anticipate cutting jobs.

- Commitment to Louisiana: 92% of respondents said they will definitely or probably keep their businesses in the state.

- Access to capital: Limited financing was the most frequently cited barrier to growth. More than half of respondents reported financing their operations through business revenue, while 38% relied on personal savings and 36% received support from friends and family. Only 15% reported obtaining venture capital.

- Artificial intelligence: About 76% said AI has improved productivity, while 48% reported a favorable impact on sales. Two-thirds identified some form of AI as the technology likely to have the greatest long-term impact on their industries.

- Industry and revenue: Software companies made up the largest share of respondents by primary industry rankings (23.1%), followed by manufacturing (12.6%) and healthcare (11.2%). Manufacturing and software respondents reported the highest estimated average gross revenue by industry, at $8.25 million and $3.18 million, respectively.

- Workspace expansion: 35% of high-growth firms expect to move to a larger office or expand their current space in the next 12 months.

The report also introduces an interactive digital platform that allows users to query the survey data using AI, explore findings by region or industry, generate downloadable charts and access anonymized underlying data.

The full 2026 Louisiana Startup Report and interactive data platform are available at louisianastartup.report.