

Enhancing Economic Resilience in the C3 Region of Northwest Alabama

Technical Assistance Report - April 2016



JOBS REDEVELOPMENT COMMERCIALIZATION PARTNERSHIPS COLLABORATION
SUSTAINABILITY CAPITAL INNOVATION CONSUMER CONFIDENCE BUSINESS RETENTION TRENDS
COLLABORATION LEADERSHIP ENTREPRENEURSHIP RAPID RESPONSE RESTORATION
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SITE SELECTION UNEMPLOYMENT REGIONALISM MANAGEMENT WEALTH MARKETING COMMUNICATION
CREATIVITY LEVERAGE FORESIGHT BRANDING STAKEHOLDERS WEALTH MARKETING COMMUNICATION
BUSINESS CONTINUITY POLICY INNOVATION COMMUNITY LEVERAGE FORESIGHT BRANDING STAKEHOLDERS WEALTH MARKETING COMMUNICATION
PREPARATION

International Economic Development Council

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization serving economic developers. With more than 4,500 members, IEDC is the largest organization of its kind. Economic developers promote economic well-being and quality of life for their communities by creating, retaining, and expanding jobs that facilitate growth, enhance wealth, and provide a stable tax base. From public to private, rural to urban, and local to international, IEDC's members are engaged in the full range of economic development experience. Given the breadth of economic development work, our members are employed in a wide variety of settings including local, state, provincial and federal governments, public-private partnerships, chambers of commerce, universities, and a variety of other institutions. When we succeed, our members create high-quality jobs, develop vibrant communities, and improve the quality of life in their regions. For more information about IEDC, please visit www.iedconline.org.

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Acknowledgements

This technical assistance project was funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The grant is focused on supporting long-term economic recovery of communities in the EDA-Atlanta region that were impacted by disaster in fiscal year (FY) 2011. The statements, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and other data in this report are solely those of IEDC and do not necessarily reflect the views of EDA.

IEDC would like to thank the technical assistance panel, referred to throughout the report as “the IEDC Team.” These individuals volunteered their time and expertise throughout this project and provided guidance for this report.

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IEDC would like to acknowledge Southwest Airlines, a community partner, for flying team members to the site visit. IEDC would also like to acknowledge StateBook International, ESRI Inc., and Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) for donating software that was used in this report.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Strengths and Challenges	8
Strengths	8
<i>Broad-based Strengths</i>	8
<i>Local-level Strengths</i>	10
Challenges	12
<i>Workforce</i>	12
<i>Communication Infrastructure</i>	13
<i>Transportation Infrastructure</i>	14
<i>Regional Brand</i>	14
<i>Healthcare</i>	14
<i>Housing</i>	15
<i>Youth Retention</i>	15
<i>Supplier Network</i>	16
Recommendations	17
1. Strengthen the C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance	17
1.1 <i>Develop a formal business retention and expansion (BRE) program</i>	17
1.2 <i>Expand the private-sector membership of the C3 EDA</i>	20
1.3 <i>Continue to explore the possibility of expanding the regional service area</i>	21
1.4 <i>Become the voice for regional business in the state capital</i>	22
1.5 <i>Develop a regional brand that reflects the region’s identity</i>	22
1.6 <i>Map the regional supplier network</i>	24
2. Address Industrial Properties	27
2.1 <i>Continue efforts to establish shovel-ready industrial sites</i>	27
2.2 <i>Explore the possibility of creating a joint mega-site with partners</i>	28
2.3 <i>Develop rail-served sites</i>	29
2.4 <i>Ensure that AdvantageSite locations have clear signage</i>	29
2.5 <i>Develop preliminary designs of speculative buildings</i>	29
3. Enhance workforce development efforts	30
3.1 <i>Quantify the C3 region’s workforce composition to better understand workforce</i>	30
3.2 <i>Expand manufacturing awareness programs to earlier grades</i>	31
3.3 <i>Work to maximize the benefits of new federal workforce legislation</i>	31
3.4 <i>Improve access to career tech programs</i>	32
3.6 <i>Increase opportunities for industry outreach in secondary schools</i>	34
3.7 <i>Create a one-stop coordination center with pooled resources for workforce development</i>	34
4. Leverage I-22	34
4.1 <i>Schedule updated traffic count upon completion of the highway</i>	35
4.2 <i>Develop a regional brand and marketing strategy for the counties along I-22</i>	35
4.3 <i>Enhance I-22 off-ramps</i>	35
4.4 <i>Conduct a retail gap analysis</i>	36

5. Improve community outreach and education efforts to build support for the C3 EDA 36

- 5.1 Create a dialogue with citizens about what economic development is and how it works 37*
- 5.2 Publicize and celebrate economic development successes 37*
- 5.3 Catalyze a regional leadership program that includes economic development education..... 37*
- 5.4 Visit peer and aspirational communities and develop benchmarks..... 38*

6. Work to further promote and assist entrepreneurial and small businesses development 38

- 6.1 Develop a plan for promoting and assisting entrepreneurial and small businesses 39*
- 6.2 Increase awareness of entrepreneurial resources 39*

7. Address talent attraction and retention 43

- 7.1 Continue fostering downtown redevelopment and community revitalization..... 44*
- 7.2 Expand marketing of unique regional assets 44*
- 7.3 Market to and stay connected with young professionals who have moved away from the region..... 44*
- 7.4 Expand options for entertainment, shopping, restaurants, and personal services..... 44*

8. Become a technology-ready community..... 45

- 8.1 Continue working to expand broadband Internet access 45*
- 8.2 Improve cellular phone coverage..... 46*
- 8.3 Continue working to promote technology utilization in the community..... 47*

Appendix A

IEDC Team Biographies

Appendix B

Background Report

Appendix C

Sample Job Description for Business Retention and Expansion Program Manager

Appendix D

A Guide to Broadband Funding Opportunities: How to Navigate the Funding Process

Introduction

In May 2015, the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) contracted with the C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance (the C3 EDA)—which represents Fayette, Lamar, and Marion counties—to conduct an economic assessment of the tri-county region. This assessment examined:

- The local economy and its trends;
- Local economic development assets, challenges, and opportunities; and
- Current and planned economic development strategies and initiatives.

This technical assistance project was funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA).¹ The grant is focused on supporting long-term economic recovery of communities in the EDA-Atlanta region that were impacted by disaster in fiscal year (FY) 2011.

From November 1-4, 2015, an expert panel comprised of three economic development professionals and two IEDC staff members visited the region for a site visit. Prior to the visit, IEDC staff prepared a thorough background report and distributed it to the IEDC Team. This report provided information and data on demographic, social, and economic trends in the area. In addition, the report provided the IEDC Team with a foundational understanding of the region and its current economic development policies and efforts. This allowed the IEDC Team to avoid spending valuable time on surface-level questions and instead ask-in depth questions that inform the recommendations made in this report.

During the site visit, the panel interviewed dozens of stakeholders in the community. This included, but was not limited to, the following.

- Economic development organizations (EDOs), partners, and allies
- Local elected officials
- Local, county, and regional economic development partners
- Banking institutions
- Real estate and development professionals
- Local small and large businesses
- Educational institutions
- Workforce organizations
- Planning staff

The first day of the site visit included a driving tour of the region and meetings with local businesses. Stakeholder meetings were conducted throughout the second day. The third day of the site visit culminated with the IEDC Team's presentation of its preliminary findings and recommendations. After leaving Alabama, the IEDC Team began working on the final report. The report, which is presented in full here, elaborates on the IEDC

¹ Economic Adjustment Assistance Project No. 04-79-06700

Team's findings and recommendations and presents strategies and case study examples that are intended to assist with implementation of the recommendations.

Strengths and Challenges

At the end of the site visit, the IEDC Team presented its preliminary observations regarding the C3 region's strengths and the economic development challenges facing the region. This feedback was based on information gathered from stakeholder meetings that were conducted on-site and from previous research. What follows is a summary of these observations.

Strengths

Broad-based Strengths

The **ease of doing business** in Alabama is a major strength for the C3 region. In fact, *Area Development* magazine has ranked Alabama one of the top five of "States for Doing Business" for each of the last three years.² This ranking takes into consideration factors like the corporate tax environment, availability of incentives, access to capital, speed of permitting, availability of skilled labor, cost of labor, educational resources, quality of life, and overall infrastructure capabilities. Since the C3 region shares all of these attributes, and has an even lower cost of living than the state average, the ease of doing business can be considered a strength for the region.

The pro-business economic climate in Alabama is partially the result of **strong state-level support for economic development**, which is another strength of the C3 region. In April 2015, the Alabama House of Representatives passed three bills (HB 57, HB 58, and HB 59) aimed at enhancing the state's economic development efforts.³ Known collectively as the Made in Alabama Jobs Incentives Package, the legislation provides up to \$850 million annually in tax credits for qualifying projects that create jobs, supply capital investment, or locate facilities in rural areas. In addition, the package created the Accelerate Rural Alabama Fund and authorizes the State Industrial Development Authority to provide loans to rural entities for funding site preparation. The package also provides tax incentives and worker training through Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT)—which is the state's workforce development organization—in order to encourage capital reinvestment by existing businesses.

The IEDC Team experienced the state's commitment to economic development firsthand when meeting with representatives of Steel Dust Recycling (SDR) during the site visit. The company, which had originally scouted sites in neighboring Mississippi, was impressed with the assistance it received from both the C3 EDA and the state. The state expedited the permitting process, provided tax incentives, and worked to see that a railroad spur was constructed. The state also assisted SDR with workforce recruitment and training. These efforts have contributed to the company's success, which has enabled it to grow from 102 employees to approximately 140 employees. SDR told the IEDC Team that it has additional expansion plans and that it hopes to further grow its presence in the region.

² <http://www.areadevelopment.com/Top-States-for-Doing-Business/Q3-2015/survey-results-landing-page-225757.shtml>

³ http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2015/03/made_in_alabama_jobs_incentive.html

SDR also cited the **C3 region's location and transportation infrastructure** as an important factor its decision to locate in the area. In particular, railway access is vital to SDR's business. The C3 region is fortunate to be served by **two major rail providers**: BNSF and Norfolk Southern.

In addition to railway access, the C3 region enjoys **access to the nation's newest interstate: Interstate-22 (I-22)**. The 213-mile highway, which connects Memphis with Birmingham, runs through the heart of Marion County and greatly improves upon the region's existing transportation infrastructure. Whereas the C3 region previously relied upon Highway 78, which is often only two lanes, much of the new I-22 is six lanes wide and the remainder is four lanes wide at its narrowest. This makes I-22 capable of meeting the logistics and transportation needs of modern industries. With the new interstate, the C3 region will no longer be isolated from the nation's interstate system and will have a better chance of attracting new industry. To help promote and market the region's strategic location along the new interstate corridor, the C3 EDA worked with regional partners to establish the **I-22 Alliance**.⁴ The Alliance includes representatives of six counties in northwest Alabama, including the C3 counties. This **willingness to cooperate with regional partners** is another strength of the C3 region.

The fact that I-22 connects the C3 region to Memphis is important, because **proximity to Memphis** is another strength. During the site visit, multiple businesses told the IEDC Team that it was vital for their business to be located near the city. Memphis is a transportation and shipping hub because it is: located on the Mississippi River, at the intersection of five major railroad lines, and accessible by three major highways (with a fourth currently under construction). Memphis International Airport is the second largest cargo airport in the world,⁵ and Memphis is the third largest rail center in the U.S.⁶ Therefore, it is easy to see why many businesses and industries value being located near Memphis.

It should also be noted that the C3 region is within 200 miles of other major metropolitan areas, including Birmingham, Atlanta, Nashville, Mobile, Montgomery, and Jackson. Meanwhile, it is less than an hour's drive to Tuscaloosa and Florence in Alabama and Tupelo and Columbus in Mississippi. Proximity to these markets is valuable for many of the businesses located in the C3 region as well.

In addition to accessibility, the C3 region enjoys **strong infrastructure** locally. Utilities such as water, sewer, and natural gas service are readily available from both municipal and county sources. Furthermore, there is a range of infrastructure-ready industrial sites available. During the site visit, the IEDC Team was impressed by visits to the Hamilton I-22 Industrial Park, the Gateway Industrial Park, and the Guin Industrial Park.

The C3 region's strong infrastructure has enabled the development of a significant and **diverse manufacturing base** that supplies both consumer goods and industrial goods. This is important in terms of economic resiliency,

⁴ <http://www.interstate22alliance.com/>

⁵ <http://www.aci.aero/News/Releases/Most-Recent/2014/09/16/ACI-releases-2013-World-Airport-Traffic-Report-Airport-passenger-traffic-still-going-strong-air-cargo-inches-along-after-third-year-of-weak-growth>

⁶ <http://www.memphischamber.com/Articles/Community/MemphisBraggingRights.aspx>

because, although the manufacturing sector may be affected by changes in the broader economy, a diverse manufacturing base will enable the region to better withstand future economic downturns. During the site visit, the IEDC Team met with multiple manufacturers.

Local-level Strengths

The C3 region is fortunate to enjoy **strong, professional leadership** from the C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance and its President and CEO David Thornell, CEcD EDFP. Mr. Thornell, who is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) and a graduate of the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute, has over 30 years of economic development experience, and has led the C3 EDA since its inception in 2010. Although it is less than six years old, C3 EDA has established a strong record of success.

Partly as a result of this success, there continues to be a **broad level of local support for economic development**. In fact, the C3 EDA receives funding from the governments of three counties and fifteen communities. The ability of these governments to put aside local rivalries and come together to **collaborate for the benefit of the region** is another true strength of the C3 region. As one mayor stated, "We know we are not competing county versus county. This is a global competition."

During the site visit, the IEDC Team was able to meet with seven local mayors. It was clear that these **mayors are actively engaged in economic development**, and each expressed a sincere commitment to promoting prosperity for their constituents. As one mayor noted, "Economic development is the hardest work that we do as elected officials." This support from local elected officials is a great strength for the C3 region.

In addition to funding the C3 EDA, the mayors have also demonstrated their commitment to economic development through other means. For instance, many of the mayors discussed publicly-funded **downtown revitalization efforts** that were underway in their communities. Also, the IEDC Team was able to meet with businesses that have received local tax credits, grants, or other economic development incentives. Each of the businesses cited these incentives as being instrumental in their location decision. The **availability of local economic development incentives** is a strength for the C3 region.

Another strength of the region is that, once located in the community, these businesses have proved to be **committed, quality employers**. During the site visit, multiple businesses reflected on their belief that their company's success was tied to the success of the community as a whole. As a result, these businesses make efforts to hire and source locally, while often also providing above-average wages and benefits like retirement and health insurance.

Perhaps no company better exemplifies this commitment to the C3 region than VF Corporation, which operates a Wrangler distribution center in Hackleburg that is one of the largest employers in Marion County. In April

2011, an EF-5 tornado with winds of 210 miles per hour destroyed the facility and took the life of one employee. The tornado ultimately killed 72 people in Alabama, making it the deadliest in state history.⁷

In the aftermath of the tornado, the VF Corporation began analyzing whether to rebuild in Marion County or move its operations elsewhere. In response, the Governor of Alabama formed a task force comprised of cabinet-level representatives that worked with local officials, utility companies, and the C3 EDA to persuade VF Corporation to rebuild the facility in Marion County. (This is further evidence of the state's commitment to economic development, which was mentioned previously.) The case for rebuilding was bolstered by the company's local employees, who had demonstrated their loyalty after the tornado by regularly commuting 90 miles to a temporary facility in Cullman County. This is an example of another strength of the C3 region: **a hardworking and eager workforce** that is dedicated to local employers.

Ultimately, the retention effort was successful, and the new facility was unveiled in 2013 on the second anniversary of the tornado. The new building, which is LEED Gold certified, was designed to accommodate future expansion and a larger workforce. When asked why the company chose to rebuild, a company spokesperson told the IEDC Team that, "It was the right thing to do. Our people have the knowledge and experience." This sentiment and the company's decision to remain in Marion County speak to another strength, which is **the region's record of effective workforce development**.

More broadly, the C3 region's proximity to the University of Alabama and the University of North Alabama is a strength. Both are within a one-hour drive and have significant workforce development assets. Locally, **Bevill State Community College (BSCC)** is a significant asset for the region. BSCC has a campus in Hamilton and a campus in Fayette. The two campuses serve approximately 1,100 students by offering two-year academic and technical degree programs. BSCC has a Workforce Development Division that meets regularly with the C3 EDA to discuss how to address the region's workforce training needs. BSCC also interfaces with local high schools. For instance, a BSCC professor regularly visits and instructs at Fayette High School.

Another strength is that many of the **high schools in the C3 region work to address workforce development**. For instance, the mission of the Lamar County School of Technology is "to equip students with the skills and knowledge that allows them to provide regional industry with a 21st century workforce."⁸ Meanwhile, a number of other schools provide students access to vocational and technical tracks. During the site visit, the IEDC Team met with the Superintendent of Winfield City Schools who pointed out that the school district is currently working to redesign classrooms to better emphasize career tech programs in an effort to blend career tech development with typical classroom work. This effort has been supported by a change in policy at the state level that has begun allowing schools to offer class credit for career tech program and training classes. Educators believe that students will be more likely to take these career tech classes if they count toward graduation. It

⁷ <http://www.madeinalabama.com/2014/04/hackleburg-wrangler-plant/>

⁸ <http://lamarcountyschooloftechnology.weebly.com/>

should also be pointed out that the C3 EDA addresses workforce development through the public school system by sponsoring an annual Career Day at the local Beville campuses. Similarly, the Alabama Technology Network (ATN) sponsors an annual Manufacturing Day for students in the eighth grade through high school.⁹

Industries are engaged in workforce development efforts in the C3 region, and many of the schools in the C3 region have a good relationship with local businesses and industries. For example, schools have led on-site industry tours to give students a better understanding of the work that goes on in local businesses and factories.¹⁰ Also, high school teachers meet regularly with local businesses to learn what skills the companies are seeking in new recruits. These needs are then incorporated into classroom curriculum when possible. During the site visit, the IEDC Team met with a local representative of 3M who explained that the company conducts outreach in high schools and communicates with students regarding the degrees and skillsets they are seeking in new employees. Outside of the school system, industries are also engaged in workforce development efforts via career fairs that are held in partnership with the C3 EDA. For instance, the IEDC Team learned that when Max Home held a career fair last year, the company received 308 applications in one day.

Challenges

Like communities across the United States, the C3 region faces challenges to future economic development. The challenges described in the following section were identified by the IEDC Team as the most significant obstacles to future economic development. The IEDC Team's recommendations for addressing these challenges are provided in the following section.

Workforce

In discussions with the IEDC Team, stakeholders conveyed a mixed perception of the workforce in the C3 region. A number of companies spoke about being generally pleased with the quantity and quality of workers. Yet, when asked whether the region faced workforce challenges, multiple companies and stakeholders mentioned **problems with the workforce's "soft skills."** Soft skills, which can be defined as the personal attributes that allow an individual to interact effectively with other people and succeed in the workplace, include skills like time management, communication, teamwork, and decision-making. The term "soft skills" can also be applied to employability issues like passing drug tests and showing up to work consistently and on-time. Such concerns were raised with the IEDC Team in regard to the C3 region's workforce more than once. However, it should be noted that such problems are not unique to the C3 region, and that many communities throughout the country are experiencing similar issues.¹¹ These issues usually affect workers in lower-wage positions, and they may be

⁹ www.mfgday.com/events/2015/west-alabama-works-2

¹⁰ <http://www.northwestalabamaeda.org/about-c3eda/news/item/newsletter-volume>

¹¹ <http://www.cnbc.com/id/101012437>

tied to the high levels of poverty in certain parts of the C3 region. Fortunately, soft skills can be addressed to help improve the region's workforce.

A number of stakeholders confirmed that the C3 region is **lacking enough skilled workers**. Specific trades that were mentioned include welders, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, and construction workers. These stakeholders also noted that businesses in the C3 region have communicated their need for more skilled workers. This is yet another problem that is not unique to the C3 region, as the lack of skilled workers has become a challenge for many communities through the U.S.¹²

As noted in the previous section, the C3 region is acting to improve its workforce and has created a number of training and workforce development opportunities in the area. However, since these training opportunities are held at locations spread throughout the three-county region, it can be difficult for residents to attend regularly (if at all), especially without a car or reliable transportation. The **limited transportation options to workforce development locations**, like the two Beville State Community College campuses, pose a challenge to future economic development in the C3 region. Put simply, public transportation is not reliable enough to ensure that residents can get the training that they want. As one stakeholder summarized the situation, "Opportunities are not always there for people, even if they might be interested."

Communication Infrastructure

The C3 region's **communication infrastructure is lacking** and is a challenge to the region's economic development efforts. While reliable broadband Internet access is available in some of the region's larger cities, it is absent for much of the rest of the region. In recent years, a number of studies have established a link between broadband access and successful economic development.¹³ Furthermore, regular surveys of corporate site location firms demonstrate the importance of broadband access to modern site selection and show that **lacking broadband access** can raise a "huge red flag" in competitive location searches.¹⁴ As an article in *Site Selection* magazine states, "...the importance [of broadband] in the site selection process will not diminish...[and] communities lagging behind will be placed in an ever more competitive disadvantage."¹⁵ In addition, Mr. Thornell and other stakeholders expressed frustration with **inconsistent cell phone reception** in certain parts of the C3 region. Although these "dead spots" are relatively limited, the lack of reliable cell phone access can hinder economic development and even pose a threat to public safety.¹⁶

¹² <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/09/whos-responsible-for-erasing-americas-shortage-of-skilled-workers/406474/>

¹³ <http://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1040&context=sppworkingpapers>

¹⁴ <http://siteselection.com/issues/2010/sep/Broadband-among-keys.cfm>

¹⁵ <http://siteselection.com/issues/2011/sep/sas-optical-infrastructure.cfm>

¹⁶ <https://www.schumer.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/schumer-cell-phone-wireless-carriers-are-wrongly-claiming-quality-reception-on-coverage-maps-for-dutchess-county-in-reality-areas-are-often-dead-zones-schumer-calls-for-feds-to-immediately-investigate-deceptive-coverage-maps>

Transportation Infrastructure

During the site visit, a number of companies and stakeholders lamented the **lack of four-lane roads** in the C3 region. Many local companies rely on 18-wheelers for either receiving supplies or distributing products. These large trucks often clog the local two-lane highways, which causes traffic and congestion. Such shipping delays add to the cost of doing business and increase the price of goods. Moreover, in large numbers these trucks may make driving on these two-lane highways more dangerous for ordinary commuters.

There is no doubt that the newly constructed I-22 is an economic development opportunity for the C3 region. Yet, the **lack of easy access to Interstate-22** is another challenge for the C3 region as a whole. While the highway runs through the heart of Marion County, it does not pass through Lamar County or Fayette County. However, many stakeholders, including a number of local mayors, expressed their desire for a highway system that connects their local communities to I-22. As one mayor stated, “Unless you have a specific reason to come to Lamar or Fayette County, you may not ever get off I-22 and stop in these communities.” In addition, easy access to a major highway like I-22 is vital for attracting manufacturers and suppliers. Since a goal of the C3 EDA is to attract Tier 2 and Tier 3 automotive suppliers to the region, ensuring that they have access to Interstate-22 will need to be a priority.

Another transportation-related challenge is the lack of rail-served sites in the C3 region. Although the C3 region boasts 17 industrial parks and sites, only one site is currently rail-served. A handful of the other sites have the potential for rail service but have not yet developed that capability.

Regional Brand

The C3 region is also challenged by a **lack of a regional brand or identity**. While the C3 EDA has done excellent work to market the region, it is an organization and not an identity. Establishing a regional identity is important because it unites the community around its shared history and values and enables it to work together toward future prosperity. The lack of a shared identity makes it more difficult for the region to be known and recognized by those who are not already familiar with it.

Healthcare

The C3 region’s **limited healthcare options** are another challenge, especially since county hospitals historically have been major job providers in the C3 region. (The hospital in Fayette is the county’s largest employer; yet, Lamar County has no hospital at all.) The problem has become more acute in recent years, as healthcare providers in the region have suffered from declining populations. This problem is expected to worsen if the population of the C3 region continues to decline.¹⁷

¹⁷ See Background Report in Appendix B

This leads to a snowball effect, as the uncertain future of healthcare in the region makes it hard to attract and retain doctors. Hospitals in the C3 region have utilized the J-1 visa program¹⁸ in an attempt to attract international doctors, but this has not completely filled the gap. Thus, local residents often travel to Tupelo, Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, or other nearby metropolitan areas to visit medical specialists. The survival of rural hospitals is not unique to the C3 region and is an issue that many other communities throughout the U.S. are facing.

Housing

The C3 region is challenged by the **limited housing stock** that is available in certain areas. The 2008 recession and mortgage crisis hit the C3 region hard, and it has not yet fully recovered. A number of local construction firms were sidelined or put out of business altogether. In addition, although the region was previously home to a number of manufactured housing companies, the IEDC Team was told that at least three have shuttered since 2008. The situation has been made worse by the fact that banks, in general, remain less willing to finance mobile home purchases.

As a result, the C3 region's available housing stock is aging, and many properties are in need of repair. This problem is exacerbated by the limited amount of federal aid and building/rehabilitation programs that are available for rural communities.¹⁹ Once again, this situation is not unique to the C3 region; rural regions throughout the U.S. are dealing with aging housing stocks. Yet, the lack of adequate housing can make it **difficult to retain young people** and attract new companies and talented workers.

Youth Retention

During the site visit, a number of stakeholders, businesses, and residents expressed concerns over the C3 region's **difficulty retaining young people**. As previously mentioned, one factor may be the lack of adequate housing. Another factor may be the limited number of non-manufacturing job opportunities. For instance, the region has a **lack of personal service providers** (e.g., dry cleaners, salons, personal services, business services). There are also **limited options for retail shopping, restaurants, and entertainment**. In fact, the IEDC Team was told that many locals travel to Tupelo, Tuscaloosa, or Florence to shop.

The C3 region's difficulty retaining young professionals means higher rates of employee turnover, because young people are more likely to move away than older, more established residents. This is a challenge for companies like 3M—and therefore the C3 region as a whole—because turnover is expensive and hurts business. As a 3M representative told the IEDC Team, “Turnover is 3M’s biggest problem this year.”

¹⁸ “A J-1 visa is a non-immigrant visa issued by the United States to research scholars, professors and exchange visitors participating in programs that promote cultural exchange, especially to obtain medical or business training within the U.S.”

¹⁹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/01/rural-americas-silent-housing-crisis/384885/>

Supplier Network

Another challenge for the C3 region is that **the regional supplier network is largely unknown**. As previously mentioned, the C3 region enjoys a strong and diverse manufacturing base. To provide these manufacturers with the raw materials and components they need, there is an even larger number of suppliers in the region. These suppliers are important to the economy because they create additional jobs, spur investment, and lead to innovation. Therefore, mapping and analyzing the regional supplier network can provide valuable insights into the regional economy and help make economic development efforts more efficient. The following section provides details on the benefits of examining supplier networks.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen the C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance

Since being established in 2010, the C3 EDA has demonstrated its significant value to the region. The organization enjoys the support of local business leaders, government officials, and its economic development and workforce partners throughout the region and state. The C3 EDA should be applauded for the many accomplishments it has had, especially in such a relatively short period of time. Yet, the IEDC Team believes there are concrete steps that can be taken to improve the C3 EDA's services and value to the region. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the organization, its leadership, and its stakeholders work to strengthen the C3 EDA through the following recommendations.**

1.1 Develop a formal business retention and expansion (BRE) program

The C3 EDA currently undertakes business retention and expansion (BRE) activities, and business retention is specified as a core component of the C3 EDA's program of work in its 2012-2016 Action Plan. However, these activities are only broadly defined in the plan. **The IEDC Team believes that the C3 region can benefit from a more comprehensive BRE initiative and recommends that the C3 EDA develop a formal business retention and expansion program.**

Economic development organizations work to address a number of related areas, including education, workforce development, entrepreneurship, community development, business recruitment, and business retention and expansion (BRE). Of these, BRE is often the most important to local economic development success. Although estimates vary, experts generally agree that existing businesses account for approximately 60 percent of net new job creation and capital investment in a community.²⁰ This percentage is even higher for rural communities.²¹ In addition, BRE programs have the added benefit of being significantly less costly than business recruitment.²²

Since existing businesses are so important to local economic success, it is no surprise that business retention and expansion (BRE) programs are a core component of all comprehensive economic development programs. A strong BRE program is important because it will:

- Prevent local businesses from relocating to other areas, thereby keeping jobs and investment in the community.
- Help local businesses survive economic difficulties, including disasters.

²⁰ https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Job_Creation.pdf

²¹ <http://www.cfra.org/renewrural/s/entrepreneurship>

²² http://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Downloads/IEDC_ED_Reference_Guide.pdf

- Reveal opportunities to foster organic job growth and investment through business expansions.
- Encourage and build relationships, and create partnerships, between local businesses and community leaders.
- Promote business recruitment through peer-to-peer marketing, as local companies speak highly about the business community.

The goals of the BRE program should be to:

- Engage targeted local companies, particularly those that are at risk of closing or relocating elsewhere, to better understand their needs.
- Respond to those needs with all available resources, including financing, technical, and workforce development assistance.
- Identify and address larger issues that may be detrimental to a healthy local business climate.
- Recognize and assist businesses that are prepared to grow and create more jobs.

To create a comprehensive and formal BRE program, the C3 EDA should begin by reaching out to all businesses in the community—whether they are small stores or large employers—to gather data and information on the region’s current business climate. This outreach should be conducted via business surveys, company visits, Internet research, and more informal means such as business luncheons or roundtable events. In the short-term, the data and information that is collected from these efforts will provide the C3 EDA and its stakeholders with an immediate snapshot of the regional business climate.

In the longer-term, this data and information should be organized in a detailed database that can be easily updated and accessed to inform key economic development metrics, such as: the number of jobs created; the number of jobs retained; per-capita income; and the amount of new investment. Typically, the most effective databases are Internet-based because data can be recorded, updated, referenced, and analyzed from almost anywhere. The C3 EDA could create its own database using Microsoft Access or Excel. It may also be worthwhile to explore various customer relationship management (CRM) software options, many of which are designed specifically for BRE efforts. One advantage of CRM programs is that they aim to simplify data collection and analysis to reduce users’ time commitment. Another advantage is that these programs often aggregate multiple users’ data at the regional and state levels, thereby making it possible for users to benchmark their community against others using the same software. It is important to note that, whatever method is selected, the C3 EDA will need to manage this data carefully since confidentiality is an essential concern of many businesses.

Once the BRE data has been collected and organized, it will be much easier for the C3 EDA to determine what businesses need the most immediate attention. Some signs that a company may be at risk of closing or relocating include the following.

- Declining sales and/or employment
- Recent change in ownership

- Expiring property lease
- Negative attitudes about the community or workforce
- Heavy regulatory burdens
- Expiration of union contract
- Family-owned firms with an aging owner and no succession plan
- Relocation of top managers and corporate officers to another location
- Loss of longstanding supplier contracts or relationships²³

However, it is not enough to simply determine that a business needs attention; for a BRE program to be successful, the EDO must act on the information it has learned. A well-coordinated follow-up effort is as important as the initial outreach itself. Of course, assisting an at-risk company has many positive potential benefits; but, a failure to follow-up may result in businesses feeling neglected after they took the time to raise their concerns, thereby resulting in the situation being even worse than it was originally.

In the longer-term, this data will enable the C3 EDA to employ an early warning system to address problems before they reach a critical stage. Such a proactive effort will sustain the business community while also enhancing the region’s reputation as a good place to do business, thereby fostering future economic growth.

1.1.1 Hire a new economic development professional to focus on the C3 EDA’s BRE efforts

As stated above, the IEDC Team believes that BRE is a crucial component of the C3 EDA’s program of work. Yet, the organization is also responsible for a number of other important tasks like business recruitment, workforce development, community revitalization, and tourism promotion. With so many moving pieces, it is difficult for any one professional—no matter how skilled or hard-working—to be effectively address all of these efforts. Although Mr. Thornell is ably assisted by Administrative Assistant Katie Crump, he is the only economic development professional working full-time to promote economic development in the C3 region.

It should be noted that the C3 EDA is understaffed when compared with other EDOs serving communities of similar size. According to a 2014 IEDC survey of over 3,000 organizations, EDOs serving populations of less than 50,000 residents have **an average of 3.3 full-time employees dedicated to economic development**. When analyzing EDOs serving populations of 50,000 to 99,999, the data shows that these EDOs have an average of 5.1 full-time employees dedicated to economic development.²⁴ Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA hire of a new economic development professional who will be dedicated primarily to leading the organization’s BRE efforts**. In addition to providing the C3 EDA with much-needed capacity, a new staff member would allow Mr. Thornell to put aside some of the organization’s day-to-day work and instead focus more on strategically addressing the C3 region’s economic development needs.

²³ IEDC’s Business Retention and Expansion Training Manual

²⁴ IEDC’s 2014 Salary Survey

Appendix C of this report includes a sample job description for a Business Retention and Expansion Program Manager.

1.2 Expand the private-sector membership of the C3 EDA

A few decades ago, it was not uncommon for the average EDO to receive 70 percent of its funding from public sources and 30 percent from private sources. Today, this funding structure for many EDOs has been inverted.²⁵ This is due partly to the Great Recession of 2008, which caused public budgets to tighten along with the economy. As a result, EDOs that relied heavily on public funds were forced to explore alternative financing sources in order to fill budget shortfalls. However, research shows that economic development funding had already begun shifting prior to 2008, as EDOs sought additional resources to increase their competitiveness and meet investor demands.²⁶

Today, the C3 EDA’s budget relies largely on public-sector funding from three counties and 15 municipalities. Although the organization does have private-sector members, it is the IEDC Team’s understanding that these are limited to a handful of utilities and other entities. While the region’s public-sector commitment to economic development should be applauded, the IEDC Team believes the C3 EDA has much to gain from increasing private-sector membership.

Securing additional private-sector members would enable the C3 EDA to grow, enhance its services, and provide greater benefit to the region. Increasing private-sector membership would also help the C3 EDA diversify its funding sources, which would contribute to organizational stability and longevity. Furthermore, expanding the number of private-sector members would spur interaction, cooperation, and partnerships in the business community and provide an avenue for businesses to become more involved in the community at-large. For these reasons, **the IEDC recommends that the C3 EDA explore opportunities for expanding its private-sector membership.**

1.2.1 Review current membership dues structure

Before working to expand private-sector membership, the C3 EDA should first review its current membership dues structure. Approximately 50 percent of all EDOs that receive private funding collect membership dues.²⁷ Membership dues allow stakeholders to contribute to, and benefit from, the C3 EDA.

Since EDOs naturally want all members to feel satisfied with their place in the organization, the C3 EDA will need to work to ensure that all paying members believe they are being treated fairly. In many EDOs, membership dues are based on the member’s operating budget; members with larger budgets pay a higher rate than

²⁵ IEDC’s New Realities for Funding Economic Development Organizations

²⁶ IEDC’s New Realities for Funding Economic Development Organizations

²⁷ http://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/directory/docs/EDRP_Financing_EDOs.pdf

members that are smaller in size. In such cases, it is important to use consistent criteria to determine the dues structure. Commonly used criteria include: total revenue, total sales, number of employees, total assets, square footage, total income, and total payroll.²⁸

Members charged higher rates typically receive additional benefits. Some EDOs charge businesses or consultants higher membership dues because of their business interests. However, there is no standard method for creating a membership dues structure. Instead, EDOs experiment through trial and error and make adjustments along the way.

Dues can also be structured so that all members contribute the same amount, which would help ensure that members feel they are being treated fairly. This method is especially useful in situations where the EDO will be offering the same level of benefits to all members, or where the EDO wants to avoid having a member that is contributing more than a competitor in the same industry.

When a decision regarding the membership dues structure has been made, the EDO should be transparent in regard to the different levels of membership and the benefits that each level entails. Moreover, the EDO should be careful to guarantee only the benefits that it can deliver. Such benefits may include a position on the EDO’s board of directors, advertising space in the EDO’s publications, registration in training or educational programs, and access to technical assistance.

1.3 Continue to explore the possibility of expanding the regional service area

In addition to expanding the organization’s private-sector membership, another method for enhancing the C3 EDA’s budget and effectiveness is through the expansion of its regional service area. As previously stated, the C3 EDA serves the Fayette, Lamar, and Marion Counties. However, these counties seem to share many similarities and economic development goals with surrounding counties. During the site visit, the IEDC Team learned that the C3 EDA has previously explored the possibility of expanding its regional service area. **The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA continue these efforts, working to assess the feasibility of expanding its service area and discussing the possibility with neighboring counties.**

In addition to offering the same budget advantages described in Section 1.2, an expanded service area would enable the new organization to pool assorted staffs, thereby allowing new EDO to better coordinate marketing, workforce development, and business recruitment efforts. A larger staff would also allow individuals to become experts in certain sectors instead of requiring them to be a “jack of all trades.” A large project may have significant infrastructure requirements—or need a piece of land that crosses county lines—which would be

28

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:AvwD91rDOMsJ:www.ammr.com/images/Guide_to_Creating_As_sociation_Dues_Structures.DOC+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us

easier addressed by a larger EDO. A larger service area would mean more stakeholders, who in turn have more business and political contacts, who can be ambassadors for the region.

1.4 Become the voice for regional business in the state capital

During the site visit, the IEDC Team learned that the C3 EDA works to promote the region at the state capital in Montgomery, holding an annual C3 Capitol Day “to thank those who serve [the region] in the legislature and in various state departments that also [provide] support.”²⁹ However, these activities are restricted by the C3 EDA’s budget and limited staff time. As the lead economic development organization for the three-county region, the C3 EDA is uniquely positioned to be the leading voice the region’s economic needs and business concerns in Montgomery. The IEDC Team applauds the C3 EDA’s current efforts but also recommends that the organization develop a strategy for expanding its voice in the state capital.

As noted previously, increasing the C3 EDA’s staff would free Mr. Thornell from some of his day-to-day responsibilities and allow him to more actively promote the region to state legislators and decision-makers. However, because the staff situation will not change overnight, and because it is important for the C3 EDA to become more active in Montgomery, the C3 EDA should look to involve local stakeholders in these efforts. The C3 EDA should utilize prominent local leaders and businesspeople, many of whom regularly call upon state leaders in Montgomery anyway. These individuals could be briefed on the issues facing the region and asked to communicate these issues with the state’s decision-makers on a regular basis.

1.5 Develop a regional brand that reflects the region’s identity

Branding is a core component of successful economic development programs, and a community’s brand should be a reflection of its identity. However, it can be difficult for regional EDOs to define the brand of a wide territory encompassing a large number of communities that may have differing perceptions of their identity. After site visit discussions with stakeholders from all three C3 counties, IEDC Team members agreed that the C3 region seems to be lacking a unified brand, which is partly because there is no single and agreed-upon identity that summarizes what it means to live and work in the C3 region. Therefore, **the IEDC recommends that the C3 EDA lead an effort to create a strong regional brand that reflects the region’s identity.**

In regard to economic development, a brand is the sum of all the characteristics—both tangible and intangible—that make a place unique.³⁰ Branding is important in economic development because:

1. Places leave strong and lasting impressions on human beings, and human beings ultimately make decisions regarding a company’s location.

²⁹ C3 Accomplishments September 2014

³⁰ <http://www.slideshare.net/wright0405/demystifying-economic-development-branding>

2. Globalization has significantly increased competitiveness among communities, and companies now have a much larger number of options in which to locate. A community's brand is therefore crucial to helping it stand apart and compete in the global marketplace.
3. A location's brand is important in attracting and retaining a talented workforce, which is in turn crucial for attracting and retaining companies in today's business climate. Firms do not only care about the business climate and their bottom line, but also about whether their employees will enjoy living in the new location.
4. Having a brand that is accepted by the local community will help unite residents, provide them with a sense of ownership and investment in the community, and allow the community to have a conversation about how it is perceived and what it can do to enhance or improve that perception.³¹

To successfully develop a brand, a community must first understand its identity. At its core, a community's identity is rooted in the common beliefs and values of its residents, and it is also shaped by outside impressions of the community. Components of a community's identity include cultural, economic, political, and physical associations connected with that location.

A branding effort should begin with an evaluation of the community's current identity. A regional SWOT analysis should be conducted to account for the region's assets, advantages, and disadvantages, especially in relation to nearby regions. The SWOT analysis will identify strengths and challenges that will be addressed in the subsequent marketing plan.

As a party of this SWOT analysis, the C3 EDA should reach out to stakeholders and residents to help determine the image of the region, understand how the image impacts the region's economic development marketing efforts, and discuss how to highlight positive attributes and address misperceptions. One method for collecting input is through a survey. This survey should be distributed to local residents and businesses, site selection consultants, and businesses in neighboring counties.

Survey responses that are collected will be a good source of information regarding the region's perceived quality of life and attractiveness. The survey can be conducted online or via telephone, email, or even in-person. Sample survey questions should be tailored for different groups. The survey for local residents and businesses could include the following questions.

- Why did you choose to locate in the community?
- What is your perception of the region's image/identity?
- How have you benefitted from being located in the region?
- Have any local factors been detrimental to your business?

³¹ <http://www.slideshare.net/wright0405/demystifying-economic-development-branding>

- How do you perceive the quality of life in the region?
- Have your answers to any of these questions changed recently? If so, why?

Surveys for site selection consultants and non-local businesses should first seek to ascertain their familiarity with the C3 region. This will provide a better understanding of whether outside audiences are aware of the C3 region and its assets. These survey responses will also indicate whether future marketing efforts should work to improve or reinforce a positive image, or change an unfavorable image.

The result of this process will be a better understanding of how the C3 region is perceived by local residents and businesses both inside and outside of the region. This knowledge will enable the C3 EDA and decision-makers to determine a strategy for developing, marketing, and eventually nurturing its identity.

1.5.1 Explore the repositioning of C3 EDA’s organizational name

The name “C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance” accurately conveys that the organization is alliance of three counties in northwest Alabama that works to promote economic development in the region. However, that name does not provide much insight into the region’s sensibilities, offerings, or brand. As previously mentioned, the lack of a regional brand or identity is a challenge for the C3 region. Once the lack of a regional brand is addressed as recommended above, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA explore the repositioning of the organization’s name in order to better reflect the community’s brand and identity.**

1.6 Map the regional supplier network

Alabama is ranked as the top state for automotive manufacturing, and a major strength of the C3 region is its location within the Southern Auto Corridor.³² There are a number of major automotive manufacturers within driving distance of the C3 region, including:

- Mercedes, which is located outside of Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
- Honda, which is located outside of Birmingham, Alabama.
- Hyundai, which is located outside of Montgomery, Alabama.
- Toyota, which is located outside of Tupelo, Mississippi.
- Nissan, which is located outside of Jackson, Mississippi.
- Kia, which is located just across the Alabama border in West Point, Georgia.
- Volkswagen, which is located just across the Alabama border in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

With so many large manufacturers in the Southern Auto Corridor, there is a consistently high demand for supplies and manufactured components. For the purposes of supply chain management, these suppliers are

³² http://www.al.com/business/index.ssf/2014/08/alabama_ranked_as_top_state_fo.html#incart_river

organized into hierarchical tiers according to their relationship with the manufacturer. Although there may be overlap, the tiers are generally defined as follows.

- Tier 1: These companies provide finished components directly to the manufacturer. They are typically the largest and most technically advanced companies in the supply chain.
- Tier 2: These companies sell parts and materials for finished components to Tier 1 companies.
- Tier 3: These companies supply raw materials to either Tier 1 or Tier 2 firms.³³

Because of its proximity to both manufacturers and Tier 1 suppliers, and its diverse manufacturing base, the C3 region is uniquely positioned to take advantage of this demand for automotive manufacturing supplies. The C3 EDA is aware of this fact, because “matching local suppliers and buyers” is listed as a broad objective in the C3 EDA’s Action Plan. It was also pointed out to the IEDC Team during the site visit. Specifically, the IEDC Team was told that, in addition to assisting existing local suppliers, the C3 EDA hopes to attract more Tier 2 and Tier 3 suppliers to the region. To effectively accomplish this goal, the C3 EDA must first have a full understanding of the region’s supplier network. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to map its regional supplier network.**

Below are recommendations for mapping the supplier network.

1. **Assemble a team of local stakeholders** who can provide information, including historical background and context, regarding the region’s suppliers and their customers. As the process unfolds, these stakeholders can help interpret data and provide feedback on how certain suppliers fit into the network.
2. Before reaching out to local businesses, **conduct thorough background research** via existing databases and open sources to develop a preliminary map of the supplier network. This initial research will avoid taking more time from the business community than necessary. The research should seek to identify key facilities in the region, what products are being produced, and what suppliers are being used. Sometimes, companies have this information listed on their website. The team of local stakeholders will also be a useful resource at this stage.
3. **Interview or survey the key suppliers** that have been identified. Interviews and surveys should seek to gain a full understanding of the supplier’s inputs, production process, and outputs. Keep in mind that although suppliers may work in the same industry (e.g., automotive), they can produce very different products (e.g, one may produce car seats while the other produces tires). Therefore, interview/survey questions should be tailored for each company. Tailoring the questions will help ensure high response rates.

³³ http://trade.gov/wcm/groups/internet/documents/article/auto_reports_parts2010.pdf

When necessary or appropriate, use the team of stakeholders to reach out and arrange interviews. Utilizing stakeholders who have a relationship with suppliers will improve response rates. Also, since survey results often provide inconsistent and incomplete data, this team can help check the findings and fill in any gaps.

4. **Organize the data and make it accessible.** Once the data has been gathered, it should be presented in a way that makes it easy to understand. Visual tools such as maps will be useful for communicating the findings. The data can be plotted geographically using mapping software, which may already be on-hand or available through a partner. There are also a number of no-cost mapping programs that can be found online. When the data is visualized, it will be possible to learn about the nature of the supplier network in a single glance.

The data should also be organized and plotted according to the tiered supplier hierarchy mentioned previously. This visual will depict the region's production process and show how raw materials are converted into finished products. It will also show the integration of various industries and manufacturers. These visuals will enable local businesses to better understand the relationship between their operations and the broader community. Maps may also lead businesses to discover potential new clients and opportunities for collaboration that could reduce operating costs.

Finally, mapping the data will allow the supplier network to be viewed alongside the transportation network. This visualization may illuminate opportunities for consolidating or improving suppliers' transportation methods, thereby lower transportation costs. The C3 EDA should particularly take note of suppliers currently located along I-22 and track future suppliers that move to the corridor in order to measure and report on the highway's economic development impact.

5. **Prioritize actionable opportunities** before presenting the data to stakeholders and the community. Instead of presenting everything at once, findings and recommendations should be prioritized so as not to be overwhelming. When local suppliers see that there are straightforward opportunities to improve their business, they are more likely to consider the findings and recommendations. The fact that improving the supplier network benefits the whole region should also be emphasized.
6. **Make a plan to improve the supplier network** and attempt to address any gaps. Assist existing suppliers to address relevant findings and recommendations, and work to recruit new suppliers to fill gaps that were identified. Track improvements to the supplier network over time and monitor the multiplier effect.³⁴

³⁴ <http://www.iedconline.org/blog/2014/06/09/economic-recovery/ed-now-feature-what-regional-supply-chain-mapping-can-do-for-your-community/>

Mapping the regional supplier network will provide a number of benefits for both local businesses and the regional economy as a whole. The knowledge gained will allow the C3 EDA to identify gaps in the supplier network and better predict future problems before they arise. Understanding the supplier network will also enable the C3 EDA to inform suppliers and other businesses of important opportunities. For instance, during the site visit the IEDC Team learned that companies like Max Home make a concerted effort to use local supplier whenever possible. However, to protect their bottom line, they also have to compare prices from suppliers outside of the region. During this process, the company may accidentally overlook a local supplier and purchase supplies elsewhere. Having access to a detailed map of the regional supply chain would help prevent this investment from leaving the community.

Similarly, there may be an opportunity for companies that source from abroad to change to a local supplier. During the site visit, the IEDC Team heard that multiple companies source from Mexico. A detailed map of the regional supply chain would help ensure that these companies are not overlooking the opportunity to utilize a competitive regional supplier. A better understanding of the supply chain may also lead to collaboration between businesses, which could lead to increased product quality, streamlined production and/or delivery, and technology advancements through information sharing and cooperation. Understanding the supplier network will help give local businesses and the regional economy the competitive edge it needs to succeed in the 21st century economy.

2. Address Industrial Properties

The availability of industrial properties is an economic development strength for the C3 region. There are 17 industrial parks and sites listed on the C3 EDA's website, and detailed information regarding available acreage, utilities, and zoning is included for each. However, **the IEDC Team believes that more can be done to take advantage of these assets and recommends the following actions.**

2.1 Continue efforts to establish shovel-ready industrial sites

During the site visit, the IEDC Team toured a number of the C3 region's industrial sites. Although the number of sites and the availability of options was impressive, most of the sites were undeveloped. As the site location industry has become more competitive in recent years, the availability of pre-developed and "shovel-ready" sites has become an important way for locations to distinguish themselves from the competition.³⁵ The C3 EDA recognizes the value of shovel-ready sites and has worked to get some of its sites shovel-ready. **The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA continue its efforts to establish shovel-ready industrial sites.**

While there is not a single standard definition of what makes a site shovel-ready, the term is generally understood to refer to a site that is primed and ready for development in that it has all of the planning, zoning,

³⁵ <http://siteselection.com/issues/2009/may/SAS-Shovel-Ready/pg04.htm>

surveys, title work, environmental studies, soil analysis, and public infrastructure engineering completed in advance of company locating to the site.³⁶ This is attractive for companies because it reduces the time it takes for them to start construction and begin operations, which provides them cost savings. Shovel-ready sites also help mitigate a company’s risk when locating to a new site, because the company will know many more details about the site’s attributes and will be less likely to discover a surprise or problem during the development process.

The C3 EDA’s goal of establishing shovel-ready industrial sites should include conceptual planning and design for available properties. This planning effort should:

- Ensure that industrial sites are compatible with surrounding land uses and that the sites create long-term value for both the community and industrial users.
- Promote sustainable development by minimizing environmental impacts, protecting natural resources, and reducing waste.
- Anticipate changing markets and industrial needs and work to ensure the sites are flexible for a variety of industrial uses.
- Include, at a minimum, selective clearing and enhanced access for vehicles to encourage site tours and evaluations with prospective businesses and site selectors.

One potential source of financing for these efforts is the State of Alabama. *The Alabama Veterans and Rural Jobs Act* (HB57), which was passed in 2015, establishes a \$20 million fund to “allow the State Industrial Development Authority to make loans to rural entities for funding site preparation and other expenses associated with projects that are creating jobs in a rural area.”³⁷

2.2 Explore the possibility of creating a joint mega-site with partners

Although there is no single agreed-upon definition, a mega-site is generally considered to be a large (i.e., 1,000+ acres) parcel of shovel-ready land that is intended for heavy industrial development. In addition to being shovel-ready, mega-sites require both highway and rail access and the availability of a skilled workforce. Since mega-sites are so large, they often span local boundaries and rely on regional resources. Examples of projects located on mega-sites include the Mercedes plant in Tuscaloosa and the Hyundai plant in Montgomery.

Mega-sites are important in economic development because they help attract large companies that have the potential to transform a regional economy. For instance, the Hyundai plant in Montgomery resulted in \$2.8 billion in investment, 3,100 factory jobs, and 9,000 supplier jobs.³⁸ Because of this potential economic impact,

³⁶ <http://businessfacilities.com/2013/11/cover-story-shovel-ready-sites-growing-ground/>

³⁷ <http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/ALISON/searchableinstruments/2015RS/Printfiles//HB57-int.pdf>

³⁸ <http://www.ptrc.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=4495>

the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA explore the possibility of creating a joint mega-site with its economic development partners in greater northwest Alabama.

Despite the previous examples, it is important to note that mega-sites are not only intended for companies in the automotive industry. Mega-sites across the country are home to all types of industries and may include railroad, steel fabrication, and semiconductor facilities.

2.3 Develop rail-served sites

Although the C3 region boasts 17 industrial parks and sites, only one site is currently rail-served. A handful of the other sites have the potential for rail service but have not yet developed that capability. When locating to the C3 region, some companies—such as Steel Dust Recycling—have worked directly with local rail providers to develop a rail spur for their site. However, proactively increasing the number of rail-served sites would provide value for potential companies and site selectors and make the C3 region more competitive. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to develop more rail-served industrial sites.**

2.4 Ensure that AdvantageSite locations have clear signage

The AdvantageSite program—which is jointly sponsored by the Alabama Department of Commerce, Alabama Power, and a number of other entities—is “a voluntary industrial site preparedness program created in order to make the state more competitive for companies considering a location in Alabama.” Locations with the AdvantageSite designation have met agreed-upon “standards related to ownership, accessibility, infrastructure, planning, zoning, environmental, and geotechnical due diligence.”³⁹ This designation shows companies that the site is ready for development and that they will not have to start from scratch.

There are currently five AdvantageSite locations in the C3 region, including at least one in each of the C3 counties. The fact that these locations have voluntarily earned the designation is a strength that should be energetically promoted. During the site visit, the IEDC Team was able to visit these AdvantageSite locations. Although the AdvantageSite logo was displayed at each location except at the Guin I-22 site, **the IEDC Team recommends that the logo be more prominently displayed and the locations’ status as AdvantageSite locations be more clearly promoted.**

2.5 Develop preliminary designs of speculative buildings

During the site visit, the IEDC Team learned that the C3 region has a history of successfully developing speculative (“spec”) buildings, two of which have sold in recent years. In early 2015, the Tombigbee Electric Cooperative moved into its new facility, which was built as a spec building by the City of Hamilton to spur

³⁹ <http://www.amazingalabama.com/advantage-site-program.html>

development in the I-22 Industrial Park. Around the same time, the Alabama Department of Transportation announced that it would be partnering with the City of Fayette and Fayette County to build out a 52,500-square-foot former spec building to accommodate operations for the region. The project was estimated to result in \$6 million in investment over three years. Due to these successes, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA develop preliminary designs for additional spec buildings** in the event that future economic conditions enable construction.

3. Enhance workforce development efforts

The C3 region's workforce and its workforce development efforts are a strength in many ways. The region is home to a hardworking and eager workforce that is dedicated to local employers. The region purposefully utilizes local resources like Beville State Community College to build the community's skills. There is outreach to, and coordination with, local high schools that train future workers, and industries based in the region are engaged in workforce development. Furthermore, the State of Alabama has demonstrated that it is committed to workforce development on a broader scale.

Yet, during the site visit, the IEDC Team heard mixed perceptions of the region's workforce. Therefore, **the IEDC Team believes that more can be done to leverage existing workforce development resources and enhance the region's workforce development efforts.**

3.1 Quantify the C3 region's workforce composition to better understand workforce

The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to better quantify the region's workforce composition, including skill and education levels. Knowing the workforce's composition is important because it will allow the C3 EDA to better promote itself to site selectors and companies looking to locate in the region. It will also allow the C3 EDA to determine areas of the workforce that have shortcomings or need to be addressed. For instance, the IEDC Team heard from one large employer that "Pre-employment education could be better." Once a better understanding of the region's workforce is obtained, these issues can be addressed.

When the regional workforce composition is being determined, commuters should be included in the calculation. Census data shows that there are large employment numbers in a 60-mile radius, and the IEDC Team heard that worker's "come from all over." For instance, the IEDC Team was told that NACCO (Hyster) has drawn employees from 21 different counties. The ability of the C3 region to draw workers from a broader area is an economic development strength, and a full understanding of the composition of this extended workforce will enable the C3 region to attract companies in need of skilled workers.

3.2 Expand manufacturing awareness programs to earlier grades

The C3 region should be applauded for efforts to promote workforce training—especially in regard to manufacturing skills—in local high schools and community colleges. For example, the C3 EDA sponsors an annual Career Day for local schools. Similarly, the Alabama Technology Network (ATN) sponsors an annual Manufacturing Day for students in the eighth-grade through high school.⁴⁰ These efforts and others were described and labeled as economic development strengths of the C3 region earlier in this report. However, **the IEDC Team believes that the C3 region would benefit from expanding manufacturing awareness programs to earlier grades.**

In addition to developing its own initiatives, the C3 EDA should consider the following programs.

- *Dream It. Do It.*—This is an industry-led effort to “change the perception of the manufacturing industry and inspire the next generation of workers to pursue manufacturing careers.” The program provides members with access to national support and resources to “aid pro-manufacturing efforts and join a network of industry leaders that implement activities to meet local, regional, and statewide workforce needs.” The program is located in 40 states. In Alabama, there is a program at Calhoun Community College in Tanner, Alabama that serves the greater Huntsville region. The program operates under an annual subscription model with a \$3,000 annual fee for regional programs. More information can be found at: <http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/Image/Dream-It-Do-It/Dream-It-Do-It.aspx>.
- *Project Lead the Way (PLTW)*—This 501c3 organization develops STEM curricula for K-12 student and teachers throughout the U.S. as a way to enhance U.S. economic competitiveness by preparing students for technology and engineering careers. Participating schools pay a flat fee that includes curriculum, course software, and access to technical support. In the C3 region, Hamilton Middle School and Hamilton High School are already members of the PLTW network. The C3 EDA should encourage these schools to communicate their experience with PLTW and the program’s benefits to other schools in the region.

3.3 Work to maximize the benefits of new federal workforce legislation

In July 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which was the first update to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. This new legislation was an effort to address and modernize the national workforce development system that has changed significantly since the original legalization was enacted. In addition to reauthorizing the workforce programs created under WIA, the new legislation aims to strengthen the country’s workforce development programs and improve upon Americans’ ability to access these opportunities in four main ways. The law:

⁴⁰ www.mfgday.com/events/2015/west-alabama-works-2

1. Enhances services for low-income citizens who limited skills, have dropped out of school, or lack employment experience, or face other barriers to employment.
2. Expands access to training and education opportunities to help individuals find employment and develop careers.
3. Assists low-income and unemployed individuals earn a paycheck while enrolled in on-the-job training.
4. Unifies state and local approaches to workforce planning efforts and establishes performance metrics to track progress an ensure accountability.

Because there are a number of WIOA provisions that may benefit the C3 region’s workforce development efforts, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to maximize the benefits of this new federal workforce legislation.**

The Second Opportunity System (S.O.S.) at Bevill State Community College is one example of a WIOA-funded program that has the potential to improve the C3 region’s workforce.⁴¹ The program aims to assist high school dropouts aged 16-21 to develop the skills needed to secure and retain employment. S.O.S. counselors provide youth with employment counseling, career guidance, leadership development, job referrals, and many other services.

The Alabama Incumbent Worker Training Program is another WIOA-funded initiative that stands to benefit the C3 region. This program provides assistance to Alabama employers to help with staff training expenses.

3.4 Improve access to career tech programs

As noted previously in this report, there are a number of training and workforce development opportunities in the C3 region. However, since these training opportunities are held at locations spread throughout the three-county region, it can be difficult for residents to attend regularly (if at all), especially without a car or reliable transportation. The limited transportation options to workforce development locations, like the two Bevill State Community College campuses, pose a challenge to future economic development in the C3 region. Put simply, public transportation is not reliable enough to ensure that residents can get the training that want. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to improve access to career tech programs.** Recommendations for improving rural transportation options include the following.

⁴¹ <http://www.bscc.edu/community/second-opportunity-system.php>

3.4.1 Encourage the review and update of regional transportation plans

The West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) has a detailed “Coordinated Public Transportation Plan” in place, but it was last updated in 2011.⁴² In addition, WARC only covers Lamar and Fayette counties. Marion County is under the purview of the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG). NACOLG has a “Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan,” but it was last updated in 2012. The C3 EDA should encourage both regional councils to review and update these transportation plans.

Though dated, the plans still provide valuable insight. The NACOLG plan details the region’s unmet transportation needs and transit service barriers before offering strategies to address those needs and barriers.⁴³ The C3 EDA should review this document and determine if the strategies have been effectively employed. The WARC document includes a detailed synopsis of transportation funding programs at the federal, state, and local levels. These funding programs should be reviewed to see if any potential funding has been overlooked.

3.4.2 Continue meeting regularly with BSCC’s Workforce Development Division

The C3 EDA should continue holding quarterly retention and recruitment meetings with Beville State Community College’s Workforce Development Division. This communication is important to addressing the community’s workforce needs, including improving access to career tech programs.

3.5 Bolster and support skilled trade programs

During the site visit, the IEDC Team heard from multiple companies about the need for skilled workers such as welders, plumbers, electricians, sewers, and carpenters. In particular, two companies told the IEDC Team that they were seeking to expand and hire additional employees, but they were having trouble finding workers with the requisite skills. This additional employment would be a significant boost to the C3 region’s economy. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to bolster and support skilled trade programs.**

To do so, the C3 EDA should continue its efforts with partners to educate students about rewarding jobs in the skilled trade sectors. In addition to addressing students while they are in school, efforts should also be made to assist educators and parents with strategies for guiding students into career tracks that will lead to a stable, well-paying career. These efforts may include aggregating and disseminating information on federal and state grants and scholarships for students who wish to enroll in skilled-trade education and training.

For example, during the site visit the IEDC Team learned of the Bovay Foundation’s Guaranteed Tuition Program, which provides all Lamar County high school students or GED recipients with the opportunity to attend BSCC

⁴² <http://www.dot.state.al.us/moweb/doc/2011%20HSCTP/WARC/Region%20%20WARC.pdf>

⁴³ [http://www.dot.state.al.us/moweb/doc/Transit/Region%201%20\(NACOLG\).pdf](http://www.dot.state.al.us/moweb/doc/Transit/Region%201%20(NACOLG).pdf)

tuition-free for two years.⁴⁴ Another example is the Go Build Alabama program of the Alabama Construction Recruitment Institute (ACRI).⁴⁵ Established by the Alabama Legislature in 2009, the ACRI works to educate students, parents, and teachers about career opportunities in the construction industry. Its Go Build Alabama program offers scholarships through the Construction Education Foundation of Alabama, including more general scholarships for high school seniors, veterans, and women who are interested in construction, and more specific scholarships for women and veterans interested in road-building.

3.6 Increase opportunities for industry outreach in secondary schools

During the site visit, the IEDC Team met with a representative of a large industrial company located in the C3 region that conducts outreach to local high schools. This outreach is intended to inform students of the kind of work that is being carried out in the community in an effort to raise awareness of careers that are available locally. Students are told which degrees and skills the company is seeking so that those who are interested can take this into consideration when planning their future studies. Making students aware of potential job opportunities not only helps to ensure the company's future workforce, but it also helps the community retain young talent and become more attractive to prospective companies. However, the company representative told the IEDC Team that he was unaware of any other companies that were conducting similar outreach in local high schools. Therefore, the **IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA proactively encourage other industries in the region to conduct outreach in local schools.** The C3 EDA should explain to companies that such outreach is beneficial for both their business and the community as a whole. The C3 EDA can facilitate this outreach by working as an intermediary between schools and industries.

3.7 Create a one-stop coordination center with pooled resources for workforce development

Although the C3 region provides access to a number of workforce development resources, these tend to be scattered throughout the three-county region. In the C3 region, there are Alabama Career Center branches in Vernon, Fayette, and Hamilton. However, these centers are smaller and have more limited services and resources than Alabama's two one-stop centers, which are located in Mobile and Birmingham.⁴⁶ **The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA explore the possibility of creating a one-stop coordination center.** This one-stop coordination center may be in addition to the other three Alabama Career Centers, or it may be worthwhile to consider combining these centers and pooling their resources to create one larger and more effective center.

4. Leverage I-22

The C3 region enjoys access to the nation's newest interstate: Interstate-22 (I-22). The 213-mile highway, which connects Memphis and Birmingham, runs through the heart of Marion County. The C3 region's location along

⁴⁴ <http://www.bscc.edu/financialaid/foundation-scholarships.php>

⁴⁵ <http://www.gobuildalabama.com>

⁴⁶ <https://joblink.alabama.gov/ada/r/contact>

the I-22 Corridor presents an important economic development opportunity for the region. The IEDC Team applauds the C3 EDA for realizing this opportunity and working to take advantage of the highway. However, **the IEDC Team believes that more can be done to leverage I-22.**

4.1 Schedule updated traffic count upon completion of the highway

Although it is nearly complete, the highway is still waiting for the completion of its final connections near Birmingham. Once the highway is fully connected, **the C3 EDA should work to obtain an updated traffic count**, especially regarding the traffic that travels through the C3 region. Having this data will be important for using the region’s access to the highway to market the region to prospective companies and site selectors.

4.2 Develop a regional brand and marketing strategy for the counties along I-22

The I-22 Corridor is an important economic development asset and opportunity for the region. The IEDC Team applauds the C3 EDA for recognizing this and working to establish the I-22 Alliance, which is a six-county (the C3 counties plus Franklin, Winston, and Walker counties) regional development alliance that was created to help market and promote the broader I-22 Corridor.

Over the last eight years, the I-22 Alliance has promoted the Corridor through trade shows, “Meet the Consultants” events, and hosted dinners with the Alabama Department of Commerce, Alabama Power, and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Although these efforts have resulted in varying degrees of success, the IEDC Team believes that the lack of an established regional brand and marketing strategy may hinder promotion of the I-22 Corridor. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA lead an effort develop a brand and marketing strategy for the I-22 Corridor** in order to increase awareness of the new highway, promote the region’s assets, and make the region more marketable to prospective companies and site selectors.

4.3 Enhance I-22 off-ramps

During the site visit, the IEDC Team noticed that there was a lack of wayfaring signage along stretches of I-22. For instance, the highway seemed to lack the instantly recognizable official U.S. Interstate signs. IEDC Team members also noted that the highway was not labeled as I-22 in multiple pieces of GPS software. In addition, highway off-ramps seemed to be missing signage notifying drivers of retail, dining, gas, and hotel options. In fact, during the site visit there was no signage for the IEDC Team’s hotel at the exit for the hotel. Also, the highway and many of its exits were very dark at night. Although signage and lighting may seem like relatively minor concerns, these simple issues could discourage travelers from stopping to eat, shop, or refuel in the C3 region. **Therefore, IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA lead an effort to enhance the parts of I-22 that lie within the C3 region.**

In addition to including wayfaring signage, additional signage could be used to promote local festivals and attractions along I-22. Perhaps more importantly, the C3 EDA could install signage to promote its economic development offerings, including available sites, industrial parks, and access to both manufacturers and suppliers. This signage would also be a good place to display the new marketing slogan or regional brand that was previously recommended.

The C3 EDA should also explore the possibility of establishing an official Welcome Center along I-22 in the C3 region. Such a center would provide tourists with a place to stop and rest while also learning about the region and its amenities. As one stakeholder said during the site visit, “People in the state know us. Outside the state, we have more work to do.” A Welcome Center would be a great way to introduce the C3 region to a broader audience.

4.4 Conduct a retail gap analysis

During the site visit, the IEDC Team heard that, “New retail businesses at off-ramps drive traffic to the city of Winfield.” Since these retail businesses are understood to be an economic driver, it is important to understand what specific retail sectors are successful currently and what retail sectors have the potential for future growth.

Therefore, once I-22 is complete, the **IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA conduct a gap analysis** to help identify retail voids that are present due to a lack of retail supply and retail leakage to other nearby markets . The “gap” in this analysis refers to the difference between a community’s actual sales and its estimated potential sales, and it should be based on the state’s per capita spending average per retail sector. Identifying these areas will allow the C3 EDA better understand how it can take advantage of future retail development opportunities that have the greatest retail potential.

5. Improve community outreach and education efforts to build support for the C3 EDA

Since its inception, the C3 EDA has been responsible for many economic development successes that have helped it to earn the respect of community stakeholders. Yet, as previously noted, the IEDC Team believes that the C3 EDA could be even more effective with greater resources and a larger footprint. In order to expand the organization’s capabilities and increase its impact, more people in the region must be aware of the impact of the organization’s work. In particular, future leaders must understand the importance of economic development to the region’s future. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA improve its community outreach and education efforts** to grow the organization’s support and recognition.

5.1 Create a dialogue with citizens about what economic development is and how it works

Open discussion with the community about its collective vision for the future is important for successful long-term economic development efforts. This discussion will be more fruitful if participants understand the basic principles of economic development and how economic development efforts work to benefit the community. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to create a dialogue with local citizens about what economic development efforts entail and how economic development efforts work to benefit the region.**

This dialogue should include creating awareness of the C3 EDA's work and informing citizens of regional economic development initiatives. The process should include outreach to a broad array of groups and networks through in-person meetings, newsletters, annual reports, and social media. Regular town-hall-style meetings are often an effective method for gathering input and explaining economic development processes.

5.2 Publicize and celebrate economic development successes

Although the C3 EDA is a relatively young organization, it has already achieved a number of successes that have positively impacted the region and its economy. However, if the C3 EDA does not proactively celebrate these accomplishments then it risks the successes being overlooked. In order to demonstrate its value to community and thereby build support for its efforts, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA better publicize and celebrate its economic development successes.** These celebrations will also help the C3 EDA to maintain interest and enthusiasm in its efforts.

The C3 EDA's economic development successes should be celebrated through more standard mediums like press releases and e-newsletters, but also through more modern avenues like social media. While the C3 EDA has a Twitter account, there have only been 181 posts since April 2011. Twitter is an easy and free way to promote the C3 EDA, especially to younger residents of the C3 region. In addition, the C3 EDA should consider creating videos to highlight its economic development successes. These videos could feature regional leaders, company spokespersons, and C3 EDA representatives, and they could be shared freely on the C3 EDA's website and via YouTube.

5.3 Catalyze a regional leadership program that includes economic development education

The C3 region is fortunate to enjoy strong local leadership in communities throughout its three counties. During the site visit, these leaders demonstrated their understanding of economic development and its importance to the community. Yet, as these leaders age and retire, it is important to realize that their successors need to be prepared for the responsibilities of leadership. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to establish a regional leadership program to help educate and train emerging leaders, especially in regard to economic development issues.** This effort could be based on the Leadership Fayette County program, which

teaches participants about “the interdependencies between sectors of the local economy, as well as the interrelationships of a variety of other local issues.”⁴⁷

5.4 Visit peer and aspirational communities and develop benchmarks

When attempting to build support for an EDO, it is important to understand the attributes that make other EDOs successful. Conducting site visits in both peer and aspirational communities can help the C3 EDA better understand both its current value to the community and also how the organization can improve. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA visit both peer and aspirational communities and create benchmark for improving its economic development efforts.** When visiting primary competitors, a comprehensive comparative analysis should be carried out in order to fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of the C3 region vis-à-vis its competition.

6. Work to further promote and assist entrepreneurial and small businesses development

Entrepreneurial businesses provide a substantial source of employment in today’s economy. In fact, a recent study from the Kauffman Foundation found that small and emerging businesses are responsible for nearly all net-new-jobs created in the U.S.⁴⁸ Without this source of job creation, communities would have difficulty expanding their tax base and improving the quality of life for local residents. Entrepreneurial businesses also benefit local economies in other ways; for instance, they help diversify the economy and make it more resilient to economic downturns and natural disasters. This is because they are nimble and can respond more quickly to changes in the market. And since homegrown businesses are more likely to remain loyal and stay located in the community as they grow, they will benefit the community over the long-term.

However, creating a new business or growing a small business can be very difficult. Entrepreneurs and small business owners face a number of challenges, including:

- Developing business and marketing plans;
- Identifying and securing financing;
- Training and managing staff;
- Accessing markets; and
- Establishing accounting and record-keeping functions.

During the site visit it was clear that the C3 EDA recognizes the value and importance of assisting entrepreneurs and small businesses in the C3 region. In addition, “supporting entrepreneurial opportunities” is listed as a

⁴⁷ <http://fayetteal.org/onetime/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.kauffman.org/what-we-do/resources/entrepreneurship-policy-digest/the-importance-of-young-firms-for-economic-growth>

specific objective in the C3 EDA's Action Plan. However, the IEDC Team believes that more can be done in this regard and therefore **recommends that the C3 EDA work to further promote and assist entrepreneurial and small business development.**

6.1 Develop a plan for promoting and assisting entrepreneurial and small businesses

Because of their importance to the local economy, EDOs should have a plan for promoting and assisting entrepreneurial and small businesses. **The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA develop such a plan.** The plan should include the following goals.

- Ensure that the C3 region's regulatory environment continues to be favorable for the creation of new businesses.
- Create awareness regarding entrepreneurship opportunities in the region's schools, community colleges, libraries, civic associations, and other public spaces.
- Encourage regional schools and community colleges to offer entrepreneurship education in areas like business planning, marketing, product development, and management.
- Promote local entrepreneurs and small businesses through economic development marketing efforts and broader community engagement.
- Facilitate access to public data to assist entrepreneurs with business development and marketing decisions.
- Create opportunities for professional networking, mentorship, and peer learning.
- Provide technical assistance to entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- Assist entrepreneurs and small businesses with finding and securing financing, especially when traditional lending sources may be unavailable.

6.2 Increase awareness of entrepreneurial resources

The pro-business economic climate in both Alabama and the C3 region provides fertile grounds for entrepreneurs. In fact, the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council ranked Alabama seventh in the nation for providing a friendly environment for small businesses and entrepreneurs.⁴⁹ In addition to a friendly business environment, entrepreneurs and small businesses in the C3 region enjoy access to a number of existing entrepreneurial service providers. Below is a list of service providers that can serve as potential partners and resources in the C3 EDA's effort to promote entrepreneurship and small businesses. **The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA complete a full inventory of such service providers, adding to the list as necessary, and work to increase awareness of these available resources.**

⁴⁹ <http://www.sbecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/SBPI2014Final.pdf>

U.S. Small Business Administration

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) provides loans for entrepreneurs and small businesses through participating SBA lenders. SBA loan programs include:

- The 504 Loan Program, which provides long-term, fixed-rate financing for major fixed assets such as land, buildings, and equipment.
- The 7(a) Loan Program, which provides working capital for borrowers that would not otherwise qualify and has repayment terms (10-25 years) that are longer than those of commercial loans.
- The Microloan Program, which provides small (up to \$50,000) loans for short-term working capital or the purchase of inventory, supplies, furniture, fixtures, machinery, or equipment.
- Disaster Assistance Loans, which are loan-interest loans that can be used to repair or replace real estate, personal property, machinery and equipment, or inventory and business assets that have been damaged or destroyed in a declared disaster.

It is important to note that the SBA provides additional assistance to minority, woman, and veteran-owned businesses as well as businesses engaged in international trade. The SBA District Office closest to the C3 region is located in Birmingham.⁵⁰

Alabama Small Business Development Center Network

The Alabama Small Business Development Center Network is the statewide implementation of the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program. SBDCs are one-stop centers where small businesses can receive free-of-charge access to technical assistance, information, training, workshops, consulting, and other business services. SBDCs are a valuable resource because they have partnerships in both the public and private sectors and at the regional, state, and national levels.

While there are no SBDCs in the C3 region, there are three within driving distance: the University of Alabama SBDC in Tuscaloosa, the University of North Alabama SBDC in Florence, and the Greater Birmingham Area SBDC in Birmingham. However, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA consider working with these SBDCs to bring training sessions to the region.** SBDCs are strong partners for promoting entrepreneurship, and their presence in the region will provide local entrepreneurs and small businesses with access to assistance they may not otherwise receive.

Alabama Business Incubation Network

The Alabama Business Incubation Network (ABIN) is part of the Alabama SBDC Network. ABIN represents the 16 business incubators located throughout Alabama and coordinates their efforts and resources, which are aimed at providing services to small businesses. The closest active business incubator to the C3 region is the EDGE Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Tuscaloosa.⁵¹

⁵⁰ <https://www.sba.gov/offices/district/al/birmingham>

⁵¹ <http://www.tuscaloosachamber.com/doing-business/business-development/theedge>

Alabama International Trade Center

The Alabama International Trade Center (AITC) is part of the Alabama SBDC Network. Located at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, AITC provides export research, technical trade consulting services, training programs, and trade financing solutions to Alabama’s small business community.

Minority Business Development Centers

The Minority Business Development Center (MBDC) program is an initiative of the Minority Business Development Agency, which is a part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. MBDCs are a national network of one-stop centers that provide minority-owned businesses with technical assistance and access to capital, contracts, and new markets opportunities in an effort to create new jobs and expand the economy. These services better equip minority-owned businesses to succeed in the economy.

The only full-fledged MBDC in Alabama is located in Mobile and is operated by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. However, there is a satellite location in Birmingham.⁵² **The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work with the MBDC to explore the possibility of bringing training sessions to the C3 region.** MBDCs are strong partners for promoting entrepreneurship, and their presence in the region will provide local minority business enterprises with access to assistance they may not otherwise receive.

Service Corps of Retired Executives

The Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) is a network of retired businesspeople that provides free and confidential mentorship to entrepreneurs and small business owners throughout the nation. The 501c3 nonprofit organization is “dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth, and success of small businesses nationwide.” The C3 region is served by SCORE’s Birmingham chapter.⁵³

West Alabama Regional Commission

The West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) is one of two councils of government that serve the region. WARC covers seven counties, including Lamar and Fayette, and is based just west of Tuscaloosa in Northport. WARC operates a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for manufacturing, retail, and service businesses. RLF funds can be used to purchase land or buildings, construct or renovate buildings, purchase equipment and machinery, or provide working capital. Loan sizes available range from \$10,000 to \$250,000 for terms ranging from five to 10 years. In addition, WARC’s website provides additional resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses, including:

- Business Preparedness Toolkits, which provide “a sample preparedness and continuity of operations plan, support materials, and a listing of local emergency resources” for each county.

⁵² <http://www.mbda.gov/businesscenters/mobile>

⁵³ <https://birmingham.score.org/>

- Databooks, which include basic demographic data, maps, and other census-related information on each county.
- Planning documents, such as annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) dating to 2012 and regional studies relating to plans for transportation corridors and waste management.
- Regional information documents, including the studies on the commuting patterns of west Alabama workers and directories for mining, manufacturing and governmental contacts.

The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments

The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG) is the second council of government that serves the region. This five-county group includes Marion County (its southernmost county) and is based in Muscle Shoals. NACOLG has a Revolving Loan Fund that targets small- to medium-sized businesses and small manufacturing companies. RLF funds can be used to purchase land or buildings, construct or renovate buildings, purchase equipment and machinery, or provide working capital. Loan sizes available range from \$10,000 to \$125,000 for terms ranging from five to 15 years.

Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network

The Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network (AERN) was created to encourage entrepreneurship in rural areas of the state. AERN provides entrepreneurs and small businesses with access to an extensive network of university resources and personnel for the purpose of business development and research. In addition, AERN provides materials, training, counseling, and business research services.

The C3 EDA’s office serves as a satellite location for AERN in Marion County. Locals interested in starting or growing their own business can visit the location to access AERN resources, which include software, publications, and information on creating or improving a business plan, identifying market potential, and planning, establishing, and opening a new business. Similar centers can also be found in Lamar and Fayette counties at the Mary Wallace Cobb Memorial Library and the Fayette Chamber of Commerce, respectively.

These AERN centers are a potentially valuable resource for the C3 region, but they seem to be underutilized. It was noted during the site visit that the center located at the C3 EDA’s offices is rarely visited. The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to promote the AERN center more broadly. While there is an AERN sign outside of the C3 EDA’s office building, it would be difficult to notice when driving by on the highway. An easy first step toward promoting the center would be to acquire a larger sign and display it more prominently.

Office of Minority Business Enterprise

The Office of Minority Business Enterprise is a part of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. The office administers a certification program that aims to accredit small, minority-owned, and woman-

owned businesses that are capable of providing goods or services to both the public and private sectors. The certification conveys the business’ legitimacy as a credible enterprise. Other benefits of certification include:

- Notification of business opportunities in the state.
- Access to training opportunities.
- Access to networking events.
- Promotion through a listing in a publication of certified businesses

Alabama Launchpad

Alabama Launchpad is an entrepreneurial promotion initiative of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama. The program “helps high-growth companies start, stay, and grow in Alabama while supporting, advocating, and recognizing entrepreneurship statewide.” Goals of Alabama Launchpad include:

- Providing seed capital to early-stage technology companies.
- Spotlighting early-stage businesses that have market potential.
- Connecting entrepreneurs with a network of key leaders throughout the state.

Alabama Technology Network

The Alabama Technology Network (ATN) is a part of the Alabama Community College System and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership. ATN works to provide businesses with innovative, sustainable, and cost-effective solutions for workforce training. Bevill State Community College is home to the ATN center located in the C3 region.

7. Address talent attraction and retention

During the site visit, a number of stakeholders, businesses, and residents expressed concerns over the C3 region’s difficulty attracting and retaining talented workers. This is important because a region’s ability to attract and retain talented workers is a competitive advantage in the modern economy. In the past, talented workers tended to relocate to locations with abundant jobs; however, in today’s economy, a significant population of talented workers is a strong asset for communities looking to recruit new businesses.

It should be noted that the difficulty attracting and retaining talented workers is a trend affecting rural communities throughout the country. However, certain actions can help prevent talent from leaving the CE region. effects. The **IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to address talent attraction and retention** through the following methods.

7.1 Continue fostering downtown redevelopment and community revitalization

During the site visit, the IEDC Team met with a number of leaders in the C3 community who discussed their efforts to foster downtown redevelopment and community revitalization. For instance, the IEDC Team was told that the City of Sulligent had purchased vacant old buildings, rehabilitated them, and then leased them back to companies with financial incentives. This is an effective model of downtown redevelopment that provides business space that would not have otherwise been available. To encourage similar efforts in other communities in the C3 region, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA explore both public and private funding opportunities that are available to assist in revitalizing and rehabilitating aging properties.**

7.2 Expand marketing of unique regional assets

During the site visit, the IEDC Team learned of many unique regional assets that are located in the C3 region, including: Bear Creek Lake, the Fayette Art Museum and Civic Center, the Fayette Aquatic Center, Jerry Brown Pottery, the Pastime Theater, the Winfield Drive-in Theater, and the Vernon Theater. In addition, the C3 region is home to abundant fishing, hunting, camping, and recreation areas, and there are multiple lakes in the C3 region. Because of these resources, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to expand the marketing of the region's unique assets.** In particular, the marketing focus should be on how to draw visitors from nearby cities like Tupelo and Birmingham. An increase in visitors will provide an influx of tourism dollars for the region.

7.3 Market to and stay connected with young professionals who have moved away from the region

During the site visit, the IEDC Team met with a number of stakeholders who commented on the region's difficulty retaining young professionals. However, many of these same stakeholders mentioned that they knew of young professionals who left the region but later returned to establish a family or take advantage of the region's low cost of living. These returning young professionals are a potential asset for the C3 region, because they often return with skills and employment experience that are not otherwise be available locally. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to market and stay connected with young professionals who have moved away.** The C3 EDA could develop a simple e-newsletter that provides this young professionals with regular community updates and notification of job openings.

7.4 Expand options for entertainment, shopping, restaurants, and personal services

During the site visit, the IEDC Team noted the region's lack of personal service providers such as dry cleaners and salons. There are also limited options for retail shopping, restaurants, and entertainment. In fact, the IEDC Team was told that many locals travel to Tupelo or Florence to shop.

Lacking these options is one factor in the region’s difficult retaining talented workers. When possible, the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to expand the region’s options for entertainment, shopping, and personal services.

8. Become a technology-ready community

In today’s economy, a community’s technological capacity is one of the key factors in its economic growth. Modern companies need and expect reliable broadband access and cell phone service. In addition, many companies require skilled technology workers. In order to better compete in the 21st century economy, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA work to become a technology-ready community.**

8.1 Continue working to expand broadband Internet access

The percentage of Alabama residents without access to fixed broadband Internet service (35 percent) is more than double that of the national average (17 percent). Residents of the C3 regions are even less likely to have access to fixed broadband, as 68 percent of Lamar County residents, 90 percent of Marion County residents, and 99 percent of Fayette County residents are without access to fixed broadband. In regard to broadband access in the state of Alabama, all three counties in the C3 region rate in the lower half of Alabama’s 67 total counties.

Americans without access to fixed broadband by county

	All Areas		
	Pop. w/o Access (1,000s)	% of Pop. w/o Access	Pop. Density (Pop./Land Area)
U.S.	54,560.0	17%	90.9
Alabama	1,701.3	35%	96.4
Fayette	16.6	99%	26.6
Lamar	9.6	68%	23.1
Marion	27.4	90%	40.9

It should be noted that this situation is not unique to the C3 region and that rural regions across the country lag behind urban areas in regard to broadband access. However, it is an important issue to address, because broadband Internet access has been shown to be an engine for growth in rural communities.⁵⁴

During the site visit, the IEDC Team asked about the limited access to broadband and was told that the vast majority of employers, and most concentrated residential areas, do in fact have reliable broadband access. The IEDC Team was also told that the C3 EDA and other community stakeholders have been working for years to

⁵⁴ <http://aese.psu.edu/nercrd/news/2014/rural-economies-found-to-benefit-from-broadband>

expand the region's access to broadband even further. The IEDC Team applauds these efforts and agrees that expanding broadband Internet access will make the C3 region even more competitive, both now and in the future. Therefore, the **IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA continue working to expand broadband Internet access in the region.**

Expanding high-speed Internet access will have benefits beyond the established business community. High-speed Internet is a strong marketing tool that will help attract young and talented workers. In addition, reliable broadband access will allow individuals who are looking to start home businesses to get up and running.

8.1.1 Explore outside opportunities for financing broadband Internet expansion

During the site visit, the IEDC Team learned that the C3 EDA has approached service providers about expanding broadband Internet access in the region but was told that the region's population density is not high enough to make widespread broad access feasible. Therefore, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA explore outside opportunities for financing broadband Internet expansion.**

There is an array of funding opportunities at the federal level. These opportunities are very well summarized in a 2015 document from the Office of U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand titled, "A Guide to Broadband Funding Opportunities: How to Navigate the Funding Process," which can be found in Appendix C of this report. The guide is "a starting point in providing information about what resources are available to individuals, businesses, community organizations, and local government

8.2 Improve cellular phone coverage

Cellular coverage is lacking in some pockets of the C3 region. The IEDC Team experienced this first-hand during the site visit. Similar to broadband Internet access, cellular phone coverage is vital for all modern businesses and industries. The C3 region's limited cellular network may discourage businesses from locating or expanding in the area. Furthermore, the lack of cellular service in certain areas presents a basic safety risk, as cellular networks are often used to communicate in case of emergencies such as natural disasters.

The solution to improving cellular service is simple: more cell towers must be installed. Unfortunately, adding cell towers is expensive, and service providers may be hesitant to install new towers if project revenues are not high enough to cover their expenditures. Nonetheless, **the IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA continue lobbying cell phone companies to install new cell towers and expand their networks.** An added benefit of an expanded cellular network would be the potential for improved access to wireless broadband Internet.

8.3 Continue working to promote technology utilization in the community

There are a number of programs in the C3 region that aim to promote technology utilization in the community. At the K-12 level, many high schools in the C3 region have made an effort to promote technology utilization in their curriculums and are above the state average for technology usage.⁵⁵ A good example is the Lamar County School of Technology, which offers programs in automotive service technology, precision machining, and welding for students in the Lamar County school system. During the site visit, the IEDC Team was told that a student-run Internet café was being developed in the Winfield school system for after-school afters. This cafe will teach students valuable business skills will also providing Internet service for the community. This is a great example of an innovative model for promoting technology utilization. **The IEDC Team recommends that the C3 EDA continue its work to promote technology utilization in the community.**

⁵⁵ <http://www.northwestalabamaeda.org/regional-overview/primary-secondary-education>

Appendix A

IEDC Team Biographies

Faith V. McClintic

Faith McClintic is a highly skilled and accomplished veteran of local government, having spent more than 20 years in public service in both economic development and finance capacities. Having spent more than 15 years as a local economic development practitioner, Faith's insights and experiences bring "real world" knowledge of community assessment and positioning, land ("product") development, public-private partnerships, business plan modeling, and target marketing to a community's business attraction and expansion efforts.

Faith currently serves as the Director of Economic Development for Albemarle County, Virginia, where she is building the County's first formalized Economic Development program. Her previous positions include Assistant Director of Economic Development and Tourism for Stafford County, VA, Assistant Director of Economic Development for Chesterfield County, VA and Development Manager for Meadowville Technology Park - Chesterfield County. In all of these roles, Faith had responsibility for overseeing multi-faceted programs that involved both regional and state economic development partners. She was also actively involved in a number of large-scale and highly visible projects, covering a wide-range of industry sectors.

In addition to her public sector experience, Faith has also worked in banking in both marketing and finance arenas, and has owned and operated two successful small business ventures.

Faith's formal education includes a B.S. in Public Administration from James Madison University, graduate MBA work at the University of Richmond, and completion of the International Economic Development Council's Certified Economic Developer Program. She is also a professionally trained facilitator and Total Quality advisor, and has completed specialized training courses in consultative sales and construction management.

David J. Myers, CEcD

David J. Myers serves as the Executive Director of the Ponca City Development Authority (PCDA), a position he has held since September of 2003. He is the past chairman of the Governor's Economic Development Marketing Team and a past president of the Oklahoma Economic Development Council. PCDA is a public trust accredited by the International Economic Development Council which serves the Ponca City, Oklahoma region.

Prior to joining PCDA, David served as President for the Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance, (GAVEA) in Lancaster, California. GAVEA is a public-private organization developed to build the economy of an area with 440,000 residents and a strong aerospace heritage.

David's career includes service as a Regional Manager for the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, two terms as a member of the Palmdale (California) City Council, the Transportation Chairman of the Southern California Association of Governments (the largest Council of Government in the United States), two years with the Palmdale Water District and ten years as the Director of Development for United Cerebral Palsy in Los Angeles and Texas.

David holds a B.A. in Political Science from California State University Northridge and a Master's Degree in Negotiation and Conflict Management from California State University, Dominguez Hills. He holds the International Economic Development Council's Certified Economic Developer credential and was named the outstanding economic development professional for 2008 by the Oklahoma Professional Economic Development Council. He has had three peer-reviewed professional papers published on subjects dealing with economic development and successful projects in rural and micropolitan areas.

Joy Wilkins, CEcD

Joy Wilkins is an advisor, speaker, facilitator, instructor, and author on community development, economic development, and leadership development matters.

Joy loves to develop partnerships for working together across boundaries, lead high-performing teams, and engage with community leaders to help improve lives. She has served with the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, and a software development start-up; and has delivered research, planning, and consultation services for clients in the United States and Canada.

A Certified Economic Developer by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), Joy is also a registered mediator in the state of Georgia. She has a master's degree in city planning from Georgia Tech; a graduate certificate in real estate from Georgia State University; and a bachelor's degree, with majors in sociology and political science, from the State University of New York at Fredonia.

Joy is a member of the IEDC Board of Directors and has been actively involved in a number of other endeavors to serve and advance the profession since 1994.

Louise Anderson

Louise Anderson is a Senior Associate and Managing Editor at IEDC. Louise has worked in economic development for 14 years, undertaking multiple roles since she joined IEDC. For local governments and economic development organizations, she has researched and consulted on projects related to strategic planning, brownfield redevelopment, downtown revitalization, entrepreneurship and disaster recovery.

Louise also edits and writes for IEDC's bimonthly newsletter, *Economic Development Now*. For four years, she edited a quarterly magazine, *Economic Development America*, for the U.S. Economic Development Administration, which featured innovative programs and best practices in the field. She is the author of numerous research reports and publications on a variety of economic development and organizational issues, ranging from the economic developer's role in site selection to the use of incentives, quality job creation and more.

Prior to joining IEDC, Louise worked in public relations and nonprofit management for Triangle United Way in Research Triangle Park, N.C., and in planning for Wake County, North Carolina. She obtained master's degrees in regional planning (with a focus on economic development) and public administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She also holds bachelor of arts degrees in journalism and English literature from Indiana University at Bloomington.

Tye Libby

Tye Libby is an Economic Development and Research Associate at IEDC. Originally from Columbia, South Carolina, Tye earned a BA in International Affairs from the University of Georgia. He subsequently attended graduate school at the University of Denver.

During his time at IEDC, Tye has led efforts to research and document the history of the organization and its predecessors. He currently manages IEDC’s Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO) program and the Clearinghouse Information and Research Service (CIRS). In addition, Tye has worked on multiple technical assistance projects, and he also contributes research, writing, and editing to other IEDC projects when needed.

Appendix B

Background Report

Economic Development Assessment for the C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance *Background Report*

October 2015



INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

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Table of Contents

Project Scope and Background 3

Regional Overview 4

Demographic Analysis..... 6

 Population Trends 6

 Age Distribution 7

 Race and Ethnicity..... 8

 Educational Attainment 9

 Income and Poverty 10

 Unemployment Rate..... 11

 Labor Force Participation 12

 Tapestry Profiles Overview 13

Economy, Industry and Employment..... 16

 Major Employers..... 16

 Employment Change..... 17

 Commuting Patterns/Workforce Flow 21

 Vehicle Assembly Plants in Alabama and Mississippi 25

 Available Sites and Buildings..... 26

Transportation and Infrastructure..... 28

 Interstate and Rail Access 28

 Broadband Availability 29

Economic Development Organizations, Plans and Initiatives 31

 C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance 31

 The West Alabama Regional Commission..... 33

Background Report, C3 of Northwest Alabama

The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments 34

Chambers of Commerce 35

Utilities 35

Economic Development Partnership of Alabama 36

Alabama Department of Commerce 36

Interstate 22 Alliance 37

Incentives 37

Other Key Stakeholders and Initiatives 39

 Education and Workforce Development 39

 Regional Workforce Development Councils 40

 Entrepreneurship 43

Appendices 44

 Appendix A: “Spotlight on Marion, Lamar and Fayette Counties”

 Appendix B: Biographies

 Appendix C: Workforce Reports

 Appendix D: C3 of Northwest Alabama 2012-2016 Action Plan

 Appendix E: “Discover Fayette, Lamar and Marion Counties” Brochure

 Appendix F: Incentives

Project Scope and Background

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) has contracted with the C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance – which represents Fayette, Lamar and Marion counties – to conduct an economic assessment of the tri-county region. This assessment will examine:

- The local economy and its trends;
- Local economic development assets, challenges and opportunities; and
- Current and planned economic development strategies and initiatives.

Specific recommendations will be provided for improving the effectiveness of economic development efforts in the area. Recommendations also will address opportunities related to a new interstate interchange, enhancement of the retail development climate, and workforce development issues.

In addition, the assessment will look at how economic resilience can be enhanced to ensure the impacts of future disasters are reduced. The tri-county region was impacted by the April 2011 tornado outbreak that was one of the deadliest ever recorded. One of the tornados in that outbreak, an EF-5 (i.e., winds over 200 mph), touched down in Marion County and caused significant damage. The town of Hackleburg, located in Marion County, was 75 percent destroyed, and 18 people were killed in the area. The tornado destroyed a grocery store, three schools, and a Wrangler clothing distribution center, which was a major employer in the region.

This technical assistance project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s Atlanta Regional Office. The grant is focused on the economic recovery and resiliency of communities and regions impacted by disasters during fiscal year 2011.

This project’s scope consists of the following background report; a site visit that will be conducted by an expert panel and two IEDC staff members; and a final written report that will provide recommendations based on findings from the site visit and other research. The expert panel includes:

- Faith McClintic, Director, Albemarle County Economic Development (Albemarle County, VA)
- David J. Myers, CECD, Executive Director, Ponca City Development Authority (Ponca City, OK)
- Joy Wilkins, CECD, Consultant, Serving Communities (Atlanta, GA)

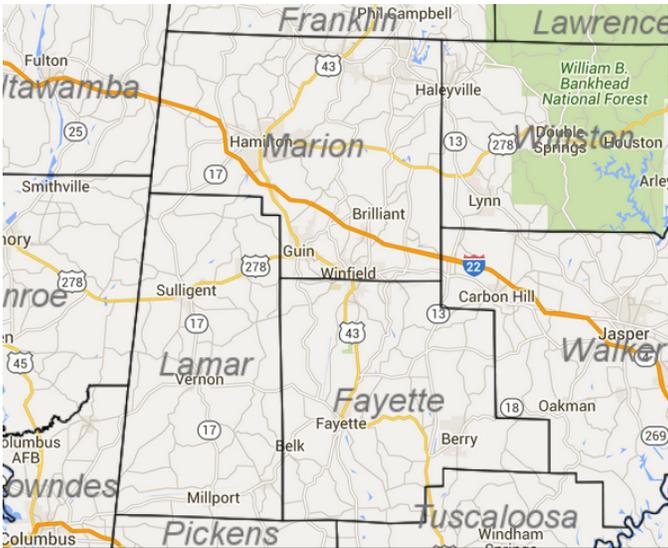
IEDC project staff includes:

- Louise Anderson, Senior Associate, Managing Editor
- Tye Libby, Economic Development and Research Associate

Regional Overview



Source: C3 of Northwest Alabama, <http://www.northwestalabamaeda.org>



Source: <http://www.alabamagis.com>

Background Report, C3 of Northwest Alabama

- **Fayette County** (pop. 17,241) was created in 1824 from portions of Tuscaloosa and Marion counties. It is located in the northwest part of the state near the Mississippi border. The county encompasses 630 square miles and was named for the Marquis de Lafayette, who was touring Alabama at the time of the county's formation in 1824. The county seat is located in the town of **Fayette** (pop. 4,619). Other communities in the county include **Berry** (pop. 1,226) and **Glen Allen** (pop. 642).
- **Lamar County** (pop. 14,564) was created by the Alabama legislature on February 4, 1867 and was originally named Jones County after E.P. Jones, who was a resident of Fayette County. On November 13, 1867 the county was abolished, but it was re-established on October 8, 1868 under the name of Sanford County. Over eight years later, on February 8, 1877, the name was changed to Lamar in honor of Senator L.Q.C. Lamar of Mississippi. Lamar County is bordered by Marion, Fayette and Pickens counties in Alabama and by the state of Mississippi on the west. It currently encompasses 605 square miles.

In 1866, the community known as Swayne Courthouse was designated as the county seat. In 1868 the name was changed to **Vernon** (pop. 2,143). Other towns and communities include **Sulligent** (pop. 2,151), **Millport** (pop. 1,027), **Kennedy** (pop. 435), **Beaverton** (pop. 226), and **Detroit** (pop. 234).
- **Marion County** (pop. 30,776) was created by an act of the Alabama Territorial General Assembly in 1818. It is located in the northwestern part of the state and bounded on the west by the state of Mississippi. It encompasses 743 square miles. The county was named for General Francis Marion of South Carolina. The county seat was established in **Hamilton** (pop. 6,804) in 1820. Other significant towns include **Winfield** (pop. 4,617), **Hackleburg** (pop. 1,494) and **Brilliant** (pop. 889).

Source: <http://www.archives.state.al.us/counties>

Demographic Analysis

Population Trends

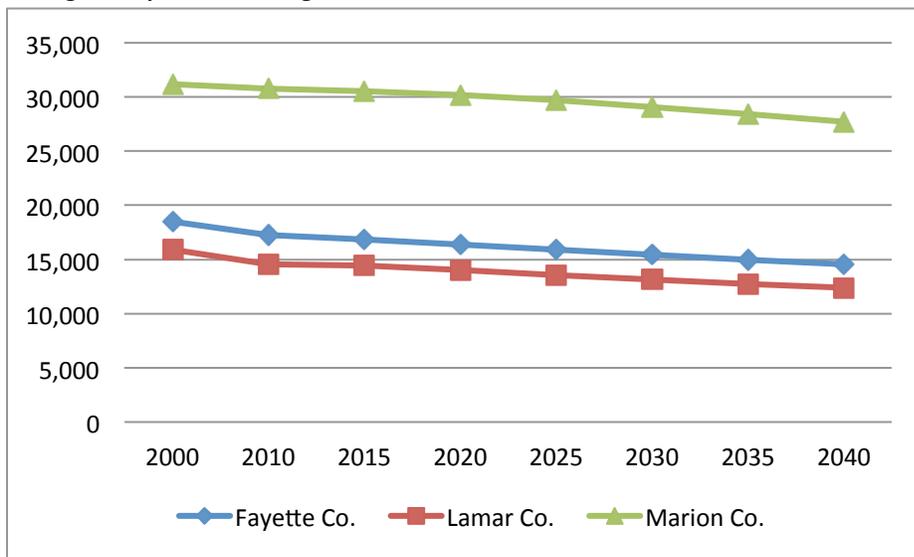
The combined population for the C3 counties is estimated to be 61,802 in 2015. Population in all three counties declined between 2000 and 2010, and it was projected to decline again between 2010 and 2015. Alabama has gained population during the same time period and is projected to continue doing so through 2040. Fayette, Lamar and Marion counties are all projected to continue experiencing a population decline between 2015 and 2040. Marion, the most populous county of the three, is projected to experience the smallest decline of the group.

C3 Region Population: 2000-2010 and 2015-2040 Projections

Area	Census 2000	Census 2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2010-2040 Δ	
									#	%
Alabama	4,447,100	4,779,736	4,931,768	5,096,521	5,244,137	5,373,294	5,486,147	5,587,919	808,183	16.9
Fayette Co.	18,495	17,241	16,832	16,384	15,922	15,436	14,968	14,542	-2,699	-15.7
Lamar Co.	15,904	14,564	14,421	14,020	13,588	13,160	12,766	12,398	-2,166	-14.9
Marion Co.	31,214	30,776	30,549	30,197	29,693	29,082	28,403	27,696	-3,080	-10.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama, March 2015

C3 Region Population Change, 2000-2040



Age Distribution

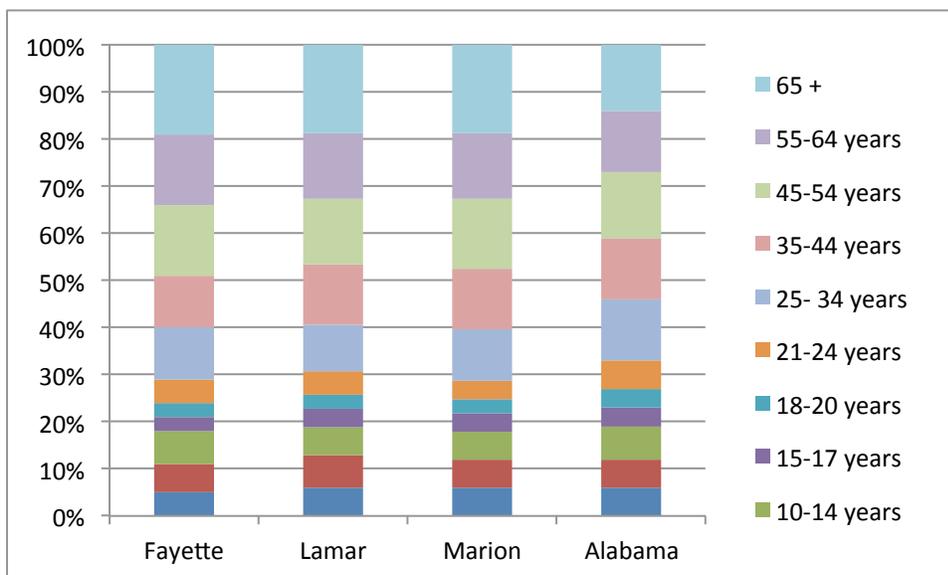
The median age for the C3 region is approximately five years older than the median age of Alabama: 43.3 versus 38.1. The region’s proportion of residents age 65 or older is five percentage points higher than Alabama’s.

Age Distribution, C3 Counties and Alabama

	Fayette	Lamar	Marion	Alabama
Under 5 years	5%	6%	6%	6%
5 -9 years	6%	7%	6%	6%
10-14 years	7%	6%	6%	7%
15-17 years	3%	4%	4%	4%
18-20 years	3%	3%	3%	4%
21-24 years	5%	5%	4%	6%
25- 34 years	11%	10%	11%	13%
35-44 years	11%	13%	13%	13%
45-54 years	15%	14%	15%	14%
55-64 years	15%	14%	14%	13%
65 +	19%	19%	19%	14%
Median Age	43.5	42.9	43.5	38.1

Source: Statebook

Age Distribution, C3 Region and Alabama



Race and Ethnicity

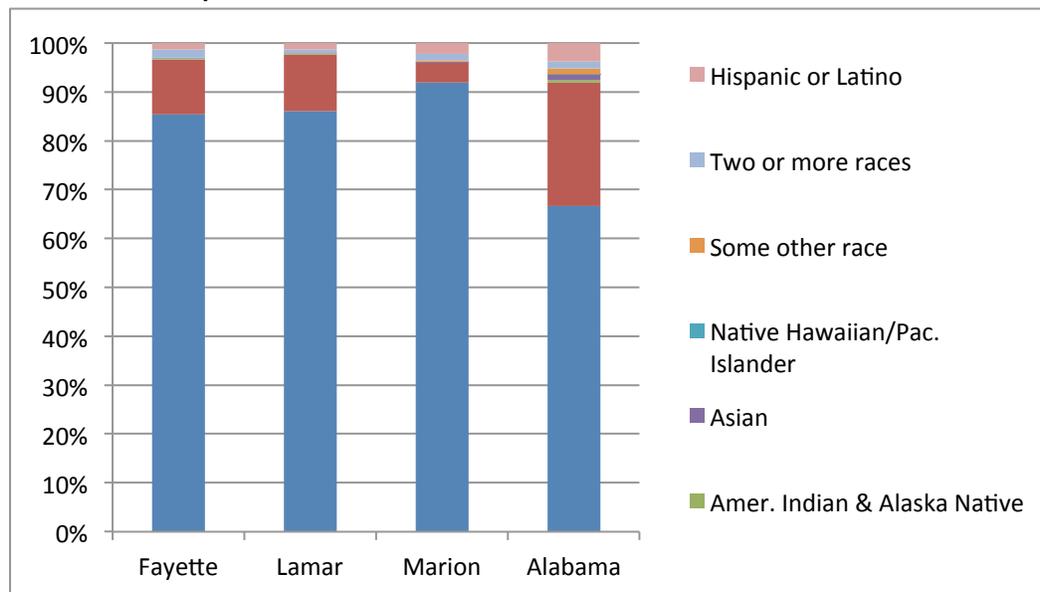
When compared to the state of Alabama, Each of the C3 counties has a significantly higher proportion of whites and a lower proportion of Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino residents. The percentage of the population that is Black/African-American in Fayette and Lamar counties is less than half that of Alabama as a whole. The Black/African-American population is nearly two-thirds smaller in Marion County than Fayette and Lamar counties, and it is less than one-sixth that of the percentage for Alabama.

Race and ethnicity as a percentage of total population

	Fayette	Lamar	Marion	Alabama
White	86.6%	87.3%	93.9%	69.3%
Black/African American	11.4%	11.7%	4.1%	26.3%
Amer. Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%	0.2%	0%	0.5%
Asian	0.2%	0%	0.3%	1.2%
Native HI/Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%
Some other race	0%	0%	0.2%	1.2%
Two or more races	1.6%	0.7%	1.4%	1.5%
Hispanic or Latino	1.3%	1.3%	2.2%	3.9%

Source: Statebook

Race and ethnicity in Alabama and the C3 counties



Educational Attainment

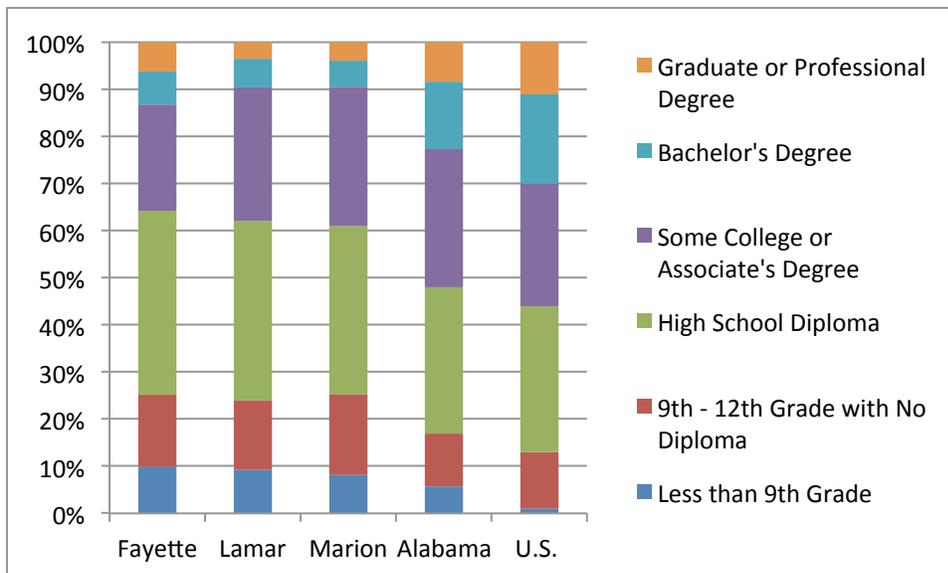
Educational attainment in the C3 region is significantly lower than it is in both the rest of Alabama and the United States. For the U.S. as a whole, the percentage of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher is three times greater than in Lamar or Marion counties and more than twice as great as that in Fayette County. Roughly 25 percent of the population in the study area does not have a high school diploma, compared to 11.2 percent for Alabama and 12 percent for the United States.

Educational attainment as a percentage of the total population aged 25+

	Fayette	Lamar	Marion	Alabama	U.S.
Less than 9th Grade	9.9%	9.2%	8.2%	5.7%	1%
9th - 12th Grade with No Diploma	15.3%	14.7%	17.2%	11.2%	12%
High School Diploma	39.1%	38.1%	35.6%	31.1%	31%
Some College or Associate's Degree	22.6%	28.4%	29.6%	29.4%	26%
Bachelor's Degree	7.0%	6.1%	5.6%	14.4%	19%
Graduate or Professional Degree	6.2%	3.5%	3.9%	8.3%	11%
High School Grad. or Higher	74.9%	76.1%	74.6%	83.1%	88%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	13.2%	9.5%	9.5%	22.6%	30%

Source: Statebook, U.S. Census Bureau

Educational attainment as a percentage of the total population aged 25+



Income and Poverty

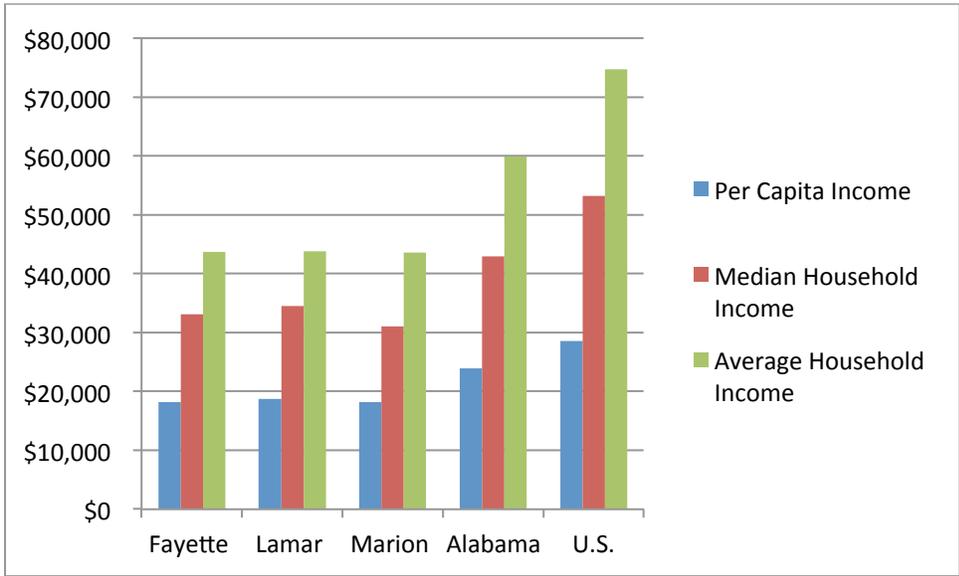
Income levels are similar across the three counties but are significantly lower than the rest of Alabama and the United States. Per capita income for the three counties is roughly two-thirds that of the U.S. and three-quarters that of Alabama. Median household income for the region is 62 percent of the U.S. median and 76 percent of the Alabama median. Average household income for the three counties is just under 59 percent of the U.S. average and 73 percent of the Alabama average.

Per capita, median and average household income, 2015

	Fayette	Lamar	Marion	Alabama	U.S.
Per capita income	\$18,231	\$18,739	\$18,178	\$23,905	\$28,597
Median household income	\$33,150	\$34,500	\$31,062	\$42,986	\$53,217
Average household income	\$43,737	\$43,791	\$43,645	\$59,883	\$74,699

Source: Esri Community Analyst

Per capita, median and average household income, 2015



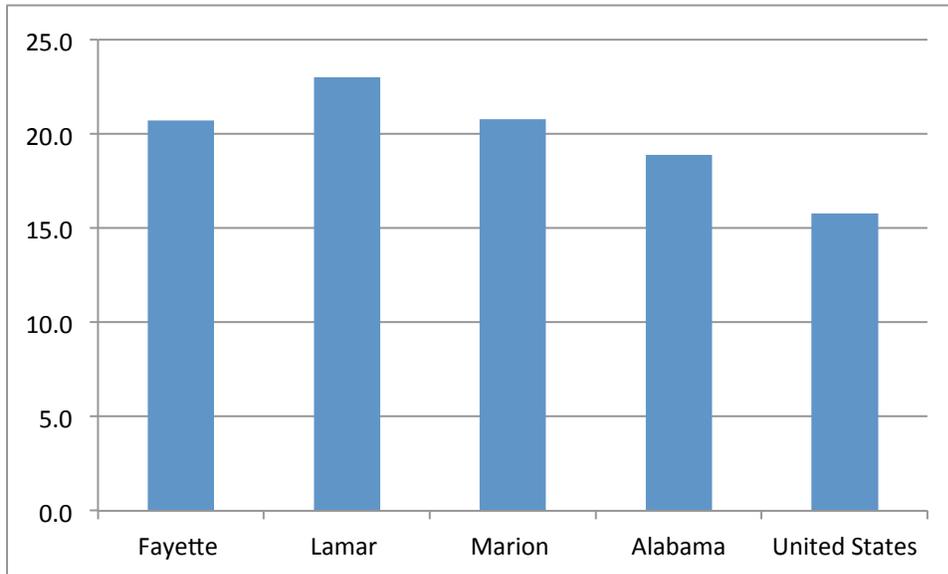
Not surprisingly, the rate of individuals living in poverty in the three counties is higher than that of Alabama and the United States. Lamar County has the highest poverty rate of the three counties at 23 percent. Fayette and Marion counties’ poverty rates (20.7 and 20.8, respectively) are a third higher than the nationwide rate (15.8 percent) and approximately two points higher than Alabama’s rate.

Percent living in poverty, 2013

	Fayette	Lamar	Marion	Alabama	U.S.
Percent in poverty	20.7%	23%	20.8%	18.9%	15.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program

Percent living in poverty, 2013



Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate of both Alabama and the United States has decreased over the last three years, although Alabama’s unemployment rate was slightly higher than the national average in 2014.

Unemployment rate and labor force in the United States, Alabama, and the C3 counties

	Unemployment 2014	Unemployment 2013	Unemployment 2012	Labor Force 2014	Labor Force 2013	Labor Force 2012
U.S.	6.2	7.4	8.1	146,305,000	143,929,000	142,469,000
Alabama	6.8	7.2	8.0	2,150,118	2,168,594	2,175,942
Fayette	7.9	8.3	8.6	6,281	6,387	6,503
Lamar	7.1	7.1	7.6	5,547	5,790	5,808
Marion	8.1	8.0	9.0	12,160	12,463	12,456

Source: BLS.gov

Similarly, the unemployment rates of Fayette, Lamar, and Marion counties have decreased since 2012. However, the unemployment rates of Fayette and Marion counties have tracked significantly higher than both the national and state averages. Meanwhile, Lamar County has enjoyed a lower unemployment rate than the other counties.

Labor Force Participation

Across the U.S., labor force participation steadily grew between the 1970s and the 1990s, reaching a peak of 67.3 percent in early 2000. During the 2000s, the level of labor force participation declined, partially in response to several recessions, including the economic crisis that began in 2008. Demographic trends, such as the aging of the U.S. workforce as baby boomers retire, also affect the labor force participation rate.¹

The U.S. labor force participation rate in July 2015 was 62.6 percent. Alabama’s labor force participation rate in July 2015 one of the lowest among states, at 57.2 percent. Over the last three years, the labor participation rate of the C3 counties has lagged even further behind the state average.

Labor force participation rate by county and year

	2013	2012	2011
Fayette County	49.2%	50.3%	51.5%
Lamar County	53.6%	53.9%	55.2%
Marion County	52.9%	53.1%	52.7%

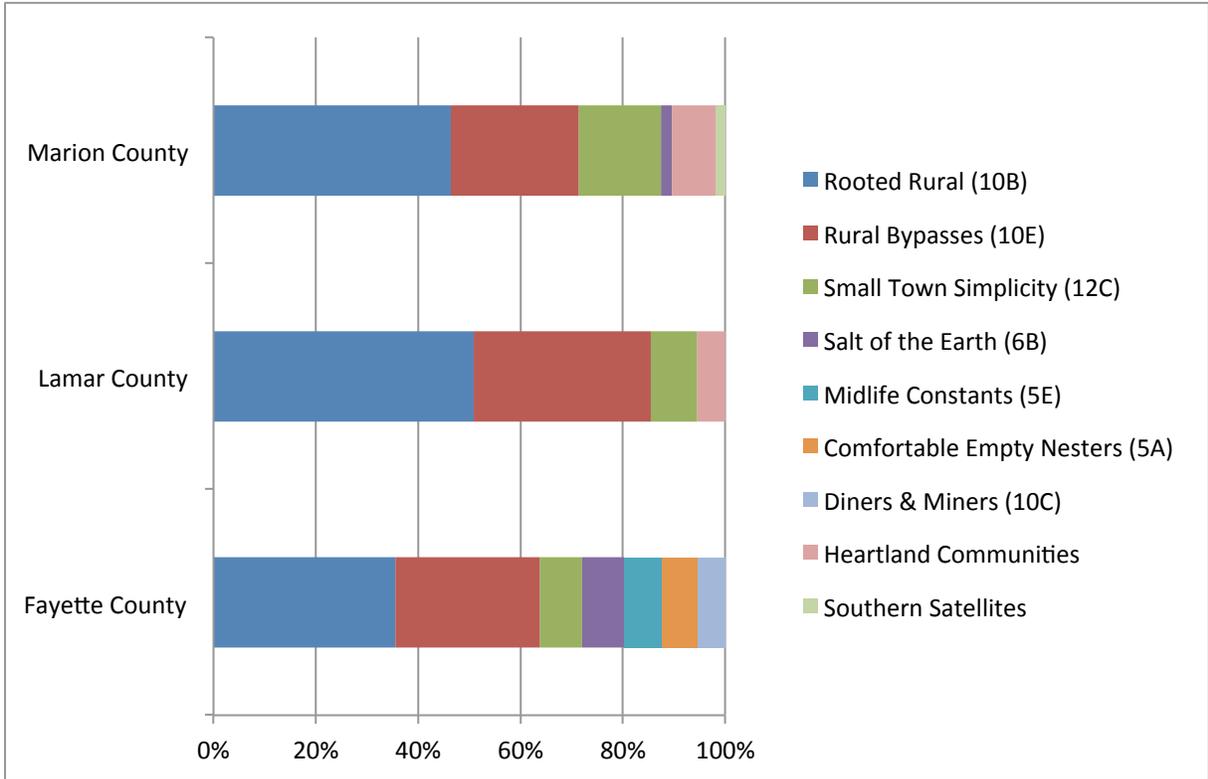
Source: American U.S. Census Bureau, Community Survey

¹¹ Garner Economics, “Labor Force Participation,” September 2015.

Tapestry Profiles Overview

Esri's Tapestry Segmentation is a geo-demographic system that identifies 68 distinctive markets in the U.S. based on socioeconomic and demographic characteristics in order to comprehensively profile American consumers.

Esri Tapestry Segmentation in C3 Counties



The following paragraphs summarize the characteristics of each group.

Rooted Rural The residents that make up this group are heavily concentrated in the Appalachian Mountains as well as in Texas and Arkansas. Employment in the forestry industry is common, and *Rooted Rural* residents live in many of the heavily forested regions of the country. Nearly nine of ten residents are non-Hispanic whites. This group enjoys time spent outdoors, hunting, fishing or working in their gardens. Indoors, they enjoy watching television with a spouse and spending time with their pets. When shopping, they look for American-made and generic products.

Rural Bypasses Open space, undeveloped land, and farmland characterize *Rural Bypasses*. These families live within small towns along country back-roads and enjoy the open air in these sparsely

populated neighborhoods. Their lifestyle is country, focused on the outdoors, gardening, hunting and fishing. They are more likely to own a satellite dish than a home computer. Although a majority of households do have a connection to the Internet, use of the Internet is very limited. Those who are not yet retired work in blue collar jobs in the agriculture or manufacturing industries.

Small Town Simplicity This group includes young families and seniors that are bound by community ties. The *Small Town Simplicity* lifestyle is down-to-earth and semirural, with television for entertainment and news and an emphasis on convenience for both young parents and senior citizens. Pursuits include online computer games, scrapbooking and rural activities like hunting and fishing. Since almost 1 in 4 households is below poverty level, residents also keep their finances simple – paying bills in person and avoiding debt.

Salt of the Earth These residents are entrenched in their traditional, rural lifestyles. Citizens here are older, and many have grown children that have moved away. They still cherish family time, but couples value time spent tending to their vegetable gardens and preparing homemade meals. Residents embrace the outdoors; most of their free time is spent preparing for their next fishing, boating or camping trip. The majority has at least a high school diploma or some college education; many have expanded their skill set during their years of employment in the manufacturing and related industries.

Midlife Constants With below-average labor force participation and above-average net worth, *Midlife Constants* are seniors who are at or approaching retirement. Although located in predominantly metropolitan areas, they live outside the central cities and in smaller communities. Their lifestyle is more country than urban. They are generous, but not spendthrifts.

Comfortable Empty Nesters Residents in this large, growing segment are older, with more than half of all householders aged 55 or older; many still live in the suburbs where they grew up. Most are professionals working in government, health care or manufacturing. These Baby Boomers are earning a comfortable living and benefitting from years of prudent investing and saving. Their net worth is well above average (Index 363). Many are enjoying the transition from child-rearing to retirement. They value their health and financial well-being.

Diners and Miners Close to one-in-five employed residents work in mining, oil and gas extraction or quarrying industries. *Diners and Miners* are a very rural, primarily Southern market. Married-couple families reside in over half of the households, and over a quarter of householders live in mobile homes. This socially conservative group earns a living working with their hands. In addition to mining, construction and agriculture are common industries for employment. They take pride in the appearance of their homes and their vehicles.

Heartland Communities Well settled and close-knit, *Heartland Communities* are semi-rural and semi-retired. These older households are primarily homeowners, and many have paid off their mortgages. Their children have moved away, but they have no plans to leave their homes. Their hearts are with the country; they embrace the slower pace of life here, but actively participate in outdoor activities and community events. Traditional and patriotic residents support their local businesses, always buy American and favor domestic driving vacations over foreign plane trips.

Southern Satellites Residents in this group enjoy country living, preferring outdoor activities and DIY home projects. *Southern Satellites* is the second largest market. They are located in rural settlements, but within metropolitan areas located primarily in the South. This market is not typically diverse; it is slightly older and includes settled married-couple families who own their homes. Almost two-thirds of the homes are single-family structures, and one-third are mobile homes. Median household income levels and home values are below average. Workers are employed in a variety of industries, such as manufacturing, healthcare, retail trade, and construction, with higher proportions in mining and agriculture than in the rest of the U.S.

Economy, Industry and Employment

Major Employers

Major Manufacturing Employers in Fayette County

Name	Product	# of Employees
Best Manufacturing	Latex Surgical Gloves	245
Ox-Bodies, Inc.	Dump Truck Bodies	119
Georgia-Pacific	Wood/Sawmill	106
Daltile	Commercial Tile	85
Lumber Remanufacturing Services, Inc.	Commercial Tile	50
Fayette Fabrication	Metal Storage Racks for Automotive Parts	25
Phifer Wire, Inc.	Woven Fabrics for Backer Board	25
Custom Automated Services	Wiring Harnesses	20
Sanford & Sons Trusses	Wooden Trusses	20
VCI Inc.	Wire Die Repair	13

Major Manufacturing Employers in Lamar County

Name	Product	# of Employees
NACCO Materials Handling Group	Lift Truck Transmissions & Axles	750
Weyerhaeuser	Forest Products	350
Marathon Equipment Company	Waste Containers & Compactors	223
MaxHOME	Upholstery Manufacturing	92
Steel Dust Recycling	Waelz Zinc Oxide	92
Brown Wood Preserving	Treated Utility Poles	25
Roof Mart	Metal Roofing & Metal Building	25
Integrated Waste Solutions	Remanufacturing of Waste Containers	20
Spruiell Truss Co.	Trusses	15
C.H. Machine Inc.	Metal Fabricating, Mill Work	12

Major Manufacturing Employers in Marion County

Name	Product	# of Employees
Kith Kitchens	Cabinet Doors	450
3M Company	Reflective Signs and Sheeting	302
Buccaneer Homes	Manufactured Housing	250
Tullahoma Industries	Sewing Manufacturing	250
River Birch Homes	Manufactured Housing	225
NTN Bower Corporations	Roller Tapered Bearing	220
Joy Global Inc.	Mining Conveyors & Equipment	200
Wrangler/VF Jeanswear	Apparel Distribution	200
Hamilton Bath Ware	Tubs, Showers & Stalls	192
Deer Valley Homebuilders, Inc.	Manufactured Housing	189

Source: C3

Employment Change

All three counties in the C3 region experienced declining employment from 2004 to 2014. The total number of jobs in the three counties declined by 3,439, or 12 percent, over that time period.

Employment Change by County, 2004-2014

County Name	2004 Jobs	2014 Jobs	2004 - 2014 Change	2004 - 2014 % Change
Marion County	15,185	13,342	(1,843)	(12%)
Fayette County	7,310	6,423	(887)	(12%)
Lamar County	5,983	5,273	(710)	(12%)
	28,477	25,038	(3,439)	(12%)

Source: Esri

In terms of private-sector employment, manufacturing remains the region’s largest industry despite a 34 percent decline in the sector’s employment since 2004. The region’s next largest sectors – retail and healthcare/social assistance – also have declined in employment since 2004. The region’s fourth-largest industry, crop and animal production, grew 6 percent between 2004 and 2014.

Employment by sector: C3 counties in aggregate with location quotient, 2004-2014

NAICS	Description	2004 Jobs	2014 Jobs	2004 - 2014 Change	2004 - 2014 % Change	2014 Location Quotient	2014 Estab's
11	Crop and Animal Production	1,922	2,028	106	6%	4.25	50
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	547	274	(273)	(50%)	1.24	11
22	Utilities	97	79	(18)	(19%)	1.03	8
23	Construction	1,321	1,360	39	3%	1.06	63
31	Manufacturing	7,306	4,835	(2,471)	(34%)	2.78	82
42	Wholesale Trade	463	417	(46)	(10%)	0.48	39
44	Retail Trade	2,880	2,517	(363)	(13%)	1.01	215
48	Transportation and Warehousing	1,528	1,152	(376)	(25%)	1.38	74
51	Information	145	136	(9)	(6%)	0.30	24
52	Finance and Insurance	834	1,089	255	31%	0.78	75
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	318	494	176	55%	0.44	26
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,506	496	(1,010)	(67%)	0.29	56
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	10	30	20	200%	0.10	6
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	667	1,334	667	100%	0.85	28
61	Educational Services	54	168	114	211%	0.28	4
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	2,365	2,230	(135)	(6%)	0.79	143
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	164	177	13	8%	0.31	11
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1,108	1,154	46	4%	0.64	82
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,351	1,437	86	6%	1.02	82
90	Government	3,892	3,632	(260)	(7%)	1.12	146
99	Unclassified Industry	0	0	0	0%	0.00	0
		28,477	25,038	(3,439)	(12%)		1,223

Source: Esri

Largest occupations

Occupation	2004 Jobs	2014 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2004-2014)	% Change	2014 Median Hourly Earnings
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	1,253	1,399	146	12%	\$8.16
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,136	907	(229)	(20%)	\$15.46
Team Assemblers	824	564	(260)	(32%)	\$12.90
Cashiers	721	646	(75)	(10%)	\$8.74
Carpenters	651	593	(58)	(9%)	\$11.42
Retail Salespersons	529	483	(47)	(9%)	\$11.83
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	502	402	(99)	(20%)	\$15.33
Registered Nurses	453	386	(67)	(15%)	\$25.70
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	450	323	(127)	(28%)	\$12.25
Sewing Machine Operators	433	153	(279)	(65%)	\$9.34

Source: Esri

Fastest-growing occupations

Occupation	2004 Jobs	2014 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2004-2014)	% Change	2014 Median Hourly Earnings
Customer Service Representatives	268	425	157	59%	\$10.82
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	1,253	1,399	146	12%	\$8.16
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	160	266	106	67%	\$6.99
Personal Care Aides	109	209	99	91%	\$7.77
Personal Financial Advisors	51	139	87	170%	\$23.83
Real Estate Sales Agents	141	215	74	53%	\$10.71
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	304	378	73	24%	\$9.01
Managers, All Other	162	227	65	40%	\$12.64
Unclassified Occupation	237	288	51	21%	\$12.76
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	40	91	51	125%	\$19.48

Source: Esri

Most competitive occupations

Occupation	Job Change	Occ. Mix Effect	Nat Growth Effect	Expected Change	Competitive Effect
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	146	(158)	125	(33)	179
Customer Service Representatives	157	(10)	27	17	141
Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters	16	(99)	26	(73)	88
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	106	16	16	32	75
Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors	36	1	5	6	30
Construction Laborers	46	(5)	22	17	29
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	73	17	30	47	27
Loan Interviewers and Clerks	21	(8)	4	(4)	24
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	51	23	4	27	23
Personal Care Aides	99	66	11	77	22

Source: Esri

Highest occupation location quotient

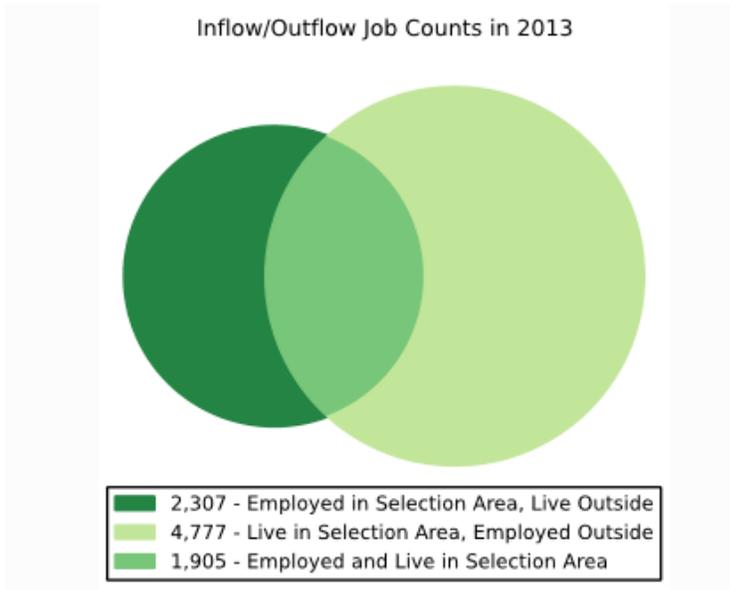
Occupation	2004 Jobs	2014 Jobs	% Change	2004 LQ	2014 LQ	% Change LQ	2014 Median Hourly Earnings
Roof Bolters, Mining	31	0	(99%)	33.39	0.20	(99%)	\$22.07
Mine Shuttle Car Operators	12	0	(100%)	28.28	0.00	(100%)	\$0.00
Woodworking Machine Setters, Operators, Tenders, Except Sawing	395	233	(41%)	22.12	24.43	10%	\$11.57
Loading Machine Operators, Underground Mining	13	0	(99%)	20.20	0.21	(99%)	\$18.67
Logging Equipment Operators	223	195	(12%)	18.71	20.06	7%	\$15.05
Fallers	49	37	(24%)	16.09	16.70	4%	\$17.63
Textile Cutting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	62	33	(47%)	15.27	16.88	11%	\$12.34
Mining Machine Operators, All Other	5	1	(77%)	13.33	3.33	(75%)	\$18.94
Logging Workers, All Other	18	14	(21%)	12.64	12.18	(4%)	\$16.62
Textile Winding, Twisting, and Drawing Out Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	104	14	(87%)	12.53	3.78	(70%)	\$13.17

Commuting Patterns/Workforce Flow

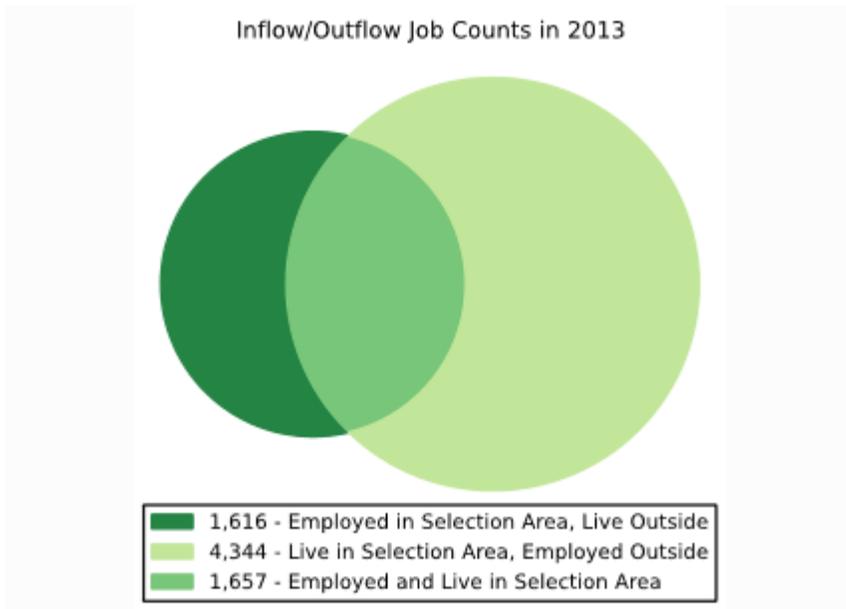
Commuting Patterns

In each of the three counties, more residents are employed outside of their home counties than within them. Marion County has a higher proportion of workers commuting in for jobs than the other two counties, as well as the highest number of residents who also work in the county. Not surprisingly, many of the region’s residents commute to another county within the C3 region to work; other predominant commuting destinations are the Birmingham and Tuscaloosa MSAs. Marion County, the northernmost of the three, has the largest number of residents commuting to the Florence-Muscle Shoals MSA.

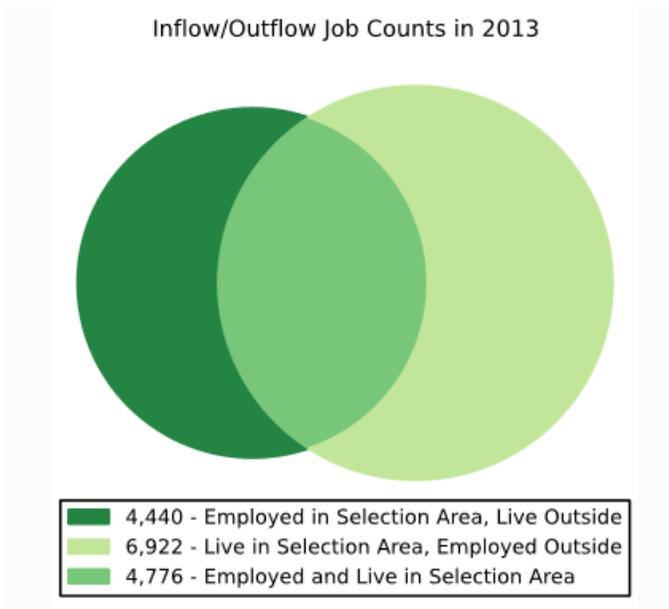
Fayette County



Lamar County



Marion County



Source: On the Map, U.S. Census Bureau

Commuting flows: county of residence to workplace county

Residence	Place of Work			Commuting Flow
County Name	State Name	County Name	Metropolitan Statistical Area	Number of Workers
Fayette	Alabama	Fayette		3,342
Fayette	Alabama	Tuscaloosa	Tuscaloosa, AL	911
Fayette	Alabama	Marion		854
Fayette	Alabama	Walker	Birmingham-Hoover, AL	249
Fayette	Alabama	Jefferson	Birmingham-Hoover, AL	236
Fayette	Alabama	Lamar		148
Fayette	Mississippi	Coahoma		60
Fayette	Alabama	Winston		56
Fayette	Alabama	Pickens	Tuscaloosa, AL	30
Fayette	Mississippi	Oktibbeha		30
Fayette	Alabama	Marengo		27
Fayette	Alabama	Lauderdale	Florence-Muscle Shoals	25
Lamar	Alabama	Lamar		3,348
Lamar	Mississippi	Lowndes		657
Lamar	Alabama	Marion		597
Lamar	Alabama	Fayette		380
Lamar	Alabama	Tuscaloosa	Tuscaloosa, AL	228
Lamar	Alabama	Pickens	Tuscaloosa, AL	81
Lamar	Mississippi	Monroe		80
Lamar	Mississippi	Jones		47

Lamar	Alabama	Jefferson	Birmingham-Hoover, AL	24
Lamar	Mississippi	Lee		20
Marion	Alabama	Marion		7,555
Marion	Alabama	Winston		843
Marion	Alabama	Franklin		598
Marion	Alabama	Lamar		342
Marion	Alabama	Walker	Birmingham-Hoover, AL	308
Marion	Alabama	Tuscaloosa	Tuscaloosa, AL	306
Marion	Alabama	Fayette		286
Marion	Mississippi	Lee		158
Marion	Alabama	Jefferson	Birmingham-Hoover, AL	133
Marion	Mississippi	Tishomingo		95
Marion	Alabama	Colbert	Florence-Muscle Shoals	94
Marion	Alabama	Lauderdale	Florence-Muscle Shoals	70
Marion	Kansas	Johnson	Kansas City, MO-KS	60
Marion	Mississippi	Hinds	Jackson, MS	55
Marion	Alabama	Morgan	Decatur, AL	37
Marion	Tennessee	Davidson	Nashville, TN	29
Marion	Virginia	Roanoke	Roanoke, VA	23
Marion	Mississippi	Itawamba		21
Marion	Ohio	Warren	Cincinnati, OH	20

Source: On the Map, U.S. Census Bureau

Vehicle Assembly Plants in Alabama and Mississippi

**Vehicle Assembly Plants in Alabama and Mississippi
 with a 50 Mile Buffer**



Source: http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/contemporarymaps/alabama/economy/AL_MS_Autoplants.jpg

Available Sites and Buildings

Site/Building Name	County	City	Sq. Ft.
Buccaneer Homes	Marion	Hamilton	211,100
Speed Rack	Marion	Hamilton	206,000
North River Homes Building	Marion	Hamilton	118,000
Sitel	Marion	Winfield	42,256
Rankin Fite Airfield Building	Marion	Hamilton	29,353
Lamar Healthcare Clinic	Lamar	Sulligent	14,924
American Power Source	Fayette	Fayette	40,704
Berry Wood Products	Fayette	Berry	44,132
Fayette Ctr. Mfg. & Innovation	Fayette	Fayette	135,000
Marathon Building	Fayette	Fayette	106,650
North River Apparel	Fayette	Berry	33,000

Source: C3

Transportation and Infrastructure

Interstate and Rail Access



The region is located between two interstates: the future I-22 to the north (currently known as U.S. 78 or Corridor X) and I-20/I-59 to the south. I-20 connects Birmingham to Jackson, Mississippi. When complete, I-22 will connect Memphis with Birmingham.

The region is served by two major railways: BNSF and Norfolk Southern.

Key Distances

- One-hour drive to five major metros or just over 850,000 people: Florence, Birmingham and Tuscaloosa in Alabama and Columbus and Tupelo in Mississippi
- Less than one-hour drive to three inland ports offering direct access for barge shipments to the Port of Mobile
- Three hours south of the various multi-modal service terminals surrounding the Memphis International Airport (MEM)
- One hour to Birmingham’s Shuttlesworth International Airport (BHM)

Broadband Availability

The percentage of Alabama residents without access to fixed broadband Internet service (35 percent) is more than double that of the national average (17 percent). Residents of the C3 counties are even less likely to have access to fixed broadband, as 68 percent of Lamar County residents, 90 percent of Marion County residents, and 99 percent of Fayette County residents are without access to fixed broadband.

Americans without access to fixed broadband by county

	All Areas		
	Pop. w/o Access (1,000s)	% of Pop. w/o Access	Pop. Density (Pop./Land Area)
U.S.	54,560.0	17%	90.9
Alabama	1,701.3	35%	96.4
Fayette	16.6	99%	26.6
Lamar	9.6	68%	23.1
Marion	27.4	90%	40.9

Source: FCC, <https://www.fcc.gov/reports/2015-broadband-progress-report>

The state of Alabama ranks 40th in the United States in broadband availability. Only 76.6 percent of Alabama residents have access to download speeds greater than 25 Mbps, and only 76.2 percent have access to three or more broadband providers.

Broadband access ranking of U.S. states, as of June 30, 2014

Rank in U.S.	State	Download Speed > 25 Mbps	% of Pop. w/ access to 3 or More Providers
40	Alabama	76.6	76.2%

Source: <http://www.broadbandmap.gov>

In regard to broadband access in the state of Alabama, the C3 counties rate in the lower half of Alabama's 67 total counties. Of the C3 counties, Lamar County ranks the highest in regard to residents with access to download speeds greater than 25 Mbps; but, the county is still ranked 47th in the state, and only 34.36 percent of its residents have access to download speeds greater than 25 Mbps.

Broadband access rankings of the C3 counties, as of June 30, 2014

Rank in State (out of 67 counties in Alabama)	County	Download Speed > 25 Mbps	% of Pop. w/ Access to 3 or More Providers	Population	Age Under 5
53	Fayette County	22.77%	31.79%	15,808	3.87%
47	Lamar County	34.36%	44.50%	13,021	4.62%
51	Marion County	25.91%	43.88%	28,868	4.52%

Source: <http://www.broadbandmap.gov>

For comparison, below is a list of the top four Alabama counties in regard to broadband access and speed. All have significantly greater access to higher broadband speeds and providers.

Broadband access rankings: Top-ranked counties in Alabama, as of June 30, 2014

Rank in State (out of 67 counties in Alabama)	County	Download Speed > 25 Mbps	% of Pop. w/ Access to 3 or More Providers	Population	Age Under 5
1	Lee AL	96.44%	74.41%	154,252	4.79%
2	Montgomery AL	96.25%	93.94%	236,368	6.09%
3	Marshall AL	94.54%	79.65%	98,858	7.40%
4	Mobile AL	94.51%	92.55%	428,232	6.03%

Source: <http://www.broadbandmap.gov>

Economic Development Organizations, Plans and Initiatives

C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance

C3 of Northwest Alabama EDA (<http://www.northwestalabamaeda.org/>) is a 501c3 public-private partnership formed in 2010 as cooperative marketing effort to serve Fayette, Lamar and Marion counties. The organization’s mission is “to create and promote an environment wherein businesses will choose to invest and create jobs for area residents.”

C3 has been led by President and CEO David Thornell, CEcD, since its founding. Mr. Thornell, who graduated from the University of Oklahoma’s Economic Development Institute, oversees two other staff members, including Vice President of Business Development Ron Davis and Administrative Assistant Katie Crump. In turn, Mr. Thornell reports to a nine-member board of directors that includes two ex officio members.

C3’s tagline is “Creating Southern Success with Global Access.” The organization is responsible for promoting business retention, expansion, and attraction for the tri-county region, and it provides a full range of economic development services, including: site location assistance, access to workforce training programs, and access to incentives programs.

For FY 2014 and FY 2013, the organization listed approximately \$400,000 per year in total revenue.

For more information, please see C3’s 2012-2016 Action Plan in Appendix D.

Industry Targets (Source: C3)

- Truck Transport and Warehousing
 - Helpers and Production Workers from manufactured homes, wood furniture, truck/tractor/trailer and stacking equipment transfer
 - Hand laborers from manufactured homes transfer and can crosswalk to forklift operators (with training)
- Automotive Parts Manufacturing
 - Team assemblers from manufactured homes and truck/tractor/trailer and stacking equipment transfer well into auto parts
 - Machine feeders from manufactured homes transfer

- Carpenters from manufactured homes crosswalk to CNC operators (with training)*
- Metal Fabrication (especially Machine Shops: Strong tie to Automotive)
 - Welders from conveyor equipment and stacker machinery industries transfer
 - Sawing machine operators from mfg. homes transfer
 - Carpenters from mfg. homes crosswalk to CNC operators (with training)
 - Sewing Machine Operators from textile industries crosswalk to cutting machine operators and team assemblers with training
- Motor Vehicle Bodies/Trailers (GROWTH SECTOR!)
 - Key positions from conveyor equipment are perfect transfers.
 - Key positions from stacker machinery are good transfers.

**Carpenters are key matches for CNC training, based on EMSI data*

C3 Accomplishments 2010-2014 (Source: C3)

- Developed and maintained a professional, comprehensive and award-winning website, as well as a bank of research tools, data and collateral materials for recruitment and project response.
- Celebrated the return of an expanded and renovated Wrangler facility in Hackleburg with additional jobs created.
- Developed an Action Plan with broad regional participation that formed working partnerships with educational, industrial and regional partners to implement and guide the plan.
- Hired a professional site consulting firm to review and evaluate the region’s key industrial sites. Placed uniform signage at industrial parks in Fayette, Lamar and Marion counties. Adjoining industrial parks were rebranded “Gateway Industrial Park” East (Winfield) and West (Brilliant).
- Enhanced relationships with existing industries in the three counties through existing industry visits, interviews, industry roundtables, industry assistance and other industry/education initiatives.
- Sponsored industry tours and career fairs to better connect students with local industry and opportunities, and enhanced connections with educational institutes and professionals.
- Formed an alliance with chambers of commerce in the region to promote dialogue, planning and collaborative efforts.

- Created entrepreneurial opportunities by relocating the Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network (AERN) to the Center of Marion County and hosted entrepreneurial workshops.
- Embarked upon an awareness campaign for state economic developers, site selectors and the community.
- Hosted an economic development forum for newly elected officials.
- Celebrated new businesses, business expansions, capital investment and new jobs for the C3 region.
- Created the North Alabama Auto Alliance, which is a joint effort with the Franklin County Economic Development Alliance to build a proactive relationship with automotive suppliers that do not yet have a facility in the Deep South. This is focused on those that are likely to be interested in supplying the Toyota-MS plant once it expands.
- First-annual “C3 Capitol Day” held in Montgomery to thank state representatives from C3 counties and others in the state government that support C3’s efforts.

The West Alabama Regional Commission

The West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) is one of two councils of government that serve the region. WARC covers seven counties, including Lamar and Fayette. WARC is based in Northport, just west of Tuscaloosa.

WARC operates a Revolving Loan Fund for manufacturing, retail and service businesses. RLF funds can be used to purchase land or buildings, construct or renovate buildings, purchase equipment and machinery, or provide working capital. Loan sizes available range from \$10,000 to \$250,000 for terms ranging from five to 10 years.

WARC’s website (<http://warc.info/planning-a-development/documents>) provides a wide range of resources, such as:

- Business Preparedness Toolkits, which provide “a sample preparedness and continuity of operations plan, support materials, and a listing of local emergency resources” for each county.
- Databooks, which include basic demographic data, maps, and other census-related information on each county.
- Planning documents, such as annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) dating to 2012 and regional studies relating to plans for transportation corridors and waste management.

- Regional information documents, including the studies on the commuting patterns of west Alabama workers and directories for mining, manufacturing and governmental contacts.

The 2015 update to the West Alabama Economic Development District’s 2012-2016 CEDS lists the following accomplishments:

- City of Fayette announced the sale of a speculative building in the city’s industrial park to the Alabama Department of Transportation to be used as an area office for the northern part of the new Alabama Department of Transportation 14-county West Central Region. There will be \$6 million in investment over three years and 125 new jobs are projected.
- The City of Fayette continued its Alabama Communities of Excellence designation and hosted Main Street Alabama program.
- MaxHome – a home improvement company – leased the former Alan White facility from the City of Sulligent, bringing 90 jobs and \$3 million in investment. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on June 26, 2015.
- The Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network (AERN) and the Mary Cobb Wallace Library partnered with C3 to host a free "Lunch 'n Learn" workshop titled "*Low-Cost Marketing to Grow Your Business*" on May 28, 2015 in Vernon.
- The State of Alabama approved new economic development incentives, including targeted incentives for rural areas.

The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments

The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG) is the second council of government that serves the region. This five-county group includes Marion County (its southernmost county) and is based in Muscle Shoals. Like other COGs, NACOLG carries out municipal planning, writes/administers grants for community development projects, and works on senior care and public transportation issues.

NACOLG has a Revolving Loan Fund that targets small- to medium-sized businesses and small manufacturing companies. RLF funds can be used to purchase land or buildings, construct or renovate buildings, purchase equipment and machinery, or provide working capital. Loan sizes available range from \$10,000 to \$125,000 for terms ranging from five to 15 years.

Chambers of Commerce

The three-county region has several chambers of commerce. They include:

- Fayette Area Chamber of Commerce (Fayette County): <http://www.fayetteareachamber.org/>
- Vernon Chamber of Commerce (Lamar County): <http://vernonal.org/commerce/>
- Hamilton Area Chamber of Commerce (Marion County): <http://www.hamiltonchamberofcommerce.org/>
- Town of Guin Chamber of Commerce (Marion County): <http://www.guinalcoc.org/>
- Town of Winfield Chamber of Commerce (Marion County): <http://www.winfieldcity.org/chamber>

Each offers typical chamber services such as business networking, marketing assistance, and access to community events and workshops. None of the chambers has paid or full-time staff.

Utilities

Alabama Power Company

<http://www.alabamapower.com>

Headquartered in Birmingham, the Alabama Power Company provides electricity service to approximately 1.4 million customers in the southern two-thirds of Alabama. The utility is operated by the Southern Company. Alabama Power is investor-owned and is the largest single taxpayer in the state. The company has hydroelectric, coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear, and cogeneration plants throughout Alabama.

Alabama Power claims to be the first electric utility in the U.S. to establish an economic development department. The department works to assist existing companies expand and help new companies in the site selection process. Alabama Power has a separate economic and community development website at www.amazingalabama.com that provides:

- Comprehensive information on buildings and sites in the state.
- Complete labor force and demographic information for every community in Alabama—including the ability to compare and contrast Alabama communities with any community in the United States.
- A thorough overview of the state's primary business taxes and statutory incentives programs.
- News regarding economic development in Alabama.

Site Selection magazine has previously named Alabama Power one of the Top 10 utilities in economic development, and the company received an Honorable Mention from the magazine in 2015.

Tombigbee Electric Cooperative

<http://www.tombigbee.net>

The Tombigbee Electric Cooperative (TEC) is part of the Touchstone Energy Cooperative brand, which is “a collection of more than 740 local-owned electric cooperatives in 46 states.” TEC was incorporated in Vernon, Alabama in May 1941 with the goal of bringing electricity to the rural areas of Fayette, Lamar and Marion counties. The cooperative is a “democratic organization controlled by its members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.”

Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

<http://www.edpa.org>

The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA) is a private 501c3 nonprofit that was formed in 1991 to help Alabama attract and retain industry. The organization is supported by more than 70 corporate partners and is governed by a board of directors that includes many of the state’s top business leaders.

With a staff of 14, EDPA provides prospective companies and site consultants with location assistance. In addition, the partnership engages with state, regional, local and corporate organizations to provide economic development assistance to Alabama communities. The organization also promotes entrepreneurship through its Alabama Launchpad program and participates in partnerships to promote workforce development, technology transfer, existing industry support and technology-driven economic development.

EDPA was instrumental in helping recruit companies such as Mercedes-Benz, Boeing, Honda, Thyssenkrupp, Hyundai, and Airbus to Alabama.

Alabama Department of Commerce

<http://www.madeinalabama.com/>

The Alabama Department of Commerce is an extension of the Governor’s Office and is responsible for leading the state’s economic development efforts. The organization’s mission is “to help every business in the state achieve and sustain success.” The Department of Commerce has 33 staff members in eight divisions: the Executive Division; the Business Development Division; the Trade Division; the Small Business Advocacy Division; the Commerce Information Services Division; the Administrative Technology Division; the Alabama Film Office; and Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT).

Staff members facilitate site location and the permitting process. In addition, the department provides access to workforce development and training programs and is responsible for developing incentive packages for business attraction. The Department of Commerce also advertises non-tax incentives and various financing programs for Alabama businesses.

Interstate 22 Alliance

<http://www.interstate22alliance.com/>

The Interstate 22 Alliance is a regional development coalition among six counties in northwest Alabama — including the C3 counties — that are located along what will soon be Interstate 22. The project, which is currently known as Corridor X, is scheduled to be completed in early 2016, at which time it will receive the “interstate” designation. The nation’s newest interstate will run from Birmingham to Memphis and will connect I-240, I-40, I-55 and I-69 in Memphis with I-20/I-59 in Birmingham.

There are high hopes that the I-22 will bring significant economic development to the C3 counties. State economic development officials have stated, “The completion of I-22 greatly enhances the competitive position of communities in Northwest Alabama, especially for projects where transportation and logistics are factors.” The creation of The Interstate 22 Alliance is an attempt to raise awareness about the new corridor and promote the area, especially to automotive suppliers, distribution operations, metal fabrication firms and farming and coal mining equipment companies.

Incentives

The State of Alabama offers a wide array of incentives, including the following.

- **Alabama Reinvestment and Abatements Act**—The act allows abatements for new facilities and expansions as well as for refurbishing, upgrading or reinstating existing facilities.
- **Jobs Act Incentives**—Jobs Act Incentives provide credits for job creation via an annual cash refund and investment credits on qualified capital investment expenses.
- **Full Employment Act of 2011**—This act provides a one-time income tax credit for businesses with 50 or fewer employees that is equal to \$1,000 per new job paying over \$10 per hour.
- **Income Tax Capital Credit**—These credits are for 5 percent of the total capital costs of qualifying projects in certain targeted industries.
- **Enterprise Zone Credit/Exemption**—Alabama offers enterprise zone credits and exemptions for qualified businesses.

- **Heroes for Hire Credit**—This program provides businesses that hire an unemployed military veteran with a one-time \$1,000 income tax credit. It provides a \$2,000 income tax credit to unemployed veterans who start their own businesses.

In addition, the Alabama Department of Commerce facilitates access to Foreign Trade Zones, State Enterprise Zones, and the state’s Industrial Development Grant Program. The Department of Commerce also promotes the state’s non-tax incentives, which include grants, permitting assistance, access to the Alabama Career Center, and access to AIDT, which is the state’s workforce recruitment and training program.

More details and information regarding Alabama’s financial incentive and business assistance offerings can be found in Appendix F.

Other Key Stakeholders and Initiatives

Education and Workforce Development

Bevill State Community College

Bevill State Community College is a public, two-year, “open door” institution serving seven counties in west-central Alabama. Its total enrollment in spring 2015 was 3,220. BSCC has four campuses plus an “instructional site” at the Pickens County Educational Center.



The Bevill State-Fayette Campus enrolls approximately 800 students and employs 150 part-time and full-time employees. The campus comprises a student center, campus bookstore, library, auditoriums, conference rooms, 28 classrooms/labs, a residence hall, gymnasium, natatorium, observatory and cafeteria.

The Hamilton Campus enrolls approximately 850 regular students. Additionally, the campus serves as the area vocational center for the Marion County School System, enrolling approximately 100

high school students in on-campus vocational programs.

The Hamilton Campus is comprised of 10 buildings including the Bevill Business and Community Center, which is used for college events as well as civic and cultural activities. The campus also contains a cafeteria, dormitory complex and a child development center.

Each campus offers a range of two-year academic degrees, pre-professional sciences degrees and education degrees. In addition, the Hamilton and Fayette campuses offer more than a dozen career and technical degrees or certificates, as well as health sciences degrees and certificates (e.g., nursing and emergency medical technician).

In addition, BSCC’s Workforce Development Division provides training opportunities for existing business and industry, short-term skills training, the Alabama Mining Academy, adult education/GED courses, and the Alabama Career Center System (a service matching employers and job seekers).

Training courses for existing business and industry are conducted at a Beville State campus, on-site at the company’s facility or a combination of both. Courses are offered as credit-producing, stand-alone, or non-credit, and they are customized to individual companies’ needs. Beville State also partners with the Alabama Technology Network and Alabama Industrial Development and Training to offer specialized and customized courses.

BSCC also hosts a 40,000-square-foot incubator center with access to warehouse space, delivery bays, flexible floor plans and a shared conference room.

Regional Workforce Development Councils

According to the Alabama Department of Commerce, Regional Workforce Councils (RWC) “monitor the workforce needs of business and industry in their region, then develop and implement practical solutions. These range from hosting regional job fairs for immediate hiring needs to addressing the short-term and long-term training needs of businesses. Regional Workforce Councils are a key mechanism in helping to ensure that there is an available pipeline of highly trained workers with relevant skills that Alabama companies want.”

Each RWC works closely with the two-year community college system.

The Workforce Development Council of Alabama Region 1

The Workforce Development Council of Alabama (WDCA) Region 1 serves the northwest corner of the state, including Marion County and five additional counties. Its 2014-2015 strategic plan lists the following top occupations and target industries for the region.

Top Occupations	Top 5 Target Industries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Manufacturing • Engineering Technicians • Green Technicians • Logistics • Nursing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automotive • Metals Manufacturing • Distribution • Energy-related • Service Industries

Workforce development strategies listed in WDCA Region 1’s 2014-2015 strategic plan include:

- Establish Career Coaches early enough to overcome curriculum barriers,
- Create interest in technical training,
- Develop internships for students (co-op), and
- Establish ongoing partnerships with bordering states .

Education strategies listed in its 2014-2015 strategic plan include:

- Establish a life simulator exercise to target the existing 11th grade classes throughout the region,
- Create a retention contract for high school, GED and PS students, and
- Create and push awareness campaign depicting the importance of education.

Communication and marketing strategies listed in its 2014-2015 strategic plan include:

- Contact businesses and industries,
- Increase communication/contact with other councils, states, workforce agencies, and
- Communicate to K-12 educators/councils of initiatives and resources.

The Workforce Development Council of Alabama Region 3

The Workforce Development Council of Alabama Region 3 serves the west-central part of the state, including Lamar, Fayette and five additional counties, including Tuscaloosa. WDCA Region 3’s 2015 strategic plan lists the following top occupations and target industries for the region.

Top Occupations	Top 5 Target Industries
• Healthcare/Nursing	• Automotive
• Hospitality	• Healthcare
• Customer Service (Jobs)	• Construction
• Transportation/Drivers	• Manufacturing
• Logistics	• Service Industry
• Information Technology	
• Machinists	
• Industrial Maintenance	
• Production/Assemblers	
• Welders/Fitters	

Workforce development strategies listed in its 2015 strategic plan include:

- Develop an active cluster process to communicate workforce solutions and gather employer workforce needs,
- Create a seamless communication stream with workforce providers to the needs of the clusters in the region, and
- Actively work to communicate and deliver workforce services to all communities in the seven county region.

Training and education strategies listed in its 2015 strategic plan include:

- Develop a comprehensive plan for dual enrollment,
- Hold information sessions about dual enrollment to educators, parents and students,
- Hold meeting with K-12 and other colleges to review and update existing agreements,
- Generate interest among businesses by sharing with them how they can really help,
- Create “learning” opportunities between businesses, educators and career coaches to offer career education opportunities.

Marketing and communication strategies listed in its 2015 strategic plan include:

- Develop and execute a high-level annual career fair program,
- Utilize career coaches to steer students to high demand careers,
- Leverage rural regional leaders to create dialogue in their communities, and
- Engage educators in the region to communicate opportunities.

Entrepreneurship

Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network (AERN)

<http://aern.cba.ua.edu>

The Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network (AERN) is intended to enhance business development throughout rural Alabama. AERN is directed through the University of Alabama's Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration in partnership with agencies in rural counties. It provides centers all over Alabama to help residents start a business and learn how to make a business plan.

The AERN Center of Marion County is hosted at the C3 offices.

Each AERN Center has the following resources available: computer, printer, business planning software, set of specialized business reference books and one-on-one staff assistance.

AERN Centers also provide training on steps to take when starting a business; Industry and economic profiles of counties; web resources to becoming an entrepreneur; checklists for opening a business; and access to the University of Alabama's business library resources and business researchers.

Source: C3

Appendices

Appendix A: “Spotlight on Marion, Lamar and Fayette Counties”

Business Alabama, February 2014

Marion, Fayette and Lamar counties —located in northwest Alabama — have a rich history and a strong spirit of economic and regional cooperation.

With a diverse economy that includes many different types of manufacturing, a healthy environment for small and large private companies to locate and thrive, revitalized downtown areas and a large public sector, this area offers an affordable lifestyle and the definite possibility of more job growth as existing industries expand.

Two cities are designated as Alabama Communities of Excellence, and many have beautification boards, Main Street organizations and historic preservation boards that help preserve and grow their cities.

This region works together for economic development, the most obvious sign of that being the formation of the C3 Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance, an agency incorporated in 2010 as a cooperative marketing effort among the three counties to grow the area.

C3 includes a strategic plan steering committee that builds from the Accelerate Alabama Strategic Plan developed by the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, a program that focuses on recruitment, retention and renewal in economic development. C3 also has four subcommittees made up of education, business and community leaders from the three counties, says David Thornell, C3 president and CEO.

“It’s really like a one-stop shop for business and industry,” Thornell says. “We believe you gain more to work as one. Our people have a strong work ethic and we have a very good workforce pool, and we would love to have even more of our residents not have to commute to work elsewhere.”

Fayette Mayor Ray Nelson agrees that cooperation is essential. “We have a global economy, and competition demands that our communities band together and promote our region,” he says. “We share our culture and values, we have a stable population, a great workforce and we are all excited about the possibilities for growth.”

Nelson and other officials expect their counties to benefit from Interstate 22, which has put them on the map for economic and commercial development. The new highway from Birmingham to Memphis has nine exits in the region, and has already prompted some commercial growth in the past few years. Counties and cities have built spec buildings, developed industrial parks and more on this route. The area also has four EDPA AdvantageSites, and two cities have airports that have seen expansions in recent years.

School systems in the three counties consistently rank in the top 20 statewide for their scores on tests covering reading, writing and math. And Beville State Community College offers dual enrollment for high

Background Report, C3 of Northwest Alabama

school students, transfer courses and adult continuing education, and plays a major role in workforce development and training.

These three counties also offer a lot of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Rivers and lakes — including the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, the Sipsey Valley River Wilderness Area and Bear Creek Lakes — offer great fishing, canoeing, campgrounds and more. The region is No. 1 in the state in deer hunting. In addition, some cities have built popular attractions in their city parks, such as water parks, splash pads and playgrounds, which are popular with residents and attract visitors from outside the region.

The area was hit hard in 2011 by massive tornadoes. Eighteen people were killed in Hackleburg in Marion County and many public and private buildings were damaged or destroyed. A new K-12 school is being built to replace the destroyed one, and grants from FEMA and other sources are helping rebuild city hall, public safety facilities and infrastructure.

“We have survived and are getting better each day,” says Hackleburg Mayor Whitey Cochran.

Appendix B: Biographies

Expert Panel

Faith V. McClintic

Faith McClintic is a highly skilled and accomplished veteran of local government, having spent more than 20 years in public service in both economic development and finance capacities. Having spent more than 15 years as a local economic development practitioner, Faith's insights and experiences bring "real world" knowledge of community assessment and positioning, land ("product") development, public-private partnerships, business plan modeling, and target marketing to a community's business attraction and expansion efforts.

Faith currently serves as the Director of Economic Development for Albemarle County, Virginia, where she is building the County's first formalized Economic Development program. Her previous positions include Assistant Director of Economic Development and Tourism for Stafford County, VA, Assistant Director of Economic Development for Chesterfield County, VA and Development Manager for Meadowville Technology Park - Chesterfield County. In all of these roles, Faith had responsibility for overseeing multi-faceted programs that involved both regional and state economic development partners. She was also actively involved in a number of large-scale and highly visible projects, covering a wide-range of industry sectors.

In addition to her public sector experience, Faith has also worked in banking in both marketing and finance arenas, and has owned and operated two successful small business ventures.

Faith's formal education includes a B.S. in Public Administration from James Madison University, graduate MBA work at the University of Richmond, and completion of the International Economic Development Council's Certified Economic Developer Program. She is also a professionally trained facilitator and Total Quality advisor, and has completed specialized training courses in consultative sales and construction management.

David J. Myers, CEcD

David J. Myers serves as the Executive Director of the Ponca City Development Authority (PCDA), a position he has held since September of 2003. He is the past chairman of the Governor's Economic Development Marketing Team and a past president of the Oklahoma Economic Development Council. PCDA is a public trust accredited by the International Economic Development Council which serves the Ponca City, Oklahoma region.

Prior to joining PCDA, David served as President for the Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance, (GAVEA) in Lancaster, California. GAVEA is a public-private organization developed to build the economy of an area with 440,000 residents and a strong aerospace heritage.

David's career includes service as a Regional Manager for the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, two terms as a member of the Palmdale (California) City Council, the Transportation Chairman of the Southern California Association of Governments (the largest Council of Government in the United States), two years with the Palmdale Water District and ten years as the Director of Development for United Cerebral Palsy in Los Angeles and Texas.

David holds a B.A. in Political Science from California State University Northridge and a Master's Degree in Negotiation and Conflict Management from California State University, Dominguez Hills. He holds the International Economic Development Council's Certified Economic Developer credential and was named the outstanding economic development professional for 2008 by the Oklahoma Professional Economic Development Council. He has had three peer-reviewed professional papers published on subjects dealing with economic development and successful projects in rural and micropolitan areas.

Joy Wilkins, CECD

Joy Wilkins is an advisor, speaker, facilitator, instructor, and author on community development, economic development, and leadership development matters.

Joy loves to develop partnerships for working together across boundaries, lead high-performing teams, and engage with community leaders to help improve lives. She has served with the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, and a software development start-up; and has delivered research, planning, and consultation services for clients in the United States and Canada.

A Certified Economic Developer by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), Joy is also a registered mediator in the state of Georgia. She has a master's degree in city planning from Georgia Tech; a graduate certificate in real estate from Georgia State University; and a bachelor's degree, with majors in sociology and political science, from the State University of New York at Fredonia.

Joy is a member of the IEDC Board of Directors and has been actively involved in a number of other endeavors to serve and advance the profession since 1994.

IEDC Staff

Louise Anderson

Louise Anderson is a Senior Associate and Managing Editor at IEDC. Louise has worked in economic development for 14 years, undertaking multiple roles since she joined IEDC. For local governments and

economic development organizations, she has researched and consulted on projects related to strategic planning, brownfield redevelopment, downtown revitalization, entrepreneurship and disaster recovery.

Louise also edits and writes for IEDC's bimonthly newsletter, *Economic Development Now*. For four years, she edited a quarterly magazine, *Economic Development America*, for the U.S. Economic Development Administration, which featured innovative programs and best practices in the field. She is the author of numerous research reports and publications on a variety of economic development and organizational issues, ranging from the economic developer's role in site selection to the use of incentives, quality job creation and more.

Prior to joining IEDC, Louise worked in public relations and nonprofit management for Triangle United Way in Research Triangle Park, N.C., and in planning for Wake County, North Carolina. She obtained master's degrees in regional planning (with a focus on economic development) and public administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She also holds bachelor of arts degrees in journalism and English literature from Indiana University at Bloomington.

Tye Libby

Tye Libby is an Economic Development and Research Associate at IEDC. Originally from Columbia, South Carolina, Tye earned a BA in International Affairs from the University of Georgia. He subsequently attended graduate school at the University of Denver.

During his time at IEDC, Tye has led efforts to research and document the history of the organization and its predecessors. He currently manages IEDC's Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO) program and the Clearinghouse Information and Research Service (CIRS). In addition, Tye has worked on multiple technical assistance projects, and he also contributes research, writing, and editing to other IEDC projects.



Appendix C: Workforce Reports

These workforce reports—which are based on local data and thousands of survey responses from Alabama residents—are published by the Culverhouse College of Commerce at the University of Alabama with funding from:

- The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs,
- The Alabama Department of Labor,
- The Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education,
- Alabama Industrial Training, and
- The University of Alabama.

[State of the Workforce Report IX: Region 1, 2014 Summary](#)

[State of the Workforce Report IX: Region 3, 2014 Summary](#)

Workforce Supply

- **Workforce Development Region 1 has a 33,078-strong available labor pool that includes 25,713 underemployed workers who are looking for better jobs, as well as 7,365 unemployed residents.**

The underemployed are more willing to commute farther and longer for a better job compared to all employees. For the one-way commute, 47.5 percent are prepared to travel for 20 or more minutes longer and 33.9 percent will go 20 or more extra miles. In comparison, for all employees, 41.7 percent are prepared to travel for 20 or more minutes and 31.9 are ready for 20 or more miles.

Labor Force	114,502
Employed	107,137
Underemployment rate	24.0%
Number of underemployed workers	25,713
Unemployed	7,365
Available labor pool	33,078

Note: Based on April 2015 labor force data.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Labor.

- **Congestion worsened in Region 1 as commute time increased and distance dropped in 2014 from 2013. The number of commuters increased in the region as well.**

Continuous maintenance and development of the region's transportation infrastructure and systems is essential because impeding the mobility of workers and the flow of goods can slow economic development.

- **Region 1 has lower educational attainment and population growth than the state.**

	Region 1	AL
Population growth, 2010-2014	-0.5%	1.5%
<i>Educational attainment, age 25 and over</i>		
High School or higher	79.5%	83.1%
Bachelor's or higher degree	15.7%	22.6%

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.

Workforce Demand

- **Labor force and population growth will lag employment growth.**
- **By sector and in decreasing order, the five largest employers in the region provided 56,492 jobs (68.8 percent of the region's 82,169 total) in the second quarter of 2014.**

Industry	Employment	Share
Manufacturing	19,618	23.9%
Health Care & Social Assistance	11,123	13.5%
Retail Trade	10,966	13.4%
Educational Services	7,539	9.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	7,246	8.8%

Source: Alabama Department of Labor and U.S. Census Bureau

- **On average 4,004 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2014; quarterly net job flows averaged about 280.**

Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

- **The 50 highest earning occupations are mostly in management, health, and engineering fields and have a minimum mean salary of \$67,803. Only seven of these do not require bachelor's or higher degrees. Six of the top 10 high-earning occupations are in health and three are in management.**

- **The top five high-demand occupations are:**

Engine and Other Machine Assemblers
Team Assemblers
Customer Service Representatives
Registered Nurses
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers

- **The top five fast-growing occupations are:**

Engine and Other Machine Assemblers
Mechanical Engineering Technicians
Information Security Analysts
Machinists
Helpers—Brickmasons, Blockmasons,
Stonemasons, and Tile and Marble Setters

- **The region has 17 jobs that are both fast-growing and in high-demand:**

Engine and Other Machine Assemblers
Information Security Analysts
Machinists
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers
Physical Therapist Assistants
Helpers--Electricians
Personal Care Aides
Market Research Analysts and Marketing
Specialists
Home Health Aides
Mechanical Engineers
Management Analysts
Medical Secretaries
Dental Hygienists
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers
Physical Therapists
Chemical Engineers
Maintenance Workers, Machinery

- **Five occupations are high-earning, fast-growing, and in high-demand:**

Information Security Analysts
Mechanical Engineers
Management Analysts
Physical Therapists
Chemical Engineers

Implications for Workforce Development

- From a 2012 base, worker shortfalls of about 12,100 in 2022 and 19,100 in 2030 are expected.

<i>Change in 2012</i>	2022	2030
Total population growth	1.3	0.9
Age 20-64 population growth	-5.0	-9.5
Job growth	9.2	13.0
Worker shortfall (percent)	14.2	22.5
Worker shortfall (number)	12,066	19,122

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.

Worker skills and the expected shortfall must be of high priority through 2030. Worker shortfall in critical occupations will need to be addressed as well.

- **Strategies to address skill needs and critical occupation shortfalls should aim at raising worker productivity and increasing labor force participation.**

Such strategies might include:

1. Improving education and education funding
2. Continuing and enhancing programs to assess, retrain, and place dislocated workers
3. Focusing on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth)
4. Using economic opportunities to attract new residents
5. Facilitating in-commuting
6. Encouraging older worker participation

- **Investment in education/training and skills development is crucial.**

Improving education is important because: (a) a highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset, (b) productivity rises with additional education, (c) more educated people are more likely to work, and (d) education yields high private and social rates of return on investment.

Publicizing both private and public returns to education can encourage individuals to raise their own educational attainment levels and also promote public and legislative support for education.

Higher incomes that come with improved educational attainment and work skills would help increase personal income for the region as well as raise additional local (county and city) tax revenues. This is especially important for a region that has low population and labor force growth rates.

Of the region's 561 occupations, 42 are expected to decline over the 2012 to 2022 period. Twenty are expected to see a sharp decline of at least two percent. Education and training for declining occupations should slow accordingly.

- **Skill and education requirements keep rising. In the future, more jobs will require postsecondary education and training at a minimum.**

The importance of basic skills generally and for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs indicates a strong need for training in these skills.

Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills.

Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can help identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

- **Based on previous projections, the pace and scale of training needs to increase for basic and social skills in the region.**

- **Economic development should target high-earning industries and workforce development should ensure availability of workers for such industries.**

Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the Region 1 economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries. This is necessary although two of the largest employment sectors pay higher wages than the regional average.

- **Workforce development and economic development can together build a strong and well-diversified Region 1 economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.**

State of the Workforce Report IX: Region 1 2014 Summary



June 2015

Funding for this project was provided by:

Alabama Department of Economic and
Community Affairs
Alabama Department of Labor
Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education
Alabama Industrial Development Training
The University of Alabama

Workforce Supply

- **Workforce Development Region 3 has a 43,175-strong available labor pool that includes 36,136 underemployed workers who are looking for better jobs, as well as 7,039 unemployed residents.**

The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer for a better job. For the one-way commute, 43.4 percent are prepared to travel for 20 or more minutes longer and 35.5 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.

Labor Force	135,728
Employed	128,689
Underemployment rate	28.1%
Number of underemployed workers	36,136
Unemployed	7,039
Available labor pool	43,175

Note: Based on April 2015 labor force data.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Labor.

- **More people are traveling to work in Region 3 and consequently congestion worsened as both commute time and distance are up in 2014 from the previous year.**

Continuous maintenance and development of the region's transportation infrastructure and systems is essential because impeding the mobility of workers and the flow of goods can slow economic development.

- **Region 3 has similar educational attainment but a higher population growth than the state.**

	Region 3	AL
Population growth, 2010-2014	2.0%	1.5%
<i>Educational attainment, age 25 and over</i>		
High School or higher	83.2%	83.1%
Bachelor's or higher degree	21.5%	22.6%

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.

Workforce Demand

- **Employment growth is expected to exceed the labor force and population growth in the long term.**
- **By sector and in decreasing order, the five largest employers in the region provided 68,297 jobs (64.5 percent of the region's 105,825 total) in the second quarter of 2014.**

Industry	Employment	Share
Manufacturing	16,942	16.0%
Educational Services	14,698	13.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	14,123	13.4%
Retail Trade	11,968	11.3%
Accommodation & Food Services	10,566	10.0%

Source: Alabama Department of Labor and U.S. Census Bureau.

- **On average, 4,905 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2014; quarterly net job flows averaged 458.**

Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

- **The 50 highest earning occupations have a minimum salary of \$74,393 and are in management, health, engineering, architecture, postsecondary education, and computer fields. Only two of these do not require a bachelor's or higher degree. Seven of the top 10 are in health occupations and three are in management.**

- **The top five high-demand occupations are:** Team Assemblers; Registered Nurses; First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers; General and Operations Managers; and Construction Laborers

- **The top five fast-growing occupations are:** Personal Financial Advisors; Logisticians; Industrial Engineering Technicians; Helpers—Brickmasons, Blockmasons, Stonemasons, and Tile and Marble Setters; and Team Assemblers

- **Eleven jobs are high-earning and in high-demand:**

Pharmacists
 General and Operations Managers
 Medical and Health Services Managers
 Construction Managers
 Software Developers, Applications
 Nurse Practitioners
 Physical Therapists
 Architects, Except Landscape and Naval
 Industrial Engineers
 Computer Systems Analysts
 Electrical Engineers

- **The region has 15 jobs that are both high-demand and fast-growing:**

Personal Financial Advisors*
 Logisticians*
 Industrial Engineering Technicians*
 Team Assemblers
 Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary
 Industrial Engineers
 Computer Systems Analysts
 Marriage and Family Therapists
 Surgical Technologists
 Software Developers, Applications
 Diagnostic Medical Sonographers
 Industrial Machinery Mechanics
 Personal Care Aides
 Architects, Except Landscape and Naval
 Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners

- **Four occupations are high-earning, fast-growing, and in high-demand:**

Industrial Engineers
 Computer Systems Analysts
 Software Developers, Applications
 Architects, Except Landscape and Naval

Implications for Workforce Development

- From a base of 2012, worker shortfalls of 9,600 for 2022 and 14,000 for 2030 are expected.

Change from 2012	2022	2030
Total population growth	7.6	11.3
Age 20-64 population growth	2.8	3.6
Job growth	11.6	16.4
Worker shortfall	8.8	12.9
Worker shortfall (number)	9,614	14,005

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.

Thus, worker skills and the expected worker shortfalls must be priorities through 2022 and 2030, with emphasis on the long term. Worker shortfalls for critical occupations will also need to be addressed continuously.

- **Strategies to address skill needs and worker shortfalls should aim at increasing labor force participation and raising worker productivity.**

Such strategies might include:

1. Improving education and education funding
2. Continuing and enhancing programs to assess, retrain, and place dislocated workers
3. Focusing on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth)
4. Using economic opportunities to attract new residents
5. Facilitating in-commuting
6. Encouraging older worker participation

- **Investment in education/training and skills development is crucial.**

Improving education is important because: (a) a highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset, (b) productivity rises with additional education, (c) more educated people are more likely to work, and (d) education yields high private and social rates of return on investment.

Publicizing both private and public returns to education can encourage individuals to raise their own educational attainment levels and also promote public and legislative support for education.

Higher incomes that come with improved educational attainment and work skills would help increase personal income for the region as well as raise additional local (county and city) tax revenues. This is important, especially for a region that has relatively higher population and labor force growth rates than the state.

Of the region's 638 occupations, 53 are expected to decline over the 2012 to 2022 period. Twenty occupations are expected to see a sharp decline of at least nine percent, with each losing a minimum of 10 jobs. Education and training for declining occupations should slow accordingly.

- **Skill and education requirements keep rising. In the future, more jobs will require postsecondary education and training at a minimum.**

The importance of basic skills generally and for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs indicates a strong need for training in these skills.

The pace of training needs to increase for technical, systems, and resource management skills while the scale of training is raised for basic and social skills.

Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills.

Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can help identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

- **Economic development should target high-earning industries and workforce development should ensure availability of workers for such industries.**

Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the Region 3 economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries. This is necessary despite having two large employment sectors paying higher than average wages.

- **Workforce development and economic development can together build a strong and well-diversified Region 3 economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.**

State of the Workforce Report IX: Region 3 2014 Summary



June 2015

Funding for this project was provided by:

Alabama Department of Economic and
Community Affairs
Alabama Department of Labor
Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education
Alabama Industrial Development Training
The University of Alabama

Appendix D: C3 of Northwest Alabama 2012-2016 Action Plan





C3 of Northwest Alabama

2012-2016
Action Plan (Phase I)



Produced in cooperation with

C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance – Action Plan (Phase I)

Overview:

At its annual meeting in January 2012, the C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance announced that it would begin the process of creating an action plan. C3 adopted a planning process that mirrors that of the State of Alabama’s Strategic Economic Development Alliance. The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama was engaged to facilitate the planning process. The process established the creation of objectives for the following economic development components: Recruitment, Retention, and Renewal.

This action plan process differs from typical strategic planning processes, in that it focuses on implementation. The mechanism sets specific action items, measurables and leadership champions. This approach will diversify the region’s economic development efforts. Tactics have been developed to grow each of the components, with a timeline and measurable objectives.

The following definitions were established for each of the three components of the action plan, based on the C3 region’s specific needs:

Recruitment: Creation of jobs/investment through locating/relocating companies
Retention: Creation of jobs/investment through expanding industry
Renewal: Growth plan for current communities, Downtown revitalization, Tourism / visitor opportunities from I-22 traffic, Housing, Education, Healthcare, Technology, Signage, Entrepreneurship.

Objectives for each component fit into a prioritized timeline. The following timeline definitions were established.

Short Term One year
Middle Term One-two years
Long Term Three to five years, and beyond.

C3 identified lead organizations and support organizations for each component of the plan – Recruitment, Retention, Renewal – and obtained commitments for engagement on a steering committee. The steering committee includes leaders from business, education, and government. Members of the steering committee were assigned to work on each of the three components, in order to develop short, middle and long term objectives and measurables.

A dedicated “war room” was established at C3’s offices, allowing for the continual display of the implementation process.

The steering committee began setting strategy at a kickoff meeting in February, and continued monthly strategy sessions concluding in April. Bi-monthly meetings will be scheduled through the remainder of 2012 to monitor progress on 2012 (short term) action items as they are implemented. Action items for 2013 and beyond are captured and will be monitored and placed into implementation at future progress meetings.

Common Themes – One Plan

To avoid the creation of three separate plans for Recruitment, Retention and Renewal, common themes were sought. During the strategy process for each component of the plan, four themes emerged and were found to be consistent across each component. These themes, which will continue from year-to-year, are:

1. Human Capital
2. Physical Capital
3. Financial and Industrial Capital
4. Marketing/Target Opportunities

Committee members from Recruitment, Retention and Renewal can find themselves in each theme of the plan. Following is a summary of 2012 Action Items with some measurables.

Component	Specific Objectives
1	HUMAN CAPITAL
REC/RET/REN	Create dialogue to address workforce issues and opportunities by engaging education
RET/REN	Establish an industry visitation program to provide assistance by reducing barriers to expansion and improving operations
REN	Support entrepreneurial opportunities by locating the Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network at C3's offices
2	PHYSICAL CAPITAL
REC	Engage site selection consultant to evaluate industrial sites and make recommendations
REN	Establish grant opportunities for downtown revitalization
3	FINANCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CAPITAL
RET	Establish an industry outreach program, to include existing industry visits, quarterly roundtables and an appreciation event
4	MARKETING/TARGET OPPORTUNITIES
REC	Select target industries for recruitment (Truck Transport and Warehousing; Automotive Parts Mfg; Metal Fabrication; Motor Vehicle Bodies & Trailers)
REC	Place uniform signage with C3 contact information at all industrial sites
REC	Create a structured approach for regional and/or county sales teams
REC/RET/REN	Promote implementation and accomplishment of Strategic Plan via electronic newsletter, other electronic media, and newspapers, and year-end report-out
RET	Match local suppliers and buyers
REN	Initiate regular meetings of Chambers of Commerce reps for dialogue, planning and collaborations
REN	Develop printed visitor information on shopping, dining, attractions within the C3 area at points near I-22 and throughout the area
REN	Update and promote consistent messaging on websites promoting the area and market a single point of contact for economic development.

For a detailed overview of objectives and timelines, see Attachment A. Attachments B and C contains middle and long term objectives. Specifics for these objectives will be refined as year-end progress meetings are held.

**C3 of Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance
Action Plan Steering Committee**

Steering Committee Chairperson: Steve Foshee (Tombigbee Electric Cooperative)

Recruitment

Lead: Art Rowland (SDR-Millport) Steel Dust Recycling
Lead: Margie Ballard (Ballard Realty)
Steve Foshee (Tombigbee Electric Coop)
David Thornell (C3)
Bill Atkinson (Chairman of the Commission on the Future of NW Alabama)
Probate Judge William Oswalt (Fayette County)

Retention

Lead: Rod Northam (3M-Guin)
Lead: Dr. Charles Murray (Bevill State)
Nathan Willingham (Northwest Alabama Council of Governments)
David Logan (Fayette County)
Don Bussey (C3 Board of Directors)

Renewal

Lead: Matt Collins (NACCO-Sulligent)
Lead: Chuck Spann (NW Medical Center, Winfield City Schools Board of Directors)
Marla Minter (Minter Court Reporting and Hamilton Chamber of Commerce) Cory Johnson (West Alabama Regional Planning Commission)
Sam Bentley (Karen Wheaton Ministries and The Ramp)

Keith Jones (Northwest Alabama Council of Governments)

Others:

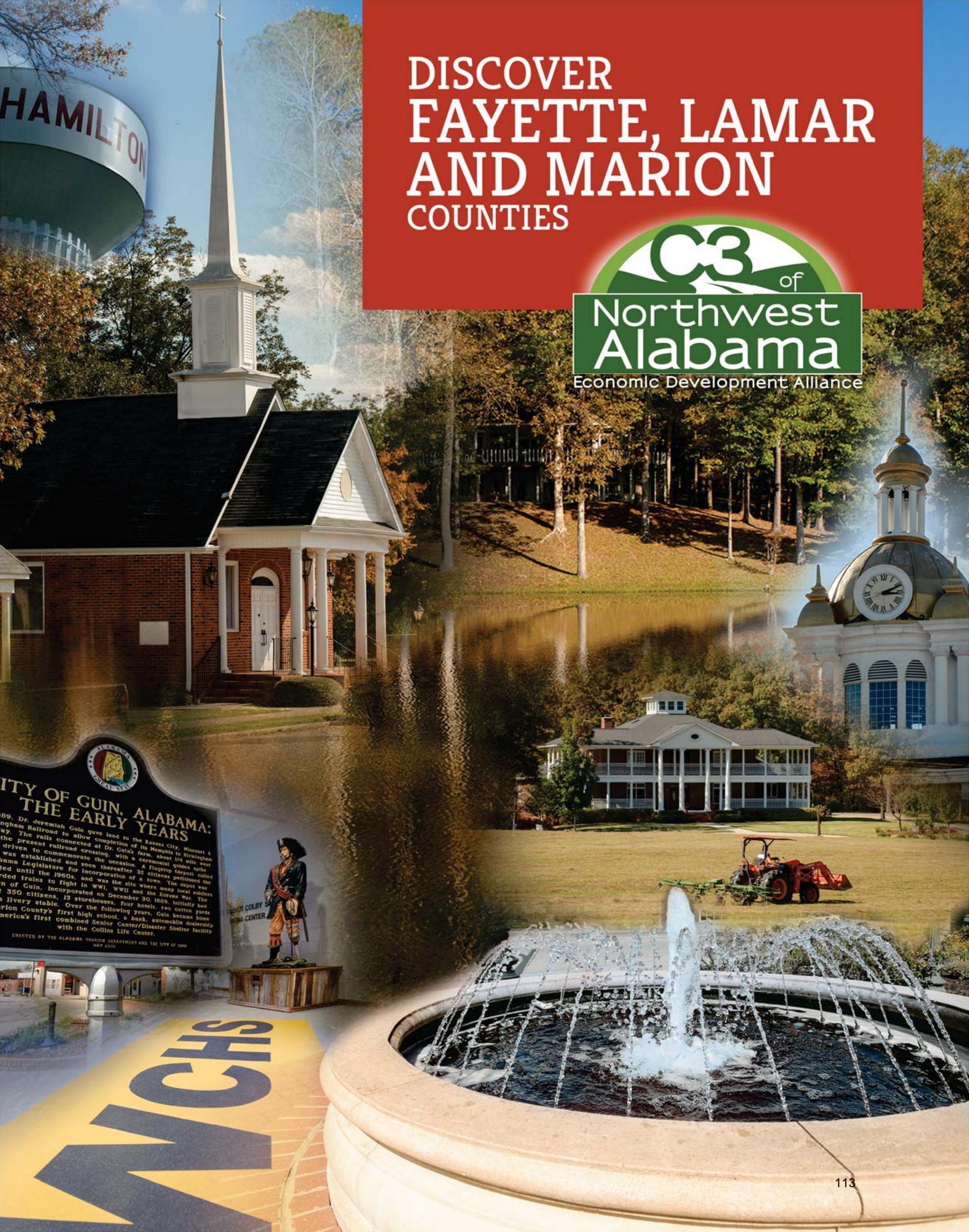
Wayne Christian (C3 Board of Directors, Lamar County Commission)
Probate Judge Johnny Rogers (Lamar County)

EDPA Facilitators

Bill Taylor
Greg Knighton
Tammy Radmard

Appendix E: “Discover Fayette, Lamar and Marion Counties” Brochure

DISCOVER FAYETTE, LAMAR AND MARION COUNTIES



**CITY OF GUIN, ALABAMA:
THE EARLY YEARS**

1899, Dr. Jeremiah Guin gave land to the Kansas City, Missouri & Memphis Railroad to allow completion of its Memphis to Birmingham line. The rails connected at Dr. Guin's farm, about 1/2 mile west of the present railroad crossing, with a ceremonial golden spike driven to commemorate the occasion. A flagtop depot was established and soon thereafter 32 citizens petitioned the Alabama Legislature for incorporation of a town. The depot operated until the 1960s, and was the site where many local soldiers boarded trains to fight in WWI, WWII and the Korean War. The town of Guin, incorporated on December 30, 1899, initially had 350 citizens, 13 storehouses, four hotels, two cotton yards and a livery stable. Over the following years, Guin became home to Marion County's first high school, a bank, automobile dealership, America's first combined Senior Center/Disaster Shelter facility with the Collins Life Center.

ERECTED BY THE ALABAMA TOURISM DEPARTMENT AND THE CITY OF GUIN
MAY 2010

HOUSING

From historic southern-style antebellum homes to contemporary residential living, you will find all



types of housing available at extremely affordable prices throughout Marion, Lamar and Fayette Counties. Whether you prefer a country setting or a close-to-town more urban location, the choices are abundant. When the place you live is enveloped in warm hospitality, outdoor activities year-round, and a place where fun and family are embraced, you will soon recognize that the C3 region offers not just a house in which to live, but a special environment to call Home.

THE LOWEST PROPERTY TAXES IN THE NATION

Alabama also ranks high in affordable housing. Average sale prices for homes in Alabama are 28% less than the national average, with home prices in the C3 region representing a 35% savings, allowing you to purchase the house of your dreams right here in Northwest Alabama.

Alabama home prices are

28%

less than the national average.



AVERAGE LIST PRICE

3 BR/2 BA

\$150,000

1,200 TO 2,000 SQ.FT.

Building lots in desirable neighborhood settings can be found from \$10-25,000, with rural land suitable as a home site (timber and pasture land) as low as \$1,000 per acre.



EDUCATION

Public, private and religious-based educational institutions are offered throughout the region. Each of the public school systems in Marion, Lamar and Fayette County offer outstanding academics, sports and specialized academics including, foreign language, technology and technical courses, and advanced diplomas.

STRIVING HIGHER

The Fayette and Hamilton Campuses of Beville State Community College serve approximately 1,100 students with two-year academic and technical degree programs to prepare graduates to transition directly to full-time work/careers or to transfer to four-year universities.

STRONG PERFORMANCE

Schools within the region consistently rank in the top 20 statewide, according to scores from the Alabama Reading and Math exams, and the Alabama Writing Assessment tests. Not only do students excel when challenged, but so do our communities when it comes to the local support of education.

TOP NOTCH TEACHERS

More than 60% of our teachers have received their master's level or higher, in education or related fields.

FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITIES WITHIN A ONE HOUR DRIVE

The University of Alabama Tuscaloosa
Mississippi University for Women Columbus
The University of North Alabama Florence
Mississippi State University Starkville

Birmingham Universities

The University of Alabama at Birmingham
UAB School of Medicine

Samford University

The Cumberland School of Law at Samford
Birmingham-Southern

TOP 20 Statewide

HEALTHCARE

HOSPITALS INCLUDE

Fayette County
Fayette Medical Center
Marion County
North Mississippi Medical
Center–Hamilton
Northwest Medical Center–Winfield

Serving Patients With
Combined 150 patient beds
State-of-the-Art Cancer Center
Dialysis Center
Hyperbaric Wound Care Center

Additional
Health Care
Services
Include

Cardiology
Oncology
Urology
Orthopedics
Neurology
Ophthalmology
Otolaryngology
Nephrology
Rheumatology

More than 200 physicians, nurse practitioners, specialty surgeons, and dentists serve the tri-county area. Should emergency needs exceed services found locally, the UAB Medical Center and others are only a 20-minute helicopter flight away.

GOVERNMENT

County commission forms of government exist in all three counties of the region. The Probate Judge is the highest elected official in each county, and in Lamar County the Probate Judge also serves as County Commission Chairman.

18 MUNICIPALITIES, each with an elected mayor and council form of government.

2 REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS represent the area and provide services from grant writing to aging programs for the elderly to assisting local communities with planning, loan programs, etc. These are the North Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG) and the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC).

FUN & GAMES

From a gallery exhibit featuring world-renowned folk artist Jimmy Lee Sudduth to weekend water

skiing and year-round golfing, recreational opportunities of all types provide relaxation and cultural experiences in Northwest Alabama. If you enjoy music, you will enjoy a visit to the Opry in downtown Vernon, or catch a concert at Belk's outdoor music venue.

If antiques is your passion, then Northwest Alabama is your destination, as the region is home to over 75,000 square feet of quality antiques and collectibles from more than 150 dealers in numerous local antique malls. Marion County is also home to Webster's Auction House.

CHECK OUT OUR LOCAL FESTIVALS

Brilliant
CoalFest

Fayette
Fayette Arts Festival
Froglevel

Glen Allen
Beyond the Tracks Festival

Guin
MayFest

Hackleburg
Neighbor Day

Hamilton
Buttahatchee River Fall Fest
Jerry Brown Arts Festival

Sulligent
Old Fashion Day

Winfield
Mule Day





ENJOY THE THEATRE

Local Performing Arts theatres/troupes exist in Fayette, Hamilton and Winfield. Winfield is home to the historic "Pastime Theatre" a fully restored, circa 1937

art-deco facility. The Fayette Civic Center also houses an Art Museum, founded in 1969 which contains over 4,000 pieces in the permanent collection, with both alternating and permanent display pieces on the main floor, and six folk art galleries on the lower level. Other symphony and theatre performances may be enjoyed within an hour drive.

TOP 10

Jerry Brown Arts Festival was voted one of the "Top 10 Events" in Alabama and a "Top 20 Event" by the national Southeast Tourism Society.

DRIVE UP TO THE DRIVE-IN

Proud to have stood the test of time is the Blue Moon Drive-In in Gu-Win, Alabama. This local icon first opened in 1956 and now operates with two screens showing first-run movies.

WE'VE GOT WAYS TO GET WET

The **FAYETTE AQUATIC CENTER** at the Guthrie Smith Park opened its 5,380 sq. ft. outdoor facility in 2013. The multi-purpose pool (including four 25-yard lap lanes,) offers interactive play features and multiple waterslides from a 35 ft. tower. A refreshing splash pad and numerous umbrella tables are on site for a comfortable day.

The **GUIN WATER PARK** at Hayden Riley Park has been a fixture in the community since 1992 as families come to enjoy the 308 foot water slide and the Olympic size pool. A mushroom splash pad near the slide exit allows parents to observe children in both places.

Both parks are surrounded by tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, pavilions, walking trails, picnic areas and softball fields.



JUMP INTO THE OUTDOORS

If you love the outdoors, you will be right at home here. The region boasts the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, the Sipsey Valley River Wilderness Area in Fayette (as traveled by Birmingham's Audubon Society), and numerous public lakes with picnic areas and boat launches. The Lake Lurleen State Park and Bankhead National Forest are also nearby. Most campgrounds are open year-round. Hunters and fishermen can enjoy thousands of public and privately owned acres for sport.

PADDLE THIS WAY

The Bear Creek Canoe Run in Hackleburg, in Marion County, has exploded in popularity as it is one of the few places where controlled and predictable water level is found every weekend to be enjoyed by canoe, kayak or inner tube. The local outfitter is the Bear Creek Canoe Rentals. Cabins and campsites are available at the Bear Creek Lakes or at nearby Dismal Canyon.

SO MUCH TO DO BY THE LAKE

Bear Creek Lakes offer more than 160 campsites in five campgrounds on more than 15,000 acres of land maintained by the Bear Creek Development Authority (BCDA). Most of these campsites have electrical and water hookups with campfire areas and cooking grills and all sites have picnic tables. Camping areas are family oriented and isolated from main traffic areas.

Scenic Marion County Lake consists of 37 acres where bass and catfish are caught year-round. An accessible fishing pier makes it easy to reach deep water without using a boat. However, boats are also available for rent, along with a launching ramp for anglers with their own boats. On-site concessions may also be enjoyed underneath the shelter of picnic pavilions. Also available is a wide variety of fishing tackle, live and artificial bait, and other fishing supplies.

SPORTS

The region represents many youth sporting interests including baseball, softball, basketball, soccer, golf, and numerous other activities. These are offered at each of the public or private schools, or as municipal or church-sponsored leagues. There are more than 15 golf and tennis complexes within a short drive, including those of the Robert Trent Jones golf facilities in Birmingham and Florence.

SPORTS GREATS

Rashad Johnson

Sulligent

FOOTBALL

Played at the University of Alabama, First-Team NFL Draft—Arizona Cardinals.

Joe Cribbs

Sulligent

FOOTBALL

Played at Auburn University, and in the NFL—Buffalo Bills, San Francisco 49ers, Indianapolis Colts, Miami Dolphins and USFL Birmingham Stallions.

Mike Davis

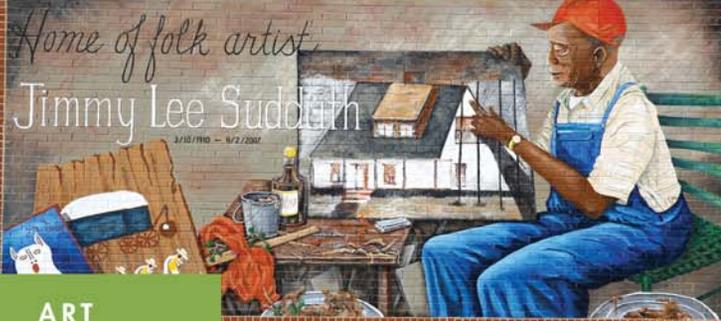
Fayette

BASKETBALL

Played at the University of Alabama, NBA draft recruit, played in Switzerland, Italy, and Topeka Sizzlers in the Continental League.

COACHING CAREER

Miles College—Fairfield, AL., Venezuela, hired as staff coach at Indiana University in 1997, and then replaced the legendary Bobby Knight; UAB Blazers and Texas Southern.



ART

SPONSORED BY FAYETTE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ARTISTS: Missy Miles & Karen Griffiths

FAMOUS ARTISTS

Jimmy Lee Sudduth
Fayette

March 10, 1910- Sept. 2, 2007

Sudduth used pigments made from mud, weeds, flowers, and berries combined with household paints, sugar, oil, and other binders. His work has been featured in the Smithsonian Institute, the High Museum of Art, the House of Blues, and is on permanent display at the Fayette Museum of Art.

Sonny James
Hackleburg

born May 1, 1929

Country Music singer/songwriter best known for the 1957 hit "Young Love", had 72 country and pop chart hits from 1953-1983, along with 23 No. 1 hits and 21 albums reaching the country Top 10. James is also a Member of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Dan Penn
Vernon

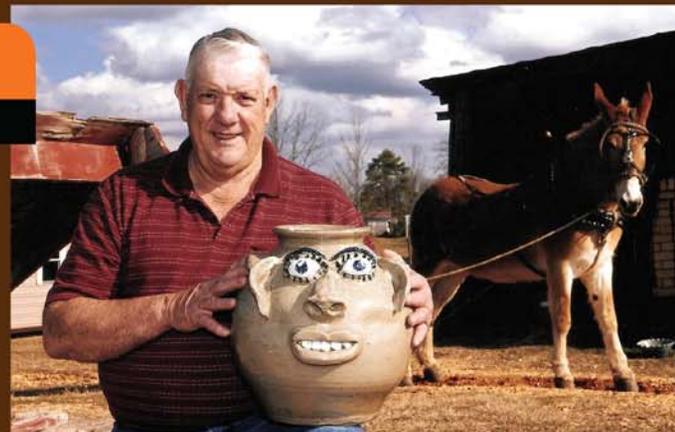
born Nov. 16, 1941

Singer/songwriter and record-producer, Penn co-wrote many soul hits of the 1960s including "The Dark End of the Street" and "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man." He was considered to be one of the great white soul singers of his generation, though released few records featuring his own vocals.

Jerry Brown
Hamilton

born 1942

A folk artist and ninth generation traditional potter, Brown lives and practices his craft in Hamilton. He is a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship and the Alabama Folk Heritage awards. His showings have included the 1984 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife.



Dale Shelnut
Guin

July 29, 1935-May 11, 1983

Shelnut began his career in 1951 with the Rhythm Masters, sang with the Tennesseans Quartet, but left in 1963 to join the Dixie Echoes as their lead singer; he would later buy/own the group. He was also a soloist on the Gospel Singing Jubilee television program.

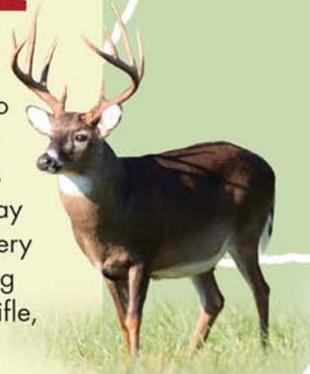
GAME & FISH

Alabama has tremendous natural diversity with more than 1.3 million acres of public hunting land and some of the most liberal seasons and bag limits in the nation for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, bobwhite quail, feral hogs, waterfowl, rabbits, squirrel, mourning doves, and many other species.

WE'RE #1

IN ALABAMA DEER HUNTING

Alabama deer hunting continues to top the list, with the herd currently at 1.75 million. The season covers 108 days annually and hunters may harvest both a buck and a doe every day in most areas, while harvesting whitetails with a bow, crossbow, rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader, or spear.



The largest deer populations in the State of Alabama can be found in Lamar, Fayette, and Marion counties, and produce some trophy animals. The region offers more than 170,000 acres of Wildlife Management Areas and National Forests.

FISHING

Clean waters from 8 lakes in 3 counties provide anglers with abundant small and largemouth bass, Florida Bass, salt water stripe, bream, crappie, as well as threadfin shad and channel catfish. Each lake is intensively managed to provide quality fishing on a sustained basis.

IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYWHERE



5 METROS WITHIN AN HOUR DRIVE



info@NorthwestAlabamaEDA.org

205-468-3213

800-399-7205 TOLL FREE

4020 U.S. Highway 43 | Guin, Alabama 35563

NorthwestAlabamaEDA.org



Appendix F: Incentives

- Alabama Taxes and Incentives Overview
- Alabama Non-Tax Incentives
- Alabama Foreign Trade Zones
- Alabama Enterprise Zones
- Alabama Industrial Development Grant Program



OVERVIEW

Alabama offers businesses an attractive taxation environment—one of the nation’s lowest overall tax burdens. In addition, Alabama provides a number of tax incentives designed to assist with a cost-effective start-up and provide continued operational savings.

INCOME TAX

- Corporations’ income tax based on net taxable income derived only from business conducted within the state determined by applying a four-factor formula of property, payroll, and double-weighted sales to total net income.
- Corporate income tax rate of 6.5 percent (Individuals taxed at a rate of 5 percent).
- Full deduction for all federal income taxes apportioned to Alabama creating a significantly reduced net effective rate.
- 15-year carry-forward of net operating losses.

PROPERTY TAX

- Constitutional limit of the state mileage rate on both real and personal property to 6.5 mills (of which 3.0 mills are dedicated to education).
- Business property, both real and personal, taxed on 20 percent of fair market value.
- Inventories and goods-in-process are not taxed.
- Pollution control equipment statutorily exempt from property taxation.
- Exemption of all tangible personal property being warehoused in Alabama for shipment to a destination outside the state.

Tax Summary	
Tax	State Data
Sales Tax - General	4.00%
Local levies applicable	yes
Abatements available	yes
Sales Tax - Mfg. Machinery	1.50%
Local levies applicable	yes
Abatements available	yes
Property Tax	6.5
Assessment %	20%
Local levies applicable	yes
Abatements available	yes
Inventory Tax	No
Corporate Income Tax Rate*	6.5%
*Deductibility of federal taxes results in a net effective rate of approximately 4.5%	
Deductibility of Federal Taxes	Yes-100%
Business Privilege Tax	
\$.25 to 1.75 per \$1,000 of net worth (\$15K max)	
Pollution Control Exemptions	
Property Tax	yes
Sales Tax	yes
State Unemployment Insurance	
2015 Taxable Wage Base	\$8,000
2015 New Employer Rate %	2.70%
2015 Minimum Rate %	0.89%
2015 Maximum Rate %	7.04%

Alabama has one of the lowest tax burdens in the U.S.



SALES & USE TAXES

- Four state rate differentials, which include:
 - / 1.5 percent rate for manufacturing and farm machinery;
 - / 2 percent rate for automotive vehicles;
 - / 3 percent rate for food sold through vending machines; and
 - / 4 percent general rate for all other items.

- Raw materials used by manufacturers or compounders specifically exempt from sales and use taxation.
 - / Pollution control equipment statutorily exempt from taxation.
 - / Credit for sales and use tax paid to another state and its subdivisions.
 - / Exemption for quality control testing and donations to charitable entities.
 - / Abatements by cities, counties, and public authorities may include:

For qualifying industries, all state and the local noneducational portion of construction related transaction (sales and use) taxes associated with constructing and equipping a project. For coal mining projects, half of the state sales and use tax may be abated.

- Utility gross receipts tax exemptions for
 - / Sewer costs;
 - / Water used in industrial manufacturing in which 50 percent or more is used in industrial processing;
 - / Exclusions for utility services used in certain types of manufacturing and compounding processes;
 - / An electrolytic or electro-thermal manufacturing or compounding process;
 - / Natural gas which becomes a component of tangible personal property manufactured or compounded (but not used as fuel or energy);
 - / Natural gas used to chemically convert raw materials prior to the use of such converted raw materials in an electrolytic or electro-thermal manufacturing or compounding process; and
 - / Increased utility tax for refurbishments, upgrades, or reopening of a facility.

BUSINESS PRIVILEGE TAX

- Replaces the former franchise tax.

- Capped at \$15,000 except for financial institutions and insurance companies. The rate ranges from \$.25 to \$1.75 for each \$1,000 of net worth in Alabama. The minimum privilege tax is \$100; the maximum privilege tax is \$15,000, except for financial institutions, financial institution groups and insurance companies

ALABAMA REINVESTMENT AND ABATEMENTS ACT

- New Facility and Expansion
 - / Abatement of non-educational portion of sales and use taxes on construction materials.
 - / Abatement of non-educational portion of property tax for up to 20 years.
- Existing Facility: Refurbishments, Upgrades, or Placed Back in Service
 - / Abatement of non-educational sales and use taxes on construction materials and equipment.
 - / Abatement of non-educational property taxes for up to 20 years of the incremental property tax increases.
 - / Exemption from taxes for increased utility services for up to 10 years.
 - / AIDT worker training.

JOBS ACT INCENTIVES

- Jobs Credit
 - / Annual cash refund up to 3 percent of the previous year's gross payroll for up to 10 years.
 - / For companies employing at least 12 percent veterans, up to an additional 0.5 percent credit is available for the wages of veterans.
 - / Up to an additional 1 percent job credit is available for companies in targeted counties.
- Investment Credit
 - / Credit of up to 1.5 percent of the qualified capital investment expenses for up to 10 years. Credit can be taken against the Alabama income tax liability and/or utility tax liability.
 - / Credit is available for up to 15 years for companies selling their output nearby.
 - / Five-year carry forward, three-year transferability.

FULL EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 2011

- Businesses with 50 or fewer employees may receive a one-time income tax credit equal to \$1,000 per new job paying over \$10 per hour.

INCOME TAX CAPITAL CREDIT

(AVAILABLE THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2015)

- Five percent (5%) of the total capital costs of a qualifying project, available each year for twenty (20) years. Projects with certain investment and employee levels may carry forward the capital credit up to four years and delay the start of the credit up to three years.
- Credit begins in the year the qualifying project is "placed in service."
- The qualifying project must constitute:
 - / An "industrial, warehousing, or research activity" defined in the 2007 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) as listed in the legislation;
 - / Any process or treatment facility which recycles, reclaims, or converts materials which include solids, liquids, or gases, to a reusable product;
 - / Headquarters facilities as defined in NAICS 551114;
 - / Data processing centers;
 - / Certain warehousing and logistics projects in NAICS Subsector 493;
 - / Renewable energy facilities;
 - / Research & development facilities;
 - / Projects owned by utilities that produce electricity from alternative energy resources; or from hydropower production.
- Projects owned by utilities that produce electricity Certain investment, employment and minimum wage thresholds apply but most project thresholds are reduced within "Favored Geographic Areas."

ENTERPRISE ZONE CREDIT / EXEMPTION

- Under certain conditions, an enterprise zone credit (Section 5) or exemption (Section 11) for income tax, sales and use tax, and/or business privilege tax is available for qualified participants.

HEROES FOR HIRE CREDIT

- A one-time \$1,000 income tax credit for each recently deployed, and now discharged, unemployed veteran hired and a \$2,000 income tax credit to recently deployed, and now discharged, unemployed veterans who start their own businesses.
- Employer must also meet the requirements of the Full Employment Act of 2011.



Alabama Non-Tax Incentives

Revised 08/13/2015 – Alabama Department of Commerce

WORKFORCE:

“Right-to-Work” State

- Enacted: 1953

AIDT (Workforce Recruitment and Training)

AIDT was established to build a healthy state economy by recruiting and training a skilled workforce to attract new industries to the state and to expand existing industries. Job-specific pre-employment and on-the-job training programs are provided. The program provides a full range of customized technical training programs that are offered at no cost to employers and to the trainees. Leadership training programs are also available. In addition to training, AIDT offers services including trainee recruitment and screening, safety assistance, industrial maintenance assessments and continuous improvement/process improvement assessments. Training is conducted by AIDT staff or contracted instructors and delivered through classrooms or 38 Mobile Training Units (MTUs) customized to meet specific company needs.

- Among the top workforce training programs in the US (Expansion Management)
- ISO 9001:2008 certified
- State-of-the-art training and support services for new and expanding businesses.
- An experienced staff, mobile training units, and in-house design and production facilities at no cost to the client.

Contact: Jacquie Allen

AIDT

Public Information Officer/Communications Manager 334-

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<http://www.aidt.edu/>

Alabama Technology Network (ATN)

The Alabama Technology Network is a part of the Alabama Community College System and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership. ATN's team of experts helps solve the needs of industry and business through innovative, sustainable, cost-effective solutions. We can conduct detailed needs assessments, outline potential solutions based on the results, and then provide technical assistance to help you solve those problems or identify those who can.

- Regional centers tailor services to meet local needs, providing innovative and cost-effective solutions to enable Alabama's existing industry to be globally competitive.

- The network is Alabama's affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Manufacturing Extension Partnership, which provides hands-on assistance and training to smaller manufacturers.

Contact: Camie Huett

Alabama Technology Network-Corporate Office 1-877-428-6457 toll free
atninfo@atn.org

Alabama Career Center

The Alabama Career Center is a one-stop career center that offers free employment services available to all businesses and jobseekers. The services include:

- Assist the employers in the local, intrastate or interstate recruitment of applicants.
- Prescreen applicants to meet employer qualifications.
- Provide interview facilities for the employers.
- Conduct any desired testing of potential employees to measure aptitudes for specified job skills using validated tests.
- Perform any related service that might be needed.

Contact: <https://joblink.alabama.gov/ada/skillmatch/skl>ContactUs.cfm>

Workforce Investment Areas

The Alabama Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) provides advice and policy guidance to the governor on building a strong workforce development system that aligns with economic development and skills training goals in the state. The board is responsible for the overall Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program which includes the Alabama Career Center System, Adult Education and Rehabilitation Services. The board members are appointed by the Governor and represent a cross-section of industry and business leaders, labor officials, education leaders, economic development specialist and local elected officials.

- Customer-focused system to help Alabamians access the tools they need to manage their careers through information and high quality services and to help U.S. Companies find skilled workers.
- The Jefferson County Commission, the Mobile County Commission, and the Alabama Workforce Investment Area (remaining 65 counties) administer the majority of Workforce Investment Act federally funded activities conducted within Alabama.

Contact: Varies by City

<http://www.adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/wdd/Documents/LWIB.pdf>

GRANTS AND OTHER ASSISTANCE:

Industrial Development Grant Program (Site Preparation)

The Industrial Development Grant Program provides grants to counties, municipalities, local industrial development boards or authorities organized as a public corporation in the state, or an airport authority organized as a public corporation in this state pursuant to Chapter 3 of Title 4, or whether created by general, or special or local laws, or general acts of local application, if such authority governs an airport operated by a county and at least one municipality therein jointly, for these purposes:

- Site preparation for land owned or possessed by lease by these entities.
- Reasonable rehabilitation of an existing building or structure, determined by the Grantee as being necessary to solicit or attract a Qualifying Project.
 - The size of the grant depends upon the amount of capital investment:

Capital Costs	Percentage of Capital Cost
Less than \$200,000	5.0%
\$200,000 to \$499,999	3.5% (minimum \$10,000)
\$500,000 to \$999,999	2.5% (minimum \$20,000)
\$1,000,000 to \$1,999,999	1.5% (minimum \$28,000)
\$2,000,000 to \$9,999,999	1.0% (minimum \$32,000)
\$10,000,000 or greater	0.75% (minimum \$100,000; maximum \$150,000)
\$ 25,000,000 or greater	Maximum \$150,000

Contact: Jonathan West

Alabama Department of Finance

Telephone (334) 353-1199

Fax (334) 353-3466

Industrial Access Road and Bridge

Industrial access funds are intended to provide adequate public access to new or expanding distribution, manufacturing and industrial firms. The industry must be committed to new investment and the creation of new jobs. The new access must be on public right of way for public use (state, city or county) and the project sponsor (city or county) must maintain the completed facility unless the facility consists of turn lanes, crossovers, etc., that are located on state highways. Industrial access funds are limited to construction, construction engineering and inspection costs. The project sponsor is responsible for all preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation costs.

Contact: Edward Austin, PE

Innovative Programs Bureau Chief

Department of Transportation

334.242.6751

austine@dot.state.al.us

<http://www.dot.state.al.us/adweb/Industrial%20Access.htm>

One-Stop Environmental Permitting

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) has authority to issue the permits required by all the major federal environmental laws. Permit Coordination and Development Center (PCDC) facilitates the permitting process by coordinating communications, conferences and other administrative functions between an applicant and ADEM.

Contact: ADEM

Permit & Services Division

(334) 271-7714

permitsmail@adem.state.al.us

<http://adem.alabama.gov/moreInfo/permittingInfo.cnt>

Alabama Improvement Districts

The Legislature has passed and the Governor has signed Act No. 99-446 providing for the creation of improvement districts and allowing for the issuance of revenue bonds to finance improvements such as streets, water systems, sewers, sidewalks, and recreational facilities.

- Formed by counties and municipalities – public corporations authorized to issue bonds backed by assessments on the real estate located within the district.
- Ability to issue bonds and confer exemption from certain state and local taxes.
- Financing vehicle to issue tax-exempt bonds to provide funds for the construction of infrastructure.

Contact: Varies by County

<http://www.madeinalabama.com/small-business-resources/local-development/>

USDA Rural Development in Alabama

A variety of loan, grant, and loan guarantee programs, plus technical assistance in the areas of business and industry, cooperative development, rural housing, community facilities, water and waste disposal, and telecommunications, including distance learning and telemedicine.

Contact: Varies by district

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices/al>



OVERVIEW

Foreign-Trade Zones are specially designated areas, in or adjacent to a U.S. Customs Port of Entry, which are considered to be outside the Customs Territory of the United States.

Currently, Birmingham, Mobile, Huntsville, Montgomery and Dothan have foreign-trade zones. A number of subzones of the Alabama general purpose zones exist.

GENERAL PURPOSE ZONE

A general-purpose zone is a foreign-trade zone in which any number of firms may operate, constrained only by the physical limitations of space in the zone. Foreign and domestic goods may be admitted to a zone for the operations not otherwise prohibited by law.

Merchandise may be stored, exhibited, assembled, processed, destroyed within the zone, or sent into United States Customs Territory subject to the customs duties and excise taxes only at the time they leave the zone.

Non-Contiguous Sites of a General-Purpose Zone:

A non-contiguous general-purpose zone consists of more than one site based on modal or space requirements. Any general purpose activity by any number of firms may occur at any site. An important advantage of a non-contiguous zone site is that only one application must be filed, and once approved, the sites may be activated as needed by approval of the Port Director of Customs. This provides flexibility by having sites available immediately, as the need for them arises. The Mallard-Fox Creek Industrial Park and Port in Decatur is an example of a Non-Contiguous Site of a General-Purpose Zone.



RELATED RESOURCES

Foreign-Trade Zone Corporation: <https://www.ftzcorp.com>



SUBZONE

A subzone is a special purpose conditional zone site authorized by the Foreign-Trade Zones Board for operations which cannot be accommodated within an existing zone site. An application for a subzone must be submitted to the Foreign-Trade Zone Board in the same manner as a general-purpose zone application would be. A subzone is a single-firm site, normally involving manufacturing, whose operations and control are separate from the general-purpose zone; in this sense, it is approved only for a specific activity. An example of this is the Mercedes-Benz manufacturing facility in Vance. Any community or industry may have an application for subzone status submitted on its behalf. The subzone may be authorized by the FTZ Board if it can be demonstrated that the use may not be accommodated in the existing zone, and that a significant public benefit will result, such as the creation or retention of jobs.

MONEY SAVING

Duty Exemption On Re-Exports

If merchandise is re-exported after being placed in a foreign-trade zone or shipped to another zone for re-export, no duty is ever paid.

Relief From Inverted Tariffs

Generally, if foreign merchandise is brought into a foreign-trade zone or subzone and manufactured into a product that carries a lower duty rate, the lower rate applies.

FOR EXAMPLE: A Foreign-Trade Zone user imports a motor (which carries a 4% duty rate) and uses it in the manufacture of a vacuum cleaner (which has a “Free” duty rate). When the vacuum cleaner leaves the FTZ and enters the commerce of the U.S., the duty owed on the motor drops from the 4% motor rate to the “Free” vacuum cleaner rate.

Duty Elimination On Waste And Scrap

No duty is charged on most waste and scrap from production in a foreign-trade zone.

No Duty On Rejected Or Defective Parts

Merchandise found to be defective or faulty may be returned to the country of origin for repair or simply destroyed. Whichever choice is made, no duty is paid. Many companies outside of foreign-trade zones pay duty on imported merchandise, find it to be faulty and return it to the country of origin for repair, and then pay duty again when the merchandise reenters the United States. If you are within a foreign-trade zone or a subzone, the “double duty crunch” is never a problem, because your merchandise never enters the commerce of the United States.

Duty Deferral

No duty is ever charged on merchandise while it is in a foreign-trade zone, and there is no limit on the length of time merchandise may be kept in the zone. By deferring the duty, capital is freed for more important needs.

No Duty On Domestic Content Or Value Added

The “value added” to a product in a foreign-trade zone (including manufacture using domestic parts, cost of labor, overhead, and profit) is not included in its dutiable value when the final product leaves the zone. Final duties are assessed on foreign content only.

Relief From Local Ad Valorem Taxes

Foreign merchandise stored in a foreign-trade zone, or merchandise held in the zone for export, is not subject to state / local ad valorem taxes.

No Duty On Sales To The U.S. Military Or NASA

No duty is charged on merchandise sold from a Foreign-Trade Zone to the U.S. military or NASA, returned to the country of origin for repair or simply destroyed.

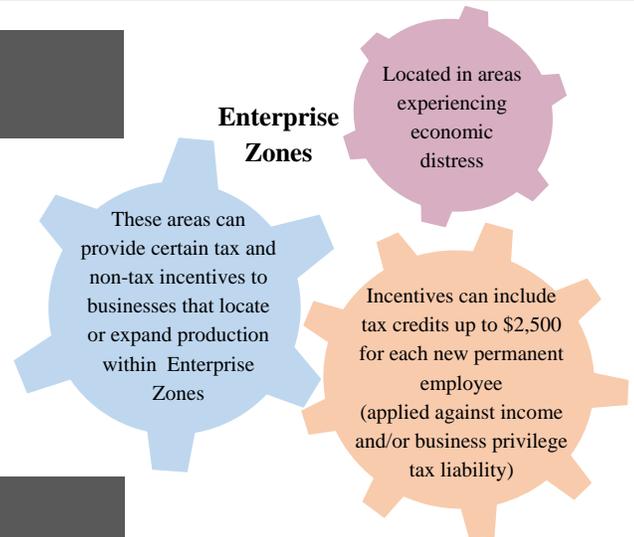
Source: Foreign-Trade Zone Corporation



OVERVIEW

Twenty-eight Enterprise Zones across the state of Alabama encourage economic growth in areas considered to have depressed economies.

In addition, each area offers innovative packages of local tax and non-tax incentives to encourage businesses to locate or expand in that area's Enterprise Zone.



STATE TAX INCENTIVES

Under Section 5 of the Act:

An employer's maximum tax credit for operations in the zone shall not exceed \$2,500 per new permanent employee hired pursuant to the act. This tax credit may be applied in all Alabama Enterprise Zones to any state income tax liability and/or the business privilege tax liability.

1. If an employer can certify that at least 30% of new permanent employees hired pursuant to the act were formerly unemployed for at least 90 days prior to this employment, then the employer qualifies for the following state income or business privilege tax credit on taxes due from zone operation:
 - 80%: first year
 - 60%: second year
 - 40%: third year
 - 20%: fourth and fifth years

2. Employers may receive the following state income or business privilege tax credit for new investments in the zone or improvements to existing facilities in the zone provided at least five new permanent employees are hired.
 - 10% on the first \$10,000 invested
 - 5% on next \$90,000 invested
 - 2% on remaining investment

3. Employers may receive a maximum state income or business privilege tax credit of \$1,000 per new permanent employee for expenses of training those employees in new skills.

Under Section 11 of the Act:

1. Employers may receive an exemption from Alabama sales and use tax on the purchases of the materials used in the construction of a building or any addition or improvement thereon for housing any legitimate zone business and on machinery and equipment used in the zone.
2. Employers may receive certain exemptions from state income and business privilege tax for a period of five years.

RELATED RESOURCES

Taxes & Incentives: <http://www.edpa.org/location-assistance/taxesincentives/>



REQUIREMENTS FOR BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

For Section 5 incentives, a business:

- A. Must be located in or locating within the boundaries of an Enterprise Zone.
- B. Must generally fall into Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Codes 20---42, 44---49 or consist of major warehousing, distribution centers, regional or corporate headquarters of companies in the referenced SIC codes, or such other activities having a prospect of significant economic impact without threatening the well-being of existing industries located within the county hosting the Enterprise Zone.
- C. Must expand its labor force, make new capital investment or prevent loss of employment.
- D. May not have closed or reduced employment elsewhere in Alabama in order to expand into the Enterprise Zone.
- E. Must obtain an endorsement resolution approved by the appropriate local governing authority prior to participation in the program.

For Section 11 incentives, a business:

- A. Must meet the criteria outlined in A-E stated previously in Section 5 and:
- B. Must certify annually that at least 35% of its employees are residents of the hosting rural Enterprise Zone county, and were receiving public assistance prior to employment, or were considered unemployable by traditional standards or lacking in basic skills, or any combination of the above.
- C. Must give preference and priority to Alabama manufacturers, suppliers, contractors, and labor, except where not reasonably possible to do so without added expense, substantial inconvenience, or sacrifice of operational efficiency.

Enterprise Zones	
Cities	
Birmingham	
Mobile	
Prichard	
Counties	
Barbour	Macon
Bullock	Mobile
Butler	Monroe
Cherokee	Perry
Clarke	Pickens
Clay	Pike
Covington	Randolph
Dallas	Russell
Escambia	Sumter
Etowah	Talladega
Jackson	Tallapoosa
Lawrence	Wilcox
Lowndes	



● Enterprise Zone Cities
 Enterprise Zone Counties



OVERVIEW

Alabama Act Number 91-635, as amended by Alabama Act No. 97-645, Act 99-590, Act 99-591, Act 2006-417 and Act 2007-300, authorizes the State Industrial Development Authority to sell bonds to make grants to counties, municipalities, local industrial development boards or authorities or economic development councils or authorities, airport authorities, port authorities or public corporations to pay for site preparation for land owned or possessed by lease by these entities.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for an industrial development grant, the activity occupying the project site must be a *Qualifying Project*. *Qualifying Project* is defined as:

A project to be sponsored or undertaken by one or more investing companies (i) at which the predominant trade or business activity conducted will constitute industrial, warehousing, or research activities, or (ii) which qualifies as a headquarters facility.

The size of the grant depends upon the amount of capital investment:

Capital Costs	Percentage of Capital Cost
Less than \$200,000	5.00%
\$ 200,000 to \$499,999	3.5% (minimum \$10,000)
\$ 500,000 to \$999,999	2.5% (minimum \$20,000)
\$ 1,000,000 to \$1,999,999	1.5% (minimum \$28,000)
\$ 2,000,000 to \$9,999,999	1.0% (minimum \$32,000)
\$10,000,000 and greater	0.75% (minimum \$100,000; maximum \$150,000)

Act 99-351 (the Act) requires entities seeking an Industrial Development Grant or certain other incentives to notify the Secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce (the Secretary) of the general parameters of the Qualifying Project (Project). The Act requires the Director to transmit a letter acknowledging receipt of the notification (Notification Acknowledgement Letter).

General parameters are defined as the following:

- Project name (the notification may be on an anonymous basis)
- Project location
- Estimated capital investment
- Number of jobs created by the project
- Projected date of first operation

Additionally, applications for Industrial Development Grants cannot be submitted to the SIDA until the construction of the Qualifying Project has been completed.



Appendix C

Sample Job Description for Business Retention and Expansion Program Manager

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION COORDINATOR

General:

Experience working in a professional capacity with businesses using federal, state, or local economic development assistance programs; organizing and conducting presentations and workshops to various audiences; manage and oversee the Entrepreneurship Center; ability to work with businesses at various stages, (startup to established companies); conduct Business Retention and Expansion interviews and surveys; Ability to work professionally with board of directors, political officials, community partner organizations, and the public.

Experience evaluating and recommending appropriate business site locations and expansions; providing technical economic development assistance to businesses, business organizations, and community groups; analyzing and implementing economic development marketing concepts.

Business Retention/Expansion Duties:

Assesses needs of businesses for retention/expansion. Advises businesses of various market development, financing, workforce training, and business planning resources. Coordinates with state, federal and regional sources to assist in business expansion and entrepreneurial development. Provides technical assistance to communities and local development groups applying for federal and state grants to aid business expansion. Analyzes market opportunities

Serves as a liaison to local units of government and works with Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Department of Labor offices, Panhandle Area Development, Scottsbluff/Gering United Chamber of Commerce, USDA and other private sector organizations and development groups on a broad range of economic development activities. Evaluates business expansion potential of the region and provides technical assistance to local governments in planning adequate infrastructure. Conducts workshops and makes presentations to the region to assist them in designing and implementing programs to facilitate business development and to promote Scotts Bluff County's business opportunities. Builds collaboration among partners, works on revitalization of business districts, and advocates for businesses and property owners when necessary.

Other Responsibilities:

Works with the Executive Director in implementing a coordinated business expansion and retention campaign and oversees the eCenter activities.

- Assists with planning, organizing, coordinating, and evaluating major economic development activities within the region; assists with the development of strategies that maintain and enhance the long-term economic vitality of the Scotts Bluff Region.
- Recommends changes that would encourage or facilitate economic development in desired areas; continue ongoing implementation of economic development priorities by facilitating the development and redevelopment of targeted, geographic areas and multi-family residential, office, commercial, and public sites.
- Resolves complaints and conflicts; act as facilitator, when necessary, between the development community and local government entities.
- Provides technical expertise and information to encourage cooperation and efficiency of the development process.
- Researches, analyzes, and promotes economic and market trends.

- Evaluates industrial and commercial development potential of properties.
- Analyze data and conducts research for various projects, companies, etc.
- Researches, prepares, and submits grant applications for potential funding sources for economic development projects; investigates the use various financing instruments that might facilitate redevelopment of business districts.
- Researches and develops marketing materials and marketing campaigns.
- Participate in special business community events to promote business development and vitality.
- Makes public presentations to community groups and public meetings; make presentations to the City Council and other government entities as needed.
- Perform related duties as assigned.
- Review proposed ordinances and codes that relate to economic development.
- Represent TCD on committees and boards regarding local and regional issues as required.
- May supervise staff, interns, and/or volunteers.
- Know and understand the following:
 - Principles and practices of economic development.
 - Understand applicable laws, codes and zoning regulations concerning land use and the development process. Work with city planning department staff as needed and be knowledgeable of city processes.
 - Legislation, trends and practices which affect the local economy and local businesses.
 - Financial feasibility, pro forma analysis, current economic trends, and economic forecasting.
 - Regional market trends in land development, retail, industrial, and office markets.
 - Market analysis as it relates to the potential development of a specific site.
 - Planning information sources including demographic and economic data, environmental determinants of land use, land development trends, and legal requirements.
 - Financing instruments and strategies for financing development projects.
 - Business management practices.
 - Resources available to business owners.
 - Grant application process and procedures.
- Must be able to work independently with little direction.
- Must be professional in representation of the TCD organization and board at all times.
- Must be able to work in a rapid pace work environment on several projects concurrently. Plan, prioritize, and schedule work. Meet deadlines.
- Compose, proofread, and edit general correspondence, reports, and other documents.
- Demonstrate strong attention to detail.

Education & Experience:

Education & Experience: **Minimum** - Associates degree in business, public administration, accounting, political science, entrepreneurship or similar degree with five years progressively responsible experience and two years as a supervisor; **Preferred** - Bachelors degree in business, public administration, accounting, political science, or similar degree with five years progressively responsible experience and two years as a supervisor; experience and background in economic development highly desired; or any equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to successfully perform essential duties of the job.

Appendix D

A Guide to Broadband Funding Opportunities: How to Navigate the Funding Process

A Guide to Broadband Funding Opportunities

How to Navigate the Funding Process

U.S. Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
New York



2015

**Note: This document will be continuously updated as information becomes available.*

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction.....	4
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).....	5
1) Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program	5
2) Community Connect Broadband Grants Program	6
3) Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program.....	7
4) Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loans and Grants Program.....	7
Federal Communications Commission	9
1) Connect America Fund/Universal Service High Cost Program.....	9
2) Universal Service Schools and Libraries Program.....	10
3) Rural Health Care Program	10
Appalachian Regional Commission.....	12
1) Appalachian Regional Commission Project Grant Program	12
United States Department of Commerce:.....	14
Economic Development Administration	14
1) Economic Development Facilities and Public Works.....	14
Institute of Museum and Library Services	15
1) Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States.....	15
2) Native American Library Services Grant.....	15
Department of Housing and Urban Development	17
1) Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grants	17
United States Department of Education:	18
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	18

1) Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities18

United States Department of Health and Human Services:.....19

Health Resources and Services Administration.....19

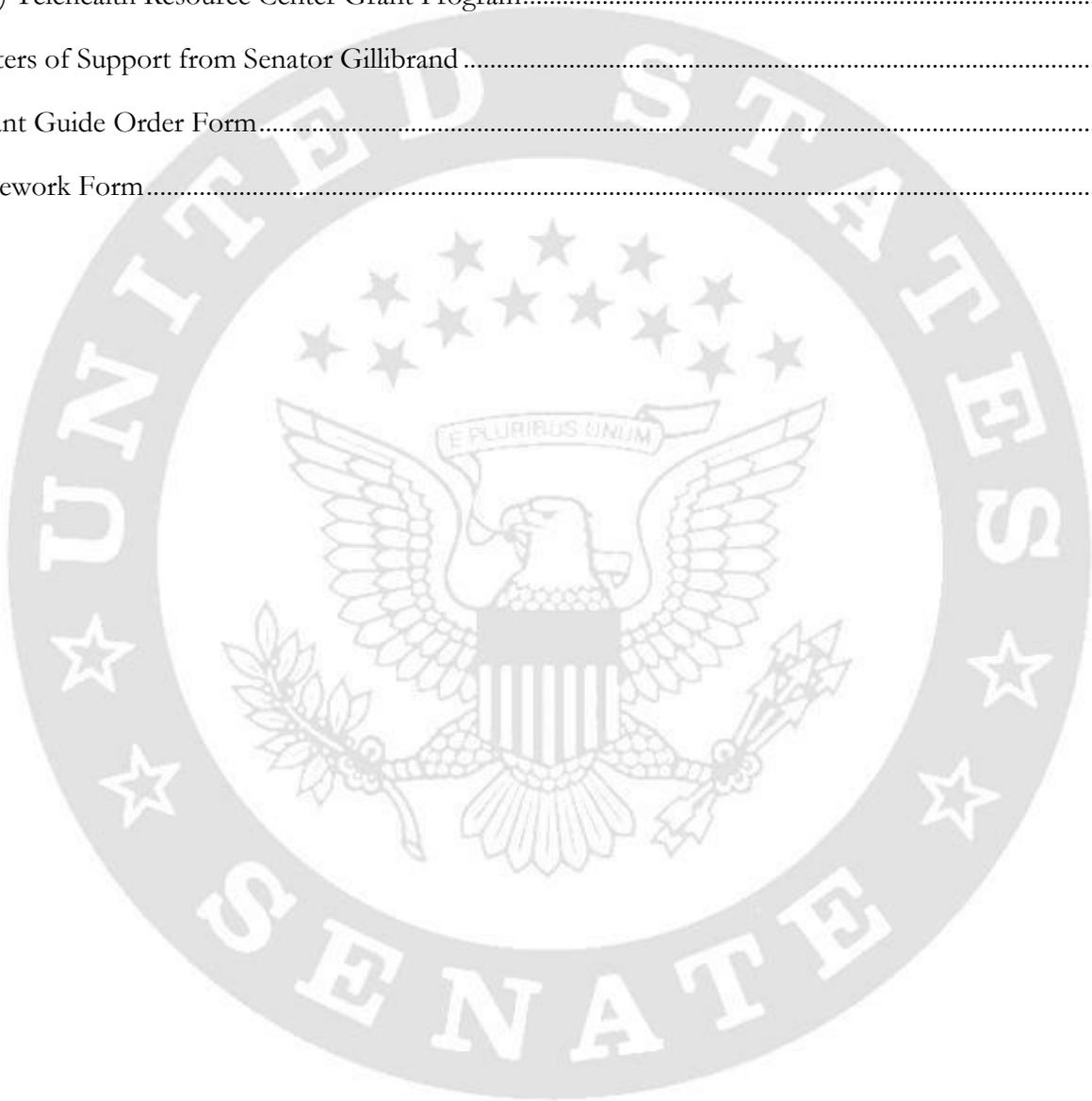
 1) Telehealth Network Grants19

 2) Telehealth Resource Center Grant Program.....19

Letters of Support from Senator Gillibrand21

Grant Guide Order Form.....23

Casework Form.....24



Introduction

Dear Fellow New Yorker,

I want to take this opportunity to provide you with some important information on funding opportunities to support broadband deployment and adoption in our communities throughout New York State. It is critical that our businesses, schools, communities and households have access to affordable high-speed Internet in order to remain competitive in the global economy. In an effort to ensure high-speed broadband is readily available, regardless of location, the federal and state governments have multiple programs that fund broadband deployment and adoption.

Finding the resources that meet your needs in the complex web of agencies can be an impossible task. For this reason, I have created this guidebook to serve as a starting point in providing information about what resources are available to individuals, businesses, community organizations and local governments. The information in this guidebook details energy program grants, loans, and tax credits. Its contents are by no means comprehensive, and as new programs and opportunities emerge, its contents will be updated to provide New Yorkers with the most up-to-date information possible.

My Senate website (www.Gillibrand.senate.gov) is continually updated with critical information about various funding opportunities that are available to you, how to access them, and where to apply. You can also request hard copies of this guidebook, and other thematic funding guidebooks, by filling out the guidebook order form at the end of this guidebook and mailing it back to my New York City office or by emailing an electronic copy to grants@gillibrand.senate.gov. Furthermore, if you need assistance from a federal agency or with an immigration case, please refer to the casework form at the end of the GOAL or visit <http://gillibrand.senate.gov/services/casework/form/>. As you move forward with any grant opportunities, please contact Andrew Usyk, my Grants Director, for letters of support, when applicable. You can reach him in my Washington, D.C. Office at Grants@Gillibrand.Senate.gov, or (202)-224-4451.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Federal Section I

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Rural Development

USDA Rural Development is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in America. Through their programs, Rural Development touches upon each aspect of rural America in a precise and organized manner.

The financial programs support such essential public facilities and services as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities and electric and telephone. Rural Development has continuously promoted economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks, credit unions and community-managed lending pools. They offer technical assistance and information to help agricultural producers and cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their operations. Additionally, they have provided technical assistance to help communities undertake empowerment programs.

USDA Rural Development has a multi-billion dollar portfolio of loans and will administer billions in loans, loan guarantees, and grants through their programs in the current fiscal year. To achieve their mission, Rural Development assists rural individuals, communities and businesses obtain the financial and technical assistance needed to address their diverse and unique needs through their specific programs.

1) Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program

- Provides loans and loan guarantees to eligible applicants, including telephone companies, telephone cooperatives, municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and tribes, to deploy infrastructures that provide broadband service in rural communities that meet the program's eligibility requirements.

Additional Information:

- Broadband Service means any technology having the capacity to transmit at a minimum transmission speed of 200 kbps both from and to a residential subscriber. The rate of data transmission is subject to annual review and will be published in the Notice of Funds Availability at the beginning of each fiscal year.
- Loans maturities are equal to the composite economic life of the facilities financed. The interest rate for the Cost-of-Money program is equal to the cost of borrowing to the Department of Treasury for a comparable maturity.
- The 4-Percent program interest rate is 4 percent and the maximum loan amount for the 4-Percent program is \$7.5 million. The interest rate for the Guarantee program is set by the lender.

Eligibility:

- Eligible rural communities are any area of the United States (which includes its territories and insular possessions) that is not contained in an incorporated city or town with a population in excess of 20,000 inhabitants, based on the most recent available information of the Bureau of the Census.

- The following are eligible: cooperative, nonprofit, limited dividend or mutual associations, limited liability companies, commercial organizations, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, state government, local government, including those located in the U.S. territories and countries included in the Compact of Free Association Act of 1985, providing or proposing to provide broadband services in eligible rural communities.

Contact Information:

- Ken Kucho
Telephone: (202) 720-9554
Fax: (202) 720-0810
Website: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/broadband.htm> or
<http://www.federalgrantswire.com/rural-broadband-access-loans-and-loan-guarantees.html>

2) Community Connect Broadband Grants Program

- Provides community access to broadband services in unserved areas through a one-time grant to such organizations as tribes, cooperatives, private companies, and universities, and uses the infrastructure built by the grant to create opportunities for continued improvement.

Additional Information:

- The funding will support construction, acquisition, or lease of facilities, including spectrum, to deploy broadband transmission services to all critical community facilities and to offer such service to all residential and business customers located within the proposed service area.
- The funding can be put towards the improvement, expansion, construction, acquisition, or leasing of a community center that furnishes free access to broadband Internet service, provided that the community center is open and accessible to area residents before, during, and after normal working hours and on Saturday or Sunday.
- All equipment purchased with grant and/or matching funds must be new or nondepreciated.

Eligibility:

- Applicants must be organized as an incorporated organization, an Indian tribe or tribal organization, a state or local unit of government, or other legal entity, including cooperatives or private corporations or limited liability companies organized on a for profit or not-for profit basis.
- The project must deploy Basic Broadband Transmission Service, free of all charges for at least 2 years, to all Critical Community Facilities located within the proposed Service Area. Additionally, it should offer Basic Broadband Transmission Service to residential and business customers within the proposed Service Area.

Contact Information:

- Kenneth Kuchno
Telephone: (202) 690-4673
Email: community.connect@wdc.usda.gov.
Website: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/commconnect.htm>

3) Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program

- The Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program makes Long-term direct and guaranteed loans to qualified organizations for the purpose of financing the improvement, expansion, construction, acquisition, and operation of telephone lines, facilities, or systems to furnish and improve Telecommunications service in rural areas.

Additional Information:

- Long-term direct and guaranteed loans to qualified organizations for the purpose of financing the improvement, expansion, construction, acquisition, and operation of telephone lines, facilities, or systems to furnish and improve.
- Telecommunications service in rural areas. "Rural area" is defined as any area of the United States, its territories and insular possessions (including any areas within the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau) not included within the boundaries of any incorporated or unincorporated city, village, or borough having a population exceeding 5,000 inhabitants.
- Applications are accepted year round and are not competitive. The types of loans offered include; cost-of-money loans, guaranteed loan (including federal financing bank loans) and hardship loans

Eligibility:

- Eligible applicants consist of telephone companies or cooperatives, nonprofit associations, limited dividend associations, mutual associations or public bodies including those located in the U.S. Territories and countries included in the Compact of Free Association Act of 1985, providing or proposing to provide telecommunications service to meet the needs of rural areas.
- A beneficiary must be a resident of rural areas and others who may also receive telephone service as a result of service provided to a rural area.

Contact Information:

- Telephone: (202) 720-1025
http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/utp_infrastructure.html

4) Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loans and Grants Program

- Provides loans and grants to rural community facilities (e.g., schools, libraries, hospitals, and tribal organizations) for advanced telecommunications systems that can provide health care and educational benefits to rural areas.

Additional Information:

- The DLT Program provides three kinds of financial assistance; a full grant, grant-loan combination, and a full loan.

Eligibility:

- To be eligible for a grant, your organization must:
 - 1) Currently deliver or propose to deliver distance learning or telemedicine services for the term of the grant. To receive a grant, the purposes must meet the grant definition of distance learning and telemedicine. The DLT program is focused on sustainability.

Planning studies, research projects, and short-term demonstration projects of less than two years will not be considered.

- 2) Be legally organized as an incorporated organization or partnership; an Indian tribe or tribal organization; a state or local unit of government; a consortium; or other legal entity, including a private corporation organized on a for profit or not-for profit basis with the legal capacity to contract with the United States Government.
- 3) Operate a rural community facility or deliver distance learning or telemedicine services to entities that operate a rural community facility or to residents of rural areas at rates calculated to ensure that the benefit of the financial assistance passes through to such entities or to residents of rural areas.

Contact Information:

- Email: dltinfo@wdc.usda.gov
Website: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP_DLT.html



Federal Section II

Federal Communications Commission

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent United States government agency. The FCC was established by the Communications Act of 1934 and is charged with regulating interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable. The FCC's jurisdiction covers the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. possessions.

The Commission staff is organized by function. There are seven operating Bureaus and ten Staff Offices. The Bureaus' responsibilities include: processing applications for licenses and other filings; analyzing complaints; conducting investigations; developing and implementing regulatory programs; and taking part in hearings. Our Offices provide support services. Even though the Bureaus and Offices have their individual functions, they regularly join forces and share expertise in addressing Commission issues. Through these offices, funding is specifically designed to meet the needs of each applicant.

Universal Service Fund

In accordance with the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the FCC established the following four programs within the Universal Service Fund, of which the Connect America Fund, Schools and Libraries and Rural Health Care Programs are focused on expanding accessible, affordable, high-speed broadband service:

- Connect America Fund (formally known as High-Cost Support) for rural areas
- Lifeline (for low-income consumers), including initiatives to expand phone service for residents of Tribal lands
- Schools and Libraries (E-rate)
- Rural Health Care

1) Connect America Fund/Universal Service High Cost Program

- Provides funding to eligible telecommunications carriers to help pay for telecommunications services in high-cost, rural, and insular areas so that prices charged to customers are reasonably comparable across all regions of the nation.

Additional Information:

- The goal of Universal Service is to promote the availability of quality services at just, reasonable and affordable rates for all consumers. The program will advance the availability of such services to all consumers, including those in low income, rural, insular, and high cost areas at rates that are reasonably comparable to those charged in urban areas

Eligibility:

- Wireline and wireless telephone companies seeking to participate in any of the High Cost Program support components must be designated as eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) and meet ongoing requirements for each component.

➤ **Contact:**

Website: http://www.fcc.gov/wcb/tapd/universal_service/highcost.html,
http://www.fcc.gov/wcb/tapd/universal_service/ or <http://www.universalservice.org/hc/>

2) Universal Service Schools and Libraries Program

- Provides discounts for affordable telecommunications and Internet access services to ensure that schools and libraries have access to affordable telecommunications and information services.

Additional Information:

- This program is also known as “E-Rate” and is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and connects the nation's schools and libraries to broadband. When E-rate was established in 1996, only 14 percent of the nation's K-12 classrooms had access to the Internet. Today, virtually all schools and libraries have Internet access. The FCC began updating E-rate in 2010 and in July 2014, released the E-rate Modernization Order expanding Wi-Fi networks in schools and libraries across America while ensuring support continues to be available for broadband connectivity to schools and libraries.

Eligibility:

- To be eligible:
- 1) Schools must provide elementary or secondary education as determined under state law.
 - 2) Schools may be public or private institutional day or residential schools, or public charter schools.
 - 3) Schools must operate as non-profit businesses.
 - 4) Schools cannot have an endowment exceeding \$50 million.
 - 5) Libraries must be eligible for assistance from a state library administrative agency under that Act.
 - 6) Libraries must have budgets completely separate from any schools (including, but not limited to, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities).
 - 7) Libraries cannot operate as for-profit businesses.

Contact:

- Telephone: 1-800-229-5476
<http://www.universalservice.org/sl/>

3) Rural Health Care Program

- The Rural Health Care Program, which includes the new Healthcare Connect Fund, provides funding to eligible health care providers (HCPs) for telecommunications and broadband services necessary for the provision of health care. The goal of the program is to improve the quality of health care available to patients in rural communities by ensuring that eligible HCPs have access to telecommunications and broadband services. Funding for the Rural Health Care Program is capped at \$400 million annually.

Additional Information:

- The Rural Health Care Program of the Universal Service Fund makes discounts available to eligible rural health care providers for telecommunication services and monthly Internet service charges. The program is intended to ensure that rural health care providers pay no more for telecommunications in the provision of health care services than their urban counterparts. The Rural Health Care Program is currently made up of four programs: the Healthcare Connect Fund, the Telecommunications Program, the Internet Access Program, and the Rural Health Care Pilot Program.
- The Rural Health Care Program reimburses telecommunications and Internet service providers for services provided to rural health care providers. While health care providers apply for these discounts, USAC works in conjunction with service providers to make sure these discounts are passed on to program participants.

Eligibility:

- Eligible organizations include:
 - Post-secondary educational institutions offering health care instruction, teaching hospitals, or medical schools
 - Community health centers or health centers providing health care to migrants
 - Local health departments or agencies including dedicated emergency departments of rural for-profit hospitals
 - Community mental health centers
 - Not-for-profit hospitals
 - Rural health clinics including mobile clinics
 - Consortia of HCPs consisting of one or more of the above entities
 - Part-time eligible entities located in otherwise ineligible facilities

Contact:

- Telephone: 1-800-229-5476
<http://transition.fcc.gov/wcb/tapd/ruralhealth/> or <http://www.usac.org/rhc/>

Be sure to also visit the following Federal Communications Commission website: http://wireless.fcc.gov/outreach/index.htm?job=broadband_home. This serves as an excellent clearinghouse of the most up-to-date broadband funding opportunities.

Federal Section III

Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, ARC is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a federal co-chair, who is appointed by the president. Local participation is provided through multi-county local development districts.

Each year ARC provides funding for several hundred projects in the Appalachian Region, in areas such as business development, education and job training, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, and transportation. These projects create thousands of new jobs; improve local water and sewer systems; increase school readiness; expand access to health care; assist local communities with strategic planning; and provide technical and managerial assistance to emerging businesses.

1) Appalachian Regional Commission Project Grant Program

- This program awards grants to projects that create jobs and improve infrastructure, enabling the people of Appalachia to compete in a global economy. These grants include funds that may be used to improve broadband access, such as distance learning, telehealth/telemedicine, e-government, and e-business applications and workforce development.

Additional Information:

- Most ARC project grants originate at the state level. Potential applicants should contact their state's ARC program manager, whose contact info is below, to request a preapplication package.
- ARC project grants can be used for business development and entrepreneurship, education and training, health care access, physical infrastructure, including broadband, and leadership development and civic capacity.

Eligibility:

- Only New York counties included in the Appalachian Regional Commission are eligible for funding. These counties include Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schoharie, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins. Interested organizations must contact the New York State Department of State to discuss individual project eligibility requirements.

Contact Information:

- Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20009-1068
Telephone: (202) 884-7700

Email: info@arc.gov

More information on ARC Project Grant Program specifics:

<http://www.arc.gov/funding/ARCProjectGrants.asp>

➤ **New York State Department of State Contact:**

Kyle Wilber, Appalachian Program Manager

New York State Department of State

Division of Local Government

1 Commerce Plaza, Suite 1015

Tenth Floor

99 Washington Avenue

Albany, NY 12231

(518) 473-3355

Email: kwilber@dos.state.ny.us



Federal Section IV

United States Department of Commerce:

Economic Development Administration

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) was established under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. § 3121), as amended, to generate jobs, help retain existing jobs, and stimulate industrial and commercial growth in economically distressed areas of the United States. EDA assistance is available to rural and urban areas of the Nation experiencing high unemployment, low income, or other severe economic distress.

In fulfilling its mission, EDA is guided by the basic principle that distressed communities must be empowered to develop and implement their own economic development and revitalization strategies. EDA helps distressed communities address problems associated with long-term economic distress, as well as sudden and severe economic dislocations including recovering from the economic impacts of natural disasters, the closure of military installations and other Federal facilities, changing trade patterns, and the depletion of natural resources.

1) Economic Development Facilities and Public Works

- Provides funding for construction of infrastructure in areas that are not attractive to private investment. Most funding is for water and sewer infrastructure but some has been designated for communications projects.

Additional Information:

- Public Works and Economic Development investments help support the construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and facilities necessary to generate or retain private sector jobs and investments, attract private sector capital, and promote regional competitiveness, including investments that expand and upgrade infrastructure to attract new industry, support technology-led development, redevelop Brownfield sites and provide eco-industrial development.

Eligibility:

- An Eligible Applicant that is a non-profit organization must include in its application for Investment Assistance a resolution passed by (or a letter signed by) an authorized representative of a general purpose political subdivision of a State, acknowledging that it is acting in cooperation with officials of such political subdivision.

Contact:

- Philadelphia Regional Office (covers New York State)
Telephone: (215)597-4603
Fax: (215)597-1063 fax

Federal Section V

Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an independent government agency established by Congress in 1996, promotes innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement in libraries and museums. IMLS supports the exemplary stewardship of museum and library collections, with emphasis on the use of technology to facilitate the discovery and dissemination of knowledge and cultural heritage.

1) Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States

- Provides funds for a wide range of services including installation of fiber and wireless networks that provide access to library resources.

Additional Information:

- Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States has been the largest grant program run by IMLS for 50 years. LSTA encourages proposals that expand the traditional mission of collecting and circulating physical holdings to one that provides access to computers, software, and other digital information services.

Eligibility:

- Any New York State library administrative agency is eligible to submit a five-year plan.

Contact:

- Point of Contact: Bernard A. Margolis, State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries
222 Madison Avenue, Room 10C34
Albany, NY 12230
Telephone: (518) 486-4865
Fax: (518) 486-6880 fax
Email: bmargolis@mail.nysed.gov
<http://www.ims.gov/programs/default.aspx>

2) Native American Library Services Grant

- Provides grants to support library services including electronically linking libraries to networks.

Additional Information:

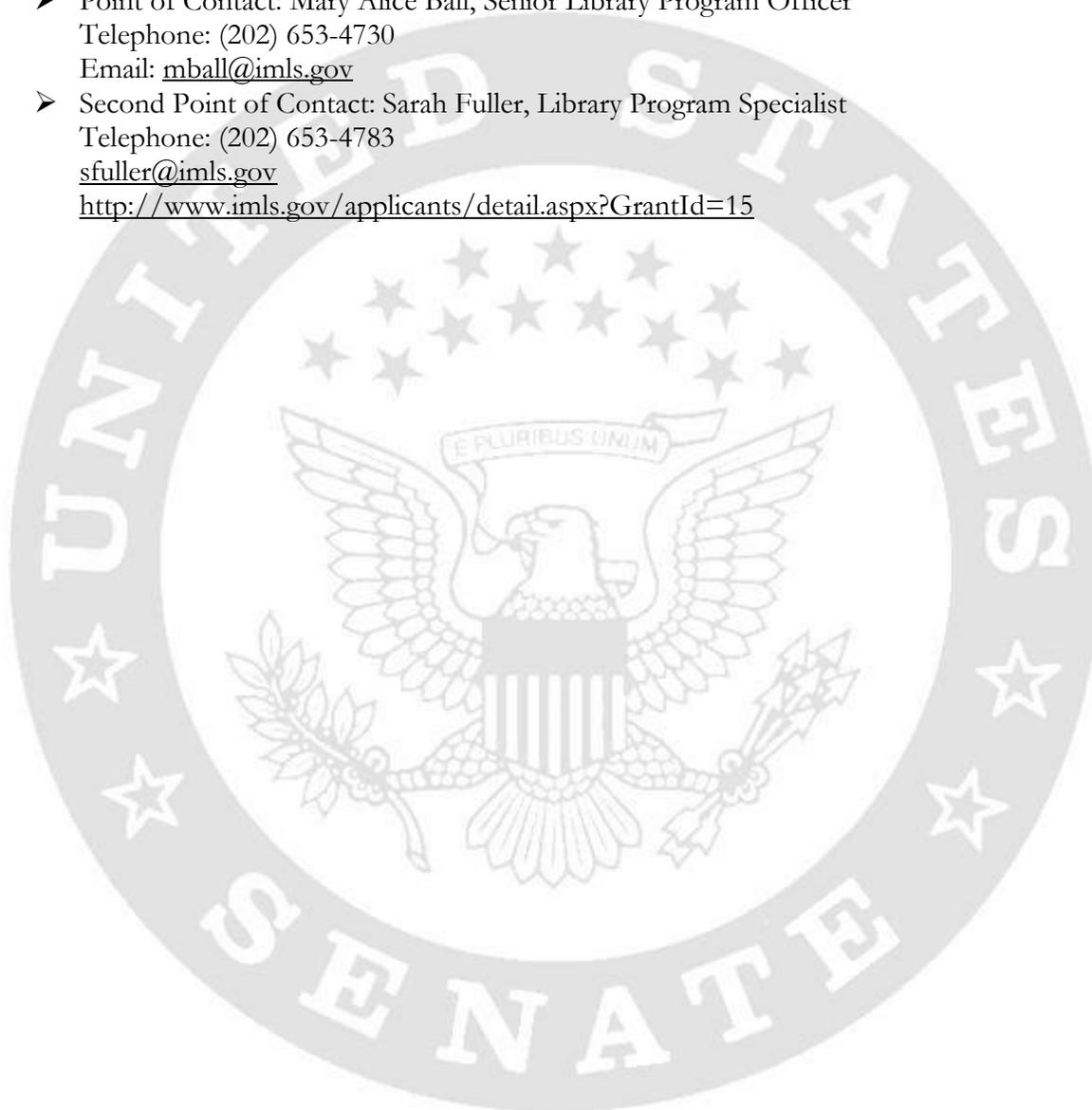
- The Native American Library Services (NALS) Basic Grant is noncompetitive and distributed in equal amount among eligible applicants. NALS Basic Grants are available to support existing library operations and core library services. The Education/Assessment Option, a supplemental grant to the NALS Basic Grant, supports library staff to attend or give presentations and to hire a consultant for on-site assessment.

Eligibility:

- Indian tribes, Alaska native villages, regional corporations, and village corporations are eligible to apply for funding under the Native American Library Services grant program. Entities such as libraries, schools, tribal colleges, or departments of education are not eligible applicants, although they may be involved in the administration of this program and their staff may serve as project directors, in partnership with an eligible applicant.

Contact:

- Point of Contact: Mary Alice Ball, Senior Library Program Officer
Telephone: (202) 653-4730
Email: mball@imls.gov
- Second Point of Contact: Sarah Fuller, Library Program Specialist
Telephone: (202) 653-4783
sfuller@imls.gov
<http://www.imls.gov/applicants/detail.aspx?GrantId=15>



Federal Section VI

Department of Housing and Urban Development

1) Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grants

- Helps communities transform neighborhoods by revitalizing severely distressed public and/or assisted housing. Grantees may use funds to provide unit-based broadband Internet connectivity.

Additional Information:

- The Choice Neighborhoods program is designed to catalyze critical improvements in neighborhood assets, including vacant property, housing, services, and schools. The program requires proposals with a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy that involves local leaders, residents, schools, authorities, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers.

Eligibility: The following entities are eligible to apply:

- County governments
- City or township governments
- Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities
- Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
- Nonprofits without 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education

Contact:

- **Email:** choiceneighborhoods@hud.gov
- **Phone:** (202) 708-0667
- General information about the program can be found at the following site: <http://www.hud.gov/cn/>

Federal Section VII

United States Department of Education: **Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services**

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) promotes inclusion, equity, and opportunity for all children and adults with disabilities to help ensure their economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and full community participation through the distribution of over \$120 million in grants.

OSERS awards grant money for a wide range of proposals, including research projects, demonstrations, technical assistance, technological upgrades, personnel development, and parental training.

1) Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities

- Supports development and application of technology and education media activities for disabled children and adults.

Additional Information:

- Purposes of program:
 - 1) Improving results for children with disabilities by promoting the development, demonstration, and use of technology,
 - 2) Supporting educational media services activities designed to be of value in the classroom setting to children with disabilities,
 - 3) Providing support for captioning and video description that is appropriate for use in the classroom setting,
 - 4) Providing accessible educational materials to children with disabilities in a timely manner.

Eligibility:

- Eligible applicants include:
 - Institutions of higher education,
 - Local education agencies,
 - Nonprofit organizations,
 - State education agencies,
 - Other qualified organizations or agencies.

Contact:

- Point of Contact: Michael F. Slade
Telephone: (202) 245-7527
Fax: (202) 245-7619 fax
Email: Michael.slade@ed.gov
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html?src=mr/>

Federal Section VIII

United States Department of Health and Human Services:

Health Resources and Services Administration

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), established in the 1982 merger of the Health Resources Administration and the Health Services Administration, seeks to improve access to healthcare by strengthening the healthcare workforce, building healthy communities, and achieving health equity. HRSA programs provide health care to people who are geographically isolated and economically vulnerable.

HRSA encourages the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support long-distance clinical healthcare, professional health-related education, and a more interconnected healthcare system. Promoting such Telehealth initiatives is necessary create a modern, efficient healthcare system that promises all Americans a dignified quality of life.

1) Telehealth Network Grants

- Funds proposals that develop sustainable telehealth programs and networks in rural and frontier areas.

Additional Information:

- Telehealth Network grants are competitively awarded to proposals that best demonstrate the use of telehealth networks to improve healthcare services for the medically underserved in rural and frontier communities.

Eligibility:

- HRSA rural health programs fund rural hospitals, health centers, local clinics, and other qualified health organizations.

Contact:

- Point of Contact:
Office of Rural Health Policy
Telephone: (301) 443-0835
<http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/about/telehealth/>

2) Telehealth Resource Center Grant Program

- Provides grants that support the establishment and development of telehealth resource centers to assist health care providers in the development of telehealth services, including decisions regarding the purchase of advanced telecommunications services.

Additional Information:

- Telehealth Network grants are competitively awarded to proposals that provide the best support for the establishment of Telehealth Resource Centers. These centers are to assist healthcare organizations, healthcare networks, and healthcare providers in the implementation of cost-effective telehealth programs in medically underserved rural populations.

Eligibility:

- HRSA rural health programs fund rural hospitals, health centers, local clinics, and other qualified health organizations.

Contact:

- Point of Contact:
Office of Rural Health Policy
Telephone: (301) 443-0835
<http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/about/telehealth/>



Letters of Support from Senator Gillibrand

While Senator Gillibrand does NOT decide which organizations are awarded grants or other federal funding, there are instances in which it is appropriate for the Senator to write a letter of support for an application. If you wish to request a letter of support for your application, you must supply Senator Gillibrand with the following:

1. A description of your organization,
2. Summary of the application,
3. a description of what the money will be used for, and
4. a draft letter of support

Please forward this information by email to grants@gillibrand.senate.gov or by mail to the nearest regional office:

Capital District

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
Leo W. O'Brien Federal Office Building
1 Clinton Square
Room 821
Albany, NY 12207
Tel: (518) 431-0120
Fax: (518) 431-0128

Buffalo/Western New York

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
Larkin at Exchange
726 Exchange Street, Suite 511
Buffalo, NY 14210
Tel: (716) 854-9725
Fax: (716) 854-9731

Hudson Valley Office

PO Box 893
Mahopac, NY 10541
Tel: (845) 875-4585
Fax (845) 875-9099

Long Island

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
155 Pinelawn Road
Suite 250 North
Melville, NY 11747
Tel: (631) 249-2825
Fax: (631) 249-2847

New York City

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
780 Third Avenue
Suite 2601
New York, New York 10017
Tel. (212) 688-6262
Fax (212) 688-7444

North Country

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
PO Box 273
Lowville, NY 13367
Tel. (315) 376-6118
Fax (315) 376-6118

Rochester Region

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
Kenneth B. Keating Federal Office Building
100 State Street
Room 4195
Rochester, NY 14614
Tel. (585) 263-6250
Fax (585) 263-6247

Syracuse/Central New York

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
James M. Hanley Federal Building
100 South Clinton Street
Room 1470
PO Box 7378
Syracuse, NY 13261
Tel. (315) 448-0470
Fax (315) 448-0476

Washington D.C.

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senate
478 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Tel. (202) 224-4451
Fax (202) 228-0282



Grant Guide Order Form

If you would like to order additional grant guides from our office, please indicate what guides you would like to have and complete the below address information. If you have any questions, please contact us at 212.688.6262.

Guide

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Ag/ Rural Development
<input type="checkbox"/> At Risk Youth / Anti Gang
<input type="checkbox"/> Broadband
<input type="checkbox"/> Brownfields/Superfund Site Cleanup
<input type="checkbox"/> Exporting and Foreign Direct Investment
<input type="checkbox"/> Faith-Based / Community Initiatives
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire and Emergency Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Hubs and Food Systems
<input type="checkbox"/> General Grants
<input type="checkbox"/> Green Energy and Clean Technology
<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservation/Arts/Culture/Tourism | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Heating and Weatherization
<input type="checkbox"/> Homeland Security
<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation and Cluster Based Economic Development
<input type="checkbox"/> K-12 Education and Libraries
<input type="checkbox"/> Lead Paint Remediation
<input type="checkbox"/> Minority and Women Owned Business
<input type="checkbox"/> Obesity Prevention / Nutritious Foods
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Small Business
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Services /Community Groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Veterans Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Water and Wastewater Funding |
|--|--|

Mail to: **Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, 780 Third Ave, 26th Floor, New York, New York 10017**

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Casework Form

If you have encountered a problem involving a federal government agency or federally subsidized benefit that you have not been able to successfully resolve, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's staff of constituent liaisons may be able to assist you in the following areas:

Employment Issues: including assistance with disability benefits, employer-provided health care plans and COBRA, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) benefits, pensions, unemployment benefits, Federal and State Workers Compensation claims, and retirement-related issues.

Consumer Affairs: including assistance obtaining a home loan modification under the Making Home Affordable Program, insurance claims, dissatisfaction with consumer products or services, environmental regulations, and concerns regarding air quality, water or land contamination.

Immigration Issues: including issues with visitor visas, family and employment based visas, lawful permanent resident status, naturalization, international adoptions, detention, passports, customs and border issues, and assistance to American Citizens in crisis abroad.

Veteran Issues: including issues with VA pension and disability benefits, education benefits, veteran burial or funeral issues, and issues regarding the VA medical centers.

IRS Issues: including connecting constituents with the Taxpayer Advocate Service to address federal tax issues including lost or delayed tax refunds, penalty abatements, payment installation plans, tax credits, referrals to IRS Low Income Tax Clinics and paper tax forms.

Military Issues: including issues pertaining to the Department of Defense, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Reserves and New York State National Guard, as well as obtaining military records, medals and academy nominations.

Health Care Issues: including issues with Medicare and Medicaid, health insurance, insurance providers, nursing homes, hospitals, prescription drugs, and 9/11 health matters.

Social Security: including issues with Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability, survivors' benefits, and retirement benefits.

Social Services: including issues with food stamps, HEAP (low-income heating program), FEMA and disaster relief, and issues related to federally subsidized housing.

Please visit the "Services" section of www.gillibrand.senate.gov or call (212) 688-6262 for further information. Please note that if you are seeking assistance with a case that involves a lawsuit or litigation, Senate Rules prohibit the Office of Senator Gillibrand from giving legal advice or intervening in the proceeding