VISION

A flourishing business friendly region with a diverse and resilient economy, smart infrastructure, quality jobs, stable and healthy communities and effective protections for natural resources.
What is a CEDS?

The Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District (NWAEDD or the District) is an economic development district designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). As the region’s economic development district, it is responsible for developing a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) that identifies economic and community development priorities for the District.

The District is composed of all the county governments and incorporated municipalities within the counties of Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, Searcy, and Washington Counties. This CEDS plan follows the new guidelines released by the US Economic Development Administration in September of 2016 and is a strategy-driven plan developed by a diverse workgroup of local representatives from the private, public and nonprofit sectors.

**The District’s CEDS is composed of four sections:**

1. Summary background of the economic conditions of the region;
2. In-depth SWOT analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
3. Action Plan outlining strategies drawn from the planning process that incorporates elements from other applicable regional plans (e.g., land use and transportation, workforce development, etc.) and identifies stakeholder(s) responsible for implementation, timetables, and opportunities for the integrated use of other local, state, and federal funds.
4. Evaluation framework to develop and monitor performance measures incorporated in the plan.

The District’s CEDS committee will work to create a strong relationship between action plans and performance measures for economic and community development at the regional, state, and federal levels.

Beginning in March of 2018, the CEDS committee met monthly until mid-October to complete the plan. Three public meetings were held in August to review a draft of the committee’s work with county judges, majors and other identified regional partners.

### CEDS Process Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>CEDS committee formed a partnership with the Arkansas Economic Development Institute (AEDI) to assist with data collection and analysis, and facilitation and implementation. AEDI developed and administered a regional online survey to local governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>CEDS committee updated NWAEDD board and received comment from staff members. AEDI presented preliminary economic and demographic data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>NWAEDD and AEDI completed the Summary Background and reviewed updated SWOT and the regional online survey results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Staff from AEDI and NWAEDD met with CEDS committee on Action Plan and Evaluation framework and determined the most workable concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>NWAEDD, together with CEDS committee, began development of the Economic Resilience component of the CEDS plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>CEDS committee, with assistance from AEDI and NWAEDD staff, presented draft CEDS plan to county judges, majors and other identified regional partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Work continued on finalizing CEDS plan and website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Draft plan presented to NWAEDD Board was adopted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>CEDS plan submitted to EDA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The regional and county profiles highlight the demographic and economic statistics of the region. As the data shows, tourism, (retail, accommodation and food services combined) government services, manufacturing, and healthcare are the leading employers, with healthcare projected as the leading growth industry. To support these businesses and develop a broader foundation in other industries such as advanced manufacturing, agriculture, and professional services, it is essential that local governments in the region continue to collaborate on essential services such as the built infrastructure, broadband, and housing.

The region is experiencing remarkable population growth. From 1990 to 2017, the number of residents nearly doubled and the region’s population should surpass 700,000 by 2027. The economically booming counties of Washington and Benton contain almost 70% of the population of the region and experienced double-digit growth from 2010 to 2017. Three counties experienced low to moderate growth ranging from 1.3 to 4.0% and the remaining 4 counties lost population. From 2010 to 2017, the fastest growing age group in the region was residents over 65. This reflects the region’s attraction as a retirement destination. It also requires planning and strategic investment to address the needs of an aging population including additional transportation options, infrastructure improvements and access to affordable healthcare particularly in less affluent counties.
ECONOMY

Most of the economic growth of the region comes from Washington and Benton counties, one of the nation’s most economically vibrant areas and home to industry powerhouses Walmart, Tyson Foods, and J.B. Hunt Inc.

By contrast, Newton and Searcy are sparsely populated counties, covered by large areas of national forest where jobs are scarce and Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing and Hunting are the leading industries. Mountain Home in Baxter County and Harrison in Boone County are both significant urban areas with populations approaching 15,000 and a strong manufacturing presence. Carroll, Madison and Marion counties have significantly smaller populations than Baxter and Boone but are more economically diverse than Newton and Searcy counties.

To thrive economically, the region must continue to be a place where talented people - and their businesses - want to be. This includes preserving the high quality of life in the region and providing the critical infrastructure needed by businesses to succeed. Supporting the economy requires an infrastructure that provides the critical services necessary for the well-being of residents, the success of businesses and the safety of communities.

The ability to build and maintain these systems is costly and resource intensive. Despite the remarkable growth in Washington and Benton counties, several of the region’s communities lack up-to-date water or sewer service. Broad sections of the region lack accessible healthcare, adequate housing and sufficient highway, rail and intermodal systems and broadband internet access is limited in rural areas. In addition, the topography, geology, and hydrology of the mountains significantly increase the cost of building and maintaining infrastructure.

To thrive economically, jurisdictions must work together to develop a well-balanced system of infrastructure, economic and community development with a focus on workforce employability that serves residents, supports communities, and attracts new businesses to ensure economic vitality and environmental resiliency.

ENVIRONMENT

The nine county region is known for its natural beauty and access to outdoor recreational opportunities afforded by the Ozark Mountains and several state parks and wilderness areas. The hills of the Ozarks in Northwest Arkansas are recognized nationally as an ideal site to live. Clean air, clean water, and the natural beauty of the area provide a living environment that is conducive to economic growth. These assets also make tourism one of the region’s leading industries.

USA Today readers rate the BUFFALO RIVER as the state’s top attraction. 4 of the top 10 attractions in Arkansas are in the region.

The headquarters of three FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES call the Region home: Walmart, Tyson and JB Hunt.
The economy of Northwest Arkansas is the fastest growing in the state and the per capita personal income for area residents is 10% above the national average. Although significant sections of the region remain poor and underpopulated, the district is experiencing strong job growth. Infrastructure is struggling to keep up with the pace of construction in Benton and Washington Counties and the economy is evolving to include more jobs in advanced manufacturing, information technology, construction and health care.

As the economy grows so does the demand for individuals with strong skill sets in communications, engineering, advanced manufacturing processes and computer and medical technology. The job skills required by the new economy are not the skills of generations past. Many require advanced degrees or unique abilities that call for specific training, certifications, licenses and apprenticeships.

Accordingly, the NWAEDD has developed partnerships with chambers of commerce, educational cooperatives, private and public educational institutions, labor organizations, and the Northwest Arkansas Council to assist regional employers with attracting a skilled, dynamic and culturally diverse workforce.

The District has promoted skill-training initiatives in emerging industry sectors and occupations by encouraging regional two-year colleges to participate in workforce grants. North Arkansas College in Harrison has targeted health care and advanced manufacturing; Northwest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville offers construction technology; University of Arkansas Global Campus concentrates on information technology; and Arkansas State University at Mountain Home focuses on advanced manufacturing and IT. Each of these schools are also working with secondary schools to create a talent pipeline for future workers.

It is critical to the region’s continued economic prosperity and resiliency that the area continues to attract a diverse set of industries that provide living wage jobs. The region’s ability to attract and support business depends on maintaining a diverse, prepared, and motivated workforce employable in all sectors of the economy.
The county links below will take you to the My School Info website provided by the ADE DATA CENTER. It allows the public to search and compare public schools and districts from across the State.

- Baxter County
- Benton County
- Boone County
- Carroll County
- Madison County
- Marion County
- Newton County
- Searcy County
- Washington County

If reading this as a hard copy, you can go to myschoolinfo.arkansas.gov and search for your school.

Links to schools who have earned recognition from the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon Schools Program (since 2013).

- Bergman Elementary School, Bergman, AR (National Blue Ribbon 2013)
- Central Park at Morning Star Elementary School, Bentonville, AR (National Blue Ribbon 2013)
- Eastside Elementary School, Rogers, AR (National Blue Ribbon 2014)
- Norfork Elementary School, Norfork, AR (National Blue Ribbon 2014)
- St. Joseph Catholic School, Fayetteville, AR (National Blue Ribbon 2014)
- St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School, Rogers, AR (National Blue Ribbon 2015)
- Vandergriff Elementary School, Fayetteville, AR (National Blue Ribbon 2015)
- J.B. Hunt Elementary School, Springdale, AR (National Blue Ribbon 2018)

For more information
NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS PROGRAM
Search for Award Winners
**THREATS**
- Keeping Up with Growth
- Population Decline in Rural Areas
- Lack of Employment Opportunities
- Losing Educated Workers
- Housing Options
- Lack of Mass Transit
- Lack of Affordable Air Travel
- Lack of Broadband

**OPPORTUNITIES**
- Mass Transit
- Improving Broadband in Rural Areas
- Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Small Counties
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Regional Collaboration
- Workforce Training
- Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Small Counties
- Innovative Approaches to Agriculture Industry
- Bike & Pedestrian Trail Expansions

**STRENGTHS**
- K–12 Schools*
- Job Growth*
- Colleges and Universities
- Highway 412 Plan
- Agricultural Resources
- Recreational Opportunities
- Opportunities for young people*
- Broadband Access*
- Natural Beauty
- Low Crime
- Tourism
- Stakeholder Collaboration
- Utilities
- Access to quality healthcare*

**WEAKNESSES**
- Broadband Access*
- Job Growth*
- Higher Education Coverage
- Buffalo River Watershed
- Access to Quality Healthcare*
- Skilled Workforce
- Agriculture Workforce Training
- Workforce Housing*
- Well-paying jobs

*Can be classified as strengths or weaknesses depending on where you are in the Region.*
Broadband is one of the strengths and weaknesses that varies dramatically among communities in the region. The FCC provides a searchable website for Fixed Broadband Deployment where you can enter an address and see the various broadband providers and the technology they use, and the upstream and downstream data speeds. The map is broken down by census block.


*Broadband is defined by the FCC as 25 mbps down & 3 mbps up
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION WITHOUT BROADBAND ACCESS (FCC), JANUARY 2016

NWAEDD...16.2%  State...22.4%

Regional Service Priorities

- Workforce Housing Availability
- Access to Quality Healthcare
- Infrastructure Improvements
  - Transportation System
- Tourism
  - Bike & Pedestrian Trails
  - Regional Tourism
- Broadband Internet Access
- Workforce Development/Job Training
  - Drug Crisis
  - Entrepreneurship Training/resources for rural counties
  - Employability Skills
- Agriculture Support
NWAEDD REGION

Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District
Includes: Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, Searcy and Washington Counties

**Housing**
- Homeowner Vacancy Rate: 2.1%
- Rental Vacancy Rate: 4.9%
- Occupied Housing Units: 234,682
- Percent of Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available: 4.6%

**Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010 Census</th>
<th>2017 Estimate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>579,161</td>
<td>653,509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Population Projections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Minority</th>
<th>65 &amp; Over</th>
<th>Under 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>100,198</td>
<td>159,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2027</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>100,198</td>
<td>159,591</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Economic**

- Families Below Poverty Level: 10.8%
- Per Capita Income: $51,675
- Per Capita Living Wage: $21,175
- Average Millage by County: 47.56
- Food Insecurity Rate: 14.0%

**Largest Industries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>39,328</td>
<td>43,143</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$29,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>38,121</td>
<td>39,903</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$55,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>36,878</td>
<td>38,038</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$49,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>35,944</td>
<td>40,457</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>$48,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>28,715</td>
<td>31,648</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$19,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of Companies and Enterprises</td>
<td>25,812</td>
<td>28,454</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$148,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>20,808</td>
<td>22,160</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$41,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>19,721</td>
<td>21,036</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>$52,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>19,206</td>
<td>21,605</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>$51,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>18,895</td>
<td>20,415</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$23,457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Higher Education**

- AR State University – Mountain Home
- John Brown University
- Ecclesia College
- NW AR Community College
- Bryan University
- North Arkansas College
- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville
- NW Technical Institute
- Blue Cliff College – Fayetteville

**SOURCES**

2. www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net
4. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division
5. U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
6. Bureau of Economic Analysis
7. livingwage.mit.edu/states/05/locations
10. EMSI Q2 2018 Data Set
11. http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Education/Schools-and-Programs
BAXTER COUNTY, AR
COUNTY SEAT¹
Mountain Home
(12,332)
FOUNDED² | AREA²
1873 | 554 sq. mi.

HOUSING⁵
Median Value | $123,100
Homeowner Vacancy Rate | 3.3%
Rental Vacancy Rate | 9.9%
Occupied Housing Units | 18,061
Percent of Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available | 4.1%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES¹⁰
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Health Care and Social Assistance | 4,059 | 4,358 | 7% | $47,184
Retail Trade | 2,873 | 3,013 | 5% | $25,751
Manufacturing | 2,331 | 2,404 | 3% | $50,432
Accommodation and Food Services | 1,798 | 1,902 | 6% | $17,978
Government | 1,713 | 1,657 | -3% | $46,290
Other Services (except Public Administration) | 1,296 | 1,331 | 3% | $20,086
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 1,187 | 1,253 | 6% | $24,141
Construction | 1,159 | 1,114 | -4% | $30,489
Finance and Insurance | 859 | 914 | 6% | $61,007
Administration and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 792 | 848 | 7% | $19,955

HIGHER EDUCATION¹¹
• Arkansas State University – Mountain Home

COUNTY ATTRACTIONS
• Bulls Shoals and Norfork Lakes
• White River
• Buffalo Point

POPULATION
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010 CENSUS³</th>
<th>2017 ESTIMATE³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41,513</td>
<td>41,355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| POPULATION PROJECTIONS³ |
| --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2027 |
| 41,120 | 41,137 |

ECONOMIC
Median Household Income⁵ | $38,115
Families Below Poverty Level⁵ | 9.2%
Per Capita Income⁶ | $34,537
Per Capita Living Wage⁷ | $21,104
Average Millage by County⁸ | 43.12
Food Insecurity Rate⁹ | 15.8%

LARGEST EMPLOYERS¹²
Baxter Regional Medical Center
Eaton Corporation (Aeroquip Hose Division)
Baxter Healthcare Corporation
Harp’s Food Stores, Inc.
Mountain Home School District
AR State University - Mountain Home
American Stitchco, Inc.
Lowe’s Companies, Inc.
Walmart Stores, Inc.
Magneess Oil Company
BENTON COUNTY, AR

COUNTY SEAT¹
Bentonville
(49,298)

FOUNDED²: 1836
AREA²: 847 sq. mi.

HOUSING⁵
- Median Value: $155,900
- Homeowner Vacancy Rate: 2.0%
- Rental Vacancy Rate: 3.4%
- Occupied Housing Units: 88,014
- Percent of Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available: 3.1%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES¹⁰
<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management of Companies and Enterprises</td>
<td>21,468</td>
<td>23,664</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$142,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>15,317</td>
<td>17,419</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>$29,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>12,298</td>
<td>12,707</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$51,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>11,146</td>
<td>12,621</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>$19,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>11,134</td>
<td>12,797</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>$46,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>10,864</td>
<td>11,707</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$52,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>10,519</td>
<td>12,183</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>$61,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>10,278</td>
<td>11,182</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>$53,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>8,025</td>
<td>8,773</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>$43,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>7,748</td>
<td>8,563</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>$23,821</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

HIGHER EDUCATION¹¹
- John Brown University
- Ecclesia College
- NW AR Comm. College
- Bryan University

COUNTY ATTRACTIONS
- Crystal Bridges Museum
- Pea Ridge Military Park
- Walmart Headquarters/Museum

ECONOMIC
- Median Household Income⁵: $59,016
- Families Below Poverty Level³: 8.8%
- Per Capita Income⁶: $76,554
- Per Capita Living Wage⁷: $21,828
- Average Millage by County⁸: 55.31
- Food Insecurity Rate⁹: 11.9%

LARGEST EMPLOYERS¹²
- Walmart Stores, Inc.
- Simmons Foods, Inc.
- J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc.
- McKee Foods Corporation
- Rogers School District
- Arvest Bank Group
- Mercy Health Systems of Northwest Arkansas
- Tyson Foods, Inc.
- Bentonville School District
- Ozark Mountain Poultry, Inc.
BOONE COUNTY, AR

COUNTY SEAT1
Harrison
(13,079)

FOUNDED2 | AREA2
1869 | 590 sq. mi.

HIGHER EDUCATION11
• North Arkansas College

COUNTY ATTRACTIONS
• Crawdad Days
• Arkansas State Championship Hot Air Balloon Races

ECONOMIC
Median Household Income5 $38,664
Families Below Poverty Level3 13.4%
Per Capita Income6 $33,026
Per Capita Living Wage7 $20,735
Average Millage by County8 43.39
Food Insecurity Rate9 16.2%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>3,168</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>$49,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>2,499</td>
<td>2,614</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$27,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1,954</td>
<td>2,035</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>$48,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>1,733</td>
<td>1,910</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$35,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>$46,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</td>
<td>1,332</td>
<td>1,459</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$33,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>$69,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>1,295</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$17,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>1,151</td>
<td>1,189</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$22,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1,041</td>
<td>1,039</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>$31,914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LARGEST EMPLOYERS12

- FedEx Freight, Inc.
- North Arkansas College
- North Arkansas Regional Medical Center
- Claridge Products & Equipment, Inc.
- Harrison School District
- Wabash Wood Products
- Pace Industries, Inc.
- Bergman School District
- Walmart Stores, Inc.
- WestRock
CARROLL COUNTY, AR

COUNTY SEAT¹
Berryville (5,449)
Eureka Springs (2,074)

FOUNDED²: 1833
AREA²: 630 sq. mi.

HIGHER EDUCATION¹¹
• Serviced by North Arkansas College

COUNTY ATTRACTIONS
• The City of Eureka Springs
  • Crescent Hotel
  • The Great Passion Play

LARGEST INDUSTRIES¹⁰

Description
Manufacturing
Accommodation and Food Services
Retail Trade
Government
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
Health Care and Social Assistance
Construction
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
Other Services (except Public Administration)
Finance and Insurance

2017 Jobs
3,883
1,674
1,571
1,308
1,290
1,213
955
659
648
516

2021 Jobs
4,174
1,720
1,576
1,337
1,254
1,360
999
829
661
554

2017–2021 % Change
7%
3%
0%
2%
-3%
12%
5%
26%
2%
7%

Avg. Earnings Per Job
$36,744
$19,766
$24,211
$42,695
$33,699
$36,082
$30,202
$29,437
$18,070
$39,528

2010 CENSUS³
2017 ESTIMATE³

Total Population
27,446
27,944

Female⁴
50.5%
49.5%

Male⁴
49.5%
50.5%

Minority⁴
20.4%
20.4%

Median Age⁴
44.8

65 & Over⁴
6,340
6,146

Under 18⁴
6,146
6,340

PER CAPITA INCOME AND LIVING WAGE

Per Capita Income⁶
$31,339

Per Capita Living Wage⁷
$21,610

Average Millage by County⁸
47.47

Food Insecurity Rate⁹
13.5%

ECONOMIC

Median Household Income⁵
$38,145

Families Below Poverty Level³
11.5%

LARGEST EMPLOYERS¹²
Tyson Foods, Inc.
Kerusso, Inc.
Berryville School District
First National Bank
Walmart Stores, Inc.
Eureka Springs School District
Mercy Hospital
Wilson Combat, Inc.
Green Forest School District
Carroll Electric Cooperative Corp.
### Housing
- Median Value: $100,100
- Homeowner Vacancy Rate: 0.3%
- Rental Vacancy Rate: 6.6%
- Occupied Housing Units: 6,279
- Percent of Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available: 4.0%

### Larger Industries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</td>
<td>1,407</td>
<td>1,731</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>$35,232</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>1,283</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>$43,336</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>$45,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>$26,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$27,322</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>$29,713</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$18,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$15,080</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>$41,129</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support and Waste Management</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>$16,684</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Larger Education
- Serviced by North Arkansas College

### County Attractions
- St. Paul Pioneer Days
- Withrow Springs State Park

### Economic
- Median Household Income: $39,839
- Families Below Poverty Level: 15.4%
- Per Capita Income: $31,416
- Per Capita Living Wage: $21,828
- Average Millage by County: 44.55
- Food Insecurity Rate: 15.2%

### Largest Employers
- Butterball LLC
- Packers Sanitation Services, Inc.
- Huntsville School District
- Anderson Gas & Propane, Inc.
- Ducommun, Inc.
- Meadowview Healthcare & Rehab
- Walmart Stores, Inc.
- Kingston School District
- Lew Thompson & Sons, Inc.
- McDonalds Corporation

### Population
- 2010 Census: 15,717
- 2017 Estimate: 16,339
- Population Projections:
  - 2022: 16,466
  - 2027: 16,634

### Madison County, AR
- County Seat: Huntsville
- Population: 2,456
- Founded: 1836
- Area: 834 sq. mi.
MARION COUNTY, AR

COUNTY SEAT¹
Yellville
(1,159)

FOUNDED²
1836

AREA²
597 sq. mi.

HIGHER EDUCATION¹¹
• Serviced by Arkansas State University – Mountain Home and North Arkansas College

COUNTY ATTRACTIONS
• Ranger Boat Headquarters/Museum
• Bull Shoals State Park
• Turkey Trot Festival – Yellville

MARION COUNTY, AR

COUNTY SEAT¹
Yellville
(1,159)

FOUNDED²
1836

AREA²
597 sq. mi.

HIGHER EDUCATION¹¹
• Serviced by Arkansas State University – Mountain Home and North Arkansas College

COUNTY ATTRACTIONS
• Ranger Boat Headquarters/Museum
• Bull Shoals State Park
• Turkey Trot Festival – Yellville

2010 CENSUS³ | 2017 ESTIMATE³
| 16,653 | 16,428 |

POPULATION PROJECTIONS³
2022 | 2027
16,054 | 15,979

Female⁴ | Male⁴ | Minority⁴ | Median Age⁴ | 65 & Over⁴ | Under 18⁴
50.6% | 49.4% | 5.8% | 52.5 | 4,634 | 2,959

ECONOMIC

Median Household Income⁵ | $33,726
Families Below Poverty Level⁵ | 13.5%
Per Capita Income⁶ | $29,903
Per Capita Living Wage⁷ | $20,160
Average Millage by County⁸ | 47.43
Food Insecurity Rate⁹ | 15.9%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES¹⁰

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>1,812</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>$39,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$24,683</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>$38,503</td>
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<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</td>
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<td>527</td>
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<td>$23,846</td>
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<td>418</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$31,314</td>
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<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>$19,122</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>$22,834</td>
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<tr>
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<td>283</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>$15,204</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>$15,157</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>$42,819</td>
</tr>
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</table>

LARGEST EMPLOYERS¹²

- Ranger Boats (Fishing Holdings LLC)
- Yellville-Summit School District
- Micro Plastics, Inc.
- Creekside Health and Rehabilitation
- Walmart Stores, Inc.
- Twin Lakes Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
- Actronix, Inc.
- Ark-Plas Products, Inc.
- Flippin School District
- Harp’s Food Stores, Inc.
## Newton County, AR

**County Seat:** Jasper  
**Founded:** 1842  
**Area:** 821 sq. mi.

### Higher Education
- Serviced by North Arkansas College

### County Attractions
- Ozark Café
- Cliff House Inn & Restaurant
- Hawksbill Crag
- Ozark Camp Ground – Buffalo River

### Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2010 Census</th>
<th>2017 Estimate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Age 65 &amp; Over</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>2,021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>1,536</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Economic

- **Median Household Income:** $33,176
- **Families Below Poverty Level:** 15.0%
- **Per Capita Income:** $26,897
- **Per Capita Living Wage:** $20,611
- **Average Millage by County:** 46.13
- **Food Insecurity Rate:** 15.8%

### Largest Industries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>$34,256</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>447</td>
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<td>$36,332</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>$22,103</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>$20,104</td>
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<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$21,270</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>$24,833</td>
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<td>144</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>$16,038</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>$28,222</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>$9,543</td>
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<td>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>$18,149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Largest Employers

- Deer/Mt. Judea and Jasper Schools
- Harp’s and Grice’s Grocery Stores
- Newton County Government
- U.S. Forest Service, Arkansas Game and Fish, and Park Service
- Newton County Nursing Home
- Arkansas State Agencies
- Newton County Special Services
- Small Businesses
SEARCY COUNTY, AR

COUNTY SEAT¹
Marshall
(1,302)

FOUNDED²: 1838
AREA²: 666.1 sq. mi.

HIGHER EDUCATION¹¹
- Serviced by North Arkansas College

COUNTY ATTRACTIONS
- Tyler Bend Campground – Buffalo River
- Chocolate Roll Festival

POPULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010 CENSUS³</th>
<th>2017 ESTIMATE³</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8,195</td>
<td>7,938</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2027</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7,844</td>
<td>7,825</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female⁴</th>
<th>Male⁴</th>
<th>Minority⁴</th>
<th>Median Age⁴</th>
<th>65 &amp; Over⁴</th>
<th>Under 18⁴</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>1,967</td>
<td>1,609</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ECONOMIC

- Median Household Income⁵: $35,542
- Families Below Poverty Level³: 16.4%
- Per Capita Income⁶: $27,937
- Per Capita Living Wage⁷: $20,871
- Average Millage by County⁸: 48.80
- Food Insecurity Rate⁹: 17.1%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES¹⁰

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$22,054</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>-10%</td>
<td>$40,346</td>
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<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$30,331</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>$23,857</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>$26,265</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>$31,298</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>$17,075</td>
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<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$16,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>$19,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>$19,322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LARGEST EMPLOYERS¹²

- Searcy County School District
- Ozark Timber Treating, Inc.
- Ozark Mountain School District
- Harp’s Food Stores, Inc.
- McDonalds Corporation
- Sonic Drive-In
- Boston Mountain Rural Health
- ZacBac Apparel LLC
- Friendship Community Care, Inc.
- McClain Forest Products, Inc.
WASHINGTON COUNTY, AR

COUNTY SEAT\(^1\)

**Fayetteville**

(85,257)

**FOUNDED**\(^2\) | **AREA**\(^2\)
--- | ---
1828 | 942 sq. mi.

**HOUSING**\(^5\)

- Median Value: $157,400
- Homeowner Vacancy Rate: 1.4%
- Rental Vacancy Rate: 4.4%
- Occupied Housing Units: 83,467
- Percent of Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available: 5.9%

**HIGHER EDUCATION**\(^11\)

- University of Arkansas
- NW Technical Institute
- Blue Cliff College – Fayetteville
- Arkansas Razorback Athletics
- Dickson Street
- Bikes, Blues, & BBQ
- War Eagle Craft Fair

**COUNTY ATTRACTIONS**

- University of Arkansas
- NW Technical Institute
- Blue Cliff College – Fayetteville
- Arkansas Razorback Athletics
- Dickson Street
- Bikes, Blues, & BBQ
- War Eagle Craft Fair

**LARGEST INDUSTRIES**\(^10\)

<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>18,873</td>
<td>20,015</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$62,656</td>
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<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>16,358</td>
<td>18,501</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>$54,827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>15,274</td>
<td>16,563</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$30,930</td>
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<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>13,189</td>
<td>13,312</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>$52,261</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>11,928</td>
<td>13,107</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$18,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>8,418</td>
<td>9,016</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>$45,983</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>7,138</td>
<td>7,640</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>$51,497</td>
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<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>7,129</td>
<td>7,722</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$25,221</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services</td>
<td>7,110</td>
<td>8,155</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>$28,702</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>6,750</td>
<td>7,411</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$43,622</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**POPULATION**

- **2010 CENSUS**\(^3\)
  - 203,065
- **2017 ESTIMATE**\(^3\)
  - 231,996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION PROJECTIONS(^3)</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2027</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>247,363</td>
<td>253,459</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female(^4)</th>
<th>Male(^4)</th>
<th>Minority(^4)</th>
<th>Median Age(^4)</th>
<th>65 &amp; Over(^4)</th>
<th>Under 18(^4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>26,650</td>
<td>56,975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ECONOMIC**

- Median Household Income\(^5\): $45,442
- Families Below Poverty Level\(^5\): 12.1%
- Per Capita Income\(^6\): $36,776
- Per Capita Living Wage\(^7\): $21,828
- Average Millage by County\(^8\): 51.80
- Food Insecurity Rate\(^9\): 15.3%

**LARGEST EMPLOYERS**\(^12\)

- Tyson Foods, Inc.
- George’s, Inc.
- University of Arkansas
- Washington Regional Medical Center
- Springdale School District
- Fayetteville School District
- Walmart Stores, Inc.
- Fayetteville VA Medical Center
- PAM Transport, Inc.
- Cargill, Inc.
The diverse and robust economy of Northwest Arkansas derives from the strength of local communities and the powerful economic engine provided by Washington and Benton counties. The region’s economic opportunities and the rich and unique quality of life in the Ozarks continues to attract new businesses and persuade existing businesses to expand their operations. This creates a resilient economy critical to long-term growth and financial stability for area families.

Miriam Webster defines resilience as, “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.” NWAEDD believes establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires anticipating risk, assessing how that risk affects key economic assets, and building a responsive capacity. Often, the shocks or disruptions to the economic base of an area or region occur in three ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy that affect demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending.
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region’s economic activity.
- Other external shocks (a natural or manufactured disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, etc.)

The District can help the region respond to changes in the economy through Steady-state and Responsive initiatives. Steady-state initiatives are long-term efforts that bolster the community or region’s ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives provide economic development organizations the capability to assist with recovery. The Region has adopted this two-pronged approach to develop strategies and performance measures.

**Steady-state initiatives include:**

- Incorporating economic resiliency into existing planning efforts, such as hazard mitigation or transportation plans.
- Ensuring our workforce development and community/economic development teams work together to identify employment training or infrastructure investment opportunities when emerging sectors are identified.
- Continuing to work with the education and workforce training communities to build a resilient workforce that can easily shift between jobs or industries.
- Leading efforts to capitalize on the region’s strengths identified through the CEDS.
- Continuing to promote strategic economic assessments at the community level to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Informing elected officials on resiliency by scheduling speakers at NWAEDD board meetings.

**Responsive initiatives include:**

- Strengthening coordination between the local Workforce Development Board and economic development entities within the region to address both employer and employee needs during times of economic downturn.
- Inviting businesses and economic development leaders to meetings regarding workforce initiatives, i.e. the local partners meetings coordinated by WIOA staff members.
- Utilizing the local Workforce Development Board to communicate directly with businesses to understand the needs of the business community.
- Considering economic resiliency when identifying projects to include in hazard mitigation plans.
STRATEGIC TARGET SECTORS

TOURISM

MANUFACTURING
Ranger Boats, Wabash, Ball Caps, Pace Industries, Superior Industries, Pinnacle Foods, Preform Line, Beakert, House of Webster, Pratt & Whitney

Advanced Manufacturing:
Robotics, Simmons Food, Nano Mech, Glad Manufacturing

EDUCATION
University of Arkansas, Northwest Arkansas Community College, North Arkansas College, ASU-Mountain Home, HAAS Academy, St. Joseph’s Catholic School, Gentry Magnet School, The New School, Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy

HEALTHCARE and SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
Veteran’s Affairs, Mercy Health, Baxter Regional Hospital, Children’s Hospital of Northwest Arkansas, Washington Regional, Springdale Community Hospital, Women’s Hospital

AGRICULTURE
Tyson, Ozark Mountain Poultry, George’s, Small Family Farms, Zero Mountain, Triple T Foods, Fallen Ash Farms, Farmer’s Market

LOGISTICS
JB Hunt, FedEx, Wal-Mart, DSI, Lew Thompson Trucking, BSF, Glory Trucking, YRS Freight, Northwest Arkansas Courier

RETAIL
Wal-Mart, Bella Boutique, Northwest Arkansas Mall, Pinnacle Mall, Cabela’s, Sports Academy
The NWAEDD CEDS Action plan was developed to address 7 regional priority areas identified during the CEDS development process and presented to elected officials and stakeholders at town hall meetings held throughout the nine county region.
AVAILABILITY OF WORKFORCE HOUSING

**Benefit To Community:**
Increasing the availability of workforce housing enhances economic development and job creation opportunities.

**Issue:**
Companies deciding to locate in the region often discover that there is no workforce housing available near their proposed locations. Multi-family housing, the most practical option for many workers, is particularly scarce.

**Strategy:**
Increase land available in the region for housing purposes and promote innovative and non-traditional funding sources that will encourage the creation of additional workforce housing.

**Action Steps:**
- Educate local government planning commissions, city councils and quorum courts, homebuilders and developers on the need for concerted action to increase the availability of workforce housing.
- Encourage local governments and planning commissions to identify land for the development of housing workforce housing.
- Facilitate the formation of a coalition of local government officials and private businesses to encourage local and regional financial institutions to develop funding strategies to create more workforce housing.
- Convince local and regional financial institutions to offer innovative and low cost financing options to builders and developers interested in creating workforce housing.

**Responsible Parties:**
- NWAEDD
- City and county governments and planning commissions
- Builders and developers
- Local and regional financial institutions

**Resources Needed:**
- NWAEDD Staff

**Timeframe:**
- Immediate
BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS

**Benefit To Community:**
Increasing access to high-speed internet service is essential to enhancing and sustaining economic development and job creation opportunities.

**Issue:**
Broadband internet access varies widely throughout the NWAEDD region. Telecommunication companies currently control broadband access and the right to offer internet services is restricted to municipalities that have their own electric systems. Local governments without this designation are prohibited from providing internet services.

**Strategy:**
Establish a collaborative effort with telecommunication companies, Rural Electric Co-ops, local government officials and other stakeholders to create realistic and cost effective approaches that increase internet services throughout the region.

**Action Steps:**
- Meet with state, county and local officials to discuss the state of the region’s broadband coverage and encourage them to discuss with telecommunication providers the need to extend their coverage.
- Meet with region’s telecommunication providers to discuss the state of the region’s broadband coverage and explore options for extending and funding coverage to underserved communities.
- Identify ‘best practices’ used by other states and regions to increase internet service in underserved rural areas.
- Convene a work session with Rural Electric Cooperatives in the region to discuss their interest in serving as internet providers and explore regulatory changes needed for the utilities to provide internet services to smaller towns and remote rural areas.

**Responsible Parties:**
- NWAEDD
- Telecommunication companies
- Rural Electric Co-ops
- State, county and local government officials

**Resources Needed:**
- NWAEDD Staff
- Current data on broadband coverage
- Research on ‘best practices’ used to provide coverage to underserved small towns and rural areas

**Timeframe:**
- Immediate
# Infrastructure Improvements

**Benefit To Community:**
A modern and efficient infrastructure will make the region stronger and more competitive.

**Issue:**
Many residents and leaders undervalue the importance of infrastructure to economic development and the area lacks a centralized regional approach to maintaining and improving infrastructure.

**Strategy:**
Create a viable approach to addressing infrastructure needs and a marketing campaign to educate the public on the importance of infrastructure.

## Action Steps:
- Conduct an exhaustive inventory of all-potential traditional and non-traditional funding for infrastructure needs available from state and federal sources.
- Convene all local, state and federal infrastructure professionals and policy leaders to identify infrastructure priorities and develop a cost effective short term and long term regional approach to strengthening and expanding the district’s infrastructure.
- Work with marketing professionals to create a marketing campaign that stresses the advantages of a regional focus and emphasizes future expansions and rebuilding and repairing existing infrastructure.

## Responsible Parties:
- NWAEDD, local, state and federal infrastructure professionals, policy leaders

## Resources Needed:
- NWAEDD
- Funding for Marketing Firm

## Timeframe:
- Funding research: Immediate
- Infrastructure policy meeting: January 2019
- Marketing Campaign launch: April 2019
**Benefit To Community:**
Providing skilled and employable workers to keep pace with the changing needs of employers is essential to economic growth and stability.

**Issue:**
The region must maintain and expand its efforts to create and implement innovative training initiatives to meet the demands of top employers in Northwest Arkansas.

**Strategy:**
Establish a viable way for school systems, business leaders, workforce development organizations and elected officials to regularly discuss, share and implement innovative training programs region wide.

**Action Steps:**
- Convene a work session of school superintendents from across the nine county region to acquaint them with innovative training programs underway in school districts working directly with Wal-Mart, Tyson, J.B. Hunt and other employers.
- Organize a meeting of leaders from the business community, K-12 public education, workforce training and county and local government to discuss the implementation of effective worker training programs region wide.

**Responsible Parties:**
- NWAEDD
- School Superintendents
- County and local government officials
- Representatives of workforce training programs

**Resources Needed:**
- NWAEDD Staff
- Meeting locations

**Timeframe:**
- As soon as possible
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/JOB TRAINING
HIGHER EDUCATION INNOVATION

Benefit To Community:
Providing skilled and employable workers to keep pace with the changing needs of employers is essential to economic growth and stability.

Issue:
Higher education provides a “hit and miss” approach to job training that too often fails to keep pace with the specific training needs of business and industry.

Strategy:
Establish a systematic way for regional community colleges and universities to stay apprised of the training needs of the area’s business and industry leaders and provide more effective and targeted courses and research.

Action Steps:
- Convene a meeting of business and industry leaders, higher education leadership, Chambers of Commerce and economic developers to assist higher education with providing courses and research more directly focused on the training needs of business and industry.
- Identify funds available through the state, economic developers and other sources that could support efforts by higher education, and businesses and industry to provide more effective workforce training.

Responsible Parties:
- NWAEDD Staff
- Economic Developers
- Chambers of Commerce
- Higher Education leaders
- Business and Industry leaders

Resources Needed:
- NWAEDD Staff
- Meeting locations

Timeframe:
- As soon as possible
Benefit To Community:
Providing skilled and employable workers to keep pace with the changing needs of employers is essential to economic growth and stability.

Issue:
Area employers cite widespread drug use and a lack of employability skills as the greatest challenges to finding qualified and motivated employees.

Strategy:
Raise public awareness on the impact of drug use on employment and the need for soft skill employability training in the public schools.

Action Steps:
- Compile data and anecdotal evidence that document the impact of drug use on employability.
- Meet with county and local government officials, representatives of health care facilities and interested charitable and non-profit public service organizations to explain the impact of drug use on employability.
- Work with regional K-12 educators to determine a “best practices” curriculum that stresses employability skills.
- Meet with area Superintendents and selected business area leaders to encourage area school districts to incorporate employability skills courses into their curriculum.

Responsible Parties:
- NWAEDD
- Community Non-Profits
- K-12 Educators
- School Superintendents
- Health Care Officials
- Local Government leaders
- Charitable Organizations
- Non-Profit Public Service Organizations

Resources Needed:
- NWAEDD Staff
- Meeting locations

Timeframe:
- On-going

2019–2023 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/JOB TRAINING
ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING
OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL COUNTIES

Benefit To Community:
Providing business training to entrepreneurs that will enable them to better operate their new business venture and position them for long term success.

Issue:
Many entrepreneurs in rural communities lack the resources/training to get their service/product off the ground.

Strategy:
Explore funding to implement similar programs in rural communities that are already in existence in other areas of the state/region.

Action Steps:
- Facilitate meetings with existing entrepreneurship training providers and entrepreneurs and other relevant community leaders to determine if programs can be replicated in rural communities.
- Explore expanding the use of the NWAEDD Revolving Loan Fund to finance programs that would benefit entrepreneurs.
- Pursue other grant funding options that provide training in this area.
- Facilitate a “Meet the Lenders” event for entrepreneurs with financial institutions and other funding sources.

Responsible Parties:
- NWAEDD
- Funding Agencies
- Financial Institutions
- Entrepreneurs
- Entrepreneur Training Providers

Resources Needed:
- Funding
- NWAEDD Staff
- Meeting Locations

Timeframe:
- As soon as Possible
## Improving and Supporting Agriculture

### Benefit To Community:
A strong and prosperous agribusiness and timber industry contributes to the region’s economic stability and growth.

### Issue:
The agribusiness and timber industries face a number of challenges including transportation, food safety, poultry and swine production, and commercial and residential development.

### Strategy:
Facilitate productive dialogues between the differing parties and interests involved in addressing the challenges confronting the agribusiness and timber industries in Northwest Arkansas.

### Action Steps:
- Convene county and local officials, agribusiness interests and Arkansas Department of Transportation officials to discuss possible improvements in farm to market transportation routes.
- Convene local officials, timber industry representatives and Arkansas Department of Transportation officials to discuss challenges and potential solutions to the transportation barriers that limit the movement of harvested timber to production facilities outside the region.
- Convene area food production and packing interests to discuss mandated requirements for tracking and reporting the origin and safety of agricultural products.
- Convene environmental interests and poultry and swine producers to discuss challenges associated with poultry and swine production.

### Responsible Parties:
- NWAEDD
- Arkansas Department of Transportation
- Local officials
- Timber industry
- Poultry and swine industry
- Environmental groups

### Resources Needed:
- NWAEDD Staff
- Meeting locations

### Timeframe:
- On-going
### Tourism

**Benefit To Community:**
Tourism creates jobs, supports new and existing businesses, and brings new people to the region.

**Issue:**
There is no region wide organized effort to promote tourism.

**Strategy:**
Determine interest in creating a regional tourism council.

**Action Steps:**
- Research existing tourism promotion efforts in the region.
- Determine cost and organizational structure for an effective regional tourism council for Northwest Arkansas.
- Convene a meeting with local government officials and Arkansas Parks, Recreation and Tourism officials to decide if there is sufficient interest and financial commitment to create a regional tourism council for Northwest Arkansas.

**Responsible Parties:**
- NWAEDD
- Arkansas Parks and Tourism
- Local government officials

**Resources Needed:**
- NWAEDD Staff
- Meeting locations

**Timeframe:**
- Immediate
**Benefit To Community:**  
The quality and accessibility of healthcare services is critical to the attractiveness of the region and the well-being of its residents.

**Issue:**  
Rural counties in the region lack accessible quality healthcare.

**Strategy:**  
Convene a dialogue of stakeholders to discuss how access to quality healthcare can be extended to residents in rural areas.

**Action Steps:**
- Compile data documenting the location and scope of the medically underserved areas and residents of the region.
- Organize a meeting of healthcare providers and local officials to discuss the feasibility of extending quality accessible healthcare to underserved areas.

**Responsible Parties:**
- NWAEDD
- Healthcare providers
- Local government officials

**Resources Needed:**
- NWAEDD Staff
- Meeting locations

**Timeframe:**
- Immediate and on-going
## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION STEP</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES</th>
<th>TIME FRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY: Workforce Housing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify land for the development of housing workforce housing.</td>
<td>Local Governments</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate appropriate parties on the need for concerted action to increase the availability of workforce housing.</td>
<td>NWAEDD</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form public/private coalitions.</td>
<td>Local Governments/Developers</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate the implementation of innovative financing.</td>
<td>NWAEDD/Local Governments/Financial Institutions</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY: Broadband Internet</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet with state, county and local officials to discuss the state of the region's broadband coverage</td>
<td>NWAEDD/Local Officials</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with telecommunication companies to explore options for extending and funding coverage to underserved communities.</td>
<td>NWAEDD/Local Governments/Telecommunication Companies</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify ‘best practices’ used by other states and regions to increase internet service in underserved rural areas</td>
<td>NWAEDD</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convene a work session with Rural Electric Cooperatives in the region to discuss their interest in serving as internet providers</td>
<td>NWAEDD/Local Governments/Rural Electric Cooperatives</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY: Infrastructure Improvements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory of all-potential funding sources</td>
<td>NWAEDD</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize regional infrastructure project</td>
<td>NWAEDD/Local Governments</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a marketing campaign that stresses regional focus</td>
<td>NWAEDD/Local Governments</td>
<td>3-7 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY:</strong> Workforce Development/Job Training — K-12 Innovation</td>
<td>NWAEDD/School Superintendents</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convene work session with school superintendents to acquaint them with existing partnerships with private sector industry.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organize meeting with business leaders, education, workforce training, &amp; elected officials to discuss the implementation of effective workforce training programs.</td>
<td>NWAEDD/School Superintendents/Locals Governments/Reps from Workforce Training</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY:</strong> Workforce Development/Job Training — Higher Education Innovation</td>
<td>NWAEDD/Economic Developers &amp; Chambers/Higher Education/Business &amp; Industry</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<td>Convene a meeting of leaders from business, higher education, Chambers of Commerce, and economic developers to assist higher education with providing courses and research more directly focused on the training needs of business and industry.</td>
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<td>Identify funds available through the state, economic developers and other sources that could support efforts by higher education, and businesses and industry to provide more effective workforce training.</td>
<td>NWAEDD</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRIORITY:</strong> Workforce Development/Job Training — Employability Skills/Drug Crisis</td>
<td>NWAEDD/Non-profits/Health Care</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compile data and anecdotal evidence that document the impact of drug use on employability.</td>
<td>Economic Developers</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<td>Work with regional K-12 educators to determine a “best practices” curriculum that stresses employability skills and encourage them to incorporate employability skills courses into their curriculum.</td>
<td>K-12/Business &amp; Industry</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<td>Meet with county and local government officials, representatives of health care facilities and interested charitable and non-profit public service organizations to explain the impact of drug use on employability</td>
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<td>Facilitate meetings with existing entrepreneurship training providers and entrepreneurs and other relevant community leaders to determine if programs can be replicated in rural communities.</td>
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<td>Explore expanding the use of the NWAEDD Revolving Loan Fund to finance programs that would benefit entrepreneurs.</td>
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<td>Pursue other grant funding options that provide training in this area.</td>
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<td>Facilitate a meet the lenders event for entrepreneurs with financial institutions.</td>
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<td><strong>PRIORITY: Improving &amp; Supporting Agriculture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Improvements in farm to market transportation routes.</td>
<td>NWAEDD/ARDOT/Local Officials</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convene meeting with appropriate parties to discuss challenges/solutions to transportation barriers that limit the movement of harvested timbers.</td>
<td>NWAEDD/ARDOT/Local Officials/Timber Industry</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<td><strong>PRIORITY: Tourism</strong></td>
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<td>Research existing tourism promotion efforts in the region.</td>
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<td>Convene a meeting with local government officials and Arkansas Parks, Recreation and Tourism officials to decide if there is sufficient interest and financial commitment to create a regional tourism council for Northwest Arkansas.</td>
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<td>Compile data documenting the location and scope of the medically underserved areas and residents of the region.</td>
<td>Healthcare Providers/Local Officials</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organize a meeting of health care providers and local officials to discuss the feasibility of extending accessible healthcare to underserved areas with priority given to providing services to as many people without care as possible</td>
<td>NWAEDD Healthcare Providers/Local Officials</td>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore bringing additional Innovative Readiness Trainings Medical Missions to the region</td>
<td>NWAEDD</td>
<td>3-7 Years</td>
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</table>
SOURCES

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