

2018

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
(CEDDS)**



SEAEDD
Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC.
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PREPARED FOR:
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District, Inc. (SEAEDD) herewith presents our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. Through resources provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA), SEAEDD has identified and set in motion a strategy to contend with the impediments which have deterred economic growth in our region.

While current trend indicators referred to in this CEDS are somewhat bleak, SEAEDD, through its Board of Directors, is optimistic that the many programs and plans aimed at unemployment and the development of infrastructure will reverse the negative trends. This reversal will undoubtedly lead to a slowdown of the outward migration from the area, eventually creating a stable tax and skilled employment base.

Southeast Arkansas endures high levels of unemployment, below average income levels and a continued decline in population. The programs and strategies in the CEDS center on shifting the repressiveness of the region to one that will provide an economic base that fosters self-dependence. The underlying theme that will lead to this shift is the proactive approach SEAEDD continues to use in economic development activities. Southeast Arkansas cannot afford to approach its economic woes from a reactionary methodology. Utilization of the area's natural resources, via intermodal transportation networks has the potential to make Southeast Arkansas an exporting center. The many lakes, rivers, and forests in the district presently provide a recreational venue principally for Arkansas. Promotion of these inherent assets, drawing outdoorsmen and recreationalists from surrounding states, could make tourism a significant factor in the economy of Southeast Arkansas.

Over the years, the successfulness of farming ventures has declined all over the nation. This has hit Southeast Arkansas especially hard. This was the base of the local economy and through creative tactics these kinds of natural resources and agriculture could lead to big gains for the economy and people of Southeast Arkansas once again.



The goal of diversification in economic development is apparent, but it is as important to maximize the utility of what you have naturally. A major goal in SEAEDD's economic development policy is to foster and implement innovative projects that lead to new cutting edge uses and industries for the area's natural resources. Southeast Arkansas needs to be on the cutting edge of new enterprises that protect the natural resources located in the area and utilize this to capitalize on value added processes and industries for historically low yield activities.

This CEDS provides a blueprint whereby future generations in Southeast Arkansas will have the opportunity to acquire gainful employment without leaving their native soil. It is the intent of this blueprint to grow an economy that is diverse and proactive towards its own well-being. To that end, the ultimate goal is to build a self-sufficient, self-correcting base for a healthy economic system that at the end of the day improves and maintains a high standard of living for the residents of the area and the region.

I. SUMMARY BACKGROUND

SEAEDD is located in the southeast portion of Arkansas and consists of the following counties: Arkansas, Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Cleveland, Desha, Drew, Grant, Jefferson, and Lincoln. The district is located in the lower Mississippi Valley region and is bounded as follows: on the north by Pulaski, Lonoke, Monroe, and Phillips counties, on the east by the Mississippi River, on the south by the State of Louisiana, and on the west by Union, Calhoun, Dallas, and Hot Springs counties. According to the United States survey, the district has an area of 7,563 square miles and is approximately 105 miles in width (east to west) and 120 miles in length (north to south).

According to the 2010 census, the total population of the district is 231,733. Jefferson County is the most populous county with 77,435 residents, which is 33% of the overall population of the district. Cleveland County is the least populated county with 8,689 residents. The rural population represents 5% of the district population.

DEMOGRAPHICS*

County	Total Population	White	Black	Other
Arkansas	19,019	71.8%	24.5%	3.7%
Ashley	21,853	69.3%	25.8%	4.9%
Bradley	11,580	60.3%	27.6%	12.1%
Chicot	11,800	41.2%	54.1%	4.7%
Cleveland	8,689	85.3%	12.2%	2.5%
Desha	13,008	47.9%	47.8%	4.3%
Drew	18,509	68.8%	27.8%	3.4%
Grant	17,853	94.9%	2.2%	2.9%
Jefferson	77,435	42%	55.1%	2.9%
Lincoln	14,134	66.6%	29.9%	3.5%
State	2,915,918	77%	15.4%	7.6%
USA	281,421,906	75.1%	12.3%	12.6%

* Source: 2010 U.S. Census



Regional Clusters

The healthcare industry, particularly nursing and care for the elderly has experienced a great deal of growth in recent years. The population of Southeast Arkansas is an aging one. Because of this trend, this industry is likely to continue to experience growth in the coming years.

The timber industry has also experienced growth. In particular, the manufacture of specialty equipment has become a cottage industry for parts of the district, especially in Cleveland County. River Ridge Equipment is located in Cleveland County and has begun manufacturing equipment specially designed to meet the unique needs of the timber industry. Other timber related industries have also continued to grow and expand in and around the district. The district has a long history of big timber related businesses as well, such as Georgia Pacific in Crossett (Ashley County) and Evergreen Packaging in Pine Bluff (Jefferson County), as well as various smaller operations throughout the district.

The transportation industry is projected to grow in the coming years as the Railroad Rehabilitation project in the southern end of the district is completed as well as the intermodal facility in Warren (Bradley County). This should lead to the construction of additional transload facility in other parts of the district as those areas seek to take advantage of the transportation corridor that will ultimately connect Southeast Arkansas to national and international markets. The anticipated growth in this industry will lead to additional growth in related areas, such as diesel service and repair, crosstie processing, and truck driving.

Currently, railroad rehabilitation in the southern part of the district is taking place. This will serve to link not only the counties in which the rail line is physically located, but also other counties in the district that have highways connecting them to the rail line in the southern part of the district. This section of rail is located near river ports on the Mississippi River and near highways as well. The location of these various modes of transportation serve to link the district to other part of the nation and the globe.



There is also an intermodal facility in Drew County, which serves as a hub for products being transferred to and from rail and truck transportation. The development of additional intermodal facilities in the southern part of the district, on or near the rehabilitated rail, could serve to further link Southeast Arkansas to the national and global economies.

Despite the developments in transportation, the lack of an adequate highway system has always been a hindrance to economic development in Southeast Arkansas. There is not a continuous four-lane facility in the SEAEDD area, not a mile of interstate highway east of a line from Texarkana to Little Rock. Many large retail and industrial corporations eliminate Southeast Arkansas from consideration for distribution centers, retail stores, general offices and plants because of this one factor. The farm-to-market roads are deteriorating at an unprecedented pace due to a lack of funds on the county and municipal level. Interstate 69, the future NAFTA trade route eventually connecting Canada with Mexico will enter the district tentatively from near Rosedale, Mississippi to near Watson (Desha County) and will traverse the district from the east onward to Southwest Arkansas. A new highway bridge and rail bridge will complement the interstate route.

In recent years, Southeast Arkansas has experienced an exodus of many manufacturing companies as well as changes in aquaculture and the processing plants that accompanied that industry. In addition, there have been changes in the agriculture industry which may not be evident as attrition, but have had that effect.

A number of manufacturing companies have left the area, which has left a void in that particular industry in this region. While that is concerning, this has also opened opportunities to industries desiring to locate in the region. There are sites that are available for occupancy by manufacturing companies that do not wish to build a new facility. Rather than the expense of building, companies may use existing facilities and modify them to fit their specific needs.

Processing plants for the aquaculture industry was once big business in Southeast Arkansas. However, as many fish farms closed as demand dwindled many processing plants in Southeast Arkansas have closed their doors as well. In addition to the attrition in aquaculture, the poultry industry has experienced attrition in the area. Poultry was also big business in Southeast Arkansas at one time. While Tyson still has a plant in Pine Bluff, there are fewer producers in the Southeast Arkansas area. This has had a ripple effect on industries that were tied to poultry production. As the number of producers dwindled, so too did the companies that complemented the industry.

Perhaps, the most important change in agriculture in Southeast Arkansas is not as evident as the attrition other sectors have experienced. While there are as many, and possibly more, acres in production than in the past, there are fewer farms. This has resulted in a smaller number of farms, but an increase in the overall size of the farming operations.

Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area 2017-2019 Industry Projections by

NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2017 Estimated Employment	2019 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
000000	TOTAL ALL INDUSTRIES	81,485	81,710	225	0.28%
000671	Total Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	8,065	7,983	-82	-1.02%
006010	Self Employed Workers, All Jobs	7,745	7,692	-53	-0.68%
007010	Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	320	291	-29	9.06%
101000	Goods Producing	19,878	19,765	-113	-0.57%
101100	NATURAL RESOURCES AND MINING	3,607	3,551	-56	-1.55%
110000	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3,552	3,491	-61	-1.72%
210000	Mining	55	60	5	9.09%
101200	CONSTRUCTION	2,055	2,080	25	1.22%
101300	MANUFACTURING	14,216	14,134	-82	-0.58%
	<i>Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing</i>	8,295	8,183	-112	-1.35%
	<i>Durable Goods Manufacturing</i>	5,921	5,951	30	0.51%
102000	Services Providing	53,542	53,962	420	0.78%
102100	TRADE, TRANSPORTATION, AND UTILITIES	12,461	12,403	-58	-0.47%
420000	Wholesale Trade	1,966	1,855	-111	-5.65%
440000	Retail Trade	7,499	7,485	-14	-0.19%
480000	Transportation and Warehousing	2,460	2,536	76	3.09%
220000	Utilities	536	527	-9	-1.68%
102200	INFORMATION	308	308	0	0.00%
102300	FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	2,358	2,314	-44	-1.87%
520000	Finance and Insurance	1,786	1,727	-59	-3.30%
530000	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	572	587	15	2.62%
102400	PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES	3,354	3,530	176	5.25%
540000	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	846	879	33	3.90%
550000	Management of Companies and Enterprises	357	375	18	5.04%
560000	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	2,151	2,276	125	5.81%
102500	EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES	19,404	19,615	211	1.09%
610000	Educational Services	8,210	8,185	-25	-0.30%
620000	Health Care and Social Assistance	11,194	11,430	236	2.11%
102600	LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY	4,511	4,716	205	4.54%
710000	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	204	235	31	15.20%
720000	Accommodation and Food Services	4,307	4,481	174	4.04%
102700	OTHER SERVICES (EXCEPT GOVERNMENT)	2,497	2,385	-112	-4.49%
102800	GOVERNMENT	8,649	8,691	42	0.49%

Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area 2017-2019 Occupational Projections

SOC Code	SOC Title	2017 Estimated Employment	2019 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Annual Openings-Exits	Annual Openings-Transfers	Annual Openings-Change	Annual Openings-Total
00-0000	Total, All Occupations	81,485	81,710	225	0.28%	3,818	4,923	112	8,853
11-0000	Management Occupations	8,568	8,509	-59	-0.69%	385	252	-30	607
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	2,126	2,147	21	0.99%	64	123	10	197
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	487	485	-2	-0.41%	8	24	-1	31
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	581	595	14	2.41%	14	27	7	48
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	849	845	-4	-0.47%	20	54	-2	72
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	1,771	1,791	20	1.13%	75	117	10	202
23-0000	Legal Occupations	316	324	8	2.53%	7	10	4	21
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	5,108	5,110	2	0.04%	206	208	1	415
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	482	478	-4	-0.83%	21	28	-2	47
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	4,323	4,457	134	3.10%	120	122	67	309
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	2,746	2,790	44	1.60%	164	144	22	330
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	2,694	2,696	2	0.07%	98	124	1	223
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	4,915	5,079	164	3.34%	368	450	82	900
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	2,339	2,363	24	1.03%	144	151	12	307
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	2,756	2,769	13	0.47%	207	182	6	395
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	6,237	6,193	-44	-0.71%	400	496	-22	874
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	9,360	9,314	-46	-0.49%	476	542	-23	995
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	2,546	2,506	-40	-1.57%	93	271	-20	344
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	2,605	2,620	15	0.58%	92	176	8	276
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	3,878	3,883	5	0.13%	136	221	2	359
51-0000	Production Occupations	10,207	10,092	-115	-1.13%	402	741	-58	1,085
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	6,591	6,664	73	1.11%	316	462	36	814

External Trends and Forces

The area is poised for success in the national and global economies. There has been a great deal of growth in transportation and intermodal facilities in the area. The district has acquired and will soon have rehabilitated over 20 miles of rail stretching from Chicot County into Louisiana. This project was completed in cooperation with agencies from the U.S. government, the State of Arkansas, and the State of Louisiana.

The district boasts highway, railways, airports, and waterways that connect it to critical points throughout the United States and beyond. With major highways that lead to the State's capital city (Little Rock), waterways that connect the district to not only U.S. destinations, but to ports with international connection, as well as railways that connect to these port cities, industry and trade in the district is well connected for exporting its wares nationally and globally. In addition to the current highway system, the I-69 corridor will wind its way through many parts of the district when it is completed. This will offer many benefits and opportunities to the area.



The highways that run throughout Southeast Arkansas often dot tourist attractions that many might enjoy on their way to points elsewhere if they do not plan to spend any significant amount of time in the area. Many Arkansas residents traverse Southeast Arkansas on their way to popular Gulf Coast vacation spots. Sites of interest include the Arkansas Entertainer's Hall of Fame in Pine Bluff, the Japanese Internment Museum in McGehee, as well as a host of other locally flavored museums throughout many of the towns in the district.

Still, there are many outdoor attractions that are bound to peak the interests of many outdoor enthusiasts from across the state and even the nation. The district abounds in both State and National Wildlife Refuges. These locations, such as the famed Bayou Meto Wildlife Management Area in Jefferson and Arkansas Counties, as well as the famous White River Bottoms in Arkansas County, attract sportsmen and other outdoor enthusiasts throughout the year. In addition, Cane Creek State Park in Lincoln County is home to high quality mountain bike trails, as well as gorgeous hiking trails. Other attractions in the area include bird watching, fishing, and camping.

As the routes of transportation continue to grow throughout Southeast Arkansas, the opportunities for growth in the area will be unparalleled. The Arkansas River Navigation System is maintained on a regular basis, which offers river transportation to the Mississippi River and on to the Gulf of Mexico.

In addition to established transportation systems, the I-69 corridor will offer additional opportunities for investment and trade throughout the Southeast Arkansas area. Natural resources abound in the area, which should continue to attract investors in industries that rely on a steady supply of natural resources.

Workforce Considerations

The area's community colleges, workforce boards, economic development agencies, and industry groups have traditionally worked together for the good of the area. These groups

are actively working together on job creation and training projects such as Wilson Bros Saw Mill, CAVU Aerospace, and SAF Holland. In addition, employers communicate their needs to workforce boards as well as training providers in the area so that employer demand may be met.

One critical part of success in this area is the Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board. This board is appointed by the area's elected officials. Members of the board include a majority of business representatives, representatives of both community colleges and secondary schools, as well as representatives of labor from the area's industries, and members of other economic development agencies. By bringing these groups together, the board can work to ensure the needs of the area's employers are met.

Performance measure under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will be tied to job and career results and are based on labor market and career information. The local workforce board is made up of members of private business and industry. Some members take part in the annual meeting hosted in the area by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services that identify local demand occupations. Many of the training programs eligible to be funded by the one-stop system is driven by employer needs.

Southeast Arkansas's labor force decreased by 5,872 (6.7%) from 2013 to 2017 and employment decreased 1,206 (1.8%) during the same time period.

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS 2013 – 2017 LABOR FORCE / EMPLOYMENT

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Labor Force	87,545	84,875	83,726	82,310	81,673
Employment	79,307	78,159	78,297	78,084	77,801
Unemployment	8,238	6,716	5,429	4,226	3,872
Unemployment Rate	9.4%	7.9%	6.5%	5.1%	4.7%

* Source: Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Year	Month	Southeast Arkansas Unemployment Rate	AR Unemployment Rate
2018	January	5.6%	4.4%
2018	February	5.5%	4.2%
2018	March	5.2%	3.9%
2018	April	4.4%	3.4%
2018	May	4.5%	3.5%
2018	June	5.0%	4.0%
2018	July	4.8%†	3.8%†

Source: AR Dept. of Workforce Services Local Area Unemployment Statistics
 *Not Seasonally Adjusted, Not Preliminary
 †Preliminary

Education of Workforce

Although Jefferson County has the highest population aged 25+, Lincoln County has the highest percentage of individuals over the age of 25, who have a high school diploma or equivalent at 50.2%. Compared to Drew County, which has the highest rate of those with Bachelor's degree, the County is 3.7% less than Arkansas County for Graduate degree attainment. However, in the categories of attaining a high school diploma/equivalent and some college, Southeast Counties are comparable and/or exceeding the State and Federal percentages.



EDUCATION

County	Population Aged 25+	H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	Some College	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree
Arkansas	12,745	40.6	21.8	5.7	5.7	10.0
Ashley	14,337	39.7	25.3	5.3	9.3	4.3
Bradley	7,582	41.5	18.4	5.8	10.5	3.7
Chicot	7,728	42.0	20.9	4.0	9.3	3.8
Cleveland	5,760	43.9	19.6	6.8	10.3	5.4
Desha	8,010	39.7	19.2	4.1	9.1	4.1
Drew	11,575	36.9	20.0	4.9	13.6	6.3
Grant	12,376	41.6	21.4	7.2	13.1	6.8
Jefferson	48,054	38.4	23.1	5.7	11.2	5.8
Lincoln	10,073	50.2	16.5	4.5	5.7	2.1
Arkansas (State)	1,973,591	34.7	22.6	6.4	13.9	7.6
U.S.	213,649,147	27.5	21.0	8.2	18.8	11.5

*U.S. Census 2012—2016 data

Vocational Training Program Opportunities for the Area

Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, DeWitt
 Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, Stuttgart
 University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
 Southeast Arkansas College, Pine Bluff
 University of Arkansas at Monticello – College of Technology, McGehee
 South Arkansas Community College, Warren
 University of Arkansas at Monticello
 University of Arkansas at Monticello – College of Technology, Crossett

Types of Labor Skills Needed in the Region

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services' 2018—2019 demand occupation list for Southeast Arkansas includes the following:

SOC Code	SOC Title
13-2031	Budget Analysts
13-2081	Tax Examiners and Collectors, and Revenue Agents
17-3027	Mechanical Engineering Technicians
19-1022	Microbiologists
19-1032	Foresters
19-2031	Chemists
19-4021	Biological Technicians
19-4093	Forest and Conservation Technicians
23-1023	Judges, Magistrate Judges, and Magistrates
25-1041	Agricultural Sciences Teachers, Postsecondary
25-3098	Substitute Teachers
25-9021	Farm and Home Management Advisors
27-1023	Floral Designers
29-1031	Dietitians and Nutritionists
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers
33-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers
33-3021	Detectives and Criminal Investigators
33-3031	Fish and Game Wardens
39-4021	Funeral Attendants
43-4141	New Accounts Clerks
43-9071	Office Machine Operators, Except Computer
45-2021	Animal Breeders
45-4011	Forest and Conservation Workers
45-4023	Log Graders and Scalers
47-2081	Drywall and Ceiling Tile Installers
47-2132	Insulation Workers, Mechanical
47-3016	Helpers--Roofers
47-5031	Explosives Workers, Ordnance Handling Experts, and Blasters
49-2092	Electric Motor, Power Tool, and Related Repairers
49-2093	Electrical and Electronics Installers and Repairers, Transportation Equipment
49-2094	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment
49-3051	Motorboat Mechanics and Service Technicians
49-9031	Home Appliance Repairers
49-9044	Millwrights
49-9097	Signal and Track Switch Repairers
51-2021	Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers
51-4111	Tool and Die Makers
51-4194	Tool Grinders, Filers, and Sharpeners
51-5111	Prepress Technicians and Workers
51-6021	Pressers, Textile, Garment, and Related Materials
51-6063	Textile Knitting and Weaving Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders
51-8013	Power Plant Operators
51-8021	Stationary Engineers and Boiler Operators



51-8091	Chemical Plant and System Operators
51-8093	Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers
51-9051	Furnace, Kiln, Oven, Drier, and Kettle Operators and Tenders
51-9071	Jewelers and Precious Stone and Metal Workers
51-9192	Cleaning, Washing, and Metal Pickling Equipment Operators and Tenders
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
53-4011	Locomotive Engineers
53-6011	Bridge and Lock Tenders
53-6051	Transportation Inspectors
53-6061	Transportation Attendants, Except Flight Attendants

The labor force in Southeast Arkansas, not unlike many areas, is in a state of transition away from an agricultural focus toward a mixture of manufacturing and service trades. The balance of manufacturing jobs appears to be concentrated primarily in Arkansas, Ashley, Drew, Desha, Jefferson, and Lincoln Counties. Seasonal employment problems continue to be most obvious in Bradley County, where the tomato industry is the primary seasonal employer. Overall, the main problem facing the labor force in Southeast Arkansas is both lack of education and the perceived lack of a trainable unemployed population. In the past, the main companies willing to locate in the delta region were the garment companies, which relied on a steady flow of unskilled, low wage labor. As a general rule, those companies now operate outside the United States.

According to 2018 Arkansas Labor Market and Economic Report Department of Workforce Services, “Southeast Arkansas is expected to gain only 225 new between 2017 and 2019.”

Top Industries – Top 10 Growth

NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2017 Estimated Employment	2019 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
311000	Food Manufacturing	3,615	3,826	211	5.84%
722000	Food Services and Drinking Places	3,915	4,080	165	4.21%
622000	Hospitals	3,089	3,238	149	4.82%
561000	Administrative and Support Services	2,050	2,166	116	5.66%
336000	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	715	797	82	11.47%
624000	Social Assistance	3,201	3,266	65	2.03%
452000	General Merchandise Stores	2,205	2,263	58	2.63%
488000	Support Activities for Transportation	409	464	55	13.45%
999300	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	2,769	2,822	53	1.91%
333000	Machinery Manufacturing	1,396	1,446	50	3.58%

Top Occupations – Top 10 Growth

SOC Code	SOC Title	Employment		Change		Annual Openings			
		2017 Est.	2019 Proj.	Numeric	Percent	Exits	Transfers	Change	Total
35-3021	Combined Food Preparation & Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	1,782	1,871	89	4.99%	162	169	44	375
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,134	1,185	51	4.50%	33	25	26	84
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	1,131	1,169	38	3.36%	92	69	19	180
53-7062	Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	1,611	1,643	32	1.99%	80	139	16	235
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	818	843	25	3.06%	22	65	12	99
31-1011	Home Health Aides	795	819	24	3.02%	49	41	12	102
51-2092	Team Assemblers	1,238	1,260	22	1.78%	54	90	11	155
53-7051	Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	604	626	22	3.64%	22	46	11	79
35-3031	Waiters & Waitresses	457	478	21	4.60%	34	53	10	97
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	368	388	20	5.43%	22	30	10	62

The per capita income for Southeast Arkansas historically has not been comparable to the U.S. average, or even the state average. Arkansas has never kept pace with the national per capita income. Grant County is the only county in the district that has a higher per capita income than the state average.

PER CAPITA INCOME BY COUNTY*

Arkansas County	\$23,387	19.6% in poverty
Ashley County	\$20,290	19.9% in poverty
Bradley County	\$20,465	28.8% in poverty
Chicot County	\$18,853	30.9% in poverty
Cleveland County	\$21,485	20.0% in poverty
Desha County	\$17,324	32.0% in poverty
Drew County	\$18,373	27.7% in poverty
Grant County	\$24,696	13.0% in poverty
Jefferson County	\$19,691	25.5% in poverty
Lincoln County	\$12,610	23.3% in poverty
Arkansas	\$23,401	18.8% in poverty
U.S.	\$29,829	15.1% in poverty

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME*

Arkansas County	\$37,330
Ashley County	\$36,352
Bradley County	\$34,665
Chicot County	\$29,628
Cleveland County	\$42,429
Desha County	\$26,519
Drew County	\$33,092
Grant County	\$49,195
Jefferson County	\$36,377
Lincoln County	\$32,369
Arkansas	\$42,339
U.S.	\$55,322

U.S. Census 2016 Dollars

Housing

There is affordable housing in the district. As many residents have left the area over the past decades, there are many affordable housing options available to new residents that may relocate to the area for jobs that could come available by a business or industry choosing to locate in Southeast Arkansas.

According to 2012-2016 ACS, the total number of housing units in the State of Arkansas was 1,316,215 and 7% are located in Southeast. Approximately 54% of the housing in Southeast are owner-occupied and 24.7% are renter-occupied and 17.9% are vacant. In Southeast, Drew County has the highest median housing value at \$94,200 and Jefferson County has the highest median contract rent at \$681 according to the 2012-2016 ACS.

Location	Housing Units %			Value	
	Owner Occupied	Renter	Vacant	Owner Occupied Unit Median \$	Gross Median Rent \$
Arkansas	52%	23%	18%	\$77,600	\$632
Ashley	62%	17%	17%	\$70,700	\$616
Bradley	50%	22%	21%	\$72,500	\$575
Chicot	54%	24%	20%	\$59,600	\$571
Cleveland	62%	13%	18%	\$84,000	\$651
Desha	47%	29%	17%	\$58,800	\$538
Drew	53%	27%	16%	\$94,200	\$626
Grant	63%	28%	22%	\$77,600	\$632
Jefferson	52%	29%	17%	\$81,900	\$681
Lincoln	58%	17%	19%	\$65,000	\$563

Partners for Economic Development

There are many influential actors in the area. The larger industries in the area are key partners in continuing to develop the economic competitiveness of the district. Such industries include Georgia Pacific and Evergreen Packaging. In addition, there are many smaller businesses that are key players in their individual industries, such as River Ridge



Equipment which specializes in manufacturing products that are unique to the timber industry.

The local chambers of commerce and economic development agencies located throughout the district are key players in the continued development of the economic competitiveness of the area. Often times, these players are the first point of contact for many businesses and industries seeking to locate in the area. These players are often very attuned to the characteristics of the area, as well as the needs of the business or industry seeking to locate here.

Finally, the area's local elected officials are major players in the area. More times than not, these individuals meet with leaders of business and industry to discuss options available in their local communities. These players are critical to this process because they are the face of the communities in which they serve. They understand well the needs of those living in their communities because they are not only an elected official, but also neighbors of those that live there.

Resources for Economic Development

As mentioned above, the local area chambers of commerce, local economic development agencies, and local elected officials are relevant resources for economic development. In developing a plan for the district, it is important to start at the ground floor—in the individual communities that make up the district. The local communities are the building blocks that make up the entire district and the overall economic umbrella of the district.

Approaching a snapshot of the entire district requires reviewing the economies of the individual areas that make up the district. The local chambers, economic development agencies, and local elected officials are on the front line when it comes to initial contact with business and industry interested in locating in the area. Each of these players has information specific to the individual area in which they are located and can best serve marketing themselves to those interested.



There are numerous State and Federal agencies that can provide support and funding to build capacity for economic development activities. Projects in the district have been funded by United States Department of Commerce / Economic Development Administration, Delta Regional Authority, United States Department of Agriculture / Rural Development, and Arkansas Economic Development Commission. Numerous other federal and state agencies can be leveraged for support for various projects. Those agencies are listed on page 27.

In addition to the state and federal agencies that have been used as a funding source for projects in the area, the businesses and industries that benefit from these projects often match monies made available from state and federal agencies. In addition, these businesses and industries make investments for their own capital improvement.

II. SWOT ANALYSIS:

University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service and USDA's Rural Development and Community Development Coordinator assisted Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District area by facilitating a series of meetings to discuss the strengths, challenges and opportunities for the ten-county region. The meetings were attended by the member of the SEAEDD Board of Directors, local leaders, residents, businesses and other stakeholders.

Regional Strengths

- Waterways/Ports/Mississippi River
- Agriculture
- Land/Water
- Wildlife/Recreation/Natural Resources (Economy)
- Citizens – diversity of people
- Geography – location of region
- Highway System – gateway to the South
- Low cost of education
- Tourism
- Education Opportunities

Regional Weaknesses

- Infrastructure
- Generational poverty
- Housing
- Lack of high paying jobs
- Workforce readiness
- Health care
- Populations decline
- Drug addiction
- Low tax revenue
- Low income



Regional Opportunities

- Tourism - Appeal to young and older; Examples: agriculture, hunting, fishing, recreation, golf, marathons, biking; we aren't taking advantage of opportunities and resources available
- Education – workforce/industry specific/skilled; addressing this will touch on other needs (housing, etc.)
- Green energy – intense sunshine-solar; focus on attracting industry seeking locations that have this
- Railroad/Mississippi River – rehab for shipping and tie together
- Value added agriculture & forestry
- Natural resources – land, water
- Apprenticeships with experienced workers – grow own workforce
- Marketing region – quality of life and value-added opportunities
- Improve dropout rate – schools
- Educate public on entrepreneurship potential

Threats

- Digital/online economy is negatively impacting businesses in region
- Changes to interest rates and available subsidies
- High cost of energy
- Environmental degradation, insects
- Political perceptions or reputation
- Young people leaving the area
- Human – lacking a skilled workforce
- Social – lack of awareness



III. STRATEGIC DIRECTION/ACTION PLAN

Vision Statement

Partnering private and public sector resources to strengthen and diversify the region's economy.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives detailed in this document are designed to solve economic problems and capitalize on the resources in SEAEDD area.

Goals:

1. To develop projects that will yield permanent jobs Southeast Arkansas
 - Assist businesses, industries and area leaders in identifying opportunities to retain and/or create permanent jobs
 - Develop marketing tools to promote the area's available economic development resources
 - Assist stakeholders in identifying, securing and administering funding sources

Projects: Cleveland County & Cleveland Rural Water Association water system improvement that will create 20 new jobs

2. To encourage tourism growth in Southeast Arkansas
 - Promote area recreational facilities
 - Assist cities and counties with securing funding assistance to develop recreational facilities

Project: Star City's 50/50 Matching park grant

City of Reed's FUN park grant

City of Winchester FUN park grant

3. To develop needed infrastructure and community facilities in Southeast Arkansas
 - Provide planning and technical assistance to local governments in obtaining funding to reduce inadequate and underserved areas in water and wastewater infrastructure and equipment



- Assist cities and counties in identifying and securing funding for emergency services, public buildings, community centers, farmers market, food pantry, senior facilities, childcare centers, libraries, health units, etc.
- Contribute in the reduction of food deserts in Southeast Arkansas
- Encourage improvements to emergency services and early warning systems
- Promote improving the availability of accessible and affordable housing
- Encourage the development of innovative and technological based projects
- Assist in improving solid waste management and recycling initiatives

Projects: Southeast Bradley Water Association USDA/RD water system Application

4. To promote business and related services

- Encourage financing for business development and expansion of business through USDA/RD, ADFA and SBA
- Promote technical assistance and training
- Collaborate with Industrial Foundations, Chambers of Commerce, USDA/RD and SBA to promote technical assistance and training for businesses

Projects: Small Business Administration Rural Outreach Campaign

5. To promote economic development through education and job training

- Partner with educational institutions to promote workforce training
- Offer employment development, educational opportunities and job skills training to economically disadvantaged and unemployed persons in the area
- Provide summer employment for eligible youth participants

Projects: SEAEDD Summer Youth Employment Program

Plan of Action

In identifying obstacles which have prevented growth in the District, we have also identified benchmarks that can be used in measuring a degree of success in transforming



the public perception, and to some extent, the reality of conditions in Southeast Arkansas. By reversing negative trends, we are able to gauge progress. Some of the barriers to economic development identified in this document that can be used as benchmarks by reversing trends are: out-migration, higher than average unemployment rates, high school dropout rates, teen pregnancy, deterioration of downtown areas, lack of adequate roads, bridges and highways, and others. The 2010 census will provide data that will be used to measure success in attaining many of the goals set forth in this document. Increased income from tourism, plant expansions and construction, increases in building permits, and less dependence on public sustenance are but a few of the objectives SEAEDD will endeavor to achieve.

Major work elements

Short-term - The major short-term work elements of the District are listed below. The District staff is responsible for implementing the work program and activities accordingly.

- Performing activities necessary to maintain the economic development process.
- Preparing special economic studies and projects identified in the CEDS or approved by the Board of Directors.
- Networking with economic development organizations and other groups to implement the Economic Development Plan recommendations.
- Developing and maintaining a socioeconomic information system.
- Disseminating socioeconomic information.
- Maintaining current information on Federal, State, and local economic development programs. Special emphasis should be placed on EDA Programs.
- Providing staff support to develop and monitor projects and programs that will increase economic development opportunities within the district. Priority should be placed on developing grant applications.



- Providing technical assistance for capital improvement programs for member agencies, industrial parks, land use regulations, district committees and subcommittees, and cities and counties.
- Implementing special projects, studies and programs that have been specifically identified in the district's Economic Development Plan.
- Providing training and workshops to local governments, economic development groups, and businesses.
- Coordinating and networking with agencies and businesses located outside the district that can provide benefits for the district's economic development program.
- Other activities approved by the Austin Regional Office.

Long-term -

- Reversing trends: The District will endeavor to reverse the current negative trends previously identified in this document.
- Infrastructure: Development of sufficient infrastructure, especially in repressed areas, remains a major work element for District staff.
- Diversified economy: Technological advancements present a challenge to rural areas such as ours. More emphasis will be placed on training the work force to enter the computer age.
- Intermodal Transportation: The District will promote and engage in developing an intermodal transportation network that avails itself of the many rivers that abound in Southeast Arkansas.

One-year program

The District will complete the work elements listed. Planning and technical assistance will be provided to the ten-member counties to enhance their economic development activities. During SEAEDD Board of Directors' Meetings, the work program elements are discussed and reviewed. Each County Judge is familiar with and aware of the annual work program of the District.



The Planning Committee, comprised of fifty-five elected officials and representatives of business from throughout Southeast Arkansas to ensures that diverse projects and programs are undertaken by District staff. The Planning Committee responsively addresses the economic development needs of the District. Current programs and activities encompass industrial and economic development, financing infrastructure development, education/training and tourism promotion.

Industrial Promotion: The District will promote industrial development through coordination of efforts with local Industrial Foundations, Chambers of Commerce and the state and federal resources available. SEAEDD, Inc. will continue to engage in staff activities designed to promote a diversified economy within the service area of the District by assistance and involvement in industrial development and expansion.

Business and Service Promotion: Business and service promotion will be addressed by providing job training, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), financing for development and expansion of businesses through coordination of efforts with local Industrial Foundations, Chambers of Commerce, other local agencies and local governments.

Education and Training: SEAEDD, Inc. is the grant recipient of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program for the ten-county area in Southeast Arkansas. Employment development, education, and job skills training will continue to be offered to the economically disadvantaged and unemployed person in the area. WIA Programs of the District will include the Entry Employment Experience Program for high school seniors, the Dislocated Workers Program, Universities and Two-Year Schools, and programs delivering specialized training for high school dropouts, illiterate adults, veterans, welfare recipients, and the unemployed and unskilled.



Financing: SEAEDD, Inc. will continue to seek out small business and development projects that will yield the highest permanent job creation and combined efforts with other financial resources such as the Arkansas Development Finance Authority, USDA/RD and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Communities Facilities: The District will provide planning and technical assistance to local governments and assist with economic development compliance with federal and state regulations in obtaining grants and administering them. Developing adequate infrastructure is a top priority for Southeast Arkansas. Infrastructure development enhances economic development and a better quality of life for the citizenry.

Tourism Promotion: Promoting tourism growth by developing recreational facilities such as lakes, local parks, baseball fields and basketball courts, SEAEDD, Inc., will assist cities and counties with the preparation of grant applications for funding assistance from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. The 50/50 Matching Grants, Trails for Life and FUN Park (Facilities for Underdeveloped Neighborhoods) grant program and the will be utilized whenever applicable for small counties. Applications are prepared upon request.

Multi-Year Program

The short-term and long-term elements identified previously in this section include multi-year programs as well as projects that require only one or two years. Development of an intermodal transportation system, reversing current negative trends, revitalizing central business districts and promotion and development of an adequate highway system are projects that will require several years.

Sufficiency of resources - Most of the projects identified in this document can rely on the following sources:

- a. Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- b. Department of Housing and Urban Development ((HUD)



- c. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- d. USDA Rural Development (USDA/RD)
- e. U. S. Department of Labor (DOL)
- f. U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
- g. Delta Regional Authority (DRA)
- h. Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC)
- i. Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC)
- j. Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism
- k. Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM)
- l. Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
- m. Arkansas Development Finance Authority (ADFA)
- n. Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department (AHTD)
- o. Arkansas Game & Fish Commission
- p. Arkansas Department of Aeronautics

IV. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

As required by EDA, SEAEDD has reported on specific performance measures on an annual basis. These measures are used to evaluate the successful development and implementation of SEAEDD's area CEDS many of the below listed projects are multi-year and the performance of the project cannot be fully quantified until the end of the final year. The performance measures used to evaluate the projects are as followed:

Number of jobs created after implementation of the CEDS

Number and types of investment undertaken in the region

Number of jobs retained in the region

Amount of private sector investment in the region after implementation of the CEDS

Changes in the economic environment of the region



V. ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

All counties are vulnerable to disasters. Since 2000, the State of Arkansas has experienced approximately 32 major disaster declarations for severe storms, tornadoes, flooding and winter storms. But it was after Tropical Storm Katrina in 2005, that many rural areas Southeast Arkansas learned first-hand, the economic impact that one event can inflict on a community. After experiencing the torrential rain, destructive flooding and high winds that caused damage to public and private property, interruptions to services, as well as the enormous influx of evacuees needing emergency accommodations, stakeholders recognized the need for tools that will assist in rebuilding local economies in the event of a disaster.

Economic Resilience can be defined as the ability to quickly recover from a disaster. The development of a comprehensive regional or community level instrument that can be utilized for disaster preparedness and recovery efforts, regardless of the type of disaster (natural, man-made or technological) can increase the area resilience.

VI. PLANNING FOR AND IMPLEMENTING RESILIENCE & ESTABLISHING INFORMATION NETWORKS

During the planning process, the District can serve as an analyst, catalyst, advocate and visionary for the local area. By clearly understanding these roles, the District's assistance can be vitally important to the stakeholders.

Planning for Disasters - Because of its geography and location Southeast Arkansas has experienced flooding, severe storms, and tornado damage. Each county addresses these issues, among others, in their individual hazard mitigation plans. Below are district wide initiatives for preparation, recovery, and resilience.

Pre-disaster preparedness -

- Identify business and community stakeholders to actively participate in the planning process.



- Identify leadership for Chief Elected Officials, Emergency Management personnel, first responders, etc.
- Establish an information collection centers & communication networks to enhance response time
- SEAEDD encourages the stakeholders (local government, community leaders, educational institutions, business owners, executives, utility companies, etc.) to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan or Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to access capacity and address economic and community vulnerabilities.
- SEAEDD can assist stakeholders in identifying and securing resources to mitigate economic and community vulnerabilities.
 - Drainage, bridges, transportation infrastructure, installation of warning systems, emergency vehicles, purchase of communication equipment (radios, phones), safe rooms, emergency shelters, emergency generators, evacuation plans for schools, daycares, senior facilities, hospitals, housing, insurance, local building codes, zoning & land use, etc.
 - Educational outreach & training for the residential and business community

Disaster recovery –

- Emergency response teams address the immediate threats presented by the disaster: emergency services, public safety, distribution of basic human needs and evacuation procedures
- Contact Department of Workforce Services Rapid Response Coordinator - Work Adjustment & Retraining Notification Act (WARN), local community colleges and job-training providers to assess workforce retention (WIOA-NEG)
- Conduct disaster assessment and identify resources/funding for infrastructure and public facilities restoration and post-disaster economic development projects: debris management, temporary housing, public utilities, health & social services, tourism renewal
- Distribute and advertise available resources and contact information



- Establish, promote and market business recovery systems that will assist resources and services to address business needs
- Implement plan for temporary and transitional housing solutions

VII. PRE-DISASTER RECOVERY PLANNING

Disaster planning is a continually evolving process will need ongoing maintenance for the community to be best prepared when a disaster occurs. An important component of implementation involves exercising the Plan and training staff for their respective post-disaster roles. The disaster recovery literature clearly demonstrates that communities that are better prepared to recover more quickly. The roles and responsibilities that many will have to assume after a disaster may be different from their usual jobs and will likely require special knowledge of disaster recovery so that everyone knows their particular role. The exercise should focus on determining whether actions included in the Plan are adequate to cover all of the predicted needs, identify gaps and should include the sequencing of events to determine if resources will be adequate for all of the actions that will need to be implemented simultaneously. To be effective, the Plan must build in flexibility and be adaptable to the dynamic and changing conditions.

VIII. MEASURING RESILIENCE

The measurement of resilience is important because it enables us to evaluate an important strategy for reducing economic losses from disasters, since individual companies' supply chain resilience contributes to the overall economic resilience of a region. Failure to incorporate resilience in loss estimation will result in inflated assessments of business interruption from disasters. Failure to include resilience in policy-making will result in missed opportunities to further reduce losses.

- Power and water are restored to all but the destroyed structures;
- Schools are reopened or temporarily relocated
- Most of the road network and traffic signalization is operational



- The long-term process of rebuilding a community's destroyed or damaged housing stock, commercial and industrial buildings, public facilities, and infrastructure to the same pre-disaster levels and standards.
- The recovery of the economy and quality of life factors within the community, including employment opportunities, social networks, cultural events, environmental quality, and educational and recreational opportunities.
- Replacement of housing stock adequate for the post-disaster population such that interim housing can be removed
- Economic indicators show unemployment has stabilized at a rate near pre-disaster levels or comparative to other similar locations
- 70% or more of businesses have reopened and remained in business for at least 3 months
- The percent of population dependent upon disaster assistance and social assistance programs has decreased to near pre-disaster levels

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