



RURAL SERVICES

EXHIBIT E

The Power of Rural

Becca Caldwell
Rural Services Director





Leadership



**Governor Sarah
Huckabee Sanders**
Governor of Arkansas



Hugh McDonald
Secretary of Commerce



Clint O'Neal
Executive Director



Jennifer Emerson
Deputy Director



AEDC Divisions

Business Development

Olivia Womack

Small Business & Entrepreneurship Development

Esperanza Massana Crane

Business Finance

Drew Smith

Informatics

Andy Capel

Film

Christopher Crane

Military Affairs

Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Charles
"Chip" E. Brown Jr.

Rural Services

Becca Caldwell

Community Development

Matt Twyford

Grants

Jean Noble

Strategic Initiatives

Fred Lewis

EPSCoR

Jennifer Fowler

Existing Business

Justin Majors

Manufacturing Solutions

Keith Gammill

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The houses are mostly two-story with gabled roofs, arranged in a grid-like pattern. In the background, there is a large industrial building with a flat roof. The foreground is filled with trees and greenery. The overall tone is muted, with a dark overlay.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development



Matt Twyford

Director, Community Development

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Customers

- Local Economic Development Professionals within the region
- Local Elected Officials – Mayors, County Judges, etc.



Key Business Processes

- Relationship Management – Developing relationships with community leadership
- Assisting Business Development Project Managers with projects within assigned region
- Assisting regional partnerships and local community leadership to address local obstacles to economic development



Programs, Products and Services

- Assisting in prospect site visits in communities within assigned region
- Facilitating meetings with key decision makers in communities within assigned region to advance economic development
- Promoting the Arkansas Site Selection Center website.
- Training for community officials to prepare for regional economic development growth
- Promote the Competitive Communities Initiative (CCI) – an evaluation tool designed to strengthen community competitiveness with regard to their Economic Development Organizations, Economic Development Funding, Workforce Narrative and Product Readiness

Community Development



Matt Twyford

Community Development Director



Tom Ginn

Regional Manager,
Northwest Arkansas



Amy Williams

Regional Manager,
Northeast Arkansas



Ashley Williams

Regional Manager,
West Arkansas



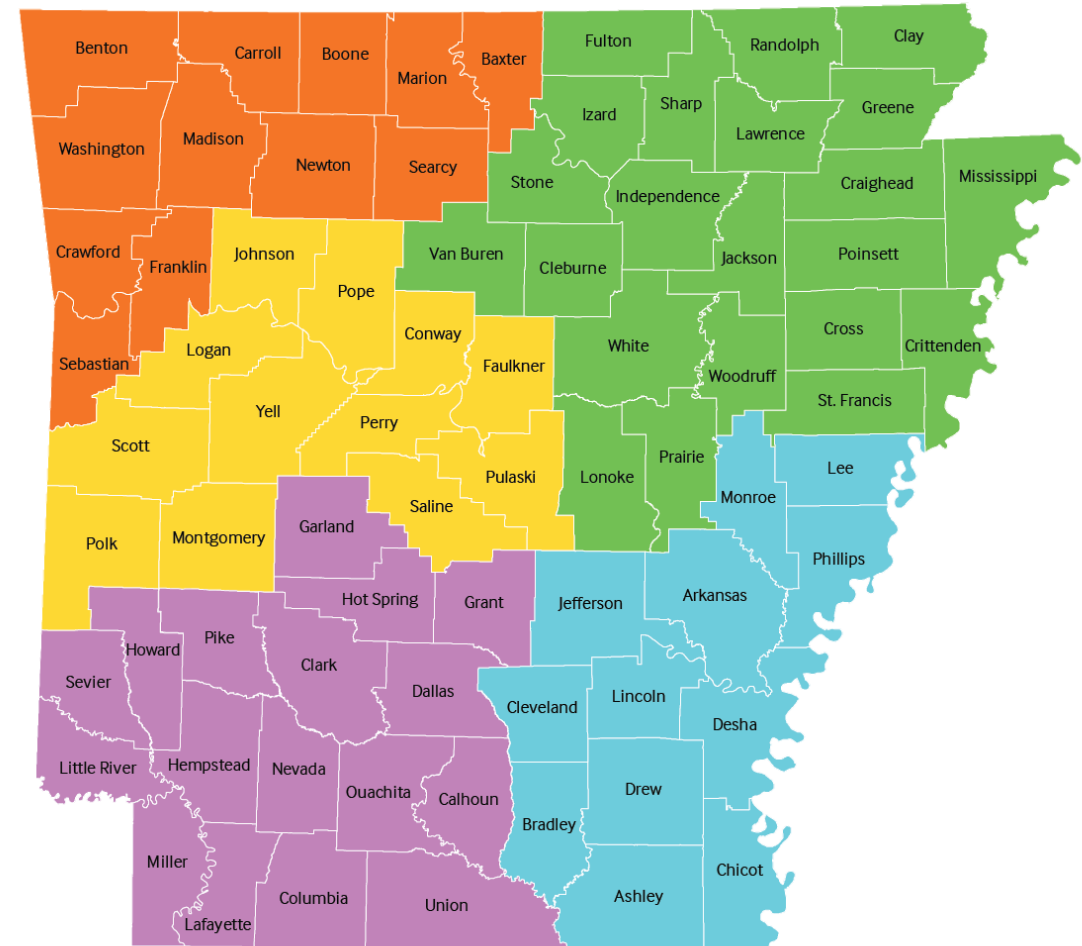
Dana Poindexter

Regional Manager,
Southwest Arkansas



Georganna Cossey

Regional Manager,
Southeast Arkansas



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CENTER FOR
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GRANTS DIVISION

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Community Development Block Grants



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Customers

- Cities and Counties, i.e. Mayors and County Judges
- Companies
- Grant Project Administrators



Key Business Processes

- Managing the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) – federal funds
- Monitoring grant project compliance and progress
- Prioritizing state goals for non-housing community and economic development



Programs, Products and Services

- Funding for Community Development projects:
 - Water and Sewer Systems
 - Drainage and Flood Control
 - Public Health Units
 - Fire Stations and Fire Equipment
 - Senior Centers and Child Care Centers
- Funding for Economic Development Projects:
 - Infrastructure
 - Equipment
 - Buildings
- Training
- Technical Assistance

CDBG Program Overview

Where Does the Money Come From?

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) are funded through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The state CDBG program has been administered by AEDC since 1983.



CDBG Program

Meeting a National Objective

Since 1983, more than **\$900 million** has been awarded to over **2,400** projects that have benefited Arkansans state-wide.

Grant awards must address one of 3 national objectives:

- 1 Benefit to low and moderate income (LMI) persons.
- 2 Eliminate conditions of slum and blight.
- 3 Address an urgent need.



2024-25 CDBG Grants Overview

**\$13
Million**

25 General Assistance grants for a variety of public facility and public infrastructure projects, benefitting over **63,000** citizens.

**458
Jobs**

3 economic development projects totaling over **\$1.8 million**, which will result in the creation of **458 jobs**.

**\$1.75
Million**

21 Rural Services Block Grant projects for the renovation of community centers and expanded fire protection in communities under 3,000.



ARKANSAS FILM COMMISSION

Film Commission



Christopher Crane

Film Commissioner

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Customers

- Film, Television, and Video Professionals – Producers, Writers, Directors – local, national, and international
- Local Elected Officials – Mayors, County Judges, JP's and City Directors



Key Business Processes

- Relationship Management - Developing relationships with key film industry decision makers
- Marketing Arkansas to the film industry nationally and internationally as a location for film and video
- Developing the state's film economy



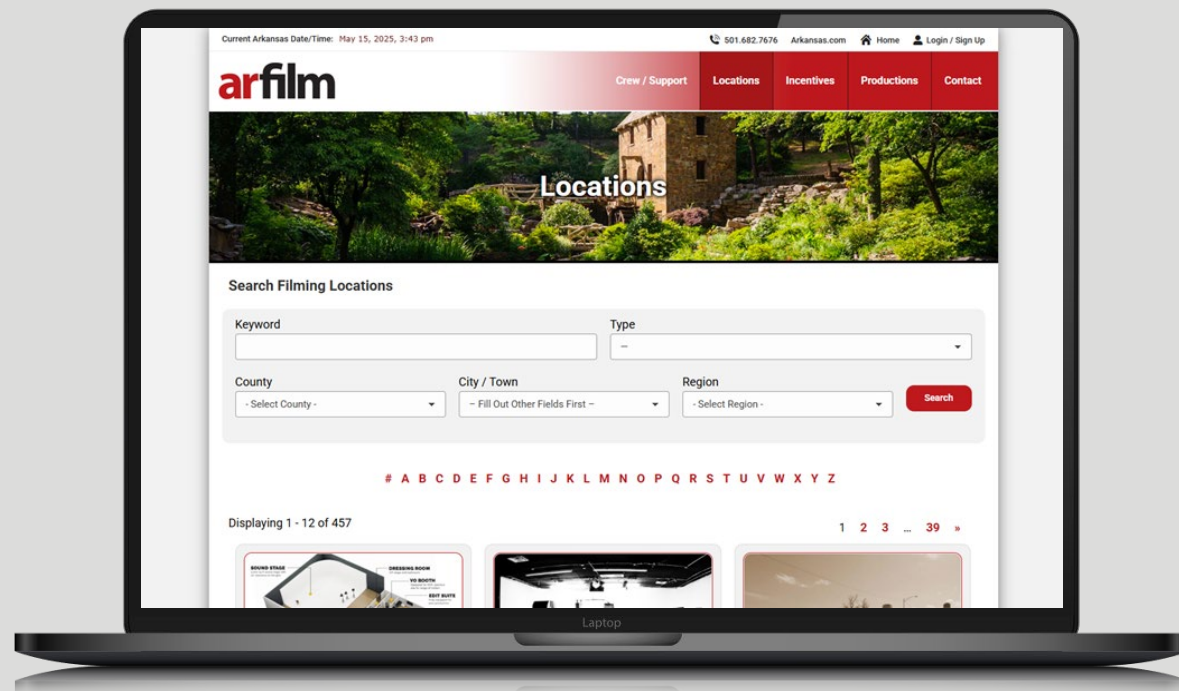
Programs, Products and Services

- Responses to official “Requests for Information” (RFI) from film makers and film executives
- Digital Product and Motion Picture incentive program
- Hands-on production support- location scouting, logistics, road closures, municipal permitting, labor relations, equipment procurement, crew, cast, props, wardrobe. Serves as liaison between film industry and federal, state and local agencies on film sets

Film Commission

Arkansas Production Resources

Comprehensive database of film production resources, including crew, support services, locations, incentives, and all films produced in Arkansas.



ArkansasProduction.com



Two Major Films Shot in 2024:

- *Trail of Vengeance* - Filmed in NWA in 2024
Opens in Theatres May 23, 2025
Starring: Rumer Willis, Jeff Fahey, Eric Nelson
- *Sovereign* - Filmed in NWA in 2024
Opens in Theatres: June 20, 2025
Starring: Nick Offerman, Dennis Quaid, Jacob Tremblay



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Business Development



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Customers

- Corporate Leadership Decision Makers
- Site Location Consultants assisting corporate customers in site location



Key Business Processes

- Business Recruitment/Expansion – Generating leads for relationship development (prospecting)
- Relationship Management – Developing relationships with key business, industry and site location consultant decision makers



Programs, Products and Services

- Formal proposals to companies including incentive information – promoting Arkansas
- Responses to official “Requests for Information” (RFI) from decision makers
- Project Management – technical assistance to companies expanding or locating in Arkansas
- Single point of contact for the state for the customer segments.



State Overview

Why Arkansas

1st

Lowest Cost of Living
(U.S. News and World Report)

1st

In Affordability
(U.S. News and World Report)

1st

**For Workforce
Development in South
Central U.S. 2024**
(Site Selection)

1st

**For inbound movers
in 2024**
(United Van Lines)

Rural Economic Development Wins



WILD PASTURES



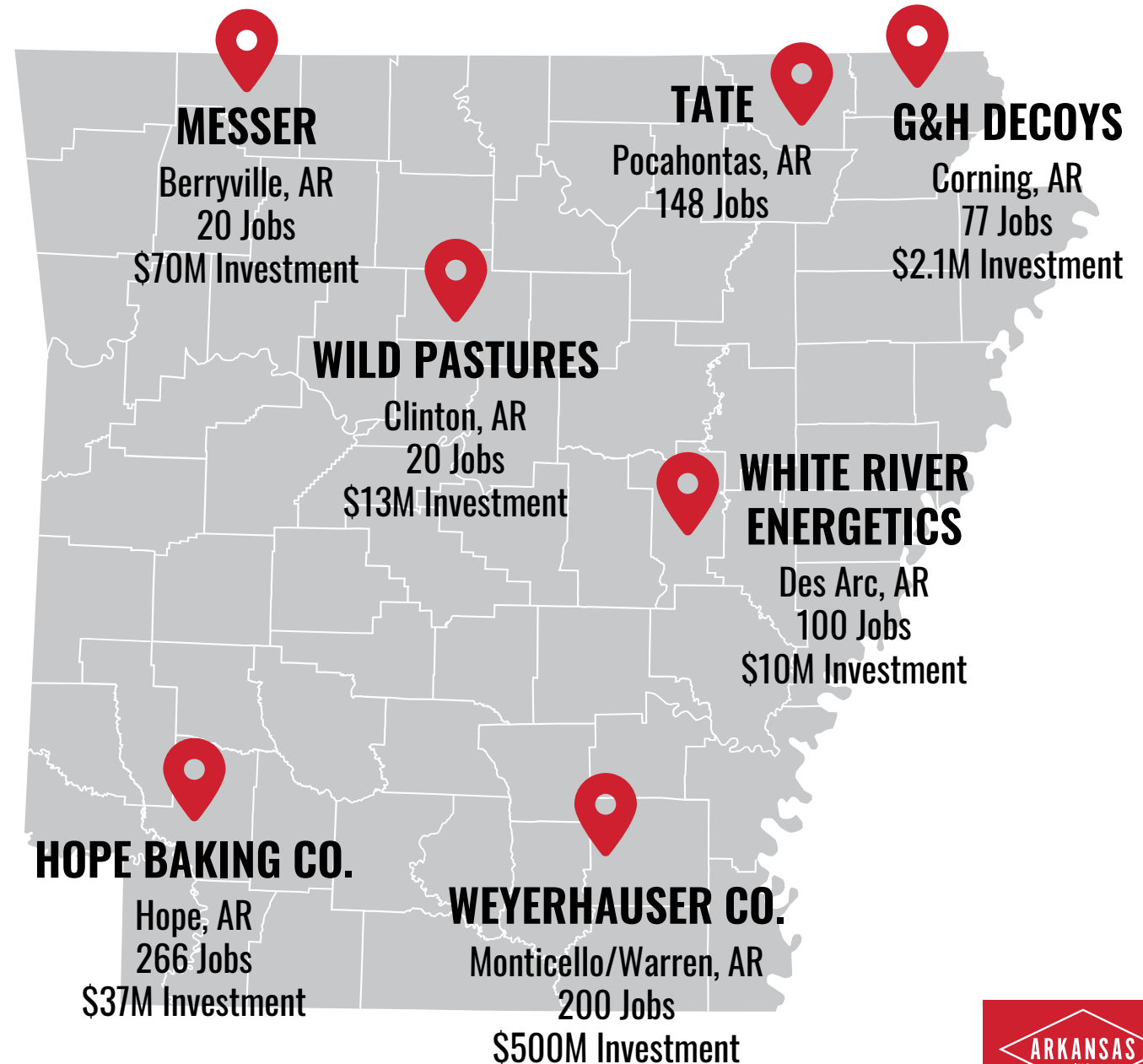
Weyerhaeuser

Tate[®]

G&H
DECOYS INC.

WHITE RIVER
ENERGETICS, LLC

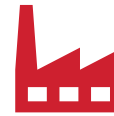
MESSER
Gases for Life



Arkansas Site Development Program



General Assembly approved \$10 million for the first of its kind program in Arkansas



Goal is to enhance industrial site readiness and competitiveness for job-creating projects



13 communities across the state received awards in 2024



SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Small Business & Entrepreneurship Development



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Customers

- Early Stage/Small Business Owners/Entrepreneurs
- Technology Start-ups
- Entrepreneurship Services Organizations (ESOs) Support
- Minority, Women-owned, and Service-disabled Veteran-owned Business Enterprises
- Government & Private Procurement Professionals



Key Business Processes

- Relationship Management – Developing relationships with key business and industry leaders and various ESOs across the state
- Assisting with state MWOBE certification and recertification
- Advocating for the continued growth and success of small businesses and entrepreneurs
- Increasing the outreach and communications of opportunities specific to unique business needs
- Planning, hosting and supporting Arkansas business events targeted to small businesses and entrepreneurs



Programs, Products and Services

- Formal proposals to companies including incentives information – promoting Arkansas
- Single point of contact for the state for small businesses and entrepreneurs

Science & Technology Programs:

1. Accelerator Grants
2. Arkansas SBIR Matching Grants
3. Research & Development Income Tax Credit Program
4. Seed Capital Investment Program
5. Technology Development Program (TDP)
6. Technology Transfer Assistance Grant (TTAG)

MWOBE Programs:

1. Loan mobilization program
2. MBE/WBE Certification and Recertification
3. Directory of minority, women-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses
4. Annual Matchmaking Event

Programs

ARise

The mission of ARise is to be the driving force of entrepreneurial economic growth in Arkansas. ARise empowers innovators, startups, and entrepreneurs to grow and create high-wage, high-demand jobs and become strong and successful tech companies. They host networking workshops and events, help entrepreneurs secure venture capital, provide no-cost coaching and consulting, and work with investors so innovative ideas have the backing they need to thrive.



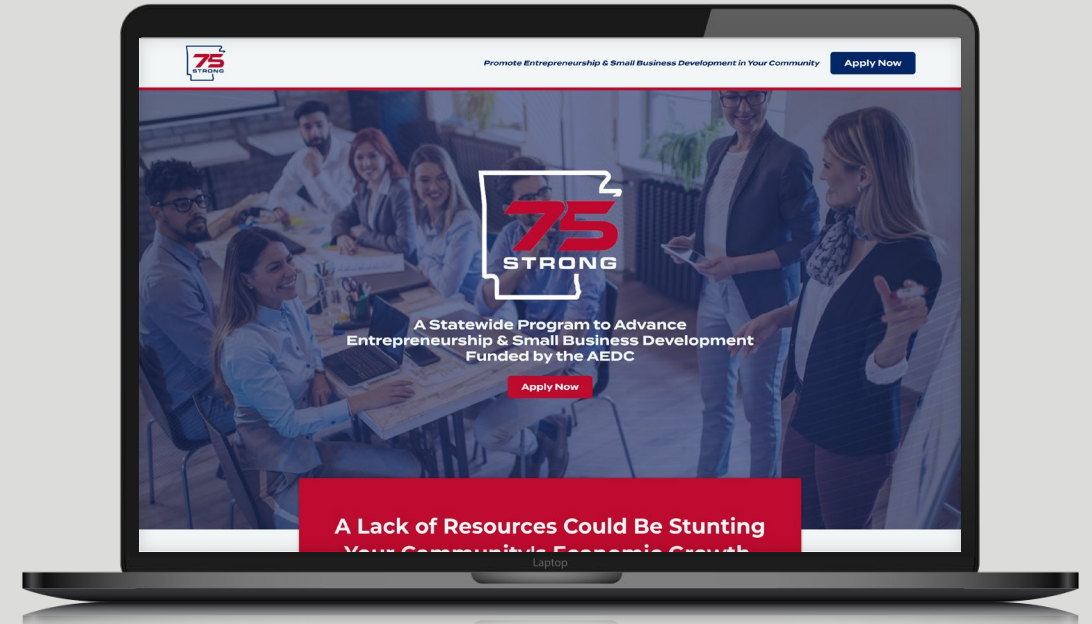
ARiseArkansas.org



Programs

75Strong

75Strong is a statewide program focused on educating, equipping, and deploying economic developers, chamber executives, community leaders, university representatives, and others as entrepreneurial developers who will build capacity across the state for those who serve small businesses and startups.



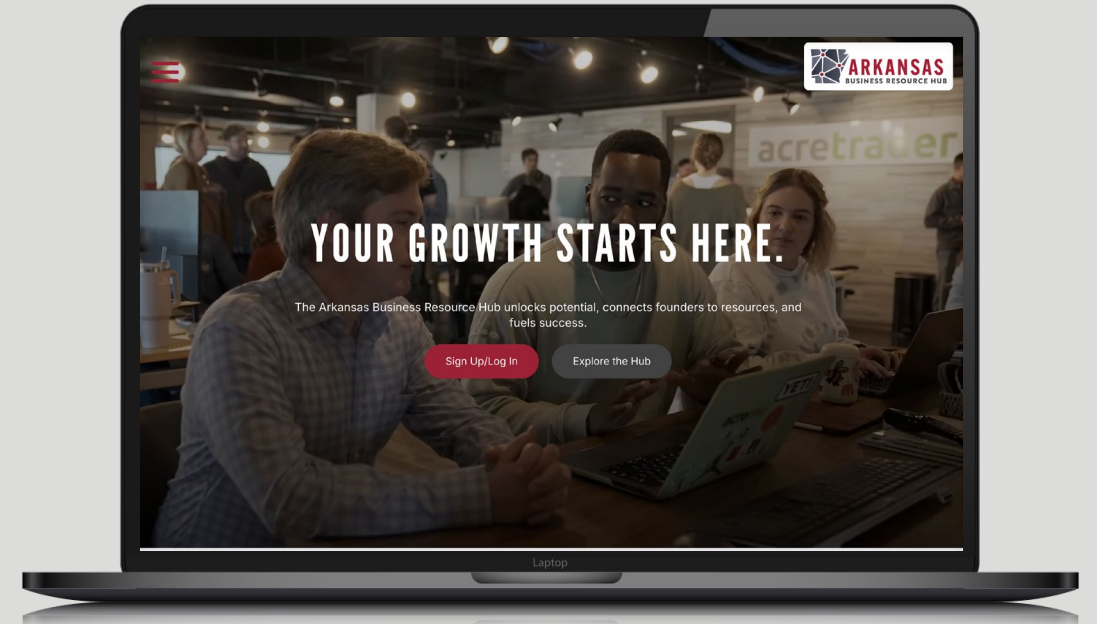
75StrongArkansas.com



Programs

Arkansas Business Resource Hub

The Arkansas Business Resource Hub is a free, centralized, statewide listing of the organizations committed to helping entrepreneurs and small business owners access the many resources, programs, and funding opportunities available to them.



ARBusinessResourceHub.com





EXISTING BUSINESS MANUFACTURING SOLUTIONS

Existing Business



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Customers

Existing Arkansas Companies



Key Business Processes

- Identifying opportunities for growth, expansion and retention
- Developing market intelligence and identifying trends
- Offering business solutions to assist in growth



Programs, Products and Services

- Customized training programs in Lean Manufacturing, Toyota Kata, DISC, Leadership, CoreValue Assessment
- Referrals to other state agencies for specialized assistance, i.e. Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality



Key Functions

- Company Visits – Discovery
- Data Collection and Entry
- Follow-up Visits for Issue Resolution
- Business Sector Development
- Referrals to AEDC Business Development Project Managers
- Referrals to other state agencies, i.e. Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS), etc.
- Market Intelligence for Strategic Planning
- Liaison to State Government for Companies
- Liaison to the state's educational system to help facilitate workforce training

Manufacturing Solutions



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Manufacturing Solutions

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Customers

- Small to medium manufacturing companies
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)



Key Business Processes

- Growth and Innovation
- Operational Excellence
- Sustainability
- Leadership Development



Programs, Products and Services

- Transformational Tools
 - Core Value Assessment
 - ExporTech
 - Team Building
 - Leadership Challenge
 - Lean Enterprise
 - Toyota Kata
 - Quality System Excellence
 - Supply Chain Optimization



Manufacturing Solutions

Workforce and Supply Chain



Workforce & Supply Chain Assessments

- Enable a manufacturer to self-assess against a series of best-in-class practices across 7 categories.
- Highlights the company strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Includes benchmarks for companies to compare their scores against other manufacturers.

Arkansas Manufacturing Showcase

- October 1 - 2, 2025
- Highlights the best of Arkansas manufacturing.
- Targets state manufacturing leaders, vendors and suppliers.





RURAL SERVICES

Rural Services



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Customers

- Local elected officials – Mayors, County Judges
- School Districts
- Fire Chiefs
- Community Leaders
- Conservation Districts
- Volunteers



Key Business Processes

- Administering 3 grant programs
 - Rural Community Grant Program
 - Rural Services Block Grant Program
 - Wildlife Conservation Education Grant Program



Programs, Products and Services

- Grants to communities
- Annual Rural Development Conference
- Technical assistance to Mayors and County Judges of rural communities

RURAL COMMUNITY GRANT

- Communities may request up to \$15,000 per grant cycle
- 50/50 match
- We have \$700,000 to distribute each year
- Two cycles per fiscal year in August and March, funds are distributed in October and May, respectively



RURAL COMMUNITY GRANT

- Project examples (this is a sample list, not all eligible projects are listed):
 - Fire stations, Fire trucks
 - Community Buildings
 - Libraries
 - City or Community Parks
 - Storm Shelters
 - Tornado Sirens
 - Baseball Fields



RURAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT



- Up to \$100,000 annually per applicant
- 10% match (can be donated labor or materials)
- we have \$1,000,000 + to allocate for FY 26

RURAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

- Purchase a Fire Truck
- Fire Fighter Protective Gear or Jaws of Life Equipment
- Fire Station Renovation or Construction
- Convert an Existing Building into a New Community Center
- New Community Center Construction

Rural Services

2024 Grant Awards by Program

Rural Community Grant Program

- \$686,966
- 61 Rural Communities and Counties

Rural Services Block Grant

- \$1,414,528
- 16 Rural Communities and Counties

TOTAL: \$2,101,494



RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERNECE

- KARAOKE, THE MAIN EVENT!



“

**Let's keep our foot on the gas,
baby, and keep this moving!**

Hugh McDonald, Secretary of Commerce

”



What's Next for AEDC?

**\$50
Million**

**Arkansas Site Development
Grant Program**

**\$15
Million**

**Arkansas Community
Assistance Grant Program**

IMPACT

2025 Legislative Session



Arkansas Economic Development Commission

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