

ARKANSAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



2025 ANNUAL REPORT





At AEDC, we know economic advancement doesn't happen by accident. We work strategically with businesses and communities to create strong economic opportunities, making Arkansas the natural choice for success.

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Dear Fellow Arkansans,

At the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC), our team is passionate about making a positive difference for those we ultimately serve: the people of Arkansas. We work with businesses and communities to help them succeed – and our ultimate goal is to help create more and better-paying jobs for Arkansas taxpayers.

To accomplish this goal, AEDC has multiple divisions and initiatives that are aimed at positioning the state for growth and helping communities prepare for successful economic development opportunities. From our Business Development and Community Development teams to our Grants and Rural Development divisions and many others, AEDC has talented economic development professionals who are committed to our agency’s mission of moving Arkansas forward.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the work that AEDC was fortunate to be a part of in 2025. It is a snapshot of each division’s work – their results and the highlights from the past year.

There were business expansion and recruitment wins in every corner of Arkansas – including Batesville, Berryville, Camden, Danville, East Camden, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Harrison, Hot Springs, Little Rock, Mena, Morrilton, Monticello/Warren, Mountain Pine, Nashville, North Little Rock, Osceola, Pocahontas, Russellville, Springdale, West Memphis, and Wynne.

Our Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development Division also had several notable milestones. 75Strong, which is a partnership between AEDC and Conductor, launched its first cohort in early 2025 with more than 50 local economic developers and community leaders, who are training to be prepared to



Clint O’Neal, CEO
Executive Director

help small business owners and entrepreneurs in their communities. AEDC also partnered with the Northwest Arkansas Council to bring the Onward FX investor summit statewide, holding the event to Little Rock for the first time.

This is just a small sampling of the important work that AEDC’s team members did in 2025. There is much more work to be done – but our team is ready to meet the challenge.

AEDC is proud to work with our community partners from across the state. Together, we had a strong year in 2025, but we expect to have an even better year in 2026 and in the years to come.

Sincerely,

CLINT O’NEAL, CEO
Executive Director
Arkansas Economic Development Commission

STATE LEADERSHIP



Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor of Arkansas



Hugh McDonald
Secretary of Commerce



ABOUT THE ARKANSAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

AEDC COMMISSIONERS



JAY BUNYARD
DeQueen



THOMAS DICKINSON
Little Rock



CHRIS GOSNELL
Magnolia



LANCE MCALINDON
Bentonville



ANNEMARIE DILLARD JAZIC
Little Rock



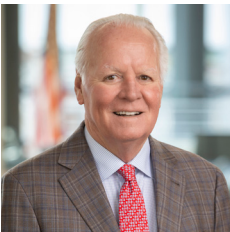
GLEN JOHNSON
Little Rock



VANCE LAWSON
Wynne



JOHNNY MITCHUM
Maumelle



JOHN NEWCOMB
Osceola



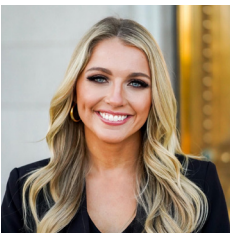
SAM RUSSELL
Bentonville



MOLLY SHEPHERD
El Dorado



JON WICKLIFFE
Little Rock



LINDSEY WINGO
Rector



LANG ZIMMERMAN
Mountain Home



JERRY HOLDER
Little Rock

OUR TEAM

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission is a division of the Arkansas Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce is the umbrella organization for workforce and economic development drivers in the state of Arkansas.



CLINT O'NEAL, CE&D
Executive Director



JENNIFER EMERSON, EDFP
Deputy Director

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE SHARED SERVICES

BUDGET

Tammy Williams

CHIEF OF STAFF & GENERAL COUNSEL

Allison Hatfield

HUMAN RESOURCES

Carol Nunn

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Missy Morehart

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Lauren Ator

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Clark Cogbill

AEDC DIVISIONS

ARKANSAS NSF EPSCoR

Jennifer Fowler

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Olivia Womack

BUSINESS FINANCE

Jennifer Emerson

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Matt Twyford

FILM

Christopher Crane

GRANTS

Jean Noble

INFORMATICS

Andy Capel

MILITARY AFFAIRS

RURAL SERVICES

Becca Caldwell

SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURS

Esperanza Massana Crane

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Fred Lewis

AEDC MILESTONES FOR 2025

“In Arkansas, companies are finding success thanks to low costs, a strong workforce, and pro-business public policy under Governor Sanders’s leadership.”

Hugh McDonald, *Secretary of Commerce*



AEDC Hosts Meet the Buyers Conference.



AEDC Hosts Annual Rural Development Conference.



Messer Expands in Berryville with New Air Separation Unit.



Lexicon Expanding Headquarters, Fabrication Operations in Little Rock.

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

Key Tronic Expands Domestic Operations with New Facility in Springdale.



Taber Extrusions Breaks Ground on \$70M Expansion in Russellville.



Green Bay Packaging Invests More Than \$1 Billion in Morrilton.



75Strong Announces First Cohort to Drive Statewide Entrepreneurship.



General Dynamics, U.S. Army Open New 155MM Artillery Facility in Calhoun County.



LaCroix Precision Optics Expands in Batesville.



L3Harris Breaks Ground on Solid Rocket Motor Plants in Camden.



Elopak Opens First U.S. Carton Plant in Little Rock.



Weyerhaeuser Breaks Ground on TimberStrand Facility in South Arkansas.



AEDC MILESTONES FOR 2025



CANTEX Locates New Operations in Nashville



Amazon Breaks Ground on State-of-the-Art Logistics Facility in Little Rock.



Mueller Streamline Expands in Wynne.



Nidec Expands in Mena with \$19 Million Investment.



Six Arkansas Communities Chosen for 2025-26 Retail Academy Program.



R2S Opens New Manufacturing Facility in East Camden.



L3Harris Breaks Ground on Arkansas Advanced Propulsion Facilities.



Hybar Celebrates Grand Opening of Rebar Mill in Northeastern Arkansas.

JUL — AUG — SEP — OCT — NOV — DEC

Central States Opens New Frame Plant in Springdale.



Google Locates New Data Center in West Memphis with \$4 Billion Investment.



Tate Opens New Manufacturing Facility in Pocahontas



Welspun Tubular Invests \$150 Million in New LSAW Pipe Mill in Little Rock.



Owens Corning Opens State-of-the-Art Facility in Russellville.



Hope Earns AEDC 'Competitive Community' Designation.



Sediver Expands West Memphis Facility.



Primo Brands Breaks Ground on New Mountain Valley Factory.



2025 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

In 2025, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission announced 32 projects that will cumulatively create 3,953 new jobs and bring an investment of \$6,712,870,868 to Arkansas.



LEGISLATION

A package of ground-breaking legislation, collectively known as IMPACT (Improving Markets, Promoting Arkansas Commerce & Trade), was recently passed into law by the Arkansas State Legislature. This legislation will reduce regulatory burdens and unleash Arkansas' full potential in a wide range of sectors, including economic development, securities, banking, and more.

IMPACT includes:

- MODERNIZATION AND AUTOMATION INCENTIVE (ACT 882 OF 2025): A tax credit of up to five percent of eligible expansion costs for existing Arkansas companies
- DATA CENTER INCENTIVE (ACT 548 OF 2025): Sales and use tax exemption for qualified data center equipment.
- LITHIUM INCENTIVE (ACT 1012 OF 2025): Creates a comprehensive lithium and grid storage incentive program to encourage the growth of this industry in Arkansas – from in-state processing, refining, manufacturing, and recycling.
- HEADQUARTER RELOCATION INCENTIVE (ACT 881 OF 2025): A tax credit that offsets up to 10% of state corporate income taxes to relocate corporate headquarters to Arkansas.
- INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES (ACT 576 OF 2025): Creates public corporations to help develop industry in given areas.
- GENERATING ARKANSAS JOBS ACT OF 2025 (ACT 373 OF 2025): Ensures that Arkansas has reliable electric and natural gas utility services.
- SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION RESEARCH REFORMS (ACT 440 OF 2025): Reforms the Arkansas SBIR Matching Grant Program to include STTR programs, and removes the lifetime awards cap.

Scan the QR code and listen to Secretary of Commerce Hugh McDonald and AEDC Executive Director Clint O'Neal discuss the IMPACT legislative package and the effect this will have on economic development in The Natural State.



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



2025 was a record-breaking year for Arkansas as the state celebrated economic development wins from Berryville to Nashville and Osceola to Camden. AEDC signed job creation agreements with companies that will lead to 3,953 jobs and a capital investment of \$6,712,870,868. This past year also saw one of the largest capital investment projects in the state's history, with the announcement of Google's \$4 billion data center in West Memphis.

In 2026, AEDC is proud to partner with communities to bring jobs to the state that will build on momentum and move the economy forward.



Companies around the world are all realizing the same thing: Arkansas means business. Whether their priority is low taxes, low cost of living, low cost of energy, ease of doing business, a quality workforce, or easy access to global markets, companies like Welspun are choosing the Natural State time and again.

Governor
Sarah Huckabee Sanders

ANNOUNCEMENT TOTALS FOR 2025

TOTAL ANNOUNCED INVESTMENT

\$6,712,870,868

3,953
PROJECTED JOBS

These numbers reflect company commitments made in public announcements and/or signed incentive agreements.



From the top down:

Governor Sanders and AEDC leaders joined Amazon executives for the groundbreaking of the company's state-of-the-art logistics facility in July 2025.

Key Tronic Corporation celebrated the grand opening of its new manufacturing facility in Springdale, Arkansas in August 2025. Governor Sanders and the company's leadership cut the ribbon on the facility, which represents a \$28 million investment that will create 400 new jobs.

State officials, economic developers, and company executives attended the 2025 Paris Air Show to promote the state's thriving aerospace and defense industry in June 2025. Team Arkansas assembled for a photo in front of the Arkansas booth.



Green Bay Packaging announced an investment of more than \$1 billion to expand its manufacturing facility in Morrilton, Arkansas. Secretary of Commerce Hugh McDonald and AEDC Executive Director Clint O'Neal took part in a ceremonial groundbreaking ceremony with Governor Sanders and the Green Bay Packaging leadership team as part of the announcement.

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In 2025, the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development Division advanced Arkansas' innovation economy by strengthening the systems that support entrepreneurs and small businesses statewide.

Building on prior investments, the division expanded both its visibility and coordination efforts, including active participation in the annual ESO Summit and assuming leadership of the monthly Entrepreneur Support Organization Call to enhance alignment, collaboration, and shared accountability among partners.

The team funded 11 accelerator programs across Arkansas, reinforcing pathways for startup growth and scale, and launched the 75 Strong Program to further support small business education and training. Additionally, the division initiated a new partnership with the Northwest Arkansas Council to support Onward FX, a statewide initiative that connects high-potential startups with leading venture capital firms through curated one-on-one meetings.

In 2026, we will build on previous years' momentum by deepening statewide coordination, strengthening program performance, and expanding access to capital and growth pathways for Arkansas entrepreneurs. Our goal continues to be to position Arkansas entrepreneurs for sustained success and to reinforce AEDC's commitment to economic opportunity across the state.

ONWARD FX OCTOBER 2025 LITTLE ROCK

Approximately **400** people attended the event, and around **100** startups were selected by investors to have one-on-one meetings with, resulting in **200** one-on-one meetings with **50** investment firms.



ARise has delivered **715** individualized consulting sessions with entrepreneurs across the state.

The meetings supported a total of **139** startups, with services ranging from initial onboarding calls and assessments to capital readiness planning and market development.



In FY 25, we funded 11 different accelerator programs that represented a variety of industries.

Some of these accelerators include:

- Fuel AI/ML
- Fuel Healthtech
- Arkansas Global Cycling Accelerator
- MaternaTech
- Highstep
- FORGE Phoenix Accelerator
- Arkansas Venture Center Lithium Accelerator
- Arkansas Venture Center Business Driven Accelerator
- the Conductor 10X Growth Accelerator
- Endeavor Heartland Accelerator
- Plug and Play Supply Chain Accelerator



BUSINESS FINANCE

Business Finance is tasked with servicing economic development loans; disbursing, tracking and auditing grant and incentive agreements; collecting reimbursement of grant funds in the event of underperformance; underwriting various incentive and financing programs; and managing the Bond Guaranty Program portfolio and investments.

In 2025, the General Assembly passed several pieces of legislation helping to create exciting new opportunities in Arkansas' economic landscape throughout the year and forward. Business Finance is poised and eager to assist in providing the support needed to make Arkansas the natural choice for success.

- Incited **\$8,545,812** in private investment into early-stage Arkansas based companies projecting **155 new jobs** with average wages of **\$60.01/hour**.

INCENTIVE PAYMENTS DISBURSED

\$17,739,119

Supporting the addition
of **5,502 jobs**

In 2025, the AEDC Council quarterly meetings were held in Benton, Mena, Fort Smith, Newport, and Camden. These meetings afforded opportunity for the full Council to meet with local business and community leaders at each of these locations.

GRANT PAYMENTS DISBURSED

\$9,718,270

Supporting the addition and retention
of **320 jobs** and **over**
\$143 million in capital investment

TRAINING GRANTS DISBURSED

\$137,100

Supporting the upskilling
of **52 Arkansans**



MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Marketing and Communications team continued to drive awareness and engagement with key audiences in 2025 by highlighting business expansion announcements through video, social media, and targeted digital advertising. We produced and shared more videos from announcements than ever before. In October, our team led the planning of the 2025 Arkansas Lithium Innovation Summit in Little Rock, attended by nearly 900 people from 28 states and nine countries. Our public relations activities increased, growing total reach to 2.7 billion, a 17% increase over 2024. We continued to “get loud” by sharing 30 “Economic Development Alerts” with site selection consultants and other stakeholders following company announcements and other important news.

In 2026, the marketing and communications team will be focused on providing custom support, including graphic design, landing pages, email marketing, collateral and more for key events, including SHOT Show, the Rural Development Conference, Select USA, the Farnborough Air Show, Walmart Open Call, and AEDC-hosted events for site selection consultants. Our team will also continue to make strides in building awareness for Arkansas as a desirable place to expand, grow, and start a business, supporting lead generation efforts and sales support through intentional strategies, including targeted digital advertising, proactive public relations, content creation (video, podcasts, graphics, handouts), and personalized outreach.

- 30 Economic Development Alerts shared with site selection consultants
- Produced and shared 20 announcement videos
- Produced and shared 12 episodes of the Arkansas Inc. Podcast
- Published and shared 30 blog posts
- Grew LinkedIn audience by more than 3,000
- 26 newsletters delivered to more than 11,000 subscribers via email and LinkedIn



MEDIA REACH
2.7 billion
up 17% over 2024

ARKANSAS LITHIUM INNOVATION SUMMIT

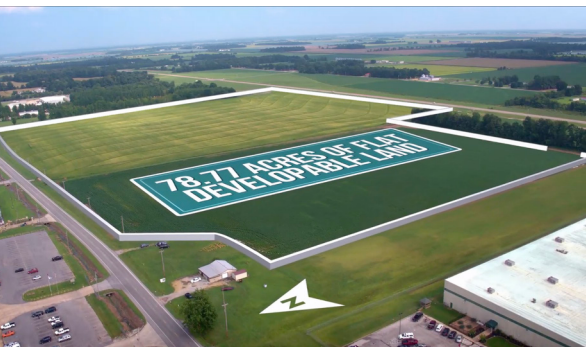
October 28-29
Statehouse Convention Center,
Little Rock

Attended by nearly **900** people from
28 states and **9** countries

“The Marketing and Communications team is focused on strategies that drive results for AEDC, from putting Arkansas on the radar screen of consultants and executives around the world, to helping the Business Development team close the sale with prospects through personalized touches and engagement. We will continue to highlight Arkansas-based executives and entrepreneurs by sharing their stories with our key audiences, providing a clear and convincing answer to the question, ‘Why Arkansas?’”

Clark Cogbill,
Director, Marketing & Communications

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



The division focused on strengthening core research capabilities while expanding its strategic value across AEDC. A major accomplishment was refining the research manager function, hiring and onboarding a new research manager, documenting the position's procedures, and establishing a strong working partnership across the organization. In collaboration with the Department of Workforce Services, the team resolved longstanding data constraints which led to significantly reducing the time required to prepare and standardize data, increasing confidence in the results, and freeing capacity for higher-value work. The division delivered timely research support for trade shows, international missions, new company prospects, and internal stakeholders by producing company profiles, executive bios, industry lists, labor shed analyses, and other reports. At the same time, close collaboration with the Marketing and Communications team strengthened outbound campaigns through shared targeting, messaging, and cadence decisions. Lastly, the division deepened its engagement in the lithium market by supporting the Arkansas Lithium Technology Accelerator and identifying a broad set of global lithium supply chain companies and executives to invite to the successful 2025 Lithium Innovation Summit.

In 2026, the Strategic Initiatives Division will continue to deepen understanding of, and support for, the lithium supply chain to ensure that AEDC remains well-informed and positioned to support Arkansas' potential in the lithium market. We will explore partnerships with third-party organizations that can augment and accelerate our research capabilities. We will also continue to evaluate data tools that deliver meaningful insights for AEDC and the communities it serves.

Accomplishments for 2025:

- Researched and provided company profiles and executive bios for numerous trade shows and international visits by AEDC and the governor
- Researched and provided company profiles and executive bios for numerous new company prospects
- Worked with the Department of Workforce Services to fix data issues, reducing the amount of time to clean, organize, and standardize data for import and use from 120 hours of work to less than 8 hours, resulting in greater confidence in the data and freeing up time for other tasks.
- Identified 195 companies and 670 executive contacts involved in the global lithium supply chain to invite to the 2025 Lithium Innovation Summit

GRANTS

In 2025, the Grants Division awarded just under \$11 million in State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, which primarily benefit persons of low to moderate income in non-entitlement small cities and communities throughout the state:

- 18 General Assistance projects totaling \$9.7 million for a variety of public facility and public infrastructure projects, including residential water and wastewater, streets and roads, drainage, storm shelter, and disabled persons centers, benefitting over 61,000 persons.
- 10 Rural Services Block Grant projects totaling nearly \$1million through a partnership with the AEDC Division of Rural Services for the renovation of community centers and expanded fire protection in communities under 3,000.

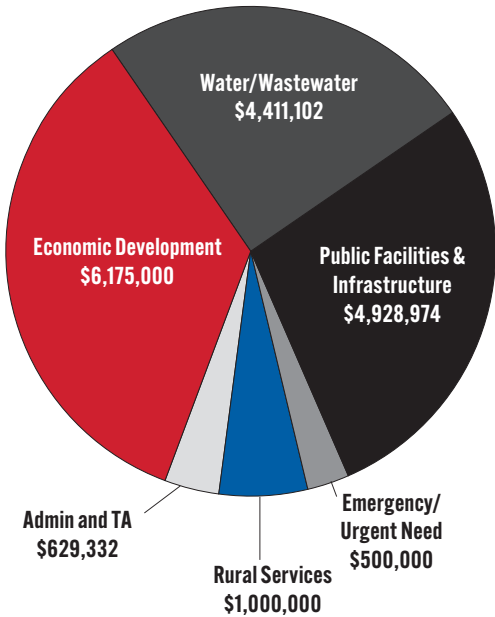
On April 22, U.S. Rep. Steve Womack welcomed HUD Secretary Scott Turner to Arkansas' Third Congressional District. Together, they visited key locations that spotlight local affordable housing initiatives and economic development opportunities and participated in a roundtable discussion with entitlement city and state CDBG Program Managers, including Director Jean Noble. Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders also joined to discuss several of these efforts, offering insights from a state-level perspective.

Congressman Womack said, "It was an honor to host Secretary Turner to the Third District and showcase how Northwest Arkansas is leading the way with innovative approaches to housing affordability. As chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, I am committed to further engaging with the Trump administration as we look to fiscal year 2026 to advance these initiatives while ensuring taxpayer dollars are used effectively and responsibly."



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
STATE'S PROGRAM FOR SMALL CITIES

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026
2025 Allocation: \$17,644,408



From Norfolk to McGehee to Horatio, Arkansans across the state deserve to live in safe, vibrant communities, and that's why these grants are so important. Not only will this funding go towards critical infrastructure projects throughout the Natural State, but it will also fund community parks, walking trails, youth centers, and more - projects that will improve residents' quality of life and ensure our towns and cities are great places to call home.

Governor
Sarah Huckabee Sanders

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Hosted a statewide Retail Academy serving six Arkansas communities: Walnut Ridge, Arkadelphia, Malvern, Nashville, Berryville, and Russellville.
- Provided training, presentations, and technical assistance to communities across Arkansas through regional meetings, leadership programs, and local organizations.
- Assisted with community outreach and application support for the second round of the Site Development Grant Program, which made \$25 million available for site development projects statewide.
- Supported four AEDC Commission Meetings held in Newport, Mena, Camden, and Saline County through planning and on-site assistance.
- Participated in and supported the Community Development Institute (CDI) at multiple levels, including Year 1, Year 2, and Advanced Year instruction and simulations.
- Provided direct assistance and engagement to more than 175 communities statewide.
- Maintained a consistent presence through hundreds of meetings and engagements with regional organizations, economic development boards, elected officials, and community leaders throughout the year.
- Continued engagement with statewide partner organizations, including the Association of Arkansas Counties and the Arkansas Municipal League, through year-round coordination in addition to conference participation.
- Contributed to state, regional, and national leadership efforts through participation in organizations and initiatives at the state, federal, and national levels.
- Supported community readiness for emerging initiatives through outreach and informational meetings related to the upcoming Opportunity Zone 2.0 rollout.

In 2025, the Community Development Division continued to serve as a resource to communities across Arkansas while supporting agency initiatives and partner efforts. The division welcomed a new team member, Georganna Cossey, who is based in Hamburg and serves Southeast Arkansas.

Throughout the year, the division continued to provide targeted training and technical assistance to communities statewide, hosted another round of the Retail Academy to six communities, strengthened regional collaboration by supporting partnerships, helped communities prepare competitive applications for the Site Development Grant Program, and played a significant role in the Community Development Institute (CDI), with team members participating at every level of the program.

The year also marked a milestone for AEDC's Competitive Communities Initiative with the designation of Hope as the program's 10th community—the first new designation in several years—reaffirming the division's commitment to long-term community readiness and competitiveness.

In 2026, the Community Development Division looks forward to continuing its work as a trusted resource for communities while expanding collaboration within the agency and with partners to support emerging initiatives and programs, including Opportunity Zone 2.0, and better prepare communities for future economic development opportunities.

“Our goal is simple: to support communities in practical, meaningful ways and help them build the tools they need to be ready for the next opportunity.”

Matt Twyford,
Director, Community Development



RURAL SERVICES

The Division of Rural Services was able to fund all grant programs and host our annual three-day event, the Rural Development Conference, in May 2025. More than 600 attendees, vendors, and sponsors attended a variety of sessions, including topics such as Outdoor Recreation Grants and Resources for Rural Communities, Tourism and Economic Development, Workforce Development, 75 Strong, Community Development through Regionalism, and Resources for Economic Development in Rural Arkansas. The Rural Community Grant Program, the Rural Services Block Grant Program, and the Arkansas Game and Fish Wildlife Grant Program were funded with \$2,695,326.66.

The division is looking forward to the Rural Development Conference being held in Jonesboro in 2026. This year's conference will be a culmination of a year's worth of planning and identifying key issues for rural Arkansas, something we enjoy highlighting each year. Division team members are excited to get back out into the communities to help spread the word on grant programs and getting back out into communities to provide training on grant programs that further help those in rural Arkansas.



GRANT FUNDS ALLOCATED BY
THE DIVISION OF RURAL SERVICES
FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2025

RURAL COMMUNITY
GRANT PROGRAM

\$723,347.13

RURAL SERVICES BLOCK
GRANT PROGRAM

\$1,414,527.95

ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH
WILDLIFE GRANT PROGRAM

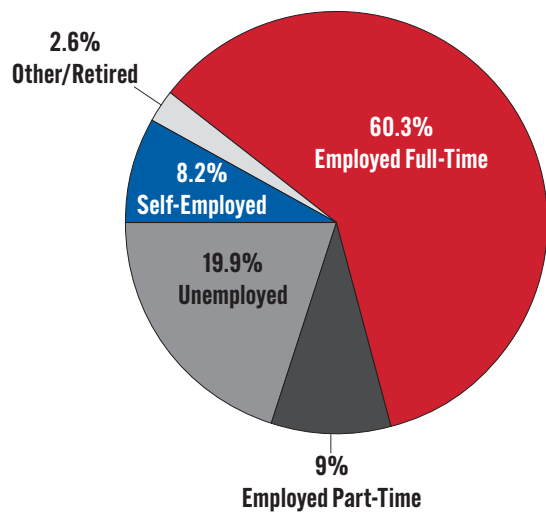
\$557,451.58



In 2025, the division received an extension on the grant that supports DART (Data Analytics that are Robust and Trusted) – the statewide data science initiative – that allows the state to support more research, develop more learning opportunities for students, and foster new public-private partnerships. The team collaborated to update the SBIR Matching Grant program and provide more flexibility for innovative entrepreneurs who want to do business in Arkansas. We also kicked off the Grow with Google program, which offers no-cost access to Google’s career certificates and AI courses for Arkansas residents.

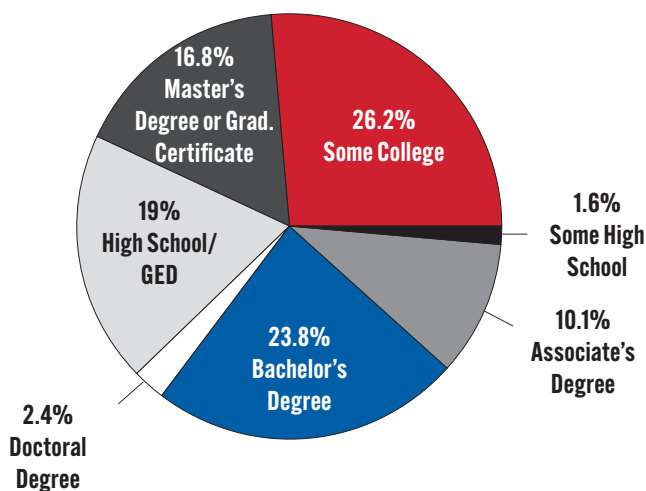
This year marks a major shift for the EPSCoR team, as the current funding expires in June. Since the program was retired at NSF, our office will transition to support science and technology efforts more broadly. We will focus heavily on sustaining the legacy of DART, and of Arkansas EPSCoR, and continue to support efforts to grow innovation capacity with our partners in academia, government, and industry.

GROW WITH GOOGLE APPLICANTS: CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS



Employment Status	Count
Full-Time	1,385
Part-Time	206
Unemployed	457
Self-Employed	189
Other/Retired	60

GROW WITH GOOGLE APPLICANTS: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED



Highest Level of Education Completed	Count
Some High School	36
High School/GED	437
Some College	602
Associate's	233
Bachelor's	546
Master's or Graduate Certificate	387
Doctoral	56

INFORMATICS

The Informatics Division plays a critical role in advancing agency-wide efficiency and data-driven decision-making at the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC). Over the past year, the division has led the strategic development, implementation, and optimization of Salesforce tools, resulting in significant operational improvements across the agency.

All AEDC divisions have now transitioned key internal processes to Salesforce, enabling real-time monitoring of programs and activities through customized reports and dashboards. These tools provide division and agency leadership with clear visibility into key performance indicators (KPIs), support effective performance management, and encourage cross-divisional collaboration on strategic initiatives that advance AEDC's mission.

During the year, several divisions expanded their use of Salesforce to modernize program delivery and reporting. The Grants Division launched digital forms to streamline grant reporting. The Office of Skills Development implemented a customized Salesforce solution to manage the full lifecycle of OSD grants. Rural Services successfully launched the Community Assistance Grant program using Salesforce to support the award of nearly \$16 million to communities across the state.

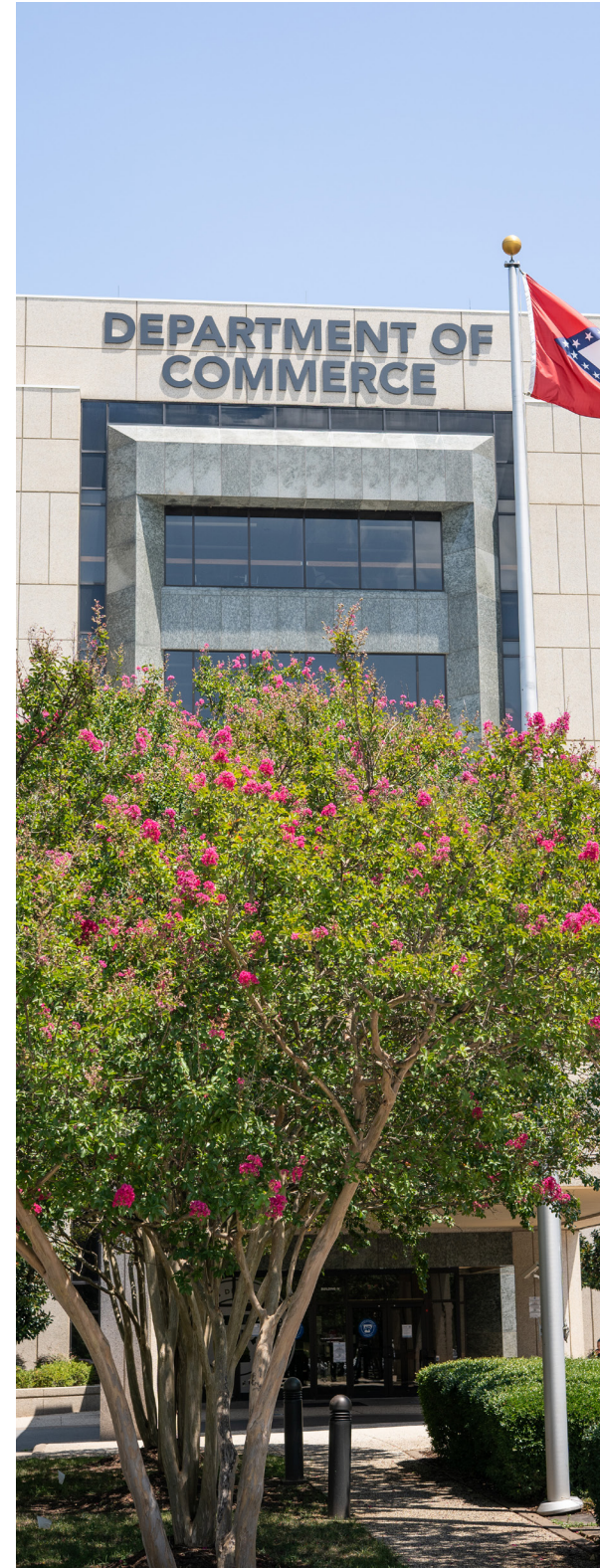
Looking ahead, the Informatics Division is partnering with the Department of Workforce Services to integrate workforce data into AEDC's reporting and analytics tools, further strengthening statewide economic insights. The division is also collaborating with the Business Development team to develop more proactive, data-informed approaches to trade shows and prospect engagement. Additional initiatives underway include enhancements to the Marketing Division's online request and project management processes, as well as improvements to the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development Division's Salesforce-based grant management system to better support award tracking and reporting requirements.

“

The success of the Informatics Division isn't just about the technology we implement, but how that technology empowers each division of AEDC. We are committed to building the digital infrastructure that breaks down silos and fosters the cross-divisional collaboration necessary to be more responsive and impactful for Arkansas communities.

Andy Capel, *Director, Informatics*

”





Arkansas' film and television industry continued its upward trajectory in 2025, building on sustained growth and increased national visibility. With its diverse landscapes, competitive incentives, and growing base of experienced crew and production services, the state has become an increasingly attractive destination for filmmakers.

Among the year's notable productions were:

- **Send a Scare**, directed by Josh Trank and starring Victoria Justice and Robbie Amell. The production filmed on location in Bentonville, utilizing the city's vibrant setting to bring the project to life while contributing to the local economy and creative community.
- **Turnbuckle**, an ambitious film shot in and around Hot Springs, that featured an ensemble cast including Emile Hirsch, Kate Beckinsale, Terrence Howard, Cara Delevingne, and James Franco. The film's presence further highlighted Arkansas as a versatile filming destination capable of supporting major productions.
- **Best Pancakes in the County**, starring Nicolas Cage, Justin Long, and Shelley Hennig, filmed in west Little Rock.



Four separate producing teams returned to Arkansas in 2025 to shoot additional projects, underscoring the value of strong relationships and positive experiences. Looking ahead to 2026, there is more reason for optimism as several productions are preparing to film across the state thanks to the state's supportive environment.



The movie production for Turnbuckle used locations around the Hot Springs area, highlighting the region's visual appeal. The photos above were taken from the Turnbuckle set.



It is no exaggeration to say that the success of our production in Arkansas was in large part due to the efforts of Christopher Crane. He embodies precisely what a film commissioner should be: a tireless advocate for the state, a trusted resource for filmmakers, and a professional who understands both the artistry and the logistics that drive our industry.

Sean McEwen,

Writer, Director, and Producer of Turnbuckle

MILITARY AFFAIRS

The F-35 Foreign Military Sales Mission at Ebbing Air National Guard Base graduated their first Polish Air Force students in May of 2025. Since then, they have graduated numerous F-35 aircrew and instructor pilots, with the number of aircraft doubling from four to 10. An “Enhanced Use Lease” Study was opened for both Pine Bluff Arsenal and Fort Chaffee. An Industry Day was held at Pine Bluff Arsenal on Nov. 12, and the U.S. Army, State of Arkansas, and Hanwha Defense USA are working together to begin a project on Army property for the first time in the state. Arkansas saw numerous ribbon cuttings for new Defense Industrial Base partners, including SWARM, RTX “Iron Dome,” and Lockheed, celebrating the 750th High Mobility Artillery Rocket System being produced for the U.S. and its international partners.

The Military Affairs Division will continue to grow the F-35 mission by adding Finland and Germany training in early 2026 and receiving the first element of the Royal Singaporean Air Force, which is permanently moving operations from Luke AFB in Arizona to Ebbing ANG Base in Fort Smith. The division will also support the new Army National Guard Aviation Battalion in Springdale and will continue to work with the University of Arkansas School of Logistics to further understand and test new opportunities in “Contested Logistics.”



Arkansas is the backbone of America's Arsenal, providing direct support to the nation and our allies through innovation and production in the defense sector, as well as the enormous strides in training our NATO and international partners in the F-35 and the C-130J. We continue to certify National Guard forces before going into combat and contested areas, as well as taking the lead on Counter-Small UAS authorities and processes to protect our state's resources, critical infrastructure, as well as our soldiers and airmen who are critical to the country's national security at home and abroad.

Chip Brown,
Director, Military Affairs



LOOKING BACK AT 2025



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