



# Tactical Advancement Plan

Mississippi County, Arkansas  
January 2020



Mississippi  
County  
ARKANSAS  
*Our Greatest Industry is Hard Work*



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## INTRODUCTION

The Great River Economic Development Foundation (GREDF) was formed in 2002 to provide cohesive economic development for Mississippi County, Arkansas. Led by Clif Chitwood, President, GREDF is the lead organization for business recruitment and expansion in Mississippi County. They also partner extensively with Arkansas Northeastern College for workforce development initiatives and serve as the steward of incentive qualifications and award, funded by a county-wide ½ cent sales tax for economic development.

## Planning Process

Historically, Mississippi County has been through numerous ineffective strategic planning efforts that yielded big documents detailing challenges and laying out unrealistic work beyond the capabilities of organizations and the good-intentioned people of Mississippi County. GREDF is intentionally naming this a Tactical Advancement Plan to reinforce the objective of this planning process for a realistic, measurable, action-based plan.

Through a competitive proposal process, GREDF selected and the Planning & Development Committee of the Mississippi County Quorum Court approved contracting with TadZo LLC for this planning project.

The TadZo Team offered professional guidance through a 3-phase planning process:

### PHASE I – INSIGHTS

#### *What is the current situation in Mississippi County?*

Technical research and analysis of Mississippi County's economic base and assets to support economic growth, as a means to educate valuable stakeholders on the current situation. A separate research document, entitled "Insights of Mississippi County" encompasses data and analysis of Mississippi County's Economic Base, Mississippi County's Economic Prosperity Indicators, assessment of key business factors, summary of an employer focus group and organizational review. Case studies were also provided to inspire thinking for tactical approaches to improve Mississippi County's situation and competitiveness for business growth as well as attracting and retaining residents.

### PHASE II – IMAGINATION

#### *What do you want to achieve together?*

The research was utilized to spur discussions in actively seeking input from stakeholders for Mississippi County's economic prosperity. Eighty-one participants were involved in 13 work sessions to discuss and define priority work for this planning, including business leaders, elected officials, community leaders, and economic development partners.

### PHASE III – ACTION

#### *How is the plan developed for effective execution of priority work?*

The 12 tactical initiatives of this plan were built by working groups for each initiative. Team Leads volunteered for each Tactical Initiative and are already advancing these important initiatives forward.

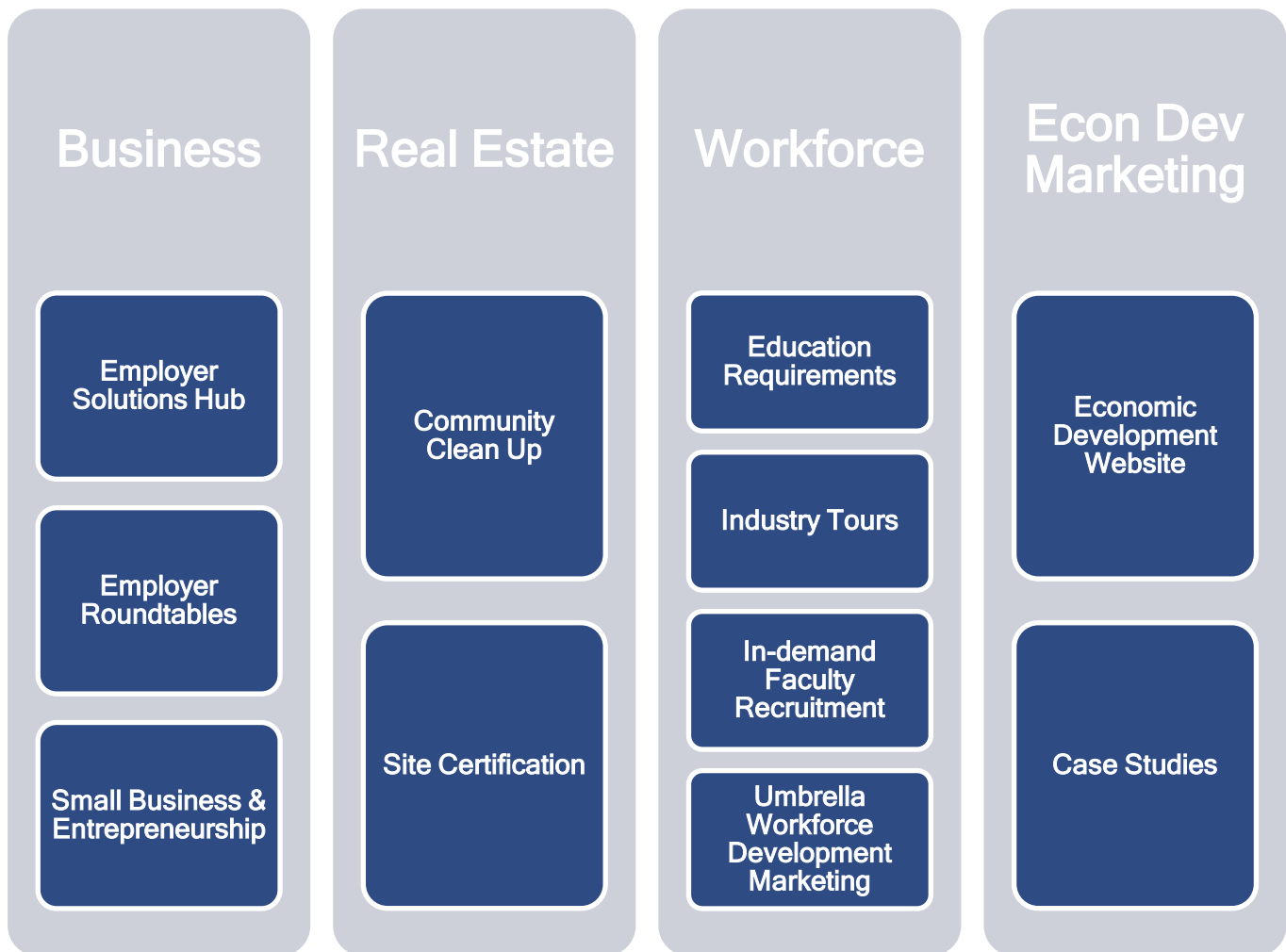
## Purpose of the Plan

This Tactical Advancement Plan is important work to bring life and lives back to Mississippi County. Economic and business growth continues to be important; however, the purpose of this plan broadens to intentionally develop our county as a place where those who work in our county's businesses want to live and raise their families.

It is important to call attention to the fact that this broadened purpose is a big shift from GREDF's previous focus solely on job creation. Therefore, successful pursuit of this plan's purpose requires many partners to own the work it will take to advance Mississippi County. This plan should not be considered a GREDF Plan, but instead a true tactical plan to advance Mississippi County's attributes for all.

## Plan Overview

In pursuit of the Tactical Advancement Plan's purpose, this plan encompasses 11 Tactical Initiatives, organized into four categories:



# TACTICAL INITIATIVES

This section of the Tactical Advancement Plan details the actions for implementation of this plan.

## 1. Business

The business-specific initiatives include:

- Employer Solutions Hub
- Employer Roundtables
- Small Manufacturer Development
- Small Business & Retail Development

### 1.1. Employer Solutions Hub

#### GOAL – EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS HUB

Create a manufacturers' group composed of large Mississippi County employers to enhance outreach with employers and embrace shared responsibility for solutions.

#### WHY IMPORTANT – EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS HUB

With most of the management for Mississippi County large businesses residing outside of this county, there is an increasing disconnect between our employers and communities. Recognition of this disconnect provides for opportunities to develop closer partnerships for real solutions. The only way real solutions will be devised, resourced and implemented is through working together instead of pointing fingers or expecting someone else to solve challenges that are not going away. For everyone to be successful, we must intentionally convert seeking solutions from “Ya’ll” to working as “We”.

#### TEAM LEADS – EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS HUB

- Judge John Alan Nelson, Mississippi County
- Clif Chitwood, Great River Economic Development Foundation

#### ACTION STEPS – EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS HUB

1. Define messaging: Clear purpose for meeting with employers.

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2. One-on-one local employer meetings. Record meeting discovery in Contact Relationship Management database (CRM).

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3. Schedule external HQ employer meetings.

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4. One-on-one employer meetings. External Headquarters. Record meeting discovery in CRM.

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5. Summarize findings from meetings (PowerPoint and/or WordCloud results).

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6. Ask for resources: Interest in group. Where they would like to get involved.

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7. Build coalitions of local employers around priority issues.

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### METRICS – EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS HUB

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of meetings with local employers	20				
Number of corporate headquarter meetings	2				
Level of investment in solutions	5				



## 1.2 Employer Roundtables

### GOAL – EMPLOYER ROUNDTABLES

Host high-value technical assistance and networking meetings for local employers on a quarterly basis.

### WHY IMPORTANT – EMPLOYER ROUNDTABLES

The most sustainable job growth comes from existing employers; it is far less frequent to recruit a business. The International Economic Development Council credits over 75% of job growth from existing employers. Providing information of value on topics identified by employers and a venue for sharing concerns helps employers to navigate complex and constant changes. This is a fundamental service of GREDF.

### TEAM LEAD – EMPLOYER ROUNDTABLES

- Tamika Jenkins, Great River Economic Development Foundation

### ACTION STEPS – EMPLOYER ROUNDTABLES

1. Survey employers for best time/day of week, potential topics of interest.

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2. Send out "Save the Date" invitations for entire year.

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3. Organize employer working group to review survey results and identify topics.

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4. Invite speakers.

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5. Create invitation with RSVP for quarterly event; email and/or mail out.

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6. Order food/beverage based on RSVP.

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7. Survey participants at end of each roundtable event for feedback and topic ideas.

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### METRICS – EMPLOYER ROUNDTABLES

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of participants	75				
Survey rating of events					

## 1.3 Small Business & Entrepreneurship

### GOAL – SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Develop a new entrepreneurship program to serve small manufacturers and other entrepreneurs to develop their business in Mississippi County.

### WHY IMPORTANT – SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Although the Great River Economic Development Foundation has traditionally only focused on large, basic industries – mainly manufacturing – there is increasing need to fill older, empty buildings in our communities. Small manufacturing operations, especially those with unique production and craftsmanship, not only diversify our economic base, they would establish interesting businesses of "Made in Mississippi County" products.

After decades of dying downtowns, there is tremendous interest to reverse the downward spiral and bring Mississippi County towns back to life. Helping small manufacturers and other entrepreneurs find buildings in our empty downtowns would create new energy and interest in locally produced goods, while fostering sense of place in our communities. Not only is this work important to create a sense of community, a place for connections, and enhance our lifestyle, it helps to grow our tax base which is critical to health of the services our communities can provide for residents and businesses.

### TEAM LEADS – SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Clif Chitwood, Great River Economic Development Foundation

Invite to participate:

- Small Business Development Center
- Bankers: Tech Business Plans, SBA Loans
- Realtors
- Landowners downtown
- County Assessor
- City Managers throughout the county
- Blytheville and Osceola Chambers of Commerce
- Blytheville and Osceola MainStreet organizations
- County government facilities manager
- Lenore Trammel
- Justin Cissell

## ACTION STEPS – SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

1. Create position description for new entrepreneurship position at the Great River Economic Development Foundation.

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2. Fund position.

---
3. Hire entrepreneurship staff person to run program.

---
4. Training for new entrepreneurship staff person (i.e. Kauffman Foundation, IEDC).

---
5. Develop target list of types of business and industries for this program.

---
6. Organize hub of business and entrepreneurship resources.

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7. Formalize incentive policy for small manufacturers.

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8. Inventory buildings and facilities capable to house small manufacturing operations. Confirm zoning.

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9. Conduct a market study of best fit buildings so that small manufacturers are informed of realistic market rates for leases.

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10. Pursue and organize facade improvement resources and other real estate improvement resources.

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11. Organize resources, related information, and building inventory on new website (Tactical Initiative 4.1).

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12. Move GREDF Office to downtown building with staff offices and meeting space in back and store front with place to display products of local businesses. This move is a commitment to our downtowns and purposely done to raise the profile of GREDF services for businesses. Potentially purchase building and upgrade for co-working and incubator space for all kinds of entrepreneurs, e.g. The Renasant Center for Ideas in Tupelo, MS  
<https://www.cdfms.org/ed/small-business-development#.XhSnIMDtyU>

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13. Define existing pipeline of local small manufacturers – meet with these leads and document needs in Contact Relationship Management database. Link to resources.

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14. Actively conduct outreach via networking and presentations on available services/resources.

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15. Establish and support mentoring program for entrepreneurs.

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16. Create a flag or signage program for small manufacturers that establish facilities in downtowns.

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17. Feature these entrepreneurs on new GREDF website.

---
18. Option: transform the Dixon Building into incubator when County Government moves into new County Building in Blytheville.

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**METRICS – SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of businesses located/started-up					
Total business – capital investment					
Total business – jobs created					
Business Success/Survival Rate					
Small manufacturers – sales growth					
Increase in downtown property values					
Number of entrepreneurs helped					
Number of outreach events					

## 2. Real Estate

The real estate initiatives include:

- Community Clean up
- Site Certification

### 2.1 Community Clean Up

#### GOAL – COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

Revitalize the appearance of our communities, including housing stock.

#### WHY IMPORTANT – COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

The population of all our communities in Mississippi County is dwindling while the industries we recruit to Mississippi County hire people who can easily live outside of our county. We are competing for residents to “choose” our communities as the place they want to live and raise their families. Community cleanup is very important to getting people to choose to live in our communities. Declining housing values from dilapidated and abandoned housing stock hinder investment in our communities. We must do this work as the degradation will only get worse without attention.

#### TEAM LEADS – COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

- Mayor Wilson, City of Osceola
- Mayor Sanders, City of Blytheville

#### ACTION STEPS – COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

1. Organize efforts via quarterly county-wide Mayors' Council.

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2. Inventory blighted properties using County Tax Assessors website.

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3. Landowner communications.

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4. Pool and share technical resources (cities/county).

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5. Identify non-profit (i.e. GREDF) for handling donations.

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6. Fund non-profit 501(c) 3 via ask of industry or grants. Money flows to Mississippi County to establish tipping fee credits. Possibly link to Tactical Initiative 1.1 Employer Solutions Hub.

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7. Properties condemned by corresponding city. Substandard properties donated to Land Banks/CDC.

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8. Debris removal.

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9. Maintenance of properties.

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10. Sell properties at auction.

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11. Properties not sold at auction, connect to City Land Banks.

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12. Rehab houses, if possible.

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**METRICS – COMMUNITY CLEAN UP**

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of properties cleaned up	1,000	250	250	250	250
Number of houses rehabbed	500	500	250	250	250
Number of pounds dumped	1,000 tons	1,000 tons	500 tons	500 tons	500 tons
Increase in housing values	5%	5%	2%	2%	2%
Number of new houses/buildings	100	50	50	50	50
Number of new building permits	600	550	300	300	300
Population increase	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Number of new customers for city services	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%

## 2.2 Site Certification

### GOAL – SITE CERTIFICATION

Certify at least two industrial sites through the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas ONSite Certified program.

### WHY IMPORTANT – SITE CERTIFICATION

A third-party verified certified site presents Mississippi County with a favorable advantage to winning site selection projects because the verification speeds up the project development process, saving companies money and reducing the inherent risk of greenfield sites. We will be able to show these sites with more confidence that Mississippi County is ready. Arkansas Department of Commerce also markets certified sites on a special state-wide database. Additionally, a certified site is one of the criteria for the state’s Competitive Communities Initiative.

### TEAM LEAD – SITE CERTIFICATION

- Tamika Jenkins, Great River Economic Development Foundation

### ACTION STEPS – SITE CERTIFICATION

1. Determine sites to certify.

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2. Secure options for sites to pursue for certification.

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3. Basic data gathering and documentation.

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4. Commission Phase I Environmental Study.

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5. Commission Wetlands Study.

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6. Commission Cultural Study.

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7. Commission Endangered Species Study.

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8. Facilitate stormwater runoff plan.

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9. Submit certified site application.

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10. Third-party verification of site application.

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11. Upload site information to GREDF website.

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12. Revise GREDF website with certification approval.

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13. Upload site information to state certified sites website.

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### METRICS – SITE CERTIFICATION

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of approved Certified Sites	2				

## 3. Workforce Pipeline

The workforce pipeline initiatives include:

- Education Requirements
- Industry Tours
- In-demand Faculty Recruitment
- Umbrella Workforce Development Marketing

### 3.1 Education Requirements

#### GOAL – EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

All school districts standardize "soft skills" curriculum for Mississippi County K-12 schools plus the Arkansas Northeastern College as a core competency. Local school districts adopt requirement for 1 elective to be a Career Tech Education (CTE) course.

#### WHY IMPORTANT – EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Employers loudly express demand for candidates with fundamental soft skills for employability. By integrating more information and training for soft skills into lower grades, students are able to build competencies and better habits for a lifetime. CTE courses are a way to teach soft skills and also expose students and their parents to career opportunities they may otherwise not encounter due to poor perceptions or simply different paths. Highschool is a venue for exposure to opportunities. With required exposure to career opportunities, students may uncover interest in work and studies in Mississippi County, leading to retention of our talented youth.

#### TEAM LEAD – EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

- Sherri Bennett, Arkansas Northeastern College
- Michelle Bennett, Arkansas Northeastern College

Invite to participate:

- Public School Administrators and staff
- ANC faculty and staff
- Industry representative

#### ACTION STEPS – EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Design strategic goal for system development.

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2. Define Soft Skills.

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3. Identify and build an assessment.

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4. Identify or build modular a curriculum for chunking delivery in classes that are live, online, or hybrid.

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5. Develop integration plan.

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6. Deliver the pilot.

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7. Invite school superintendents to discuss workforce preparedness issues brought forward by stakeholders and identify solutions.

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8. Develop strategic public school goal for county-wide systemic impact.

---

9. Form a team to lead public school efforts.

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**METRICS – EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Defined Skills & Assessment Tool	X				
Curriculum Created & Implemented	X				

## 3.2 Industry Tours

### GOAL – INDUSTRY TOURS

Organize tours inside Mississippi County industries for students, parents and teachers/career advisors.

### WHY IMPORTANT – INDUSTRY TOURS

Skilled labor needs are expanding not only globally, but right here in Mississippi County. Our students could be very successful members of the Mississippi County workforce and have no need to leave our county for world-class employment and career development. However, if students are not exposed to opportunities here in Mississippi County, they may leave to pursue jobs and careers elsewhere. Parents may not be aware, nor fully informed, of the tremendous career opportunities present in Mississippi County because major industry is spread far and wide across our county. Parents and other influencers for students' future decisions may have negative perceptions of manufacturing, which are likely inaccurate. Exposure through tours of in-operation, world-class facilities can introduce students to career paths of interest that connect to quality jobs in manufacturing in Mississippi County.

### TEAM LEAD – INDUSTRY TOURS

- Willie D. Williams, Jr., Arkansas Northeastern College

### ACTION STEPS – INDUSTRY TOURS

1. Reach out to major employers to request hosting student/parent/teacher tours.

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2. Document safety requirements for each facility and company.

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3. Assemble ANC and high school contacts to plan for tours – what students are involved, how to invite parents, when are tours offered, frequency, transportation.

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4. Develop surveys for tour participants – before tour and after tour – to measure change in perception and gather intelligence on areas of interest and follow up activities for each student.

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5. Schedule tours.

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6. Participants must complete pre-tour survey before registration is approved for tour.

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7. Secure parental permission.

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8. Communicate dress code requirements.

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9. Orientation for tour behavior and safety rules.

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10. Host tour.

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11. Post-tour survey completed on bus or immediately in classroom once returning to school.

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12. Analyze pre and post-tour surveys to document changes in perceptions.

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13. Send thank you to host company.

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14. Debrief and feedback by company post-tour to seek ideas for improvement.

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15. Integrate feedback from touring companies and students/parents/teachers into future tour events.

---

### METRICS – INDUSTRY TOURS

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of tours	4				
Number of involved companies	7				
Number of students who participate on tours	13				
Number of parents and community members who participate on tours	2 - 4				
Number of teachers/career advisors who participate on tours	2				
Change in perceptions (difference between pre and post tour survey)					
Number of students (who toured) interested in ANC internship	10				
Number of students (who toured) interested in related post-secondary training for industry skills	80%				

### 3.3 In-Demand Faculty Recruitment/Development

#### GOAL – IN-DEMAND FACULTY RECRUITMENT/DEVELOPMENT

Recruit and train faculty to teach high demand skills in corresponding programs at Arkansas Northeastern College.

#### WHY IMPORTANT – IN-DEMAND FACULTY RECRUITMENT/DEVELOPMENT

Unbelievable employment opportunities exist in Mississippi County for skilled workers. However, those interested in increasing skills through training may find it difficult to get the training they want or need because there are limited instructors to teach in-demand skills.

#### TEAM LEADS – IN-DEMAND FACULTY RECRUITMENT/DEVELOPMENT

- Gene Bennett, Arkansas Northeastern College
- Randy Henderson, NUCOR

#### ACTION STEPS – IN-DEMAND FACULTY RECRUITMENT/DEVELOPMENT

1. Inventory the high demand skills required for employment at Mississippi County employers.

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2. Identify gaps for instructors to meet in-demand skills training.

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3. Investigate why gaps exist – may be different reasons for different skills/industries.

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4. Inquire with local employers as to potential instructor solutions – submit names, share workers as instructors, contribute to increase salaries so that instructors paid on par with industry in-demand job, etc.

---

5. Reach out to targeted instructors; recruitment or send existing identified instructors for skills acquisition.

---

6. Regularly inventory high demand skills and compare to instructor capacity.

---

#### METRICS – IN-DEMAND RECRUITMENT/DEVELOPMENT

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of recruited/developed instructors					
Updating of high demand skills need					

## 3.4 Umbrella Workforce Development Marketing

### GOAL – UMBRELLA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MARKETING

Develop and implement a cohesive marketing message and image for marketing workforce development programs and resources.

### WHY IMPORTANT – UMBRELLA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MARKETING

Abundant workforce development programs and resources are available in Mississippi County. Yet, programs and resources may be underutilized. There is opportunity for better promotion and marketing of these programs and resources so that our residents utilize these programs and resources, resulting in increased access to better jobs that could transform their life and the wellbeing of their families.

### TEAM LEADS – UMBRELLA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MARKETING

- Stacey Walker, Arkansas Northeastern College
- Stacy Travis, City of Osceola
- Tamika Jenkins, Great River Economic Development Foundation

### ACTION STEPS – UMBRELLA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MARKETING

1. Assemble a core working group of workforce development service providers to co-create the umbrella marketing effort.

---

2. Inventory marketing materials and channels to define what all providers are doing to reach target audiences.

---

3. Analyze marketing for common marketing messages. Investigate which messages are working the best.

---

4. Survey ANC students and other workforce development program participants as to how they found out about resource and what was compelling message that inspired them to sign up/take action.

---

5. Analyze results for common themes.

---

6. Define key message (no more than 3) that apply across all resources in a compelling way.

---

7. Test potential messages with sample audiences.

---

8. Agree on key message platform among workforce development partners.

---

9. Engage graphic artist/branding firm to design logo (and guidelines for use) that embodies key message platform.

---

10. Develop workforce development portal webpage that presents umbrella marketing messages and branding, organizing links to all resources with one URL.

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11. Partner with all service providers to market new website consistently with key marketing messages. Dovetail their offerings with this brand.

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### METRICS – UMBRELLA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MARKETING

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Key message platform developed and shared among partners					
Website analytics					

## 4. Economic Development Marketing

The marketing initiatives include:

- Economic Development Website
- Case Studies

### 4.1 Economic Development Website

#### GOAL – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEBSITE

Create and maintain a modern economic development website for the Great River Economic Development Foundation (GREDF) to market Mississippi County and its resources for recruiting external companies, conducting effective outreach with entrepreneurs and communicating effectively with existing employers.

#### WHY IMPORTANT – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEBSITE

GREDF has been marketing with three websites ([www.misscoeda.com](http://www.misscoeda.com), [www.mscounty.com](http://www.mscounty.com), [www.greatriversupersite.com](http://www.greatriversupersite.com)), all of which are lacking current information. Additionally, GREDF staff emails do not carry the official website URL thus presenting an unprofessional impression of the organization, as if operated by volunteers and not official staff with authorized email addresses. Fundamentally, a website is the online “front door” for economic development marketing and frequently is the source of first impressions. The expectations of site selectors, global businesses and even small entrepreneurs is up-to-date, clear information located in a consistent place that is organized by audience need.

GREDF has many audiences for their work and communications (e.g. site selectors, external prospective companies, local companies, state and local economic development partners, job seekers or new hires interested in moving to Mississippi County, stakeholders and community at-large). A modern website and content management system will enable easy and frequent updates.

GREDF has been operating under the Mississippi County Arkansas Economic Development Area brand, instead of the organization's name, for decades. A consistent brand strategy needs to be employed with the new website to enhance uniform marketing and communications to reduce confusion.

#### TEAM LEAD – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEBSITE

- Clif Chitwood, Great River Economic Development Foundation

#### ACTION STEPS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEBSITE

1. Methodically develop message platform with input about Mississippi County's perceptions from site selectors, AEDC and local employers.

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2. Define consistent naming and tag line.

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3. Development of graphic brand image and brand guidelines (font, colors and design standards) that embodies the message platform.

---

4. Aligned to message platform and brand, define and purchase new URL for website.

---

5. Set up email accounts for GREDF staff with new URL addresses.

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6. Set up (or change) social media accounts to align to new brand and consistent naming.

---

7. Solicit proposals, examples and demonstrations with economic development website vendors.

---

8. Select website vendor.

---

9. Develop site map.

---

10. Engage with website vendor on design. Honor new brand guidelines.

---

11. Inventory all data to be gathered for completing website content.

---

12. Gather data and information for new website. Document when updated data becomes available.

---

13. Train on content management system.

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14. Populate website with data and information, including copy for website text.

---

15. Define schedule for regular updates of data and information.

---

16. Hire part time staff to manage website and social media.

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17. Create topic schedule for blog articles as a means to address gap in local media outlets covering positive economic development stories. Define who writes blogs and calendar posts.

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18. Design regularly calendared social media campaign to drive traffic to website.

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### METRICS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEBSITE

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Completed new message platform					
New brand & brand guidelines					
New website designed, populated and launched					
Website analytics					
Social media hits/shares					



## 4.2 Case Studies

### GOAL – CASE STUDIES

Develop case studies to feature companies as proof points of Mississippi County's capabilities in marketing.

### WHY IMPORTANT – CASE STUDIES

The most compelling marketing features real people sharing their stories and experiences. Not only is this tactic helpful for external business recruitment, it is an outstanding way to distinguish existing employers.

### TEAM LEAD – CASE STUDIES

- Tamika Jenkins, Great River Economic Development Foundation

### ACTION STEPS – CASE STUDIES

1. Define list of companies by topic (i.e. service provided, or resource utilized)

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2. Develop interview questions for company representative(s).

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3. Request interview with respective company representative(s).

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4. Develop schedule for interviews and video production.

---

5. Explore utilizing ANC students to film and edit interviews. Otherwise hire video professional or use partner resource.

---

6. Shoot videos.

---

7. Invite company representatives to approve videos or provide any feedback for revisions.

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8. Post on GREDF website on pages related to case study topic(s).

---

9. Share on social media and other outlets.

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### METRICS – CASE STUDIES

FACTORS FOR MEASUREMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of videos produced and posted to website					
Number of companies involved					
Social media analytics					

# IMPLEMENTATION FOR TACTICAL ADVANCEMENT

This section of the Mississippi County Tactical Advancement Plan lays out critical steps for initiating implementation and continual advancement to stay on track to success. This section includes:

- Near-term Operational Steps
- Continual Advancement with Team Leads
- Communications

Resources to support effective implementation and tracking are provided in the appendices:

- Mississippi County Tactical Advancement Plan Implementation Timeline
- Mississippi County Tactical Advancement Plan Budget
- Position Descriptions
- Implementation Resource List
- Team Leads 1-page Update Report Template

## 1. Near-term Operation Steps

The Tactical Initiatives in this plan expand GREDF programming beyond industry recruitment and expansion. To be successful in bringing life and lives back to Mississippi County, additional work and investment is necessary to recruit people, enhance our communities to attract and retain workers, and stimulate wealth creation through entrepreneurship programming. GREDF has been successful with industry locations; yet Mississippi County is losing population because no one is paying attention to placemaking and attracting workers to live inside the county. One of Mississippi County's strengths for recruiting industry is its access and connectedness in the Mississippi Delta. Industry can draw labor from a large geographic labor shed spanning across several states. This means that workers do not have to live in Mississippi County to work in Mississippi County. So, it is a vital choice to do something more than what GREDF has been doing. If the decision is to continue the course of current programming only, Mississippi County will continue to lose population, income and all the lifestyle amenities that income supports in a community.

Implementation of this *entire plan* is crucial to overcome challenges. Successful implementation requires *building capacity* and organizing accordingly to accommodate this important work. The following near-term operation steps lay out work to organize and gear up for effective implementation:

- Confirm or update all budget estimates and organize with full GREDF operational budget.
- For elements of the Tactical Advancement Plan under the responsibility of GREDF, assign implementation responsibilities for corresponding staff. This includes hiring a Vice President and upgrading the responsibilities of the GREDF Project Coordinator to a second Vice President to better align compensation with current workload and responsibilities.
- Prepare and approve position descriptions for both Vice President positions.

- Secure resources for hiring and upgrading staff according to position descriptions, including salaries commensurate with six or more years of experience in economic development and training within a career pathway for certified economic developers (CEcD).
- Define approved budget and budget expansion needs (by year).
- Request additional budget resources from Mississippi County Quorum Court. Define an annual contract of metrics to measure accomplishments. First up, fund new GREDF branding and website initiative work.
- Create annual goals/metrics and professional development plan with each staff person. Conduct mid-year check-in and annual performance review.
- Coordinate Kick-off implementation with Team Leads. Schedule full year of regularly-scheduled update meetings (every 3 months) and related communication timeline. Set up Communication tools for Team Leads Updates.

## 2. Continual Advancement with Team Leads

The work of the Tactical Advancement Plan extends beyond the Great River Economic Development Foundation. In fact, Team Leads for each initiative are quite diverse, representing six organizations throughout Mississippi County. Tactical Initiative Teams who are implementing the Plan include an even wider range of representatives and volunteers. Therefore, it is crucial to define specific practices to maintain communication and accountability to keep this important work on track and continually evolving.

### Team Lead Roles

The Team Leads for each Tactical Initiative led the shaping of their respective Tactical Initiative, building ownership of the direction for the work to be completed.

Key roles of Team Leads encompass:

- Assemble volunteers who participated in Tactical Initiative Planning.
- Invite others who may be interested or have relevant technical knowledge for their initiative.
- Initiate and lead implementation by team – *this does not mean do all the work.*
- Document progress and accomplishments from implementation. Share updates with the other Team Leads.
- Review and assess results, adjusting as pertinent to changing conditions and discovery from implementation.
- Ask for information and help from other Team Leads if challenges or questions emerge. Leverage and contribute to other, interrelated Tactical Initiatives in the Plan.
- Celebrate accomplishments along the way.

### Updating on Accomplishments

One of the most important contributors to successful implementation is simply getting into action. When Team Leads share progress on their work it energizes others as well as establishes shared responsibility for accountable implementation.

## REGULAR PROCESS

Team Leads agreed up monthly reporting, involving three different methods over a 3-month cycle to yield quarterly meetings with updates in between via conference call and a 1-page report. This process provides for monthly updates with one in-person meeting per quarter with all Team Leads.

## TOOLS FOR REPORTING

To support effective updating on accomplishments, the following tools are needed:

- Implementation Timeline, including all tactics for each team.
- Pre-scheduled calendar of monthly deadlines.
- Conference call system.
- Template for 1-Page Team Leads Update Report.
- GREDF house Google Docs folder for Team Leads Updates and related Tactical Advancement Plan materials.

## 3. Communications

Doing the work of the plan is not enough for sustained support. It is vital to communicate what we plan to do, what we are doing, and what we accomplish. The benefit of quality communications enhances positive support of the work as well as provides positive messaging to increase pride in Mississippi County.

### Audiences

The work of this Plan is valuable to a wide range of audiences in Mississippi County:

- Residents
- Businesses – small and large
- Local elected officials
- Clergy
- Schools
- Regional media outlets

### Content

It is important to share the work we are doing to keep these audiences informed, with the aim to transform conversation to positive messages about Mississippi County. Priority content includes:

- Why we are doing this work of the Tactical Advancement Plan.
- How others can become involved.
- Accomplishments – metrics and progress to goals.



## Media

A variety of diverse media will enable broad distribution of information, leveraging the Tactical Initiative 4.1. Economic Development Website as a place to house updates to be shared on social media.

- New GREDF website, including a page for the plan and updates.
- Social media, focused on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram.
- Videos.

## ARKANSAS COMPETITIVE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

An additional objective of the Tactical Advancement Planning Project was to evaluate and organize the Great River Economic Development Foundation for the Arkansas Competitive Communities designation. This section of the Tactical Advancement Plan lays out the tactics necessary to submit a completed evaluation for the Competitive Communities Initiative.

### GOAL – ARKANSAS COMPETITIVE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

Earn recognition of the Great River Economic Development Foundation as a designated Arkansas Competitive Communities organization.

### WHY IMPORTANT - ARKANSAS COMPETITIVE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC), in partnership with utilities, developed the Competitive Communities Initiative (CCI) to help ensure communities and economic development organizations (EDO) are fully prepared to compete for jobs and investment.

### ACTION STEPS - ARKANSAS COMPETITIVE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

1. Review evaluation form for Competitive Communities Initiative.

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  2. Track completion of relevant work of the Tactical Advancement Plan necessary for CCI recognition.

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  3. Initiate work to prepare and complete gaps identified in the "need" column.
    - a. Schedule annual Board training and education on economic development.
    - b. Prepare annual professional development plan for each GREDF staff member.
    - c. Although there are marketing initiatives in the Tactical Advancement Plan, a comprehensive marketing strategy with annual calendar of marketing activities by target audience is specifically needed.
    - d. Update GREDF mission statement.
    - e. Complete a Target Industry Study.
    - f. Complete Local Wage and Benefits Survey.
    - g. Identify County's key industry clusters and location quotients.
    - h. Identify active unions and number and percentage of unionized workers.
    - i. Create 30- and 60- minute drive time maps.
    - j. Submit and earn approval for at least one certified site.
    - k. Prepare marketing strategy for sites/buildings.
-

## GREDF Status for CCI Evaluation

Competitive Communities Requirements	In Place	Tactical Advancement Plan Implementation	Need
<b>Economic Development Organization</b>			
Senior paid, dedicated staff	X		
Decision/policy-making Board	X		
Board by-laws	X		
Board - annual training and education			X
Staff - annual training and education			X
Well maintained and informative website		Tactical Initiative 4.1	
Active, comprehensive marketing strategy		(marketing elements in) Tactical Initiatives 1.2, 1.3, 4.1 & 4.2	X
Mission Statement	X		X update
Strategic Plan		X	
Target Industry Study (completed since 2016)			X
BRE Program		Tactical Initiatives 1.1 & 1.2	
Local Wage and Benefits Study (completed since 2016)			X
<b>Economic Development Funding</b>			
Dedicated funding stream for economic development	X		
Money dedicated to project incentives	X		
Money dedicated to infrastructure development for economic development projects	X		
Money dedicated to land acquisition and/or site development for economic development projects	X		
Funding reserves for economic development projects	X		
<b>Workforce Narrative</b>			
5-year labor profile		Tactical Initiative 4.1	
Top 10 occupational codes and data		Tactical Initiative 4.1	
Workforce certification tools (WAGE, ACT/CRC)	X		
Data 2-year and 4-year higher education institutions		Tactical Initiative 4.1	
Local customized training program(s)	X		
Facilities to train the workforce for industry	X		
Non-govt employer list and data		Tactical Initiative 4.1	
Key industry clusters and location quotients	X (Economic Base Data)		
Layoffs, closures, expansions data		Tactical Initiative 4.1	
Unionization data		Tactical Initiative 4.1	
30 and 60-minute drive time maps			X
<b>Product Readiness</b>			
Certified site		Tactical Initiative 2.2	
Certified site controlled by the EDO		Tactical Initiative 2.2	
Marketing strategy for sites/buildings		Tactical Initiative 2.2	X (beyond website posting)
List certified site on Arkansas Site Selection Center		Tactical Initiative 2.2	
Complete building data (min 3 buildings)	X	Tactical Initiative 2.2	
List building(s) on Arkansas Site Selection Center	X		

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Mississippi County Tactical Advancement Plan is a living, active plan developed by an expansive list of leaders from throughout our county.

## MISSISSIPPI COUNTY QUORUM COURT JUSTICES

Judge John Allan Nelson,  
Presiding Officer

Rich Ash

Sylvester Belcher

Neil Burge

Alvin Clay

Fred Fleeman

Joann Henton

Betty Hepler

Molly Houseworth-Jackson

Bill Nelson

Howard Norvel

Michael White

## GREAT RIVER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

Clif Chitwood, President  
Great River Economic Development  
Foundation

Randy Scott, Chairman  
Farmers Bank & Trust Company

Greg Reece, Vice Chairman  
First National Bank of Eastern  
Arkansas

Kenny Noble, Treasurer/Secretary  
Thomas Spade and Noble

Mayor Becton Bell, City of Wilson

Brad Harrison, Mississippi County  
Electric Cooperative

Barrett Harrison, Blytheville Gosnell  
Regional Airport Authority

Lisa John-Adams, Nucor Corporation

Priscilla Johnson, Mississippi County  
Arkansas Economic Opportunity  
Commission

John Logan, Logan Real Estate  
Mayor Rodney Robertson, City of  
Leachville

David Oakes, American Greetings

Micha Pankey, NIBCO

Dr. James Shemwell, Arkansas  
Northeastern College

Gaylon Rogers, TOI Putting Green

Mayor James Sanders, City of  
Blytheville

Mayor Teresa Walker, City of Gosnell

Lenora Trammel, Big River Steel

Mayor Wayne Wagner, City of Manila

Mayor Sally Wilson, City of Osceola

Tamika Jenkins, Great River Economic  
Development staff

## MAYORS

Mayor Becton Bell, City of Wilson

Mayor Lee Charles Brown, Jr., City of  
Luxora

Mayor Captain Bo McCollum, City of  
Etowah

Mayor Rodney Robertson, City of  
Leachville

Mayor David J. Sanders, City of  
Blytheville

Mayor Wayne Wagner, City of Manila

Mayor Teresa Walker, City of Gosnell

Mayor Sally Wilson, City of Osceola



ADDITIONAL WORK SESSION PARTICIPANTS

Daniel Ritchey, Attorney, ANC Board of Trustees	Michael Smith, ANC, The Solutions Group	Stacey Walker, ANC, The Solutions Group
Eddie Perdue, Arkansas Division of Workforce Services	Carolyn Stewart, Arkansas Division of Workforce Services	Gene Bennett, Arkansas Northeastern College
Sherri Bennett, Arkansas Northeastern College	Courtney Fisher, Arkansas Northeastern College	James Odom, Arkansas Northeastern College
June Walters, Arkansas Northeastern College	Willie Williams, Jr., Arkansas Northeastern College	Kaci Bell, Arkansas Northeastern College
Eddie Purdue, Arkansas Workforce Centers	Mike Willyerd, Arkansas Workforce Center	Rich Dedmon, Big River Steel
Bobby Ashley, Blytheville School District	Allison Turner, Blytheville School District	Cody Wyatt, City of Blytheville
Revis Blaylock, City of Manila	George Chipman, City of Manila	Michael Ephlin, City of Osceola
Ray Fulmer, City of Osceola	Stacey Travis, City of Osceola	Edward Richardson, City of Osceola
Jessica Warrenfells, Cypress Coffee House	John Beal, Denso	Justin Cissell, First Commercial Bank
Taylor Lucius, First National Bank of Eastern Arkansas	Sandy Gillespie, Gillespie Insurance Group	Dale Hinson, Hinson Signs
Erin Carrington, Ibis Development	Andrew Carrington, Ibis Development	Toby McClanahan, Mailboxes and Beyond
Jill Hubbard, Main Street Blytheville	Dan Robbins, Manila Industries	Logan Perish, Manila Middle School EAST Program
Christopher Cheadle, Manila Moving Forward	Nickie Bell, Mississippi County Community Foundation	Ray Benson, Mississippi County Extension Office
Steven Savage, Mississippi County Government	PraAwpji Thakor, Mississippi County Primary Care Physicians	Randon Caruthers, Mississippi County Arkansas Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc.
Randy Henderson, Nucor Steel Arkansas	Laraine McClendon, Nucor Steel Arkansas	Justin Palmer, Omnium LLC
Kristain Dedmon, Osceola School Board	Sandra Brand, Osceola Times News	Ammi Tucker, Osceola/South Mississippi County Chamber of Commerce
Samantha Fleeman, S&F Rentals	Marcos Sierra, Sierra Group & Associates	Kanecha Echols, Southern Bancorp
Max Gurley, Southern Bancorp	William King, Southern Bancorp	Christie Patterson, Southern Bancorp
LaRay White, Southern Bancorp	State Representative Monte Hodges, Southern Bancorp	Pamela Williams, Systex Products Arkansas
Tracey Ritchey, Tenaris	Phyllis McClendon, The Haven	Ann Coleman
Grant Oeeter	Wendell Poteet	Iris Poteet
Charlotte Wagner		

## About the Consulting Team

TadZo LLC is a leading economic development strategy firm that employs inclusive business and community engagement techniques through an innovative planning process.



Allison Larsen, CEcD  
Principal  
TadZo LLC  
[www.TadZoConsulting.com](http://www.TadZoConsulting.com)  
(623) 233-5333  
[allison@TadzoConsulting.com](mailto:allison@TadzoConsulting.com)



Sandy Pratt, CEcD FM  
Senior Consultant  
TadZo LLC  
[www.TadZoConsulting.com](http://www.TadZoConsulting.com)  
(405) 735-5456  
[sandy@TadzoConsulting.com](mailto:sandy@TadzoConsulting.com)



Empowering Meaningful Action Together

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