



Regional Sector Reports



Air Transportation

XNA

Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (XNA) has served nearly five million passengers since opening on Nov. 1, 1998. The airport itself employs 58, while overall operations (including the regional jet center and other companies) employ 654 workers.

Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (XNA) has identified three primary goals related to facilities and service needs in planning toward the year 2025 and beyond:

- **Outboard taxiway/alternate landing surface.** Estimated cost: \$45 million.
- **Airport access road.** Estimated cost: \$40 million.
- **Second level concourse.** Estimated cost: \$25 million.
- **Support efforts to obtain a low-cost carrier.** Enplanements have risen from approximately 330,000 in 1999 to nearly 600,000 for 2007; low-cost carriers cite a bare minimum of 500,000 enplanements/year.
- **Funding and execution of the proposed airport access road from Interstate 540.** Estimated cost: \$80 million.
- **Projects of regional significance including the Springdale Northern Bypass, Bella Vista Bypass and Western Beltway are critical for a future airport access road.**

Support from Northwest Arkansas for legislative funding and mechanisms to advance these needs will be critical in the coming years.

RMA

The Rogers Municipal Airport has a number of expansion priorities beginning in 2009 to maintain high service demands for Wal-Mart Aviation and other operations:

- **Runway extension project of 1,500 feet on the north end (taking the runway from 6,000 to 7,500 feet) is of the utmost priority.**
- **Taxiway relocation and strengthening to meet current FAA design standards.**
- **Aircraft apron rehabilitation.**
- **Utility improvements.**

- Hangar construction.
- Rehab of airfield lighting.
- Additional instrument capabilities.
- Land acquisitions.

Cultural Arts

Communication and coordination of cultural and artistic activities in Rogers and Lowell are key points to consider for the future. Although opportunities exist in the community today, greater awareness and promotion are necessary to continue the positive direction of artistic growth in Rogers and Lowell into the future. Changes in funding for formal education in our schools for arts are occurring. Improving arts education in the schools is a key priority to foster the enjoyment of cultural arts in future generations.

Immediate Goals:

- **Use the Vision 2025 Cultural Arts Committee to spearhead a project to build a database of arts opportunities** in northwest Arkansas, focusing on Roger and Lowell, and including Bentonville, Fayetteville, Springdale, Siloam Springs and adjoining areas. Leverage NWACC resources by proposing this as a class or individual project for credit, or as an internship initiative.
- **Work with cities of Rogers and Lowell resources or other designated community organizations to incorporate public art (e.g. sculpture, painting) to enhance the visual attractiveness of the cities.**

Short-term Goals:

- Guided by the Chamber of Commerce, **identify committed and engaged volunteer resources to create a budget proposal to identify required funding allocations for presentation to City, Chamber and the public to initiate a dedicated arts program.** Initially, apply for a grant through the Arkansas Arts Council or a local/national foundation to fund a study of market area interest in the arts, including one-year funding for a director of either an Arts Commission or Mayor's Commission for the Arts.
 - Study and understand the area's market for cultural arts to determine interest, participation and support and best methods of communication, and to predict future trends.
 - Create and deliver a web-survey with follow up in-person focus groups or intercept surveys for research.
 - Define the targeted segments for arts, focusing on children, Millennial generation and Baby Boomer generation to ensure continuity as Traditional generation segment
- **Create a sustaining paid position for the Arts Commission** to coordinate the efforts of the various community arts groups. The position may be titled director of the Arts Council, or Mayor's Commission for the Arts or an independent organization, and it will serve as a liaison to local government and other community organizations.
 - Identify funding sources for director, research studies, and promotion and advertising. Consider including long-term funding request in next bond issue, or

city of Rogers annual budget, or Chamber of Commerce budget via next Capital Campaign, or funds from hotel/motel/restaurant tax, or seek grants funding from local foundations and corporations.

- Construct and support a cooperative effort among the arts organizations (Arts Consortium/Clearinghouse) to coordinate programming, promotion and branding of Rogers as an arts center while each maintains their individual mission.
- Via the Arts Consortium/Clearinghouse, increase public awareness of cultural arts opportunities in Rogers and Lowell through the use of consolidated, consistent and effective promotional methods. Apply creative, effective and efficient advertising techniques to the promotion of arts opportunities to reach consumers where they are, rather than waiting for them to find arts organizations. A cooperative effort among the various Rogers arts organizations will have a greater impact and increased success in reaching a fragmented market.

Long-term Goals:

- **Recognizing the national significance of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, define, build and brand Rogers as a center for community and regional-level cultural arts programming that enhances the quality of life in the region.** Build upon the existing cultural arts core in downtown Rogers of museums, Community Theater and arts-related businesses while advocating for the addition of regional arts facilities in the community.
- **Share the benefits of the arts in education to supplement current curriculum for students.** Use the Arts Consortium to coordinate with the Rogers Public school district as well as private schools to bring Arts to the schools. Arts organizers agree that incorporating the arts into traditional educational subjects, as well as supporting a strong art program in the community's schools will contribute to a student's interest and affinity for the arts when they become adults. Additionally, communicating arts opportunities to children at school is an effective method for reaching parents. Work with local and state government to enhance support of arts programs in school curriculum.
- **Develop and implement a plan for a viable, self-sustaining, multi-use theater venue that can be rented for large productions in our area** that is less limited than the Walton Arts Center (seasonal availability only), the Arend Arts Center (seasonal and school-related availability only). Develop a city or county owned arts center for rental purposes, modeled after the Tulsa Performing Arts Center or the Eisemann Center.

Drug Free Rogers-Lowell

The projects of Drug Free Rogers-Lowell (DFRL), a program of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce Community Health Investment Program (CHIP), enhance the quality of life in Benton County while voicing the concern of the business community on illegal drug use, tobacco and underage drinking, while promoting healthy lifestyle choices.

The mission of the DFRL coalition is to reduce the demand for illegal drugs and other harmful substances in the home, workplace and community. The coalition's work evolves to fight current drug issues while being culturally sensitive, providing information to the community in English and Spanish.

Identified areas of need in the community have been addressed through programs funded by a series of grants. Programs funded by two Drug-Free Communities grants targeted alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamine, prescription drug and cocaine abuse. Grants for tobacco prevention target underage use, Hispanic outreach and promote cessation programs. A program designed to reduce underage drinking was developed after surveys of area teenagers indicated a growing problem. The prevention of future health concerns through the promotion of awareness and healthy lifestyles is also addressed by the CHIP/DFRL program in order to reduce future health-care costs on employers and society.

Each grant within the CHIP/DFRL program outlines specific goals and actions designed to have an impact on the health and safety of the community. In looking toward the future, the coalition identified the following long-term goals for the community.

Goals:

- **Sustain and expand the Drug Free Rogers-Lowell program to meet a broader mission, offer a wider service region and to have a greater influence focused on prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.**
- **Focus prevention efforts to work with families and younger children through additional education efforts, and individual assistance and parenting training for families at risk.**
- **Advocate for environmental changes to support a safer community by communicating a consistent message and attitude of prevention.**
- **Support legislative efforts at all levels of government that are beneficial and supportive of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation goals.**
- **Encourage public and private sector investment and development of amenities, programs and businesses targeted to support prevention goals.**

Health Care

Benton County, with focus on the Interstate 540 corridor, faces an important moment of decisions affecting the health care service needs of a growing, dynamic population. The growing disparity between the need for health care services, the distribution of service, the cost of care and technology, the shortages of health workers, and the demand for increased scope of specialty care has reached a point where decisions made today will enable or limit the ability of Benton County to reach its potential as a destination for health care.

In order to enhance the health care infrastructure and bring medical services to the level the community is demanding and deserves, health care providers, the business community, local government, and the public must work together.

Goals:

- **Provide destination health care.** The level of care available locally should be enhanced and expanded. Ensure no unnecessary duplication of services so as to ensure efficiency of community resources and to improve clinical outcomes.
- **Increase safety through the use of technology that can make health care safer while reducing duplication and waste.**
- **Create a new business relationship between employers, insurers, and providers.** The relationships must be redefined to simplify and decrease the cost of the business component of health care.
 - In order to enhance business systems, a data exchange system should be developed that would link employers, payers, and providers. Data exchange systems typically address two aspects of health care, financial and clinical.
 - The financial component is focused on automating and integrating the business activities such as eligibility and claims submission.
- **Provide world-class service through the use of technology and the Internet,** which will allow providers to enhance their relationship with the patient to improve access and service.
 - Support a consumer-directed health care system focusing on customer convenience and the hospitality of facilities in order to enhance the customer's experience.
 - The true consumers model for health care that is designed to enhance the patient experience includes the following.
 - Home monitoring of health conditions, including automated reporting to primary-care physicians.
 - Automated appointment scheduling.
 - Point-of-service validation of coverage and pro-ration of payments due.

- Member communication with health service providers (e-mail, support group chat rooms, etc.) and among providers serving the same customer.
 - Expansion of retail distribution to keep pace with demographic and health technology changes;
 - Creation of a single medical record, and the vesting of that record with the customer.
- **Coordinate health education and preventative services in order to eliminate redundancy and improve effectiveness.**
 - If health promotion and prevention were properly funded, the need for nurses in acute care facilities could drastically decrease and shift into clinical screening and public education.
- **Enhance and expand workforce development services to offer increased opportunities to attract highly-skilled health care professionals and expand current staffs' skills.**
 - Train and recruit nurses to meet future needs by providing scholarships from government and private sources. Scholarships should be tied to a commitment to work in northwest Arkansas for a specified period of time following graduation.
- **Utilize a “Community Trust” to bring residents and businesses into an alliance with health care providers to influence the development and delivery of health care services within Benton County.**
 - In its leadership role, the Community Trust is charged with making the vision for enhanced health care services within the community a reality. Goals associated with this vision include:
 - Supporting the development of enhanced medical services in response to the expressed needs of the residents of Benton County.
 - Improving the community’s understanding and awareness of health care services.
- **Improve access to medical providers within close proximity to home and work for most community residents that are state of the art, and designed for optimal customer/patient and physician experiences.**
- **Develop capabilities within the community similar to those of leading medical institutions.**
 - Clinical services organized as centers of excellence (cardiology, oncology, orthopedics, trauma, etc.).
 - Outstanding physician-led research capabilities in areas such as pharmaceutical management and clinical treatment protocols.

- Distributed delivery system designed to serve the population's needs with easily accessible clinic sites that are efficient and convenient.
- **Address issues faced by Hispanics in the area of health care, including outreach, insurance and prevention.**
 - Provide incentives to attract Hispanic students to health care professions.
 - Provide professional bilingual communication, both oral and written.
 - Increase the level of awareness of available health care programs among other cultures. Create public service announcements targeting the health needs of the population.
 - Provide better training for public health officials in cultural health care issues, and in all programs and insurances available.
 - Create educational programs for existing health care professionals on Hispanic health issues.
 - Determine methods for developing mutual trust in the doctor-patient relationship of Hispanics.
 - Promote the importance and accessibility of the local health care system to other cultures.
 - Emphasize prevention and routine care as a means of avoiding catastrophic illness.

Higher Education

In October 2008, Gov. Mike Beebe convened “Arkansas Works 2008: The Governor’s Summit on Education and Economic Development.” He set forth several key goals and challenged Arkansans to aggressively work to move Arkansas from its current ranking as 49th in the nation for attainment of bachelor’s degrees, with only 72 to 81 percent of Arkansas high-school students graduating and just 16 out of every 100 incoming high-school freshmen obtaining a college degree within ten years.

First, the Governor challenged Arkansas to raise high school graduation rates and improve the quality of high school diplomas. Second, he charged community leaders to ensure that students who enroll in college obtain a diploma. Gov. Beebe encouraged schools to increase the use of the Smart Core Curriculum in Arkansas high schools, and to challenge principals and superintendents to embrace the curriculum.

Finally, Gov. Beebe pledged to continue supporting efforts to address the financial issues which prevent many students from enrolling, much less completing, college. Community involvement in education was cited as absolutely vital to success, with elected officials, business leaders, principals, parents, superintendents and college presidents partnering to invest in schools, collaborate between K-12 and higher education and ensure stakeholders and community members focus on education and workforce.

These same values were also themes of the Vision 2025 Higher Education sector, with the group identifying access, affordability and delivery as critical components for long-term success.

Goals:

- **Advocate for increased funding for higher education.**
- **Work closely with K-12 to ensure college readiness.**
- **Form a stronger, widespread effort for buy-in and advocacy for education** from business, industry and government and ensure higher education issues are included in local and regional legislative agendas.
- **Encourage need-based scholarships versus academic and athletic.** Advocate a larger portion of funding allocated to need-based and second-chance students. Encourage philanthropists, donors and trusts to give greater consideration to the potential impact of need-based scholarships. Ask existing donors to adjust requirements.
- **Consider the potential for a university center concept as well as other unique delivery systems.**
- **Review mentoring/early alerts of student risk.**
- **Encourage and facilitate standardized regional (and eventually statewide) transfer agreements.**

Media

Media companies in Rogers recognize that their business models will continue to change radically as new media and new consumers enter the region. Trends indicate that consumers will continue to seek new media types that allow them to interact with each other and to find hyper-local information of value to each individual. In the future, more partnerships between news organizations will develop, advertisers will invest more in online marketing, and advertising will be targeted to individuals.

Goals:

- **Implement strategies to reach consumers with valuable information tailored to the individual's interests.** There is an increasing group of consumers who bring high expectations of the use of new technologies with them from larger cities. Building relationships with this audience is a business opportunity for media companies.
- **Collaborate on a central website to provide information and a directory of community sites, offering a single location for organizations to distribute information and for consumers to find information.**
- **Training in new media such as social networking and interactivity should be offered in informal seminars as well as through higher education.**
- **Create business models that work for new media technologies.**
- **Emphasize the value of local news media in providing the public with a trusted source for accurate, unbiased information.** Ensure the consumer is aware of the difference between a blog and an established news-gathering organization.

Minority Affairs

The northwest Arkansas region is home to a diverse array of cultures and minority populations from around the world. Statistics from the Rogers School District indicate the community includes Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, African-American and Native American minority students. Students born in 22 different countries attend Rogers schools, with 29 different native languages identified.

In discussing minorities in Rogers, this committee is inclusive of all minorities, but recognizes that Hispanics make up the largest minority group, and that the continued growth of minority populations is to be expected as the community grows. People come to Rogers to enjoy the quality of life that sets this community apart from others. They move here, whether from other cities, states, countries or cultures, to find better jobs, to enjoy the natural beauty of the region, and to live near family.

In the future, this committee hopes that all residents feel they are a part of the community. Changing attitudes toward minorities and replacing old stereotypes with positive perceptions of people of different cultures will help accomplish this vision.

The committee supports other sector's goals that promote an improved quality of life for all residents. The committee seeks to improve relations between community members. Some goals listed below are specific to Hispanics, as the largest minority group in the region, while other goals include all minorities. Some goals address community issues that are not specific to minorities, but that do impact minority residents in a significant manner.

Goals:

- **Create an inclusive society that welcomes minorities and blends cultures** rather than supporting disconnected subgroups in the community. Improve communication with all community members and help the non-English speakers by offering information in other languages, and being more collaborative with non-English media. Celebrate the area's various cultures to share the positive aspects of diversity. For example, offer programs that showcase the art of different cultures. Minority groups must also be inclusive of Anglos in their programs and activities as well.
- **Access to work, school, shopping and entertainment is needed through an improved public transportation network.** Connecting sidewalks to schools, retail areas, employers and activities is an important component of the overall transportation program.
- **Health care** is not solely a minority issue, but significantly affects minorities in the community. Additional after-hours clinics offering affordable care are needed, as well as a focus on educating minorities on where to go and how to get the care they need. Health-care providers and programs are needed on the east side of Rogers to serve the needs of minority residents in that area.

- **Agencies, organizations, businesses and groups should become more reflective of the community's population.** Encourage minorities to run for elected offices, and increase the representation of minorities in local positions of leadership.
- **Improve the future quality of life for young people of minority cultures through education and support.** Ensure leadership at all levels in the school district reflects the diversity of the student population, from elected officials to administrators to teachers. Minority school leaders and teachers serve as role models and mentors, influencing the lives of minority students.
- **Increase the number of minority students continuing their education after high school** by showing them how they can go to college or access training programs. Offer career and college information early and often to minority students. Provide mentoring programs through the schools or nonprofit organizations to support minority students in achieving their goals. Increase the offerings and availability of after-school and summer programs to meet the growing needs of the community for these services.
- **Encourage the use of new technologies in the schools for communication and education,** such as social networking, online learning, and handheld computers and electronic books. Increase the use of technology in the home by providing computers and internet access for low-income households in the community. Access to the internet will improve the ability of residents to be informed and aware, and will improve the education of students in those homes.
- **Recognize the needs of the aging minority populations and make accommodations for their inclusion in programs to support the community's seniors.** For example, the Rogers Adult Wellness Center should employ Spanish-speaking staff members and improve communication with Hispanics to encourage their usage of the facility and programs.
- **Encourage successful minority business leaders to mentor new minority business owners and employees to help them understand how to build a successful business in Rogers.**
- Most significantly, it will be essential in the coming years for the community to not simply talk the talk of diversity and inclusivity verbally or go through the motions. A truly welcoming and inclusive community will require the dedication of time to move together toward walking the walk. **To achieve a cohesive community, we must achieve understanding before we can achieve acceptance.**
- **Many of the action steps needed in the coming years will be challenging and, at times, uncomfortable.** These steps may include equipping our police, fire and emergency personnel to respond to diverse populations, and developing the ability of school personnel to partner constructively with ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) students as well as their families. The pursuit of qualified individuals of

diverse backgrounds for boards, commissions, elected positions and roles of leadership throughout the community will also be vital in the effort to advance our community.

- **We will need to broaden our definition of diversity and focus on systematically creating the “soft infrastructure” needed to achieve a truly diverse and inclusive community.** Many of the first steps toward these “soft infrastructure” mechanisms already exist: Wal-Mart has created corporate diversity councils representing the many cultures and creeds of their associates, and the proposed emerging leaders program is a form of the infrastructure needed to develop diversity and inclusivity across generations.

PreK-12 Education

With a vision of educational institutions in the community being the premier choice, this committee promotes the ideals of exceptional community support for local schools, curriculum that meets the needs of local employers, and the availability of private resources to augment state funds.

Educational institutions in the Rogers-Lowell area include the public school district, public charter schools and private schools.

Goals:

- **Build community support for education to the maximum by 2025.** Community-School partnerships are outstanding now but must continue to grow and get better in the future. With state funding limited, it is important to secure private funds to meet the needs of educational institutions in the community.
- **The Rogers-Lowell community will become the "premier option" in private and public education in northwest Arkansas.** This will allow the community to offer premier choices in educational opportunities. Make Rogers and Lowell the community of choice for education, quantitatively and qualitatively. Market the educational system in Rogers and Lowell as the institutions of choice.
- **Education should equip our students to take advantage of opportunities offered by a global economy.** The diversity that we have in Rogers-Lowell gives us a step up in accomplishing this goal. The community's educational institutions should be reflective of a unique global community.
- **Develop outstanding leadership, communications, curriculum, professional development and technology in our schools which will allow us to meet the growing and complex needs of our communities.** The citizens of our communities, including the parents, students and employers, will do all they can to support the school's efforts in creating, updating and carrying out a strategic plan for success in our local schools.

A successful implementation of the strategic plan can assure us of delivering schools that will move us from "good to great to extraordinary" when we measure the success of our students.

Move the community's educational institutions ahead in the use of technology to stay current in how students access information. Consider possibilities offered by technology, such as using virtual classrooms and libraries. In the short-term, provide a computer for every student.

- **Provide funding to offer opportunities universally for post-high school education.** Implement a comprehensive scholarship program that provides students an opportunity

to pursue higher education through the payment of tuition at any accredited college or university based upon their length of attendance in Rogers-Lowell educational institutions. This program should work in cooperation with the Community-based Scholarship program.

- **Create expanded regional education networks and opportunities.** Regional education support will erase the district lines when it comes to offering quality education at an affordable cost. Offer regional options and assistance for students who choose not to go to college that prepare them for the workforce.
- **Achieve "equity" of educational resources for all of our schools.** The rapid growth of the number and size of our schools requires addressing the different needs of each of our schools. Equity is defined as "fair," while equal is defined as "even." Achieving equity is more important than achieving "equality" as it assures that education resources will be provided to all our schools on an "as needed" basis.
- **Assure that all students have the opportunity and tools to be successful in school.** Enhance the educational opportunities for students receiving free and reduced lunches.
- One of the most important issues identified for the Rogers Public School System is the **aggressive promotion and marketing of our district as highly competitive and a leader in the state.** Realtors, newcomers and businesses alike must be proactively approached and "sold" on the desirability and high caliber of Rogers Public Schools.

Public Transportation

Public transportation is an important component of our overall transportation system and a necessity for many of our residents as the price of fuel has increased. This committee believes that public transportation needs to remain a viable option for the thousands of northwest Arkansans who either don't have vehicles or who ride the bus because it is a more affordable option for them.

The recommendations of this committee are classified into short-term (next 1-5 years) and long-term (5-15 years) goals. The committee organized the recommendations to address problems/issues in the following categories:

- Congestion relief
- Access to social services
- Access to work/places of employment
- Sustainability
- Affordability
- Access to cultural venues and entertainment

Short-term Goals (1-5 years):

- **Activities such as carpooling, car sharing (hourly rental), park and ride lots, telecommuting and shift management, should be encouraged and developed by businesses and transit providers whenever feasible.**
- **Operate more scheduled, fixed route bus services** to connect residential areas with social service providers and places of employment as determined through a transit development planning process.
- **Express bus transit is needed at regular intervals running along the I-540 corridor to provide congestion relief and to provide access to places of employment.**
- **Provide sufficient funding to ensure customers of social service agencies have access to transportation as needed during each day (including weekends and evenings).**

Long-term Goals (5-15 years):

- **Conduct an Alternatives Analysis as recommended by the Federal Transit Administration to evaluate the merits of various forms of mass transit alternatives.**
- **Develop a Rogers-Lowell Circulator Bus** that would transport riders between downtown Rogers, Lowell's commercial areas, and the Pinnacle Hills/Pleasant Crossing areas throughout the day.

- **As existing highways are expanded and new highways are constructed, bus-only and HOV lanes should be considered as part of the scope of those projects.**
- **To facilitate access to cultural venues and entertainment, existing transit providers should be encouraged to operate excursion buses from Rogers to large-attendance events** at the University of Arkansas, performances at the Walton Arts Center and to the Jones Center for Families.

Regionalism

Northwest Arkansas has demonstrated great success in achieving lofty goals when its leaders work together. For example, a regional plan was the impetus for the development of Beaver Lake. With an attitude of taking care of your neighbors, it is possible to accomplish solutions to the challenges we face in the future.

It is critical to develop a strong regional strategy to plan for the future, so that the region does not fall behind. Parochialism prevents cost-effective and practical solutions while regionalism offers economies of scale, uniformity and consistency. Building consensus among stakeholders is key: leaders must be willing to meet in the middle and compromise to solve issues.

The long-term goal of this committee is to encourage leaders to develop a mindset that northwest Arkansas addresses issues as a unified group, recognizing that we have common needs and common neighbors.

Goals:

- **Transportation** – Support projects of regional significance through the Regional Mobility Authority. Support the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission’s long-range plan. Support increased public transportation efforts to relieve congestion, provide access to employment, social services, cultural venues and entertainment, offer affordable transit, and enhance sustainability. Support cooperation among regional communities in developing and installing standardized wayfinding signage and regional gateways.
- **Utilities** – Support adoption of a federal energy plan that includes a triple bottom line, taking into account environmental and social performance in addition to financial performance. Support infrastructure development and technological updates for all utilities, especially in water and sewer, and the electric power grid and transmission. Identify a regional approach to solving watershed and storm water issues. Maintain and improve the quality of Beaver Lake while supporting the implementation of a management plan to protect it. Support cooperative efforts between utilities to efficiently and effectively solve issues. Consider the development of a regional power source. Offer more information to consumers, encouraging them to take control of their usage by making informed choices.
- **Health care** – Support the growth and development of health care as an economic engine, and create educational opportunities in health-care related fields. Support cooperation among area health-care entities to explore areas where they can work together, complementing existing services, and eliminating roadblocks in order to maximize the use of area facilities. Develop of a regional emergency preparedness plan.
- **Education** – Encourage close coordination and cooperation between all institutions of higher education in the region. Optimize resources and facilities while using technology to improve quality. Develop opportunities in health-care education for training doctors, nurses, technicians, and physical therapists.

- **Governance** – Highlight the tradition of unified, strong legislative leadership that works for the betterment of the region. Encourage sensible candidates to run for offices at the local, county and state levels. Foster an attitude among the area’s legislative delegation of collaboration, using a regional focus and perspective.
- **Land Use** – Encourage county and city leaders to work together to build a land-use plan. County zoning ordinances should work together, not compete against each other, to promote unified development.
- **Economic Development** – Strengthen and support the region’s flagship companies. The economic base they provide grows stronger as we continue to develop. Use Beaver Lake as an asset to recruit industries that require large amounts of water. Promote the relatively low cost of utilities in the region as a benefit to companies. Seek potential business opportunities from new technology.
- **Communicate and promote the benefits of northwest Arkansas** – Identify and promote positive, influential keys to the region’s success to attract others to the area. Be proud of our accomplishments in making the region a better place to live, and share that with others. Use specific examples to illustrate successes. Promote a positive image of northwest Arkansas, and be mindful of how others perceive the region on social, economic, political and immigration issues.
- **Technology** – Apply technology to serve business needs as the region grows into a metropolitan area. Encourage the use of technology to enhance the way we work, increase sustainability, and lower costs. Actively support businesses considering technological changes. Support new technology as a flagship industry for the region.
- **Entertainment and Culture** – Support the development of additional cultural and entertainment amenities that will complement existing venues, serve as regional attractions, and meet the needs of people moving into the region.

Workforce

Workforce issues continue to present major challenges for many local employers, predominantly related to the recruitment and retention of qualified employees, a shortage of skilled laborers in certain trades and a lack of many basic skills.

Workforce issues reflect many of the same concerns as the Vision 2025 Anchor Industry sector, including desire for increased cooperation by guidance counselors to promote trade and technical careers, strong ongoing need for engineers, electricians and many skilled labor positions, and solutions for childcare/after-school programming shortages and public transportation solutions.

Specifically, participating companies cited the following:

- **Top three workforce issues: hiring production workers, skilled laborers and engineers; cost of turnover; and competitive wages and insurance.**
- **Open positions at local companies represent less than 25 percent of the total workforce, and most companies ranked employee turnover as low to medium.** However, open positions at local companies were essential positions.
- **Primary positions sought include: skilled and semi-skilled labor, engineers, supervisors, administrative, industry-specific (production, maintenance, drivers, industrial sales, welding), second- and third-shift workers.**
- **Local employers continue to experience a shortfall of qualified applicants** for available positions and frequently cite issues with unemployed jobseekers not interested or motivated in obtaining employment and/or fulfilling minimum requirements to retain unemployment compensation. Many applicants are severely lacking in basic skills.
- **Most local employers use company websites & newspapers as the primary mechanism to promote available positions.** Secondary mechanisms include word-of-mouth, job fairs and industry associations.

Other issues cited include:

- Lack of part-time applicants.
- Significant job hopping, legal and credit issues among applicants.
- Region is losing college graduates to bigger job markets (Dallas, California, etc).
- Younger employees lack work ethic, values and alignment with company culture.