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*Ozark Foothills*

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**August 1, 2018**

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### Regional Economic Development Plan Goals

#### Goal One Broadband:

**Increase the percentage of the region's population that has access to high-speed internet (>100 mb/s or above) from the current 23% to 35-40% of the population outside of Butler county and from 60% to 75% of the population of Butler County by 2023.**

##### *Regional Economic Benefits*

This goal will ensure that a minimum of 50% of the region's population will have access to broadband internet at speeds at or above 100 mb/s by 2023. The increase will help develop more opportunity within the Agribusiness, Biomedical, Forestry and Wood Industry, and Tourism clusters.

#### Goal Two Entrepreneurship:

**Increase the participation rate of potential and existing small businesses in the targeted clusters of tourism, agribusiness, and forest and wood products that take advantage of small business counseling and/or support services, from University of Missouri Extension and the Small Business Development Centers by 15%, over the 2017 baseline, by December 31, 2023**

##### *Regional Economic Benefits*

This goal recognizes that small businesses are more sustainable when they take advantage of business counseling or other entrepreneurial education prior to starting or expanding their business according to the Small Business Administration. The region would benefit from promoting available small business services so that businesses in the targeted clusters can create and retain jobs and remain competitive in a global economy.

### **Goal Three Tourism:**

**Increase year-round hotel and campground occupancy rates in the region by 20% by December 31, 2023, compared to the 2017 baseline.**

#### *Regional Economic Benefits*

This goal recognizes that the busiest tourism season for the region is May through August and that many hotels have high vacancy rates in January through April and September through December. The region would benefit through increased tourism revenue if occupancy rates for the local hotels were higher during these traditional off peak months

### **Goal Four Workforce:**

**By December, 2013 increase the participation in workforce readiness training to address the region's lack of skilled workforce by 10% compared to the 2017 baseline.**

#### *Regional Economic Benefits*

This goal recognizes that the region requires improving local worker skills in two priority areas: increase workers overall employable skill level and improve workers soft skills to strengthen their ability to attain employment that will improve employers' ability to remain competitive in both the local and global economy.

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## Executive Summary

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This Regional Economic Development Plan will serve as the roadmap for the future economic development efforts of Ozark Foothills. Key regional stakeholders embrace a spirit of regionalism to support this initiative. Implementing the action items described within this document will strengthen the ability of the Ozark Foothills to secure its economic future and position it as a competitive region. This plan reflects a nine module planning process with active participation from business, civic, and community leaders. Significant research and discussions have led to the development of this plan.

The economy of the Ozark Foothills has deep roots in the natural resources available such as timber as well as tourism with visitors traveling to see the region's natural beauty. The region is within easy driving distance from the major urban centers of St. Louis, Missouri; Springfield, Missouri; Little Rock, Arkansas; and Memphis, Tennessee. The area's natural beauty has drawn visitors from these areas for getaways, to purchase weekend homes, and for retirement homes around the region's many lakes and rivers.

Using the Regional Data Profile prepared by the University of Missouri Extension/ExCEED Program, the following data was used in the development of this plan:

- The Ozark Foothills economy has not recovered from the Great Recession. Total employment is still down by **-1,030 jobs (-3.2%)** from 2007 levels.
- Average wages in the Ozark Foothills Region are significantly below national standards and have been growing more slowly than national rates of growth. In 2016 the Regional average wage of \$38,422 is only 60.2% of the US average wage (\$64,161).
- The Regional labor force has been shrinking since the end of the Great Recession. There were **-5,079** fewer workers in 2017 than in 2007.
- Per Capita income in the region is \$31,790, significantly lower than Missouri's PCI of \$42,926 and Rural Missouri's PCI of \$33,227
- Poverty rates in the region are extremely high with 36.1% of households living with incomes less than \$25,000. For Missouri this rate is 25.0%. The poverty rate for all persons is 23.6% compared to 14.0% for Missouri.
- Unemployment rates are persistently higher than the Missouri average, for 2015 the unemployment rate for the region was reported as 6.5% and for Missouri 5.0%.
- The Region has a high rate of out-commuters, 10,275 persons, nearly one-third of the labor force, are employed outside the region.
- Only 12.6% of adults 25+ years of age have a college degree, 21.1% do not have a high school diploma.
- 23% of households in the region have no one in the labor force and the overall participation rate of 51% is far below the State average of 62%.
- Since 2010 the Region has experienced population losses in every county. Total population decline was **-1,406 (-1.7%)** compared with a 2.1% increase for the State and 5.5% for the nation.

Overall, the SET SWOT revealed that the strengths of the region include the natural resources and the tourism that attracts, the school systems in the region, a growing healthcare system, a low cost of living, four-lane highways, recreation activities, and a good quality of living. The challenges include high poverty rates, the lack of a sufficiently skilled labor force, lack of broadband and other needed infrastructure such as wastewater treatment systems, limited industries, few job opportunities, low

educational attainment, insufficient housing stock, food insecurity, high rates of drug abuse, and sparse population density.

Understanding these existing strengths and challenges, this Ozark Foothills Economic Development Plan was written with goals and objectives that focus on four areas: 1) increasing broadband availability 2) improving the success rate of entrepreneurs 3) increasing tourism 4) improving the readiness of the local workforce. Significant research and discussions have led to the development of this plan. The plan reflects the SET planning process with active participation from business, civic, and community leaders.

The Ozark Foothills Regional Economic Development Plan will serve as a roadmap for future regional economic development efforts. Based on significant research and region-wide discussions, key stakeholders have embraced a spirit of regionalism and support this initiative. Implementing the action items described within this document will strengthen the ability of the Ozark Foothills Region to improve the regional economy and better position the region as economically competitive.

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## *Introduction*

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### *Stronger Economies Together Initiative*

Launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and their land-grant university partners. The purpose of Stronger Economies Together (SET) is to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Important elements of the Stronger Economies Together program will build collaboration between communities in a region, provides economic analyses that is tailored to help capture the region's current or emerging clusters and comparative economic advantages and is supported by technical assistance provided by land-grant university extension systems to the regions over a period of several months including the SET training.

The Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission (OFRPC) committed staff time and energy to the SET program in 2016-2017 in an effort to seek ways to improve the local economy of this rural region. The OFRPC was one of two regions in Missouri accepted in to the SET VI round. Once accepted, the OFRPC recruited local community leaders from each of the five counties in the region and held the first meeting on August 30, 2016 with 20 local leaders in attendance. The first meeting was held at the offices of the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission at 3019 Fair Street in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Between August 2016 and August 2017, over 60 local leaders participated in the eight sessions, attendance ranged from 15 to 30 local leaders in each session.

The SET initiative has been a catalyst for regional thinking and planning. New partnerships are created, plans are in place, strategies outlined, and people are engaged in implementing the ideas developed during the SET discussions.

### *Regional Description*

The Ozark Foothills Region is a five-county, 3,410 square mile area located in the southeast section of the state. The Ozark Foothills Region has 83,376 residents, according to the 2010 US Decennial Census, a 3.9% increase from the 80,265 reported in the 2000 census. Making up this 2010 population total are Butler County, with 42,794 residents, Carter County, 6,265 residents, Reynolds County with 6,696 residents, Ripley County with 14,100 residents, and Wayne County with 13,521 residents.

The climate in the rolling hills of the five-county area averages 70.5 degrees. In January, the average temperature is 31.4 degrees, with the hottest month, July, seeing 91.8 degrees. The area measured an average annual rainfall of 37.26 inches and average snowfall of just over nine inches.

The Ozark Foothills Region includes 16 incorporated places within its five counties. Butler County has the largest population with 42,794 residents, more than half of the total population in the region. In terms of land area, Butler County ranks third with 697.5 total square miles and a population density of 61.3 persons per square mile. There are four incorporated places in the county, the cities of Fisk, Neelyville, Poplar Bluff and Qulin. Poplar Bluff is the county seat and the largest incorporated place in the county and the region with 17,023 residents.

Carter County is the smallest county both in terms of geography and population. The county covers 507.6 square miles and has a population of 6,265 residents. There are three incorporated places in the county, Ellsinore, Grandin, and Van Buren. The City of Van Buren is the county seat and the largest town in the county with a population of 819 residents.

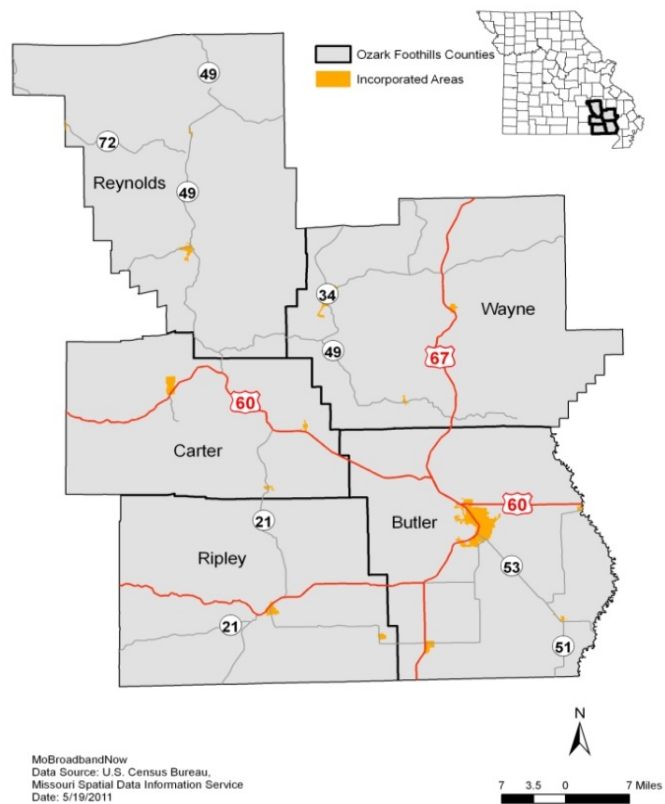
Reynolds County is the largest county in the region in terms of geography with a land area of 811.2 square miles. The county ranks fourth in population size with 6,696 residents. There are three incorporated places in the county, the Cities of Bunker, Centerville, and Ellsinore. The City of Centerville serves as the county seat and has a population of 191.

Ripley County is the second largest county in terms of population and the fourth largest county in terms of geography. According to the 2010 US Census, the county is home to 14,100 residents and covers 629.5 square miles. There are two incorporated places in Ripley County, the Cities of Doniphan and Naylor. The City of Doniphan serves as the county seat.

Wayne County is the third largest county in terms of population and the second largest in terms of geography. The county is home to 13,521 residents and covers a total land area of 761 square miles. There are four incorporated places in the county, the Cities of Greenville, Piedmont, and Williamsville, and the Village of Mill Spring. The City of Greenville serves as the county seat.

The geography of the Ozark Foothills region is as varied as the people that reside in the region. The eastern and southern portions of Butler County and the southeast section of Ripley County is flat, fertile farm lands. These areas are home to row crops such as cotton, soybeans, and rice. As you travel west through the region you enter the foothills of the Ozark Mountains. This hilly terrain is home to countless streams that cut through scenic hills and valleys of the area. There are three larger rivers that are part of the region, the St. Francis Rivers marks the eastern boundary of Butler County. Traveling west the next river to cross is the Black River, and finally is the Current River.

The climate of the region can be described as humid continental with long summers and variable weather conditions. Summers are typically warm and humid with periods of extreme heat and humidity. The average daily temperature is 92.3 degrees in July. Winters are fairly brisk, but seldom severe, and also with periods of extreme cold or above average warmth. The average annual low temperature in January is 26 degrees Fahrenheit. Average annual snowfall is 7.6 inches, and the average annual rainfall is 46.2 inches. The region typically experiences 91 days with precipitation annually and 216 sunny days.



The Ozark Foothills Region is home to many scenic natural settings. To begin, portions of all five counties are part of the Mark Twain National Forest. Butler County is home to 48,493 acres of the forest; Carter County has 90,641 acres; Reynolds County is covered by 89,812 acres; Ripley County 97,434 acres; and Wayne County 88,372 acres. In addition to the national forest, there are several other outdoor recreation areas. The Current River in Carter County is part of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Sam A. Baker State Park is located in Wayne County, Clearwater Lake is also located Wayne County. Wappapello Lake, Mingo Wildlife Refuge, and the Coldwater State Forest are all also located in Wayne County. The Fourche Creek State Forest is located in Ripley County. Reynolds County is home to the Deer Run State Forest and Johnson Shut-Ins State Park.

### *Regional Collaboration*



The plan has buy-in from several key decision makers in the region including the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission, the Greater Poplar Bluff Area Chamber of Commerce, Ripley County Chamber of Commerce, the Ellington Chamber of Commerce, and the Piedmont Chamber of Commerce, and all local counties and incorporated jurisdictions. Key decision makers explicitly expressed commitment to support the plan's implementation by participation with the development of the plan.

Additionally, public input and support was garnered through updates that were provided to the Board of Directors of the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission that includes the presiding county commissioners of each of the five counties in the region and the mayors of the 16 incorporated communities. A draft of the plan was also posted to the OFRPC website and then shared through e-mail and several Facebook pages of local organizations. Representation from all five counties was sought in the preparation of the plan to include a broad view of the region's needs.

### *Acknowledgements*

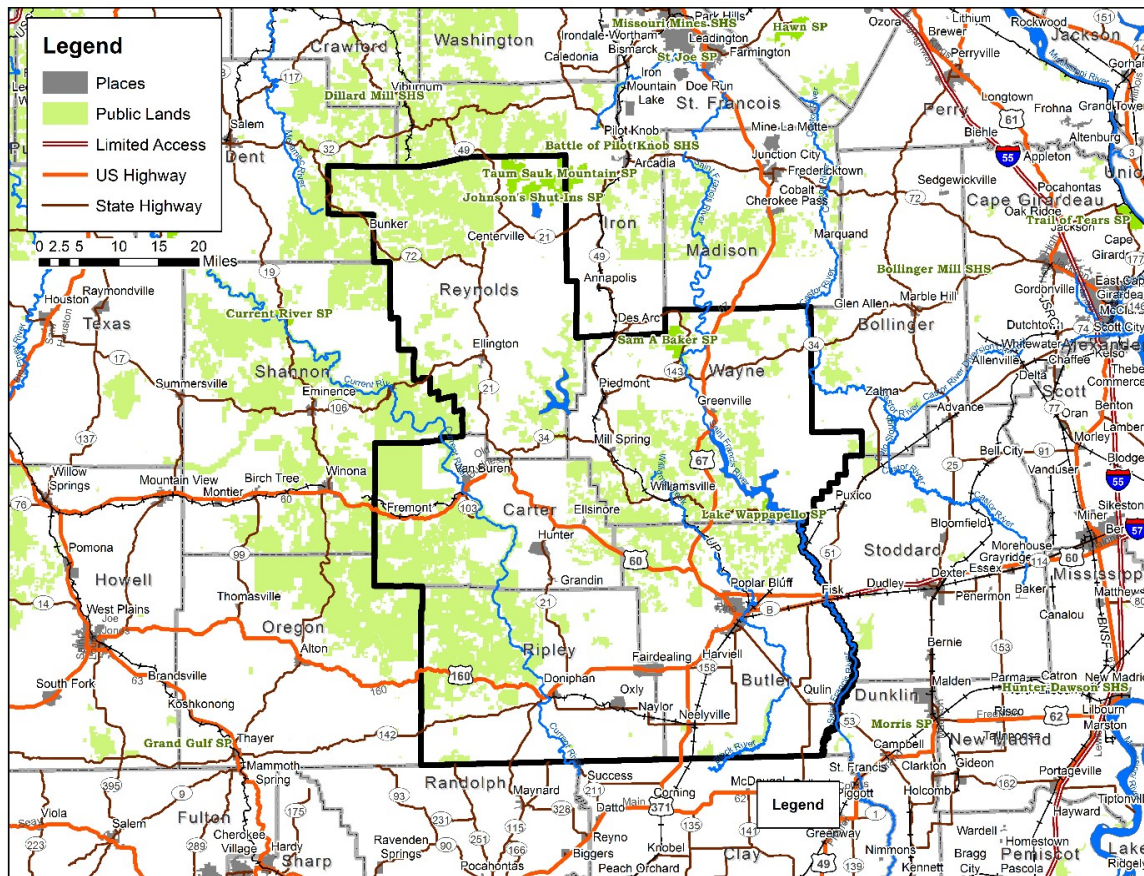
The Ozark Foothills Region would like to thank the staff from the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development; the Regional Rural Development Center; and the University of Missouri Extension for support throughout this project. We would also like to express our appreciation to Southeast Missouri State University and Three Rivers College, and the many distinguished individuals that took part in the training and planning sessions, and the numerous others that provided invaluable insights and ideas that all led to the creation of this plan.



## Land Resource and Regional Context

The five counties in the Ozark Foothills Region are Butler, Carter, Reynolds, Ripley and Wayne. The southernmost counties, Ripley and Butler, straddle the Arkansas border while Carter, Reynolds and Wayne extend north into the Ozark Highlands. Most of the 3,428 square mile Region is hilly and covered with deciduous forest (73.4%) but there are some notable differences among the counties. Carter and Wayne are nearly 90% forested followed by Wayne (82.3%) and Ripley (73.9%). Butler is the outlier with only 32.6% of the land area forested. Nearly all of the Region’s farmland is located in southern Butler County (88.8%, 326 sq. mi.) and neighboring Ripley County (8.9%, 33 sq. mi.). The hydrology of the area includes three important river systems that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The St. Francis, on the eastern side of the region, is a popular float stream and the source of water for Lake Wappapello in Wayne County. The Black River drains nearly one-half of the Region and is dammed to create Clearwater Lake in Reynolds County. The Current, a National Scenic River, drains most of Carter and Ripley counties. Big Spring, a tributary of the Current and one of the largest springs in the world, is located in Carter County.

### Ozark Foothills Region



One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Ozark Foothills Region is the large proportion of land in public ownership, 28.7% (983 mi. sq.) of land is public. Four of the counties are ranked in the top five in Missouri for the proportion of land that is publicly owned. The US Forest Service is by far the largest land manager. The agency manages 18.7% (641 sq. mi.) of all land. The State of Missouri is the second largest land manager with 5.5% (188 sq. mi.), followed by the Corps of Engineers 4.1% (141 sq. mi.) and the National Park Service 0.4% (13 sq. mi.). There are several federal and state parks located in the Region. In 2015 there were over 1.7 million visitors to State parks and 1.2 million to the Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

### Area in Land, Water and Public Ownership (in square miles)

	Butler	Carter	Reynolds	Ripley	Wayne	Region
Total Area	699	509	814	632	774	3,428
Land Area	695	507	808	630	759	3,399
Water Area	4.3	1.7	5.9	2.1	14.9	29
Total Public Land	91.6	233.5	249.9	166.7	241.2	982.8
Missouri Dept. of Conservation	19.8	38.0	81.4	13.5	35.3	188.0
USFS Land	70.0	140.9	140.5	153.2	136.8	641.4
National Park Service	0.0	12.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.9
Corps of Engineer Land	1.8	41.7	27.9	0.0	69.1	140.6
Public % of Total Land	13.1%	45.9%	30.7%	26.4%	31.2%	28.7%

Source: University of Missouri Extension

The Region is somewhat isolated from the influence of metropolitan areas. Cape Girardeau, Missouri’s newest and smallest metro area, is located about 100 miles east of the center of the Region, St. Louis Missouri is 150 miles to the north, Memphis, Tennessee is 160 miles south and Springfield, Missouri is 167 miles west.

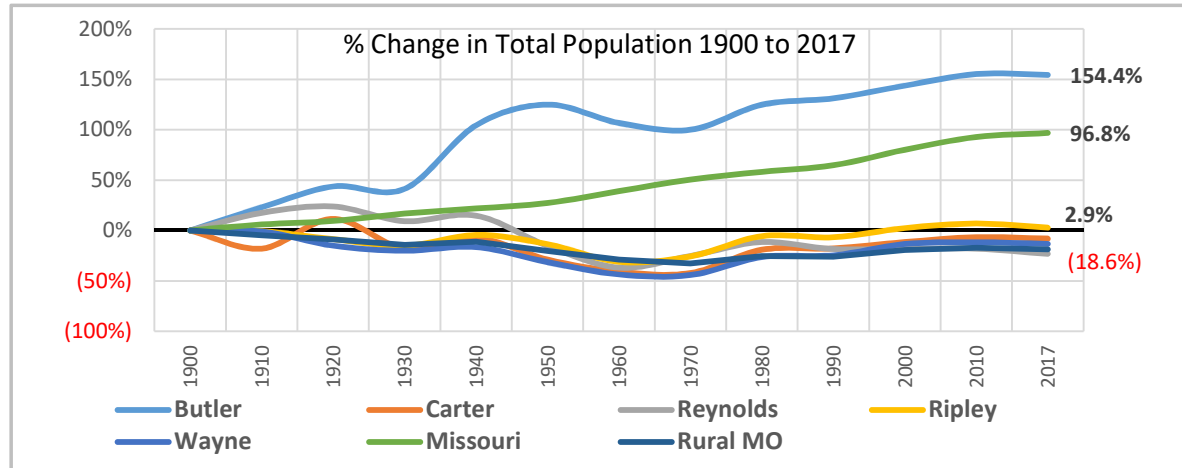
Transportation infrastructure is an important part of economic development. The Region is fortunate to have relatively good highway access. US Highway 60, a four lane limited access road, is the primary east-west transportation corridor. Highway 60 intersects with Interstate 55 and 57 about 50 miles east of Poplar Bluff. US 67 is the primary north-south connector between the Region and the St. Louis metro area. Missouri State Highway 21 is a secondary north-south route that traverses the west side of the Region. US 160 is a secondary connector that intersects with US 60 at Poplar Bluff and passes through the two largest places in the Region (Poplar Bluff and Doniphan).

### Regional Demographic Data

Long-term population trends for counties in the Ozark Foothills Region have largely tracked those for Rural Missouri except for Butler County. Butler and Ripley are the only counties in the Region that have a larger population in 2017 than in 1900. Butler’s growth is the result of the development of Poplar Bluff as a commercial center and Ripley’s growth is largely a result of the close proximity to Butler where abundant jobs have supported commuters. All counties, except Butler, experienced persistent losses until the 1970s when a national trend of migration from urban to rural places reached the Ozark Foothills resulting in a 19.8% (+12,244) population increase. The growth stopped in the 1980s with total

regional population increasing only 0.9% (+701). In the 1980s nearly all growth occurred in Butler County which added 1,072 residents while Reynold and Ripley lost population. All counties grew in the 1990s with Wayne experiencing the largest proportional gain (+14.9%, +1,706) and Butler the largest total growth (+2,102). Regional population increased by 7.3% (+5,478) which was less than the average for Rural Missouri (+8.7%), Missouri (+9.3%) and the US (+13.2%).

### Population Trends 1900 to 2017



Source: Census Bureau

Population growth slowed to 3.9% in the 2000 to 2010 period which was slightly above the average for Rural Missouri (3.1%) but far below the Missouri (7.0%) and US (9.7%) growth. The Great Recession had a relatively large impact on the Region resulting in losses in all of the counties since 2010. Total population is estimated to have declined by **-1.7% (-1,406)** a rate similar to the trend in Rural Missouri (**-2.0%**). Missouri population growth slowed to 2.0% which was less than one-half the national growth of 5.5%. In 2017 over one-half of the Region's residents live in Butler County (52.1%) followed by Ripley (16.5%), Wayne (16.2%), Reynolds (7.7%) and Carter (7.5%).

### Total Population 2000, 2010 and 2017

Geography	2000	2010	2017	Change 2000 to 2010	% Change 2000 to 2010	Change 2010 to 2017	% Change 2010 to 2017
Butler	40,867	42,794	42,666	1,927	4.7%	(128)	(0.3%)
Carter	5,941	6,265	6,169	324	5.5%	(96)	(1.5%)
Reynolds	6,689	6,696	6,275	7	0.1%	(421)	(6.3%)
Ripley	13,509	14,100	13,564	591	4.4%	(536)	(3.8%)
Wayne	13,259	13,521	13,296	262	2.0%	(225)	(1.7%)
Region	80,265	83,376	81,970	3,111	3.9%	(1,406)	(1.7%)
Rural Missouri	820,079	845,329	828,661	25,250	3.1%	(16,668)	(2.0%)
Missouri	5,595,211	5,988,927	6,113,532	393,716	7.0%	124,605	2.1%
US	281,421,906	308,745,538	325,719,178	27,323,632	9.7%	16,973,640	5.5%

The Region’s population growth has primarily been the result of migration. The rate of natural change (births minus deaths) varies significantly among counties but has been negative for the Region. The average annual natural change for the Region between 1990 and 2016 was **-25** however Butler (+25) and Carter (+4) have posted small positive average rates of natural change. These have been offset by losses in Wayne (**-47**), Reynolds (**-14**) and Ripley (**-4**). Because the Region has experienced a negative rate of natural change population growth has to be the result of migration. The 1970s was the peak decade for migration with an estimated 10,480 migrants moving to the Region. At that time the migrant stream was dominated by middle aged adults (30 to 39 years) with children aged 5 to 14 years. Beginning in the 1990s migration was dominated by older adults and retirees. In the 2000s the migrant stream was primarily comprised of persons aged 50 and over (54%) and 19% were aged 65+. This indicates the Region is attracting retirees. Like most rural areas the Region suffers from ‘brain drain’ as significant numbers of young adults aged 20 to 29 leave for higher education, military service and other pursuits.

The age profile for the Region identifies several important differences between the counties in the Region and benchmarks like Rural Missouri and the State. It is important to keep in mind that 52% of the Region’s residents live in Butler County and 21% in Poplar Bluff, the largest city in the County. Butler has a significantly younger age profile than the other counties with larger proportions of school age children and young adults, and smaller proportions of persons aged 65 and over. Wayne and Reynolds have very large proportions of persons aged 65+, nearly one fourth of all residents in these counties are over 65. The Region has a very similar age profile to all of Rural Missouri but is significantly older than the State.

### 2016 Age Profile

2016	0 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 64	65 to 74	75+	65+
Butler	25.6%	12.0%	12.1%	11.8%	20.2%	10.2%	8.0%	18.2%
Carter	21.0%	11.4%	11.8%	12.4%	23.1%	12.2%	8.0%	20.2%
Reynolds	21.7%	9.5%	10.4%	11.9%	23.3%	12.6%	10.6%	23.2%
Ripley	25.0%	11.1%	10.9%	11.7%	21.3%	11.1%	8.9%	20.0%
Wayne	18.3%	10.3%	10.6%	11.7%	25.4%	13.7%	9.9%	23.6%
Region	23.8%	11.4%	11.5%	11.8%	21.6%	11.2%	8.6%	19.9%
Region without Butler	22.9%	10.5%	10.7%	11.7%	22.9%	12.2%	9.2%	21.4%
Rural Missouri	24.5%	10.7%	10.9%	11.4%	21.8%	11.7%	9.0%	20.7%
Missouri	25.3%	13.7%	12.8%	11.9%	20.2%	9.2%	6.9%	16.1%

Source: Census Bureau

Between 2000 and 2016 the region experienced population change trends similar to Missouri and Rural Missouri benchmarks although there were differences in the magnitude of changes. The number of school age children (0-19) decreased by **-6.8%** but there were big differences among counties with Butler actually experiencing an increase of 0.5% while all other counties had losses. Growth in the 20 to 29 age group is a positive sign the Millennial age group that will be replacing retiring Baby Boomers are remaining in the Region. Losses in the 30 to 49 age groups is expected as the aging Baby Boomer cohort approaches retirement age. All age cohorts above 50 years grew at rates that were below those for Rural Missouri and the State except for the 75+ age group.

## Percent Change in Population 2000 to 2016 by Age Group

	0 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 64	65 to 74	75+	65+
Butler	0.5%	5.8%	(3.2%)	(14.6%)	23.6%	20.7%	6.7%	14.1%
Carter	(26.3%)	3.6%	(11.5%)	(16.2%)	24.0%	27.5%	15.2%	22.3%
Reynolds	(20.6%)	(9.6%)	(18.2%)	(20.3%)	7.6%	27.0%	54.4%	38.2%
Ripley	(6.8%)	5.0%	(11.1%)	(12.0%)	19.4%	19.5%	18.9%	19.2%
Wayne	(13.6%)	10.7%	(17.0%)	(18.5%)	18.6%	11.1%	13.9%	12.3%
Region	(6.8%)	5.0%	(8.5%)	(15.4%)	20.5%	19.6%	14.0%	17.1%
Region without Butler	(14.4%)	3.9%	(14.3%)	(16.3%)	17.6%	18.6%	21.9%	20.0%
Rural Missouri	(9.9%)	3.8%	(13.6%)	(18.7%)	25.5%	29.4%	7.3%	18.8%
Missouri	(3.2%)	14.0%	(4.6%)	(14.0%)	42.8%	42.7%	14.9%	29.3%

Source: Census Bureau

The Region has very little racial diversity which is typical of Rural Missouri and even the State as a whole. In 2017 the Region's population was 93.1% white compared with 94.5% for all of Rural Missouri and 83.1% for the State. 3.3% (2,705) were Black but 91% (2,458) of all Black residents lived in Butler County. The second largest racial minority was Two or More Races (2.3%, 1,849). Asian and Pacific Islander and American Indian and Alaska Natives each made up less than one percent of the population. Hispanics are also underrepresented in the Region when compared with all benchmarks.

## Racial Characteristics 2017

	White	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian and Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Hispanic
Butler	90.2%	5.8%	0.8%	0.8%	2.5%	2.1%
Carter	96.3%	0.3%	1.3%	0.2%	2.0%	2.6%
Reynolds	95.0%	1.0%	1.1%	0.2%	2.7%	1.6%
Ripley	96.5%	0.5%	1.0%	0.4%	1.7%	1.6%
Wayne	96.5%	0.7%	0.5%	0.3%	2.0%	1.9%
Region	93.1%	3.3%	0.8%	0.6%	2.3%	2.0%
Rural	94.5%	2.4%	0.7%	0.6%	1.7%	2.7%
Missouri	83.1%	11.3%	0.6%	2.2%	2.3%	4.2%
United States	76.6%	13.4%	1.3%	8.7%	2.7%	18.1%

Source: Census Bureau Population Estimates

## Income and Poverty

Incomes are significantly below Missouri and US standards and poverty rates are high in the Ozark Foothills Region. Butler County (\$34,428) has the highest per capita income followed by Carter

(\$30,908), Ripley (\$29,089), Reynolds (\$28,371) and Wayne (\$28,141). Regional per capita income is \$31,790 which is only 64.5% of the US benchmark. While incomes are low the proportion of incomes from transfer receipts is high. The US share of income from transfer receipts, which includes Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other direct payments from government to individuals, is 20.3%. In the Ozark Foothills transfer receipts make up 38.3% of all income. In Reynolds and Wayne counties income from transfer receipts is larger than income from earnings. Per capita income from earnings for the Region (\$14,716) is only 47.2% of the US benchmark (\$31,148).

Poverty is a significant challenge across the Region. All of the counties have poverty rates above 21% with Ripley County (27.7%) posting the highest rate. In 2016 an estimated 19,078 persons were in poverty across the Region. The 23.6% poverty rate is 168% of the US and Missouri rates of 14.0%.

### 2016 Income and Poverty Indicators

	Per Capita Income	Per Capita Transfer Receipts	Per Capita Investment Income	Per Capita Earnings	Persons in Poverty	% in Poverty
Butler	\$34,428	\$12,101	\$5,195	\$17,132	9,237	22.0%
Carter	\$30,908	\$11,897	\$4,869	\$14,142	1,298	21.2%
Reynolds	\$28,371	\$12,076	\$5,882	\$10,413	1,397	22.1%
Ripley	\$29,089	\$12,466	\$3,685	\$12,938	3,776	27.7%
Wayne	\$28,141	\$12,366	\$4,665	\$11,110	3,370	26.0%
Ozark Foothills	\$31,790	\$12,187	\$4,886	\$14,716	19,078	23.6%
Rural Missouri	\$33,227	\$10,418	\$5,748	\$17,060	153,776	19.1%
Missouri	\$42,926	\$8,716	\$7,776	\$26,434	826,358	14.0%
US	\$49,246	\$8,567	\$9,531	\$31,148	44,268,996	14.0%

Source: Income data is from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Poverty estimates are from the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates program of the Census Bureau.

### Labor Force Characteristics

The quality and quantity of the Regional labor force is recognized as one of the most important factors influencing economic development opportunity. The profile of labor force characteristics indicates there are many challenges. One of the most pressing is the relatively low level of educational attainment. In four of the counties over twenty percent of adults aged 25 and over do not have a high school diploma. The regional total of 21.1% is significantly above the average for all Rural Missouri (17.2%) and the State (11.6%). The Region (29.1%) has a slightly larger proportion of persons with some college or a two year degree than Rural Missouri (27.0%) but less than the State (30.0%). The proportion of adults with a college degree (12.6%) is slightly below that for Rural Missouri (14.3%) but significantly below the State (27.1%). Butler County has the best educational attainment profile with the smallest proportion of persons not completing high school and the largest proportion that are college graduates. Reynolds and Wayne have the largest proportions without a high school diploma and the lowest proportion with a college degree.

## 2015 Educational Attainment for Persons Aged 25 and Over

	< High School	HS Diploma	Some College or Associates	Bachelors Degree or Higher
Butler	18.8%	36.7%	30.0%	14.6%
Carter	21.7%	31.3%	35.7%	11.4%
Reynolds	23.5%	44.0%	24.4%	8.1%
Ripley	22.7%	39.1%	27.1%	11.1%
Wayne	25.1%	36.6%	27.6%	10.7%
Region	21.1%	37.3%	29.1%	12.6%
Rural	17.2%	41.4%	27.0%	14.3%
Missouri	11.6%	31.3%	30.0%	27.1%

Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey

The size of the regional labor force changed dramatically in the last decade as a result of the Great Recession. In the run-up to the recession, 2000 to 2007, all of the counties except Reynolds experienced growth in the size of the labor force. The regional growth rate of 7.5% was nearly identical to the US and well ahead of Missouri (2.5%) and Rural Missouri (0.0%). Over one-half of the increase occurred in Butler County. As the Recession started to influence the Regional economy in 2008 the labor force declined from a peak of 39,261 in 2007 to the current tabulation of 34,182. All counties except Reynolds have lost workers and prospective workers with Butler (-3,301) posting the largest absolute loss and Ripley posting the largest proportional loss (-1,511, -22.7%). The 16.0% growth in Reynolds is largely the result of increased wood products manufacturing and mining employment. The -12.9% decline in the size of the regional labor force is larger than the average for Rural Missouri (-10.8), Missouri (0.5%) and the US (4.7%).

## Change in Total Labor Force 2000 to 2007 and 2007 to 2017

	2000	2007	2017	Change 2000 to 2007	% Change	Change 2007 to 2017	% Change
Butler	19,794	21,386	18,085	1,592	8.0%	-3,301	(15.4%)
Carter	2,619	2,904	2,471	285	10.9%	-433	(14.9%)
Reynolds	2,805	2,635	3,056	-170	(6.1%)	421	16.0%
Ripley	5,819	6,645	5,134	826	14.2%	-1,511	(22.7%)
Wayne	5,498	5,691	5,436	193	3.5%	-255	(4.5%)
Region	36,535	39,261	34,182	2,726	7.5%	-5,079	(12.9%)
Rural Missouri	406,151	406,196	362,241	45	0.0%	-43,955	(10.8%)
Missouri	2,959,948	3,034,582	3,050,725	74,634	2.5%	16,143	0.5%
US	142,585,750	153,123,083	160,310,167	10,537,333	7.4%	7,187,083	4.7%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The Region's 2017 labor force participation rate (51.1%) is also low compared with Rural Missouri (53.7%) and the State (61.5%). Two important demographic trends will also influence labor force availability in the future. The first is the relatively large share of the population approaching retirement age. There are 5,700 persons aged 60 to 64 who will be considering retirement in the next few years. As this cohort retires there will be demand for additional workers that is likely to exceed the regional

supply. The other trend is the relatively smaller share of persons aged 20 to 34 (approximate age of Millennials) who will become the replacement workers for retirees. Like most rural areas the Millennial generation is underrepresented in the Region with an estimated 13,860 in this age group which is -3,222 less than expected for an area this size.

Occupational demand has changed as the economy has restructured following the recession. There were losses in 14 of the 24 two digit occupational codes. The largest losses were in Production (-704) and Building and Grounds Maintenance (-506) occupations. These losses are likely an outcome of declining employment in manufacturing as are losses in Transportation and Material Moving. Over one hundred jobs were lost in several other categories including Office and Administrative Support (-213), Sales and Related (-202), Installation Maintenance and Repair (-136) and Construction and Extraction (-118).

### Occupations Losing Employment between 2007 and 2017

Description	2007 Jobs	2017 Jobs	2007 - 2017 Change	2007 - 2017% Change	Median Hourly Earnings	2017 Location Quotient
Production	3,768	3,064	(704)	(18.7%)	\$14.05	1.66
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	1,675	1,169	(506)	(30.2%)	\$9.78	1.01
Transportation and Material Moving	2,383	2,077	(306)	(12.8%)	\$14.22	0.98
Office and Administrative Support	4,261	4,048	(213)	(5.0%)	\$13.22	0.87
Sales and Related	2,851	2,649	(202)	(7.1%)	\$11.21	0.84
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	1,486	1,350	(136)	(9.2%)	\$16.45	1.09
Construction and Extraction	1,615	1,497	(118)	(7.3%)	\$15.33	1.05
Architecture and Engineering	346	281	(65)	(18.8%)	\$27.98	0.53
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	252	209	(43)	(17.1%)	\$15.50	0.36
Education, Training, and Library	1,926	1,884	(42)	(2.2%)	\$16.15	1.05
Protective Service	740	705	(35)	(4.7%)	\$14.86	0.99
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	423	391	(32)	(7.6%)	\$12.33	1.63
Military-only	139	120	(19)	(13.7%)	\$16.05	0.72
Legal	108	95	(13)	(12.0%)	\$28.08	0.36

Source: EMSI, 2018.3 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

There are ten occupational categories that increased between 2007 and 2017. Many of these occupations are in the Health Care and Social Services sector of the economy that added 1,564 jobs between 2007 and 2017. The growth in this sector was widespread with every county adding jobs in these occupations. Personal Care and Service occupations had by far the largest growth (+816, +52.7%) adding more jobs than all other occupations combined. Food Preparation and Serving Related (+218, +9.2%) and Community and Social Service (+111, +20.2%) both experienced increases of over 100 jobs. Unfortunately the two occupations with the largest growth also pay low wages, only \$9.86 for Personal Care and Service and \$9.44 for Food Preparation and Serving Related. There are some promising signs with growth in a handful of high paying occupations including Healthcare Practitioners, Business and Financial Operations, Management, Life, Physical, and Social Science and Computer and Mathematical – all of these occupations pay over \$20 per hour.



## Growing Occupations 2007 to 2017

Description	2007 Jobs	2017 Jobs	2007 - 2017 Change	2007 - 2017 % Change	Median Hourly Earnings	2017 Location Quotient
Personal Care and Service	1,548	2,364	816	52.7%	\$9.86	1.75
Food Preparation and Serving Related	2,358	2,576	218	9.2%	\$9.44	0.98
Community and Social Service	549	660	111	20.2%	\$16.51	1.27
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	2,091	2,178	87	4.2%	\$22.20	1.24
Business and Financial Operations Management	801	848	47	5.9%	\$26.14	0.52
Healthcare Support	1,532	1,574	42	2.7%	\$21.62	0.90
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,329	1,368	39	2.9%	\$10.82	1.60
Computer and Mathematical	157	194	37	23.6%	\$23.90	0.77
	233	243	10	4.3%	\$26.71	0.27

Source: EMSI, 2018.3 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

## Regional Economy

The Ozark Foothills economy has not recovered from the Great Recession. Total employment is still down by **-1,030 jobs (-3.2%)** from 2007 levels. This is little surprise given the slow growth in the State economy, which experienced job growth at only one-fourth the rate of the US economy, and the even worse performance of Rural Missouri which is still down **-7.2% (-21,951)** from 2007.

### Employment and Average Wage Change between 2007 and 2017

Geography	Employment				Average Wage			
	2007	2017	Change	% Change	2007	2017	Change	% Change
Rural Missouri	304,788	282,837	(21,951)	(7.2%)	\$31,188	\$38,602	\$7,414	23.8%
Ozark Foothills	32,573	31,543	(1,030)	(3.2%)	\$31,411	\$38,422	\$7,011	22.3%
Missouri	3,075,696	3,116,890	41,194	1.3%	\$45,444	\$55,193	\$9,749	21.5%
United States	152,747,155	160,946,219	8,199,064	5.4%	\$51,772	\$64,161	\$12,389	23.9%

Source: EMSI, 2018.3 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

Average wages in the Ozark Foothills Region are significantly below national standards and have been growing more slowly than national rates of growth. Average wages are very similar to Rural Missouri although growth has been slower in the Region than the average for all Rural counties. In 2007 wages were \$31,411 in the Region compared with \$31,188 in Rural Missouri, but by 2017 the average for Rural Missouri had exceeded the Region. Both rates of growth were below the US rate of 23.9%. The gap for the State was even larger as the State growth was **-2.3%** less than the US average. Currently the Regional average wage of \$38,422 is only 60.2% of the US average wage.

There are notable differences in job creation and wage growth among counties in the Ozark Foothills. Reynolds is the only county that had more jobs in 2017 than in 2007. The growth in Reynolds is primarily the result of increased employment in the mining sector of the economy. Butler County had the largest

total losses (-827) and Ripley had the largest proportional loss (-7.8%). Butler (\$41,168) has the highest average wages which is largely the result of the concentration of high paying jobs in health care, manufacturing and government but the average wage for the County is still only 64.2% of the US average. Ripley and Wayne have the lowest average wages and also the smallest growth in wages. In both counties the average wage is less than one-half the national wage.

### Ozark Foothills Employment and Average Wages 2007 and 2017

Geography	Employment				Average Wages			
	2007	2017	Change	% Change	2007	2017	Change	% Change
Butler	21,490	20,663	(827)	(3.8%)	\$33,858	\$41,168	\$7,310	21.6%
Carter	1,919	1,797	(122)	(6.4%)	\$25,404	\$34,099	\$8,696	34.2%
Reynolds	2,102	2,339	237	11.3%	\$29,230	\$38,602	\$9,373	32.1%
Ripley	3,752	3,460	(292)	(7.8%)	\$26,160	\$30,778	\$4,617	17.7%
Wayne	3,309	3,283	(26)	(0.8%)	\$26,343	\$31,429	\$5,086	19.3%
Ozark Foothills	32,573	31,543	(1,030)	(3.2%)	\$31,411	\$38,422	\$7,011	22.3%

Source: EMSI, 2018.3 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

Although the Region’s economy has not fully recovered from the Great Recession there are some notable indicators of growth in some sectors. The most prominent is the Health Care and Social Assistance sector that added 1,564 jobs. The large growth is in part due to a reassignment of businesses supplying home health care services to this sector from the Other Services sector. After compensating for the transfer of 1,056 jobs there was a net job creation of 508. Accommodation and Food Services added the second largest number of employees (+305) but this has little impact on the Regional economy because of the low wages. The third largest growth occurred in the Mining sector of the economy where the 276 new jobs have an extraordinary impact on the regional economy. The impact is amplified because these jobs have an average wage of \$94,998 and 95% of production is exported making this sector the fourth largest contributor to the gross regional product of the Region even though there are only 330 jobs. The only other sector that added more than 100 jobs is the Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services sector which largely provides business services. This sector also has very low average wages (\$20,197) and therefore limited economic impact.

Fifteen sectors of the economy have not recovered to 2007 employment. The most impactful losses occurred in the Manufacturing sector where one-fourth of all jobs (-1,208, -24.5%) were lost. Wages in the Manufacturing sector are above the average wages for the Region and this sector also buys inputs and services from local businesses. It is likely that some losses in the Construction, Transportation and Warehousing, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, and Professional Scientific and Technical Services sectors are related to the declining Manufacturing sector. Losses in Construction, the sixth largest employment sector, were more modest (-212 jobs, -12.2%) and the sector has actually added jobs every year since 2014 when employment bottomed out at 1,342 jobs. Government is the second largest employer in the Region with 5,822 jobs and pays relatively high wages \$53,851, 40% above the average for the Region. Most of the reduced employment has occurred in public schools where decreasing enrollment has reduced the need for teachers but employment has also decreased for local and state government. Federal employment increased by 197 with most new jobs at the Veterans Administration

hospital in Poplar Bluff, these jobs pay an average wage of \$95,736. Other notable losses occurred in Transportation and Warehousing (-128, -13.1%), Information (-122, -27.2%), Wholesale Trade (-91, -11.3%), and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (-55, -8.7%).

**Ozark Foothills Economic Indicators and Employment Change 2007 to 2017 (sorted by 2017 employment)**

	2007	2017	2017 % of Total	Change	% Change	Average Wage	Location Quotient
Total	32,573	31,543		(1,030)	(3.2%)	\$38,422	0.00
Health Care and Social Assistance	4,609	6,173	19.6%	1,564	33.9%	\$32,233	1.55
Government	6,004	5,822	18.5%	(183)	(3.0%)	\$53,851	1.22
Retail Trade	3,910	3,746	11.9%	(164)	(4.2%)	\$28,244	1.16
Manufacturing	4,924	3,716	11.8%	(1,208)	(24.5%)	\$41,826	1.50
Accommodation and Food Services	2,252	2,557	8.1%	305	13.5%	\$16,786	0.94
Construction	1,734	1,523	4.8%	(212)	(12.2%)	\$39,320	0.88
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1,168	1,435	4.6%	268	22.9%	\$20,197	0.73
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,616	1,434	4.5%	(1,183)	(45.2%)	\$20,679	0.95
Finance and Insurance	804	886	2.8%	82	10.2%	\$52,782	0.70
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	884	860	2.7%	(24)	(2.8%)	\$29,139	2.27
Transportation and Warehousing	971	844	2.7%	(128)	(13.1%)	\$56,092	0.76
Wholesale Trade	806	715	2.3%	(91)	(11.3%)	\$53,951	0.60
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	632	577	1.8%	(55)	(8.7%)	\$69,225	0.28
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	55	330	1.0%	276	504.1%	\$94,998	2.64
Information	449	327	1.0%	(122)	(27.2%)	\$47,230	0.56
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	287	198	0.6%	(89)	(31.0%)	\$47,940	0.37
Utilities	178	166	0.5%	(12)	(6.5%)	\$96,497	1.52
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	202	164	0.5%	(38)	(18.9%)	\$15,632	0.30
Management of Companies and Enterprises	29	64	0.2%	35	122.3%	\$64,446	0.14
Educational Services	59	0	0.0%	(59)	(100.0%)	\$0	0.01

Source: EMSI, 2018.3 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

## *Regional Assets*

As a part of the SET process, participants were asked to list regional strengths. The top regional strength identified through this process is the region's natural resources. These resources include varied recreational resources such as many rivers and lakes such as Current River, Clearwater Lake, and Lake Wappapello. This also includes the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, which was the first national park area to protect a river system. The ONSR provides some of the finest floating rivers found anywhere. There are also large sections of the Mark Twain National Forest and numerous state parks located throughout the five counties.

In addition to the recreational opportunities offered by the availability of the natural resources, other benefits of the natural resources include the timber industry and agriculture.

The healthcare industry is a strength in the region, and one of the largest sectors for employment. Poplar Bluff and Butler County serve as a regional hub for medical services. A new, state of the art regional hospital was recently constructed in Poplar Bluff.

Transportation was identified as a strength for the region; primarily the availability of two four-lane US highways – US Highway 67 and US Highway 60. These two highways provide easy access to the region for travelers and for freight carriers.

An additional strength of the region was the low cost of living. When compared to other areas of the country, and even metropolitan areas of the state, residents in the Ozark Foothills are paying less in taxes and less for housing costs.

## *Potential Barriers and Related Strategies*

The top three barriers for the region that were identified through the SET process are – 1) high rates of poverty; 2) lack of a skilled/educated workforce; 3) lack of broadband availability. The poverty in four of the five counties in the region is considered persistent poverty, meaning these counties, Carter, Reynolds, Ripley, and Wayne, have poverty rates greater than 20% for the past 30 years or more. One factor the group felt strongly about that impacted these high poverty rates was the high rates of drug abuse and addiction in the region.

In reviewing demographic data and anecdotal evidence, another concern observed by the group was the lack of a skilled workforce. In reviewing demographic data this barrier becomes evident. In the Ozark Foothills region only 77.64% of the population has a high school diploma or equivalent. This is only 88% of the rate of the high school diploma attainment rate for all Missouri residents and 89% of the rate of all United States residents. It is even more alarming is that only 11.2% of all Ozark Foothills region residents have a bachelor degree or higher. The rate for all Missouri residents is 27.1% and for the US, 29.8%, both substantially higher than the rate for the region's residents.

The third barrier identified was the lack of broadband access. This problem is common in many areas of rural Missouri. Many participants felt that this barrier restricted the opportunities for entrepreneurs and large businesses alike as it put the area at a competitive disadvantage when competing economically with areas with sufficient broadband access.

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## *Regional Economic Development Plan Goals*

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The Ozark Foothills Economic Development Plan is outlined in the following text. Measurable objectives and strategic steps were identified for each goal along with the resources, timeline, and person(s) responsible. Each of the four goal area groups entered all the components of the plan into the Plan of Action (Appendix D) and will use this document to guide the implementation process and to summarize activities to each of the goal's strategies.

The plan was vetted by the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission as well as the broad team that worked on the plan. Each team member solicited input and comments on the plan from their organizations and boards.

The Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission will be responsible for the long-term implementation of the goals and objectives in the plan and will integrate much of this plan into their CEDS. OFRPC will meet with committees on a regular basis and hold an annual planning meeting to make needed course adjustments to strategies and steps. On an annual basis, the Core Planning Team and the four committees will hold a strategic review session. During this session, each committee will give progress reports and the plan will be reviewed for revision and/or update. Following the annual meeting, a progress report, including any revisions to the plan, will be provided to each county commission.

University of Missouri Extension has committed to support the project for a 3-year period through quarterly phone calls with the leadership to check on progress and offer any assistance needed and annual progress meetings. University of Extension will serve as a point of accountability for the long-term implementation of the plan.

## Goal 1 – Broadband

Increase the percentage of the region’s population that has access to high-speed internet (>100 mb/s or above) from the current 23% to 35-40% of the population outside of Butler county and from 60% to 75% of the population of Butler County by 2023.

*Regional Economic Benefits:* This goal will ensure that a minimum of 50% of the region’s population will have access to broadband internet at speeds at or above 100 mb/s by 2023. The increase will help develop more opportunity within the Agribusiness, Biomedical, Forestry and Wood Industry, and Tourism clusters.

Strategies/Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Available Assets	Key Partners	Outcomes/Metrics
<b>Objective A: Increase the number Internet Service Providers (ISPs) within the region in order to cover unserved areas within the region.</b>					
1) Identify ISPs currently serving the region and map their service boundaries.	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	January 2019 – June 2019	FCC Broadband Map	Mo Dept. Economic Development, Office of Broadband Development	1) Square miles served by ISPs; 2) Number of customers served by ISPs; 3) Number of ISPs serving the region.
2) Identify and recruit startups and ISPs to provide services within unserved areas of the region.	Poplar Bluff Chamber of Commerce, Ozark Vitality, Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	ongoing	FCC Broadband map, provider data	Smart Space of Poplar Bluff, AT&T	Number of potential ISPs that would provide services within the region.
3) Conduct market research and profitability study to identify demand for services and understand the cost per household.	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	July 2019 – June 2020	FCC Broadband Map, Provider Data	MU Extension, USDA Rural Development Mo Dept. Economic Development, Office of Broadband Development	1) Number of individuals currently having access to high-speed internet; 2) Number of individuals that would pay for high-speed internet if services were offered.
<b>Objective B: Expand and improve the quality of telecommunications infrastructure within the region.</b>					
1) Conduct infrastructure SWOT analysis in order to analyze	Smart Marketing, Ozark Vitality, Ozark	July 2020 – December 2020	FCC Broadband map	USDA-Rural Development, Mo Dept. Economic	1) Miles of existing infrastructure; 2) Miles of

barriers and identify dead zones.	Foothills Regional Planning Commission, City of Poplar Bluff			Development, Office of Broadband Development	infrastructure required to cover potential customers living in dead zones; 3) Miles of existing infrastructure needing updated in order to provide high-speed internet services.
2) Develop career-training programs for technicians and contractors needed for installation and maintenance.	Poplar Bluff Chamber, Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	July 2020 – December 2023		Three Rivers Community College, Workforce Development Board	Completed training curriculum
3) Conduct training for technicians and contractors for installation and maintenance.	Three Rivers Community College, Workforce Development Board	Ongoing	Curriculum, Trainers	Three Rivers Community College, Workforce Development Board	50% increase in individuals certified as technicians.
4) Monitor the availability of grant funds and technical assistance from the newly established Office of Broadband at the MO Dept. of Economic Development.	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	Ongoing	Unknown at this time	MO Dept. of Economic Development	Apply for grant funds and technical assistance funding when available (est. after July 1, 2019).

**Target Outcomes:**

- Cooperate across sectors with the purpose of supporting the other goals (entrepreneurship, tourism and workforce).
- Increase the number of technicians able to maintain and install telecommunications infrastructure.
- Provide marketing tools needed to benefit small businesses and regional tourism by increasing access to high-speed internet.
- Increase number of customers served by ISPs by at least 10% within Butler County 2023.

- Increase number of customers served by ISPs by at least 10% within the rest of the region by 2023.

**Short Term:**

- 1) Increase knowledge and skills of local citizens in internet usage.
- 2) Educate the region's business owners on the value of having a web presence.
- 3) Find ISPs willing to take a smaller profit margin.
- 4) Build the appropriate infrastructure in order to provide high-speed internet to those living in dead zones.

**Intermediate:**

- 1) Recruit ISPs willing to invest in expanding their infrastructure.
- 2) Increase the number of individuals utilizing websites to promote their businesses and regional tourism.
- 3) Increase in the number of individuals and business owners seeking technology education, training, and services.

**Long Term:**

- 1) Increased revenue from all levels of business due to improved internet access.
- 2) Emergence of more IT businesses and services throughout the region.
- 3) Broadband access in 4 counties increased to 20% and Butler County to 75%.
- 4) Continued investment to sustain the expansion, including infrastructure, of access to high-speed internet.
- 5) Increased internet presence of small businesses.

**Goal 2 - Entrepreneurship**

**Increase the participation rate of potential and existing small businesses, in the targeted clusters of tourism, agribusiness, and forest and wood products, which take advantage of small business counseling and/or support services, from University of Missouri Extension's Business Development Program, by 15%, over the 2017 baseline, by December 31, 2023.**

*Regional Economic Benefits:* This goal recognizes that small businesses are more sustainable when they take advantage of business counseling or other entrepreneurial education prior to starting or expanding their business according to the Small Business Administration. The region would benefit from promoting available small business services so that businesses in the targeted clusters can create and retain jobs and remain competitive in a global economy.



Strategies/Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Available Assets	Key Partners	Outcomes/Metrics
<b>Objective A: Establish a small business referral system and baseline</b>					
1) Establish 2017 baseline of participation rate of small businesses that take advantage of small business counseling and/or support services.	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission, MU Extension	January – March 2019	Existing client contact databases	MU Extension, regional Chambers of Commerce	Baseline established by April 2019
2) Create a team of service providers where small businesses can be referred and information on best practices and services can be shared on a regional level.	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	Team creation: January – June 2019  Team meetings - ongoing	All regional chambers of commerce	Regional Chambers of Commerce, all county commissions, all city councils, University of MO Business Development Program, SBA lenders	1) 20 referrals per year to the team. 2) 1 meeting of the team each quarter.
<b>Objective B: Raise awareness of available small business services.</b>					
1) Identify successful entrepreneurs that have received services and assistance through providers and create testimonials.	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission, Regional Chambers of Commerce	Ongoing		Southeast Missouri State University SBTDC, MU Extension, Region's Chambers of Commerce, successful clients	1 testimonial per quarter will be developed and promoted.
2) Create and use marketing materials, promo videos, social media, etc. co-branded with Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission and other regional partners.	Poplar Bluff Chamber, Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	ongoing	Regional media outlets, MU Extension county offices, banks, city clerks, libraries, economic development offices, Job Centers	Smart Marketing, regional chambers of commerce, banks and other lenders, MU Extension, regional media outlets, Ozark Vitality	1) 20 referrals per year to the small business team. 2) New marketing piece each month.

**Target Outcomes:**

- Increase the number of small businesses in the Ozark Foothills region that take advantage of small business assistance services.
- Increase awareness of the availability of small business assistance services.
- Improve information sharing and best practice outcomes amongst regional service providers.
- Increase the presence of small businesses and create jobs in the targeted industry clusters of tourism, agribusiness, and forest and wood products.

**Short Term:**

- 1) Identify successful entrepreneurs for testimonials. Identify pool of regional service providers.
- 2) Write sample questions to use with all clients across the board for future testimonial use.

**Intermediate:**

- 1) Establish first meeting of the team of regional service providers.
- 2) Create small business referral system and promote with key contacts throughout the region.
- 3) Collect testimonials from successful entrepreneurs who have utilized the business assistance services. Ask for photos and written information. Release first testimonial.
- 4) Standardize media release and marketing message.

**Long Term:**

- 1) Release one testimonial per quarter on an ongoing basis.
- 2) Provide consistent, co-branded marketing materials each month on an ongoing basis. Regional service provider team meets each quarter on an ongoing basis.
- 3) Regional organizations provide all small business inquiries to the regional team on an ongoing basis.

**Goal 3 - Tourism**

Increase year-round hotel and campground occupancy rates in the region by 20% by December 31, 2023, compared to the 2017 baseline.

*Regional Economic Benefits:* This goal recognizes that the busiest tourism season for the region is May through August and that many hotels have high vacancy rates in January through April and September through December. The region would benefit through increased tourism revenue if occupancy rates for the local hotels were higher during these traditional off peak months

Strategies/Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Assets	Key Partners	Outcomes/Metrics
Objective A: Organize a Regional Tourism Group					

Identify participants that would participate in regional tourism group	Poplar Bluff Chamber, Ozark Vitality, Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	January 2019-May 2019	Region's Chambers of Commerce, Missouri Department of Tourism	Missouri Department of Tourism, city/county leadership	Regional tourism group is formed and named.
Conduct an initial meeting for input from stakeholders	Poplar Bluff Chamber of Commerce	May 2019-August 2019		Ozark Vitality, Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission, city/county leadership	Number of attendees at meeting and comments received
Select Committee/Board members for group	City/County Leadership	August 2019-September 2019		Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission, Poplar Bluff Chamber, Ozark Vitality, Regional Chambers	Board members appointed
Establish baseline occupancy rate	Regional Tourism Board	September – December 2019	Data available from MO Div. Tourism, US Forest Service, local businesses	Regional tourism Board, RPC, regional chambers of commerce, local tourism promotion groups	Baseline established
Seek funding for organization and operation	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission, Ozark Vitality	August 2019-August 2020		Poplar Bluff Chamber, Missouri Department of Tourism, Delta Regional Authority	Applications submitted, applications funded

Identify resources for marketing of tourism group	Poplar Bluff Chamber, Ozark Vitality, Smart Marketing	August 2019- August 2020		Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	Number of resources identified
Identify local points of interest to promote	Poplar Bluff Chamber of Commerce, Regional Chambers	August 2019- December 2019		Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	Number of points of interest identified

**Target Outcomes:**

- Increase tourism
- Increase Occupancy Rates at local hotels, motels, and campgrounds

**Short-Term:**

- 1) Identify local residents interested in participating in a regional tourism group
- 2) Identify board members

**Intermediate:**

- 1) Identify and secure funding for operation of tourism group
- 2) Identify and secure resources for marketing materials, promotions and videos

**Long-Term:**

- 1) Increase hotel and campground occupancy rates by 20%
- 2) Increase local sales tax revenue
- 3) Decrease unemployment through creation of new jobs related to tourism

**Goal 4 - Workforce Training**

**By December, 2023 increase the participation in workforce readiness training addressing the region’s lack of skilled workforce by 10% over to the 2017 baseline.**

*Regional Economic Benefits:* This goal recognizes that the region requires improving local worker skills in two priority areas: increase workers overall employable skill level and improve workers soft skills to strengthen their ability to attain employment that will improve employers’ ability to remain competitive in both the local and global economy.

Strategies/Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Available Assets	Key Partners	Outcomes/Metrics
Objective A: Increase workers skill levels					

Form training teams	Three Rivers College, Missouri Jobs Center	complete by Fall 2019		Three Rivers College, Missouri Jobs Center, ResCare, MU Extension	Teams formed
Establish 2017 baseline of individuals that used available workforce readiness training, as determined by the Missouri Job Center's records	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	Established by April 2019	Missouri Job Center training participation data	Missouri Job Centers, Ozark Foothills, Three Rivers College	Baselines established.
Sign MOUs between local educational institutions and MO Workforce	Three Rivers College	Begin Spring 2019 complete by Fall 2021		Missouri Jobs Center	All relevant educational programs and institutions sign MOU.
Provide Training to workforce and employers	Regional Chambers, Three Rivers College	Begin Spring 2019 complete by Fall 2021	Missouri Jobs Center	Three Rivers College, Missouri Jobs Center	A 10% increase of individuals attempting workforce training
Each county in the region is certified as Work-ready	Missouri Jobs Center, Regional Chambers	Begin Fall 2019 complete by Fall 2021	Three counties (Reynolds, Carter and Wayne) still need to achieve certification	Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	Determine current certification status of each county by May 2019.  100% of the counties in region are certified as Work-Ready.
<b>Objective B: Increase workers soft skills especially within GenX and Millennials</b>					
Create a curriculum template school for middle schools and high schools to use, outlining mandatory soft-skills training	Three Rivers College, Missouri Jobs Centers	Begin Fall 2019 complete by Fall 2021		Three Rivers College, Regional Chambers	Template created.  Availability of the template is communicated to all middle and high schools in the region.

					Template is adopted by 50% of the schools by 2020.
Develop a job shadowing program linking clients to employers	Missouri Jobs Center, Poplar Bluff Chamber, Regional Chambers	Begin Spring 2019, complete by Fall 2021		Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission	Program established with 5 businesses participating and a minimum of 10 student participating each school year.

**Target Outcomes:**

- Increase employability skills
- Educate local communities about local workforce training opportunities
- Connect with underemployed individuals to re-train them to increase employable skills
- Improve soft skills among local workers
- Teach GenX and Millennials the important of soft skills and how to improve them

**Short Term:**

- 1) Create local communication about the regional workforce education goal
- 2) Gather public support, and identify needs assessment for local businesses regarding needs
- 3) Communicate results of needs assessment
- 4) Schedule progress reports

**Intermediate:**

- 1) Increase participation and interest in workforce training programs
- 2) Demonstrate the importance of soft skills when pursuing long-term employment
- 3) Collaborate with local businesses to promote the value of workforce training programs

**Long Term:**

- 1) Create an industry pipeline of local businesses that communicate trends and future worker needs
- 2) Align workforce training and employer needs
- 3) Establish and positive employer/employee networking systems to encourages worker skill improvement

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## *Moving Forward as a Region*

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### *Guiding the Plan Moving Forward*

Upon approval of the plan, the Region's Core Planning Team will establish a regular meeting schedule. The Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission (OFPRC) will serve as the administrative organization for the plan's implementation, evaluation and future revision. All records, reports and other pertinent materials will be retained and maintained by OFPRC.

The Core Planning Team intends to create four committees based upon the goals. Committee titles will be Broadband, Entrepreneurship, Tourism and Workforce. Chairpersons will come from within the Core Planning Team. Once chairpersons are in place, they will be asked to recruit members from within the Core Planning Team, from those attending the sessions and from any other connection or resource available.

Each committee will be responsible for ensuring members are included with expertise, skills and knowledge of the area in which the goal falls. For example, the Entrepreneurship Committee will recruit from chambers of commerce, business owners, lenders, vocational technical schools and consumers. The number of committee members should align with the strategies and actions steps developed under each goal, but the anticipation is committees will have no fewer than seven members.

Each committee will be responsible for implementation of strategies outlined in the plan. When the committees are established, they will be responsible for reviewing the action steps connected to each strategy. The committee can revise the action steps, but not the strategies. The committees will be responsible for submitting a final timeline for completing the action steps, implementing the strategies and achieving the goals to the Core Planning Team. These timelines will become the evaluation tool for gauging success. Each action step will have two people assigned to oversee accomplishments. The two people may be committee members or a committee member and Core Planning Team member.

Committees will be asked to meet no less than quarterly to review the timeline and adjust implementation tactics if progress is not being made. Should a strategy or action step prove to be infeasible or impractical based upon information received during implementation, the committee, in coordination with the Core Planning Team, may revise the strategy or action step. If the strategy or action step is recommended for elimination, all members of the Core Planning Team must agree with the removal.

On an annual basis, the Core Planning Team and the four committees will hold a strategic review session. During this session, each committee will give progress reports and the plan will be reviewed for revision and/or update. Following the holding of the annual meeting, a progress report, including any revisions to the plan, will be provided to each county commission.

The Core Planning Team will use all available resources to promote and report the progress of the plan. Each agency and organization will use existing websites, Facebook pages or Twitter accounts to promote the plan. A website will be created, a Facebook page established and a Twitter account opened, once the plan has been approved and adopted by all county commissions. In addition, broadcast and print

media outlets will be provided a copy of the plan. The Core Planning Team intends to host a launch party to announce plan approval and implementation start.

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## *Summary*

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The Ozark Foothills Region began the Stronger Economies Together (SET) planning process to create a document that could be used as a guide for improving the lives of the residents of the region's five counties in a collaborative manner. While the region faces significant challenges as identified through the civic forum and secondary data, the region possesses the capacity and determination to move the regional economy forward and improve current conditions. The goal is to develop an active approach based upon the region's assets and data.

The goals, strategies and action steps outlined in the Ozark Foothills plan will help to move the region forward, improving economic and social indicators that are typically more depressed as compared to other rural regions in Missouri. It is the desire of the planning team to work with the region's businesses and industries, in cooperation with other partners like secondary and higher education and state and federal agencies, to change the region for the better. SET has provided the tools and the responsibility of the SET partners is to use the tools to build a vibrant and vital region.



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## Appendix

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### Appendix A: List Planning Group Members and Affiliations

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>
Allen, Judy	Citizen
Allen, Norman	guest
Asberry, Brian	Next Communications
Aubuchon, Kyle	Office of Senator Doug Libla
Avery, Dennis	Poplar Bluff City Planner
Ayers, Van	MU Extension
Batson, Greg	USDA - RD
Bedell, Andrew	The Landing
Behrle, Kelli	Southeast Missouri State University
Black, Donald	Carter Co. Presiding Comm.
Black, Donald	Carter County Commissioner
Brown, Jan	Poplar Bluff attorney
Burke, Carrol	AARP
Carter, Alice	Collins Brothers
Cole, Art	AARP
Collier, Mike	M&A Electric Power
Collins, Jordan	Collins Brothers
Conover, Davine	Ozark Federal Credit Union
Cooper, Terry	Mayor, Doniphan
Cordia, Chelsae	DAR (newspaper)
Crook, Karen	Butler County Community Resource Council
Curry, Pat	MU Extension
Davis, Alicia	Mo Job Center
Griffin, Debbie	US Rep Jason Smith
French, Russell	SEMO Insurance
Fuller, John	Job Center
Gardner, Melody	Reynolds County small bus owner
Gitonga, DeNae	MU Extension
Gruidl, John	Southeast Missouri State Univ.
Gulick, Sharon	MU Extension
Hale, Tami	Doniphan Vitality
Halter, Steve	PB Chamber of Commerce
Hedstrom, Marji	DWF
Henson, Robert	Ozark Border Electric Coop
Hines, Cecilia	Rocky River, Inc.
Horn, Renee	Reynolds County EMD
Huber, Matt	Liberty

<b>Jaques, Karla</b>	USDA - RD
<b>Jenks, Cindy</b>	AARP
<b>Jones, Crystal</b>	Southeast Missouri State Univ.
<b>Lampe, Vince</b>	Butler County
<b>Lauder, Dr. Dan</b>	Three Rivers College
<b>Libla, Doug</b>	Missouri Senate
<b>Loyd, Joe</b>	Reynolds County
<b>Maness, Matt</b>	Ripley County business owner
<b>McGath, Penny</b>	Downtown Poplar Bluff
<b>Michel, Matt</b>	Attorney, Doniphan
<b>Moriarty, Bill</b>	Carter County
<b>Morris, Phyllis</b>	MERS Goodwill
<b>Nesbit, Marvin</b>	Schultz Engineering
<b>Proffer, Richard</b>	MU Extension
<b>Ray, Felicity</b>	Ozark Foothills RPC
<b>Reed-Miller, Renee</b>	MU Extension
<b>Reynolds, Angi</b>	USDA - RD
<b>Richardson, Todd</b>	South Central MO Community Action
<b>Rodgers, Samantha</b>	Ozark Foothills RPC
<b>Roy, Julie</b>	citizen
<b>Santhuff, Carol</b>	Reynolds County Genealogy
<b>Schremp, David</b>	Ozark Border Electric Coop
<b>Schrimsher, Erin</b>	SCMCAA
<b>Schryner, Frank</b>	Carter County resident
<b>Shawan, Jeffrey</b>	American Red Cross
<b>Shelton, Alice</b>	Ripley County resident
<b>Sherman, Ed</b>	USDA Forest Service
<b>Sinigest, David</b>	Collins Bros.
<b>Smith, Ann</b>	SCMCAA
<b>Smith, Ron</b>	Prospect Newspaper
<b>Stansfield, Jon</b>	US Forest Service-Mark Twain
<b>Styles, Herman</b>	Bus owner/Board ERASE Fndtn
<b>Teslow, Connie</b>	Doniphan City clerk
<b>Thurman, Tammy</b>	City of Piedmont
<b>Wade, Christina</b>	Delta Regional Authority
<b>Wallace, Wanda</b>	Job Center
<b>Williams, Eddie</b>	Reynolds County Commissioner
<b>Winters, Matt</b>	Ozark Foothills RPC
<b>Wisdom, Betty</b>	City of Bunker

**Appendix B: Training Team Members – USDA-RD and MU Extension**



**Richard Proffer**  
**MU Extension**  
[ProfferRD@Missouri.edu](mailto:ProfferRD@Missouri.edu)  
573-243-3581



**Sharon Gulick**  
**University of MO**  
[gulicks@Missouri.edu](mailto:gulicks@Missouri.edu)  
573-884-0669



**Greg Batson**  
**USDA-RD** [Gregory.Batson@mo.usda.gov](mailto:Gregory.Batson@mo.usda.gov)  
573-876-9304



**Pat Curry**  
**University of MO**  
[currymp@missouri.edu](mailto:currymp@missouri.edu)  
573-882-9509

**Appendix C: Regional Economic Development Planning Chart**

**Regional Economic Development Planning Chart**

Goal 1: BROADBAND Increase the percentage of the region’s population that has access to high-speed internet (>100 mb/s or above) from the current 23% to 35-40% of the population outside of Butler county and from 60% to 75% of the population of Butler County by 2023.

ASSETS	STRATEGY	PARTICIPANTS	ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS <i>Short Term (1-2 months)</i>	BEHAVIORS <i>Intermediate (1-2 yrs)</i>	CONDITIONS <i>Long Term (5-10 yrs)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attorneys and accountants</li> <li>• Three Rivers Community College</li> <li>• ISPs</li> <li>• Funding sources</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Ozark Foothills RPC</li> <li>• SBDC@SEMO</li> <li>• Shared workspace in Van Buren</li> <li>• Existing infrastructure</li> <li>• University of MO Extension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold town hall meetings</li> <li>• Sessions to inform and educate ISPs</li> <li>• Identify ISPs to supply services</li> <li>• Recruit vendors for infrastructure installation</li> <li>• Train contractors and technicians on proper installation</li> <li>• Marketing workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• ISPs</li> <li>• Users, general population</li> <li>• Contractors</li> <li>• Governments (esp. County)</li> <li>• Special Districts (e.g., water, utilities, etc.)</li> <li>• Attorneys and accountants</li> </ul>	<p><u>Attitudes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISPs accept smaller profit margin</li> <li>• Recognizing the value of websites to business success</li> <li>• Accept the idea of a regional economy</li> </ul> <p><u>Knowledge:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Region needs to recognize the difference in resource between counties</li> <li>• Types of broadband infrastructure identified and understood</li> </ul> <p><u>Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building appropriate infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISPs willing to invest and seek funding sources</li> <li>• Individuals / participants launching websites to promote businesses and the region</li> <li>• Individuals and businesses seeking technology education, training and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased revenue from all levels of business due to improved access</li> <li>• Emergence of more IT businesses and services in region</li> <li>• Meet SMART goal</li> <li>• Broadband access in 4 counties increased to 20% and Butler County to 75%</li> <li>• Continued investment from grants to sustain the expansion, including infrastructure</li> <li>• Increased internet presence of small businesses</li> </ul>

## Regional Economic Development Planning Chart

Goal 2: ENTREPRENEURSHIP Increase the participation rate of those seeking small business counseling and/or support services in the targeted clusters of tourism, agribusiness, and forest and wood products by 15%, over the 2017 baseline, by December 31, 2023.

ASSETS	STRATEGY	PARTICIPANTS	ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS <i>Short Term (1-2 months)</i>	BEHAVIORS <i>Intermediate (1-2 yrs)</i>	CONDITIONS <i>Long Term (5-10 yrs)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SBDC – Extension and SEMO</li> <li>• Chambers</li> <li>• Banks</li> <li>• Economic Developers</li> <li>• Delta Regional Authority</li> <li>• SEMO gap financing</li> <li>• USDA-RD</li> <li>• State (DED) financing &amp; tax credits</li> <li>• Ozark Foothills Regional Community Foundation</li> <li>• Three Rivers Community College</li> <li>• Small Business Owners/aspiring owners</li> <li>• City/County Clerks</li> <li>• Local Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of services available from resource providers</li> <li>• Schedule workshop and counseling sessions across region</li> <li>• Testimonials on value of services/counseling from small business owners who received assistance and market via social media, video, print, etc.</li> <li>• Encourage partnerships/collaboration between service providers (such as SBDC) and Chambers, for services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Existing) Small business owners</li> <li>• Aspiring small business owners</li> <li>• Resource Providers – SBDC, Extension, Chambers, etc.</li> <li>• Referring entities – banks, city/county clerks, chambers, business associations, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Attitude:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners recognize potential for their business or business idea</li> <li>• Awareness of service providers and value of/demand for their services</li> </ul> <p><u>Knowledge:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of services &amp; resources available from SBDC, Chambers, etc.</li> <li>• Awareness by service providers of needs of small businesses</li> </ul> <p><u>Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use resources</li> <li>• Business plan development</li> <li>• Ability to market their businesses</li> <li>• Targeted training, counseling &amp; resources (business services) from service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small business willing to seek counseling and/or participate in networks</li> <li>• Increased risk-taking (e.g., starting or expanding their business)</li> <li>• Resource providers expand accessibility to their services and resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of successful small businesses</li> <li>• Attract new residents (new business owners and employees)</li> <li>• Increase in awareness of businesses and business linkages</li> <li>• More support services to small businesses; enhanced services</li> <li>• Increased tax revenue to support services to businesses</li> <li>• Increased jobs</li> </ul>

## Regional Economic Development Planning Chart

Goal 3: TOURISM Increase year-round hotel and campground occupancy rates in Butler, Carter, Reynolds, Ripley and Wayne Counties by 20% by September 2023, compared to a 5 year rolling average baseline, using data obtained from sources such as Missouri Division of Tourism, US Forest Service, city lodging tax data, etc.

ASSETS	STRATEGY	PARTICIPANTS	ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS <i>Short Term (1-2 months)</i>	BEHAVIORS <i>Intermediate (1-2 yrs)</i>	CONDITIONS <i>Long Term (5-10 yrs)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Colleges: Three Rivers, Mineral Area and their outreach centers: Van Buren, West Plains</li> <li>• Public Radio: Pop. Bluff station. Also, one exists already as a student-led project in the high school in Doniphan, as a vocational training program.</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Public agencies: national park service, MDNR, MU-Ext, USDA, RPC</li> <li>• Natural assets:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property tax</li> <li>• Property to utilize</li> <li>• Cooperation &amp; Coordination</li> <li>• Billboards, social media, brochures, TV, etc.</li> <li>• Ability to organize</li> <li>• Create an app. that would outline a map of all campgrounds and hotels in a (TBD) radius. It could also help those traveling through the region to find accommodations (at a discount) as well as to hear about daily tourism-based promotions and tourist attractions off the beaten path.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers</li> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Tourists</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Property owners</li> <li>• Sm. Business owners</li> <li>• Future entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Families</li> <li>• Retirees</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Public entities; such as: Public schools, MCD, DNR, Hwy. Patrol/law enforcement, water patrol</li> <li>• Workforce</li> <li>• Medical community</li> <li>• Faith community</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> <li>• Retired military</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General negative attitude towards preservation; decrease dumping and start a volunteer-based “Stream Team”</li> <li>• Be more receptive to cultural diversity and outsiders; raise awareness</li> <li>• Soft skills-training</li> <li>• Age-appropriate activities (more understanding of need according to age group and family unit)</li> <li>• Educate: residents on the benefits of an increase in sales revenue</li> <li>• Increase pride in places;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be more open-minded to tourists</li> <li>• Eliminate siloes; set up a referral system</li> <li>• Cooperate among vendors on info-sharing even among competitors; create a cooperative agreement among vendors, or a “vendors’ group”</li> <li>• Keep hotels clean</li> <li>• Increase cultural competency of locals to ensure a more pleasurable experience for tourists</li> <li>• Decrease entrepreneurs’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More business, more quality jobs</li> <li>• Increase tax revenue (esp. sales tax) &amp; track strong months vs. weak months</li> <li>• Be known as a “destination” region. Goal: growth would impact.</li> <li>• Better highways and infrastructure</li> <li>• Tracking occupancy rates more</li> <li>• Create a tourism association: organize to be attached to one another; cooperate on marketing: a.)</li> </ul>

<p>State Parks (Peck Ranch); cemeteries (Pratt); rivers &amp; springs (Big Springs, Current River, Jack’s Fork, Black River, St. Francis, Clearwater; hunting access points; MDC property; caves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers Market and Local Artisan’s Hub</li> <li>• Bluegrass musicians</li> <li>• Historic assets (eg. Civil War cemetery where BOTH Union and Conf. soldiers are interred)</li> <li>• Airport</li> <li>• Stories: heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio: use a low frequency/low wattage signal to blast the area; allow tourists and locals to hear about certain section of the highway, as they pass through, as well as updates on river levels.</li> <li>• Driving tour: with audio narration and a printed map linking sites to regional network of tourist attractions as well as national registers of historic sites.</li> <li>• Sync with bus tours organized along regional and national tourist routes.</li> <li>• Hiking guides for guided tours</li> <li>• Outfitters: retaining them and activating their role in a personalized tour experience (e.g. fishing)</li> </ul>		<p>understanding and education about historic places; importance of preserving them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting past fear of losing treasured places due to increased use and degradation related to tourism</li> <li>• Perception that gov’t. programs ignore the needs of locals; locals don’t feel heard</li> <li>• Maintaining exclusivity over land use by locals</li> <li>• “What’s in it for me?”</li> <li>• Understanding natural and cultural assets.</li> </ul>	<p>fear of failure</p>	<p>specific to season and b.) social media campaign for <u>regional</u> marketing; counties work together to overcome competition; website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional map on an app—showing hotels and campgrounds on a rating system</li> </ul>
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## Regional Economic Development Planning Chart

Goal 4: WORKFORCE Beginning June 2019 and ending June 2023, increase participation in workforce readiness training by 10% in the identified clusters compared to a 2017 baseline as determined by the Missouri Job Center's records.

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE &amp; SKILLS</b> <i>Short Term (1-2 months)</i>	<b>BEHAVIORS</b> <i>Intermediate (1-2 yrs)</i>	<b>CONDITIONS</b> <i>Long Term (5-10 yrs)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MO Job Center/WIOA</li> <li>• Three Rivers Community College</li> <li>• Community Foundation of the Ozarks</li> <li>• Res Care</li> <li>• Community Action Agencies</li> <li>• Public Libraries</li> <li>• Local and regional businesses (for job shadowing)</li> <li>• Ozark Foothills RPC</li> <li>• Delta Regional Authority</li> <li>• Work Ready Certified communities</li> <li>• Regional colleges and universities;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job shadowing program</li> <li>• Mobile units from ResCare and Mo Job Center</li> <li>• School boards – referendum for mandatory soft skills training in high school</li> <li>• Employers adaptable to employee's modern needs and abilities</li> <li>• Sign an MOUs with all parties, esp. the CCA for use of mobile units</li> <li>• Focus on skill-sets instead of long-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School admin &amp; teachers</li> <li>• Students – middle school and high school</li> <li>• Corporations / employers</li> <li>• Families (increased support)</li> <li>• County Government</li> <li>• City Government</li> <li>• College and Career Counselors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aptitude knowledge</li> <li>• Knowledge of workforce trends and salaries</li> <li>• Attitude of purpose and achievement</li> <li>• Increase in critical thinking skills</li> <li>• Motivation and self-respect</li> <li>• Parental guidance and role modeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to a skill/trade</li> <li>• Willingness to learn or train</li> <li>• Openness of community to accept young adults as valued citizens</li> <li>• Establish communication and collaboration with partners in workforce</li> <li>• View social services as temporary</li> <li>• Profitable gain</li> <li>• Skilled labor embraced as a benefit to company</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in long-term employment</li> <li>• Increase in number of people with higher wage/salaries</li> <li>• Increase youth retention to communities</li> <li>• Partnership for strong career development; increase and strengthen partnerships related to workforce pipeline</li> <li>• Decrease in young adults utilizing social services</li> <li>• Increase in soft/employable skills (esp. within GenX and Millennials generations)</li> </ul>



<p>such as: MAC, SEMO, Drury, Central Methodist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New home owner assistance programs (USDA)</li> <li>• USDA-RD home loans</li> <li>• 4H, FFA, Mingo</li> <li>• Job Corps</li> <li>• MU Extension</li> <li>• Speaker of the House Todd Richardson</li> <li>• MOWINS Program</li> <li>• Parents as Teachers</li> <li>• Military enlistment and veteran services</li> <li>• Religious institutions</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> </ul>	<p>term training and education (trade intensive courses / certificates)</p>				
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## **Appendix D: Economic and Demographic Data Tables**

The following data tables were produced by the Purdue University Center for Regional Development. The data was used as part of the discussion and development of goals. The data provided in the text of this plan reflects updated data that was prepared by University of Missouri Extension.

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## **Appendix E: Letters of Commitment/Support from Key Stakeholders**

**Ozark Foothills Civic Forum – Nov. 1, 2016**  
**“Define Success for the Region”**

- Growing Tourism to include unmapped areas, bird watching, and encouraging diversity.
- Job training and growth in place.
- Small business incubator in place
- Broadband in place for all counties.
- Lower our poverty rate!
- To develop a regional economic development plan with actionable goals that will help move the region forward.
- My idea of success for our region is we have a well-educated work force and the jobs available for people to earn a liveable+ wage to provide for their families the necessities of life – food, health care, decent house, education – and the extras that make life fun. Our children are our treasure and we need to make sure we invest heavily in them as they are also our future.
- The region begins implementing project ideas from the plan (action taken).
- Actual dollars are received to implement our plan.
- A continued working group or committee that will assist with implementing the plan.
- Outcomes and metrics are collected from implementing our plan.
- If as much of the data as possible has moved from the challenges column to the strengths column.
- Roadmap of actionable steps with a view toward funding and resourcing to begin taking steps – i.e., money and motivated people.
- Strategies that can directly drive economic growth in the next 12-18 months.
- Some sort of organizational structure to lead change beyond this project.
- Success for this project would be a plan developed to support all counties to allow the ability to provide job opportunities, utilize resources already available (natural and human capital) to build medical and educational opportunities and support for all counties and cities so access is available to everyone.
- I would define success as a region, as a place that is self-sustaining and has new opportunities for future residents. New ways of thinking and operating the region is also a measure of success. Alternative energy and ways to protect our natural resources or find way to promote health with trails, etc. Nutrition is also something that needs to be added to our region (community gardens, mobile farmers markets, mobile alternative education).
- A better quality of life for people in our region, through the development of economic opportunities, springing from actual action as a result of ideas generated.
- To me success for this project would be to see more people, outside of Poplar Bluff, with stable, well-paying employment. I would like to see small businesses receiving regional support to grow.
- Well educated workforce, enjoying a quality of life [and] community that has access to well-paying jobs.
- Industry has moved into the area
- New businesses are forming and become successful.
- Tourists are enjoying the new access to a relaxing vacation instead of the fast paces go-go-go of the past.
- Lower poverty rates.
- Better internet services.
- Low unemployment rates.

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- More jobs for the region.
  - Less unemployment in each county.
  - Stronger infrastructure for housing and businesses.
  - Continued partnership of counties in the region.
  - Career training sites.

## **Ozark Foothills – Regional Opportunities Civic Forum, November 1, 2016**

### Opportunities that we will focus on:

- **Workforce Pipeline Analysis & “workforce ready” programs** (17): including job fairs (4 of 17); vocational training (esp. for returning veterans-4 of 17); remedial classes (3 of 17); soft skills training (5 of 17); intergenerational mentorship according to expertise (1 of 17)
- **Broadband/Internet access** & infrastructure/digital communications (9)
- **Regional Tourism “Consortium”** & regional branding to differentiate region (8)
- **Entrepreneurship & growing small businesses**/small business incubation (8)
- Food: increase food access & address food insecurity (3)
- Transportation access (1)/capitalize on hwy. infrastructure for trucking industry (0)
- Marketing region to retirees (1)
- Improving Healthcare facilities; attract healthcare specialists (0) & attract to region for healthcare access esp. in Pop. Bluff (1)

### Other opportunities discussed:

- Market our region to retirees (healthcare, low cost of living, natural resources)
- Expand educational/vocational training opportunities (some county lack higher education institutions)
- Work on our infrastructure (highways and education)
- Become industry hub (easy access with 4-lane highways; but have workforce problems)
- Create more skilled jobs/industry and semi-skilled jobs
- Advance entrepreneurship – grow small businesses
- Greater access to broadband/digital infrastructure; local funding for rural providers
- Create more skilled labor education programs
- Promote tourism opportunities with regional marketing
- Become healthcare hub
- Trucking industry accommodations
- Tourism expansion
- Low cost of living
- Poverty (people/organizations are eager to assist with food; not enough food to go around, education on preserving and preparing food)
- Regional branding and marketing, e.g., Delta Ozarks
- Workforce Pipeline and readiness programs
- Broadband infrastructure improvements
- Food Hub – regional and education
- Increase vocational education for all ages
- Small business incubator
- Tourism expansion

- Healthcare hub and specialists
- Trucking industry accommodations
- Timber (specialty products)
- Creating a healthcare hub for the region (compared to St. Louis, Cape or Jonesboro)
- Creating a regional marketing strategy for the tourism industry
- Marketing our unused/abandoned property for new industry – a lot of developable land is available
- Tourism (water, hunting, trails; but need signage, advertising and amenities)
- Workforce (career center education, TRC; but need more training, address drug abuse and transportation issues)
- Education (HiSet, TRC, Career training; but need broadband, higher standards for graduation, entrepreneurship)
- Tourism/recreation (need to repair substandard road and get digital communications)
- Highway infrastructure – our 4-land highways
- Timber (National Forest; but high cost of timber, price drop on lumber and ties)
- Marketing
- Life skills classes
- Job fairs
- Internet services and cell service
- Educational system (public & private k-12; need to improve reading, writing and math)
- Healthcare (3 regional centers; challenge in hiring and retaining quality healthcare staff)
- Quality of life (affordability)
- Tourism – need marketing
- Digital infrastructure (one 1 provider)
- Highway intersections (easy access and transport; but cost of maintenance)

### Civic Forum Participants:

NAME	ORGANIZATION	COUNTY	Sector
Allen, Judy	Citizen	Reynolds	Educ
Asberry, Brian	Next Communications	Reynolds	Bus
Aubuchon, Kyle	Office of Senator Doug Libla	all	Govt
Avery, Dennis	Poplar Bluff City Planner	Butler	Govt
Batson, Greg	USDA - RD	Boone	Govt
Behrle, Kelli	Southeast Missouri State Univ	all	Educ
Brown, Jan	Poplar Bluff atty	Carter	Bus
Collier, Mike	M&A Electric Power	Butler	Bus
Cordia, Chelsae	DAR (newspaper)	Butler	Bus
Driffin, Debbie	US Rep Jason Smith	All	Govt
French, Russell	SEMO Insurance	Ripley	Bus
Fuller, John	Job Center	Carter	Govt
Gruidl, John	Southeast Missouri State Univ	all	Educ

Gulick, Sharon	MU Extension	All	Educ
Hale, Tami	Doniphan Vitality	Ripley	NFP
Halter, Steve	PB Chamber of Commerce	Butler	Bus
Henson, Robert	Ozark Border Electric Coop	All	Bus
Hines, Cecilia	Rocky River, Inc.		Bus
Jaques, Karla	USDA - RD	all	Govt
Jenks, Cindy	AARP	Ripley	NFP
Jones, Crystal	Southeast Missouri State Univ	All	Educ
Lauder, Dr. Dan	Three Rivers College	Stoddard	Educ
Libla, Doug	Missouri Senate	all	Govt
Maness, Matt	Ripley County business owner	Ripley	Bus
McGath, Penny	Downtown Poplar Bluff	Butler	NFP
Michel, Matt	Attorney, Doniphan	Ripley	Bus
Moriarty, Bill	Carter County	Carter	Govt
Proffer, Richard	MU Extension	Ripley	Educ
Reed-Miller, Renee	MU Extension		Educ
Reynolds, Angi	USDA - RD	All	Govt
Richardson, Todd	South Central MO Community Action		NFP
Rodgers, Samantha	Ozark Foothills RPC	All	Govt
Schryner, Frank	Carter County resident	Carter	
Shawan, Jeffrey	American Red Cross	Butler	NFP
Shelton, Alice	Ripley County resident	Ripley	NFP
Sherman, Ed	USDA Forest Service	all	Govt
Sinigest, David	Cellins Bros.		bus
Stansfield, Jon	US Forest Service-Mark Twain	all	Govt
Styles, Herman	Bus owner/Board ERASE Fndtn		BUS/NFP
Thurman, Tammy	City of Piedmont	Wayne	Govt
Wade, Christina	Delta Regional Authority	All	Govt
Winters, Matt	Ozark Foothills RPC	All	Govt
Wisdom, Betty	City of Bunker	Reynolds	Govt

***Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission***

*Felicity Ray, Executive Director*

[www.ofrpc.org](http://www.ofrpc.org)

573-785-6402

[ofrpc@ofrpc.org](mailto:ofrpc@ofrpc.org)



***Missouri Stronger Economies Together Partners***



***National Partnership for Stronger Economies Together***

