



# INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

## University

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

## Center Director

Jim Youngquist

## Center Location

College of Business

## Center since 1996

## Center Activities

- Technical assistance
- Economic analysis
- Economic development training
- Disaster preparedness training
- Applied research

## Clients

- Local government
- State government
- EDA planning districts
- Community development organizations
- Existing businesses

## Assessment Techniques

- Program staff feedback
- Client Interviews

## Contact Information

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### Institute for Economic Advancement

Institute for Economic Advancement (IEA) is the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's EDA University Center.

Supported by the EDA grant, university money, local and state government money, and other federal grants, Jim Youngquist leads a wide range of outreach activities that seeks to provide research, training, and technical assistance to public and private sector entities and individuals. These activities strive to enhance and advance community economic development throughout Arkansas.

The Center's activities have an added emphasis on building public-private collaboratives that help address opportunities and challenges facing communities.

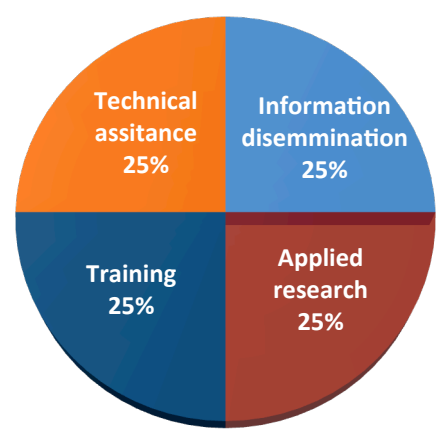
### Activities

The Center provides assistance and research to many local, regional, and state governments, community development organizations, and nonprofit institutions. The Center has a large and widely respected training program on a variety of topics.

Training on the basics of economic development is offered to local

elected officials. In addition, the Center has focused on helping Arkansas businesses and governments prepare for natural disasters, which occur often in Arkansas. Through workshops and resource guides, the Center has positioned Arkansas well for a smooth recovery after the next event.

The Center works closely with EDA economic planning districts and local community development organizations



by providing economic data and analysis, workforce data, GIS maps, and website hosting. For example, to assist with strategic planning, IEA produces reports on major demographic and economic trend analysis, retail analysis, and workforce analysis. In addition, the Center acts as

a facilitator of community meetings for communities' strategic planning processes focusing on private-public partnerships. During these meetings, IEA helps attendees by addressing the barriers that keep a strong public-private partnership from taking place. IEA also provides the community development organization of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission GIS analysis for their spatial analysis services, from potential site location

*"This Center is a role model for all Centers – it is highly connected in the community."*

*-- Center stakeholder*

to evaluating current sites considering expansion. The Center has an active applied research program in general economic trends and produces both a "state of the region" report card and a state of the state report named *Aspire Arkansas*.

### Leveraging

IEA leverages university support in the form of funding as well as office space and utilities. In addition, IEA leverages university data sources and analytical

expertise. Student labor is utilized in the GIS lab, and enables the Center to provide geographically-based analysis to its clients. IEA leverages Center money to obtain other EDA grants, which are used to design a state-wide comprehensive development strategy and for the development and analysis of a statewide regional innovation clusters initiative. IEA also provides research, technical assistance, and training supported by grants, partner contributions, and fees for services.

## Success

### Natural disaster recovery and preparedness – engaging the community

Natural disasters are often the final straw forcing local businesses to close. Businesses still operating suffer damage, disruption to supply lines, loss of sales, and the interruption of operations. When businesses and industries fail or falter, the communities they serve can be severely disadvantaged.

Working closely with Arkansas's eight Planning and Economic Development Districts (PDDs/EDDs) and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC), the Institute for Economic Advancement (IEA) facilitated a two-

phased "bottoms up" planning process that allowed local officials, business people, first responders, regional planners, and others to share their experiences and ideas on improving disaster preparation and recovery. During the first phase of meetings or "understanding sessions," the chronology of events in a natural disaster and the limitations for disaster planning and recovery were identified. At the second wave of sessions, participants developed a wide range of actions and strategies at the local, state, regional, and federal level to improve planning and recovery for local business and industry. As they proceeded through these phases, a reference plan evolved for the state.

In an attempt to keep disaster preparedness on the forefront of planning, IEA engaged staff from the Texas Engineering Extension Service to provide additional disaster preparedness training for local elected officials and leaders in the eight regions. The trainers from Texas traveled to the eight regional offices in Arkansas to provide the training sessions. Each region was responsible for getting a minimum of 15 participants involved.

**IEA has been successful in part due to its strong and successful engagement with the community, achieved by a willingness to bring services directly to clients.**