

# REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

**R**ecruiting businesses to relocate is a cornerstone of the region's economic development strategy. High-profile relocations, such as Nissan North America in 2006, not only add jobs but also send a message to the business community that middle Tennessee is an attractive place to do business. Because companies tend to form "clusters" with peers in their industry, the region holds a competitive advantage in the healthcare, automotive, and music sectors. The region is also well suited to compete for headquarters/business services projects, and its location and quality infrastructure make the area appealing to manufacturing and logistics/supply chain management companies as well.

ECD regional staff will offer assistance to city and county economic development organizations that are interested in enhancing business development processes based on national best practices. While comprehensive business development plans are in place for each of the 13 counties in the region, variation in resources among the organizations charged with executing these plans could result in some counties having more effective economic development processes than others. In an effort to insure that all partners are aware of best practices in business recruitment, ECD's regional staff will conduct meetings to share best practices in the development of marketing materials, responding to RFI/RFPs and engaging in other aspects of business recruitment. It is anticipated that these meetings will appeal most to economic development professionals located in rural areas of the region.

Regional staffs will conduct scheduled meetings with local economic development officials in each of the region's 13 counties to review the project pipeline. Business recruitment is most effective when the various interested stakeholders become involved in the process at an early stage and a primary goal of these meetings is to spur communication about the pipeline of prospects being courted by local officials. While it is likely that ECD regional staff will communicate with their local counterparts periodically

throughout the year as various issues arise, these formal meetings will ensure that discussions about the deal pipeline occur on a regular basis.

## Existing Business Outreach

Existing businesses are responsible for more than 86 percent of all new jobs created in Tennessee. As a result, conducting meetings with existing employers is a key aspect of the ECD's regional staff activity. ECD's regional staff will work with chambers of commerce and local and regional community development organizations throughout the region to cooperatively arrange meetings with large employers that have not been contacted by the governor or commissioner. These meetings will accomplish the following objectives: show appreciation to companies that do business in Tennessee, open a line of communication so that companies are comfortable reaching out to ECD with questions regarding state government (i.e., underscore ECD's position as a "one-stop-shop"), educate companies about state incentives and other forms of assistance that may be available, obtain feedback on state programs and initiatives, identify potential relocation/expansion opportunities, and provide ECD regional staff with deeper industry knowledge and understanding of future challenges and opportunities facing companies in the region.

In addition, ECD regional staff will also accompany the Film, Entertainment and Music Commission's (FEMC) staff and local partners as appropriate on several of its initial meetings with entertainment industry companies in the region. The commissioner will be working with FEMC's local partners in reaching out to gather information about the entertainment industry and identify possible expansion and relocation opportunities. The involvement of ECD's regional staff will facilitate a concerted effort to expand and relocate industry participants to the area at an accelerated pace.

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# NORTHERN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

	Population 2010	Median Age 2005-2009	HS Graduate or Higher % Population aged 25+	Bachelor's or Higher % Population aged 25+	Labor Force (Oct. 2011)	Available Labor (Oct. 2011)	Unemployment Rate (Oct. 2011)	Average Private Sector Annual Income (2010)	Nearest Public Riverport (in miles from county seat)	Nearest Commercial Airport (in miles from county seat)	Nearest Interstate (in miles from county seat)
<b>NORTHERN MIDDLE</b>	1,722,648	35.1	86.4%	29.2%	898,660	77,680	7.8%	\$42,881	Nashville and New Johnsonville	Nashville International	I-24, I-40 and I-65
Cheatham	39,105	38.3	81.4%	16.7%	21,410	1,950	8.2%	\$36,040	Nashville - 24 miles	Nashville International - 31 miles	Direct access to I-24 and I-40
Davidson	626,681	34.3	85.1%	33.6%	339,720	29,590	7.8%	\$49,113	Nashville - 0 miles	Nashville International - 10 miles	Direct access to I-24, I-40, I-65 and I-440
Dickson	49,666	37.5	80.4%	15.5%	24,510	2,500	9.2%	\$33,044	New Johnsonville - 35 miles	Nashville International - 50 miles	Direct access to I-40
Houston	8,426	41.7	79.3%	7.1%	4,080	390	8.7%	\$26,696	New Johnsonville - 32 miles	Nashville International - 79 miles	33 miles to access I-40 and 34 miles to I-24
Humphreys	18,538	40.9	81.2%	12.6%	9,430	990	9.4%	\$41,498	New Johnsonville - 11 miles	Nashville International - 83 miles	Direct access to I-40
Montgomery	172,331	30.7	90.3%	22.8%	73,660	7,630	9.3%	\$31,390	Nashville - 49 miles	Nashville International - 58 miles	Direct access to I-24
Robertson	66,283	36.4	79.5%	14.0%	35,260	3,100	7.9%	\$32,019	Nashville - 29 miles	Nashville International - 35 miles	Direct access to I-24 and I-65
Rutherford	262,604	32.1	87.5%	26.4%	141,440	11,990	7.6%	\$41,452	Nashville - 34 miles	Nashville International - 33 miles	Direct access to I-24
Stewart	13,324	41.2	79.2%	10.7%	6,100	650	9.7%	\$35,985	New Johnsonville - 52 miles	Nashville International - 88 miles	37 miles to access I-24
Sumner	160,645	37.8	84.9%	22.8%	83,640	6,980	7.5%	\$35,448	Nashville - 28 miles	Nashville International - 35 miles	Direct access to I-65
Trousdale	7,870	39.3	71.9%	9.7%	3,830	400	9.3%	\$27,646	Nashville - 49 miles	Nashville International - 42 miles	19 miles to access I-40
Williamson	183,182	38.1	93.9%	50.2%	94,210	6,530	6.3%	\$52,935	Nashville - 19 miles	Nashville International - 23 miles	Direct access to I-65
Wilson	113,993	38.4	87.4%	23.3%	61,370	4,980	7.3%	\$39,836	Nashville - 32 miles	Nashville International - 24 miles	Direct access to I-40

Source: US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development

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A disciplined effort to call on existing businesses should boost the rate of expansion in the region by area businesses. Companies that understand available incentives and see the state as a partner in growth are more likely to invest in the region. Moreover, these businesses are key partners in the recruitment of their suppliers and customers to the region. Numerous business leaders have noted that the seemingly simple act of the State calling on companies and maintaining an open dialogue also goes a long way in influencing corporate decisions about expansion.

## Innovation

Because much of the support for entrepreneurs in the region is centered in urban and suburban

areas, ECD's regional staff will market the services available at the Entrepreneur Center, the Nashville-based accelerator that received a \$250,000 grant as part of ECD's INCITE program, to contacts in both inner city and rural areas of the region. Northern Middle Tennessee is a leader in entrepreneurial activity among the nine regions due to its higher education assets, established industry clusters, and concentration of venture capital firms, but the rural counties in the region have not traditionally enjoyed the same access to entrepreneurial support as their urban and suburban counterparts.

Similarly, we see an opportunity for expanded outreach in some of our more distressed urban areas. To remedy this problem, ECD regional staff will make efforts to make economic development professionals as well as community and business leaders located in the region's inner

city and rural areas aware of the Entrepreneur Center and its services. The regional staff's goal is to have entrepreneurs from each of the region's rural counties participate in an Entrepreneur Center program in 2012.

In addition to this marketing initiative aimed at underserved markets, ECD regional staff also intends to work with the Entrepreneur Center to link all of the area's entrepreneurial support services. This will be accomplished by bringing all of the organizations together that support start-up and high-growth businesses. Through this effort, framework for cooperation between the various organizations will be established.

## Workforce Development

The region's primary workforce-related challenge is a lack of qualified technology workers. The Nashville Technology Council estimates that approximately 1,000 technology-related jobs are currently unfilled in the Nashville area because qualified candidates are not available. ECD regional staff will assist the council in its efforts to recruit qualified technology workers from out-of-state by gathering information from existing businesses on technology-related workforce needs and supporting other research initiatives of the council. It is anticipated that ECD's assistance will help enable the Nashville Technology Council to conduct targeted technology-worker-recruitment activities in at least two out-of-state markets in 2012.

In addition to supporting the efforts of the Nashville Technology Council, ECD regional staff will also cooperate with employers, educational institutions, and workforce development boards to strengthen existing training programs and establish new training programs. Programs run by the Tennessee Technology Centers in Dickson, Hartsville, and Murfreesboro have been particularly effective at crafting programs that provide workers with skills required by specific employers. ECD will work with the various stakeholders involved in workforce development to ensure the continued success of these and other programs.

## Action Items

- *Conduct training sessions for county-wide economic development organizations that seek assistance in enhancing business recruitment processes.* ECD staff will offer every county-wide economic development organization that is interested training to enhance business recruitment processes based on national best practices. The economic devel-

opment landscape is constantly changing, and ECD is well positioned to work with economic development professionals to make sure that marketing materials, RFP/RFI responses, and other aspects of their business recruitment efforts meet the standards of leading peer organizations elsewhere in the country. Organizations that seek ECD's assistance in enhancing their business development processes will attend customized training sessions conducted by Northern Middle Tennessee regional staff.

- *Engage as needed with the Film, Entertainment, and Music Commission (FEMC) in its existing business outreach efforts to help industry employers expand or relocate to the region.* Regional staff will accompany FEMC staff in meetings with existing entertainment companies as appropriate as well as share best practices in business outreach efforts with the commission on an as-needed basis. Regional staff will aim at supporting the FEMC efforts to gather information about the entertainment industry and identify possible expansion and relocation opportunities.
- *Promote innovation in the Northern Middle Tennessee region's rural counties and distressed inner-city areas by leveraging relationships in these counties to promote programs offered by the Entrepreneur Center.* Regional staff will ensure that ECD's efforts to boost innovation benefit start-ups across Northern Middle Tennessee by leveraging contacts in the region's rural counties and in distressed inner-city areas to market programs offered by the Entrepreneur Center. The staff's efforts will result in at least one entrepreneur from each of the region's rural counties and targeted inner-city areas participating in an Entrepreneur Center program.
- *Assist the Nashville Technology Council's efforts to recruit technology workers.* By gathering information from existing businesses on technology-related workforce needs and supporting other related initiatives focused on technology workers, ECD regional staff will help enable the Nashville Technology Council to conduct targeted technology-worker-recruitment activities. The council intends to make targeted recruitment efforts in at least two out-of-state markets in 2012.

*To read more, download the entire Northwest Middle Tennessee Regional Strategic Plan at [http://www.tn.gov/ecd/pdf/Regional\\_Strategic\\_Plans/Northern\\_Middle.pdf](http://www.tn.gov/ecd/pdf/Regional_Strategic_Plans/Northern_Middle.pdf).*

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