

# ALLIANCE FOR RURAL IMPACT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ALLIANCE FOR RURAL IMPACT AWARDED HISTORIC EDA RECOMPETE PILOT PROGRAM STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT GRANT

*To help communities in Southeast Arkansas significantly increase local coordination and planning activities for workforce support and development.*

**Harrisburg, AR-** Alliance for Rural Impact (ARI) has been awarded the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Strategy Development Grant as part of the Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program (Recompete) for “Working for Southeast Arkansas.” ARI was one of only 24 nationwide recipients of this award which highlights the importance of the project and the impact this \$500,000 will have on the region. The official announcement came on Wednesday, December 20, 2023, to ARI leadership.

The Recompete Program is designed to target the hardest hit and most economically distressed areas where prime-age (25-54 years) employment is significantly lower than the national average, with the goal to close this gap through flexible, locally driven investment. Authorized by the CHIPS and Science Act, Recompete is a key part of President Biden’s Investing in America agenda. Recompete will invest \$200 million in economic and workforce development projects that connect workers to good jobs in geographically diverse and persistently distressed communities across the country.

“Beginning in the summer of 2022, ARI began the concerted effort of forming a collaborative team in and around Phillips County, Arkansas, to address workforce challenges,” said Jamie R. Wright, Co-founder, and Executive Director of ARI. “The results of this work identified prevalent challenges within

the region that restrain its ability to make progress. Our team decided to apply for the Recompete Strategy Development Grant in hopes to continue this work on a deeper level and identify additional partners who can assist in this monumental task. This award gives Phillips and the surrounding counties a real chance to move the needle.”

The Strategy Development Grant will allow ARI and its partners to significantly increase local coordination and planning activities that could make selected grantees more competitive for future Recompete funding.

“Economic development takes strong partners to be successful, and as we work to build up the physical infrastructure of Helena Harbor, partners like ARI, are working to build our human infrastructure,” said John Edwards, General Counsel and Economic Director of Helena Harbor & Phillips County Economic Development. “The EDA Recompete Strategy Grant is a crucial investment for Phillips County and the surrounding region, and we support the work ARI is doing to create a stronger workforce foundation in the region.”

“This is an opportunity to see real change in Phillips County and Southeast Arkansas as a whole,” says Jennifer Watkins, ARI Co-founder and Director of Operations. “It will take time to strengthen the community, but the EDA award allows us to build a solid foundation from which to launch.”

ARI could not do this work alone and is appreciative of the local, regional, state, and federal partners for their support of this workforce development work. Long-term commitment, continued and targeted investment and the resolve of the citizens of Southeast Arkansas can make a difference for the future of this region.

**Link to EDA Press Release [here](#).**

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### **About Alliance for Rural Impact**

The Alliance for Rural Impact is a nonprofit organization serving rural communities across the Mississippi Delta and Mid-South. A collective partnership of technical assistance experts, ARI is focused on community equity for rural regions; is solutions-focused and adept in financial stabilization and growth, strategic planning and analysis, capacity building and long-term implementation of priorities. ARI’s primary objective is to facilitate successful transformation of rural communities through innovative technical assistance partnered with investment to ensure better opportunities for rural communities and businesses to compete and prosper in the global market.