

Strong Economies, Resilient Counties: The Role of Counties in Economic Development

Presentation to the NACo Rural Action Caucus

**NACo 2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE:
COUNTY SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS MARKETPLACE**

By

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STRONG ECONOMIES, RESILIENT COUNTIES

The Role of Counties in Economic Development

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Purpose of Study

- **Understand how counties are engaging in economic development**
- **Identify opportunities and challenges that are facing county elected officials**
- **Highlight county innovations to encourage peer learning and promote county role**

Methodology

- **Joint project by NACo and LBJ School of Public Affairs at UT at Austin**
- **Survey (September-October 2013) and case studies (January-March 2014)**
- **480 counties responded to survey (16%)**
- **35 case studies (125 interviews)**
- **Full report--www.naco.org/strongeconomies**

Key Findings

- **Counties are important sponsors of local economic development initiatives**
- **Workforce challenges are at the top of county economic development agenda**
- **Collaboration is key to county economic development initiatives**

Economic Development Initiatives: Share of Small County Adoption through Partnerships

Workforce training 79%

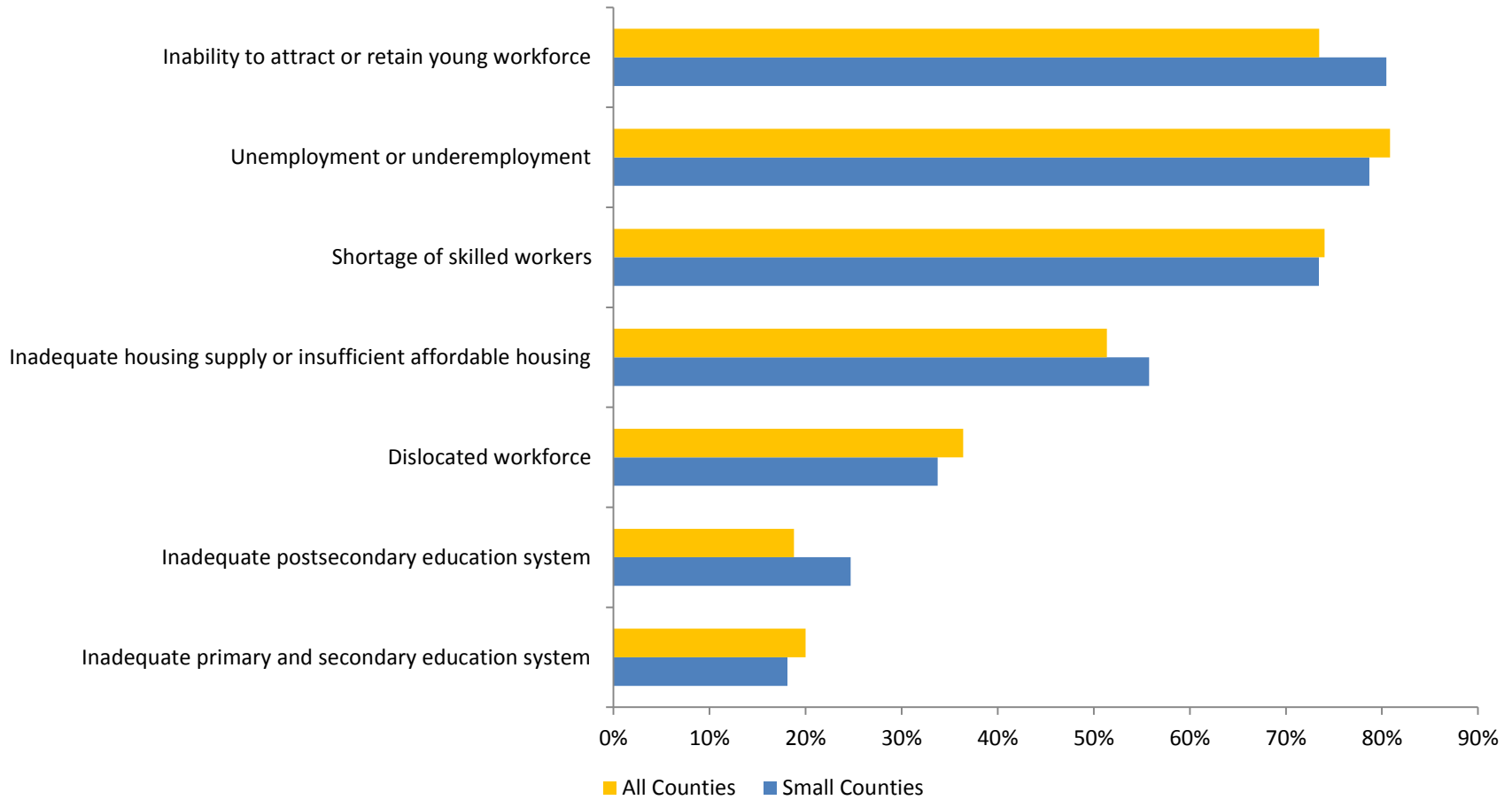
Business recruitment 72%

Regional marketing and branding 61%

Business retention 61%

Disaster preparedness 56%

Workforce Challenges in Small Counties



Business Environment Challenges in Small Counties

Inadequate access to capital 62%

Overreliance on single industry 46%

**Inadequate engagement of
businesses in county's effort 40%**

Lack of developable land 31%

Infrastructure Challenges in Small Counties

Inadequate access to broadband	50%
Inadequate trade infrastructure	39%
Inadequate air service	38%
Inadequate major highway systems	31%

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Click on a county to see its economic profile data.

Use the filters on the right-hand side to narrow your search.

Double-click on a county to view or print a case study of the county government economic development initiatives.

United States

316.1 Mil

Population, 2013

136.4 Mil

Employment, 2013

6.3%

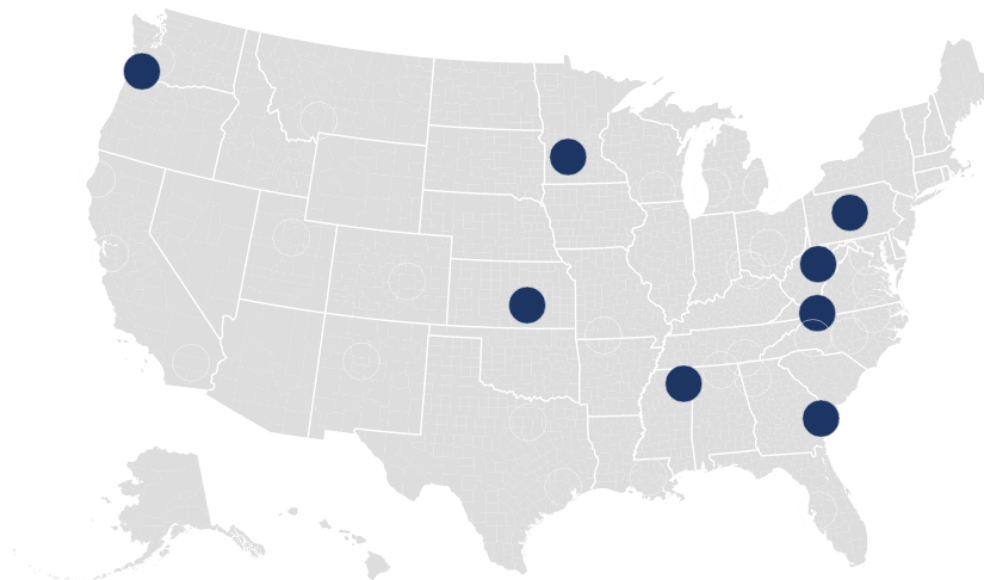
Unemployment Rate, April 2014

\$43.7k

Income per Capita, 2012

28.5%

Educational Attainment, 2012



[Reset All Filters](#)

Filter by Economic Development Activity Type

Workforce Development

Disaster Preparedness/ Industry Diversification

Entrepreneurship & Small Business Support

International Economic Development Initiatives

Infrastructure Investment

Regional Marketing and Branding/ Business Recruitment

Filter by County Population Size

Small

Medium-sized

Large

Filter by Census Region

NE

S

MW

W

But Small Counties have Creative Solutions

- **Workforce Development**
Lee County, NC
- **Strategic Planning-Industrial diversification**
Taney County, MO
- **Entrepreneurship and small business support**
Renville County, MN
Ottawa, MI
- **Infrastructure investments**
SEDA-COG—eleven counties in Central Pennsylvania
- **Regional marketing and branding**
Harvey, KS

Partnerships in Economic Development

Most Mentioned County Partners in Economic Development Initiatives	Small Counties (%)	All Counties (%)
Local chamber of commerce or other local business associations	81.6	83.5
Regional economic development organizations	84.6	83.5
Cities in the county	76.1	83.0
State government	77.4	80.7
Other counties in the region	71.4	65.8

Q & A

Thanks for your attention

Full report--

www.naco.org/strongeconomies