

Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission

Roadmap to Economic Resiliency

September 2021

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Executive Summary

Recovery and Resiliency Planning for Cumberland Plateau PDC

The Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission engaged the help of Hickey Global in researching and analyzing economic opportunities and concerns for business resiliency and recovery from economic shocks including the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to make these recommendations, Hickey Global conducted stakeholder surveying, asset mapping, and cluster analysis within the region and combined these results with prevailing industry research and thought.

This analysis revealed an image of a region with reliable legacy industries, cutting edge technological positioning, and rich natural beauty on which to continue to capitalize. Also uncovered were opportunities in developing education, transportation infrastructure, and workforce engagement which could lead to resiliency difficulties in the future if not adequately addressed. Overall, the Cumberland Plateau region is better situated than many similar regions to maintain economic vibrancy in the face of economic shocks and possibly utilize current market conditions to grow into the future with remote worker recruitment and strategic engagement with the current workforce.

Stakeholder surveying was conducted in person and online over the course of two weeks and included representatives of small and large business owners, local and regional officials, park staff, food and beverage industry, information technology sector, manufacturing and industrial sector, accommodations and lodging, and economic development groups. 52% of those surveyed were in the private industry and tourism sector with 48% in the government and non-profit sector. Stakeholders were evenly distributed across the region with 24% from Buchanan County, 29% from Dickenson County, 35% from Tazewell County, and 18% from Russel County.

Surveying revealed that many groups had taken at least some amount of pandemic assistance funding with the most popular being PPP loans followed by County and Town IDA Grants and Town Cares Act Grants at an even split for the second most popular. While the funding made available was listed as a highlight of pandemic response in both the private industry and tourism sectors, stakeholders also noted the need for better community engagement and flow of information in helping these industries learn about available programs and application and eligibility requirements. Notably, government and non-profit entities also agreed that clarity of information flow would have made regional pandemic response more affective. Overall, government and non-profit entities felt better informed about pandemic information and were gaining that information through official and more reliable sources. This lead Hickey Global to suggest the structure of a pandemic response board for the region which could assess and appropriately disseminate information from better informed local authorities to private and tourism industry stakeholders within the region.

Executive Summary

Recovery and Resiliency Planning for Cumberland Plateau PDC

There was also agreement across stakeholder groups about workforce concerns and remote worker recruitment potential. All stakeholder groups identified job opportunities and wages as primary reasons why workers may leave the region. There were also varying levels of causal weight given to recreation opportunities in the area across stakeholder groups. While a very small percentage of jobs currently in the region were able to be transitioned to remote work during the pandemic and an even smaller percentage are anticipated to remain remote, there is nearly universal support and belief across stakeholder groups for a remote worker recruitment campaign to bring workers made permanently remote into the region. Hickey Global recommends that this campaign be crafted to not only recruit workers but also to leverage best-in-class broadband capabilities to create IT pipelines for remote work between the Cumberland Plateau region and companies in areas like Northern Virginia and Washington DC which could be attracted to the regions lower labor costs.

Asset mapping revealed three primary assets which distinguish the region for workers and business recruitment—exceptional broadband capacity, low cost of living and labor, and availability of outdoor recreation and natural beauty. These three key assets have also proven critical in the pandemic recovery environment and can be immediately leveraged for growth as workers and companies are placing a higher value than ever on these assets. The tourism industry can be particularly leveraged in regional recovery and resiliency efforts by making the region more attractive to a migrating workforce and in helping to improve community services by becoming a catalyst for eliminating blight and advertising the community for potential relocation. This would assist in mitigating two of the key regional deficiencies revealed by asset mapping—lower technology usage among households and lack of human capital.

Two additional key deficiencies were identified through asset mapping which should become a key focus of the region when planning for future resiliency—transportation infrastructure and education including elementary school performance and low graduation rates from high-demand post-secondary programs. Transportation infrastructure was identified as an essential resiliency area in both private industry and tourism sector assessment. Current transportation infrastructure limits shipping access for materials and manufactured goods and limits tourist access to standout natural assets. Investment in education would serve to propel the region’s investment in technology-based jobs. Additionally, high quality entrepreneurial education was seen as a key need by private and tourism industry in ensuring the successful establishment and staying power of business in the region. Investment in education within the region could serve to limit ‘brain-drain’ while also attracting new jobs to the region.

Asset mapping done on industrial parks in the region has shown good development and growth of industrial parks while noting some considerations for future resiliency. Current industrial parks have good utility infrastructure planning and implementation with good strategy around reuse of existing “shell” buildings. Key deficiencies are the size of available sites limiting larger scale projects and distance of existing parks from a major highway for efficient transportation and general difficulty of road access.

Executive Summary

Recovery and Resiliency Planning for Cumberland Plateau PDC

Cluster studies identified six key clusters for regional growth. These clusters were also assessed against industry data from prior economic shocks and shown to be acceptably diversified to work in combination to propel growth in the region without placing it in a precarious position for future resiliency. The six key development clusters are mining, fabricated metal manufacturing, machinery and equipment manufacturing, shared services and IT, tourism, and healthcare. Mining strategy should focus on growing demand for metal commodities, addressing pressing challenges within the industry growing the area as a thought leader, and promoting current capabilities via an online database to advertising these capacities outside the region. Fabricated metal manufacturing strategies should focus on expanding and marketing specialized knowledge within the region, investigate prototyping and product customization, and piloting new technology in Industry 4.0 components. Machinery and equipment manufacturing strategy should center diversification of mining manufacturers into new markets, developing this cluster portfolio by promoting key skills and inputs, and taking advantage of existing inputs to reinforce the value chain. Shared services and IT should pursue growth by capitalizing on best-in-class broadband capabilities to recruit remote workers, developing a shared services program supporting Northern Virginia and DC, and training and supporting residents working from or wishing to work from home. Tourism strategy should be centered around expanding infrastructure to increase access to natural and outdoor recreation assets, developing a mixed accommodations industry with equal representation of RV parks, campgrounds, and traditional accommodations to improve resiliency, and tying tourism offerings to more resilient regional enterprises such as agriculture and mining. Healthcare strategy should follow its current trajectory to cater to an aging populace while leveraging the Appalachian College of Pharmacy to recruit on-line pharmacy operations such as shared services and distribution. A healthcare leakage study is also recommended to determine needed or improved services within the region to ensure income created within the region remains local.

Tourism strategy for the region was requested as a breakout industry with planning and suggestions made in support of this industry. Analysis revealed that tourism in the region may be best thought of at present as aligned with resident needs. Larger tourism events can be leveraged to bring areas up to a standard of readiness by mitigating blight and developing needed visitor services for the region. Resident support and patronage of new and existing tourism ventures is critical within the region currently and is made more pressing during economic downturns. Tourism development should therefore seek to benefit both groups equally. Outdoor recreation tourism should remain the focus of regional tourism development efforts as it has been shown to be more resilient in a pandemic environment than other types of tourism and has been shown to increase area appeal for remote worker relocation. Tourism development should be considered based on which key activity the area is question is best suited for. Visitor services can then be built out around the central activity to ensure a tourism ecosystem which reduces leakage.

Executive Summary

Recovery and Resiliency Planning for Cumberland Plateau PDC

Additionally, it was requested that Hickey Global propose a large-scale tourism asset for the region. To this end Hickey Global has laid out the foundations and required support mechanisms to suggest the region capitalize on its preexisting assets by hosting a cycling rally. This rally would incorporate heritage and agritourism stops with nights spent in each county to ensure full regional activation in planning and in economic benefit. Additional, proposed event details and necessary support infrastructure aligns tourism needs with identified opportunities in other areas of the report as well as addressing identified improvement areas. Tourism is most resilient when thoroughly supported by the host community and tied to key regional industries which are also proven to be resilient.

These three key analysis exercises led to the creation of a private industry and tourism resiliency strategy which addresses historic and current market disruptions and seeks to envision the Cumberland Plateau's fiscally sustainable future. Information was used from the International Economic Development Council's work on disaster recovery, the US Travel Association's work on mitigating pandemic impacts in tourism, and current research in recovery and value shifts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The visions of the future of the region revealed in stakeholder surveying were highly aligned between business and community leaders. Business leaders envisioned increased livability, a strong industrial base, more people and jobs, and a strong tourism economy. Community leaders envisioned new industry, more jobs, more people, and an expanded tourism industry. The furtherance of these visions is found in recommendations presented in each section of this report based on stakeholder engagement, cluster analysis, asset mapping, and tourism planning. These findings should be incorporated into regional and more localized preparedness plans which should be created to support businesses during an economic crises and during the recovery process.

Greater detail on all of the assessment and recommendations made within this summery can be found in the sections of the report below which have been divided out to show results and associated recommendations from each analytical assessment and recommended planning initiatives from business and tourism resiliency.

Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission

Stakeholder Engagement Responses

Responses received May 17
through May 28, 2021

Stakeholder Feedback

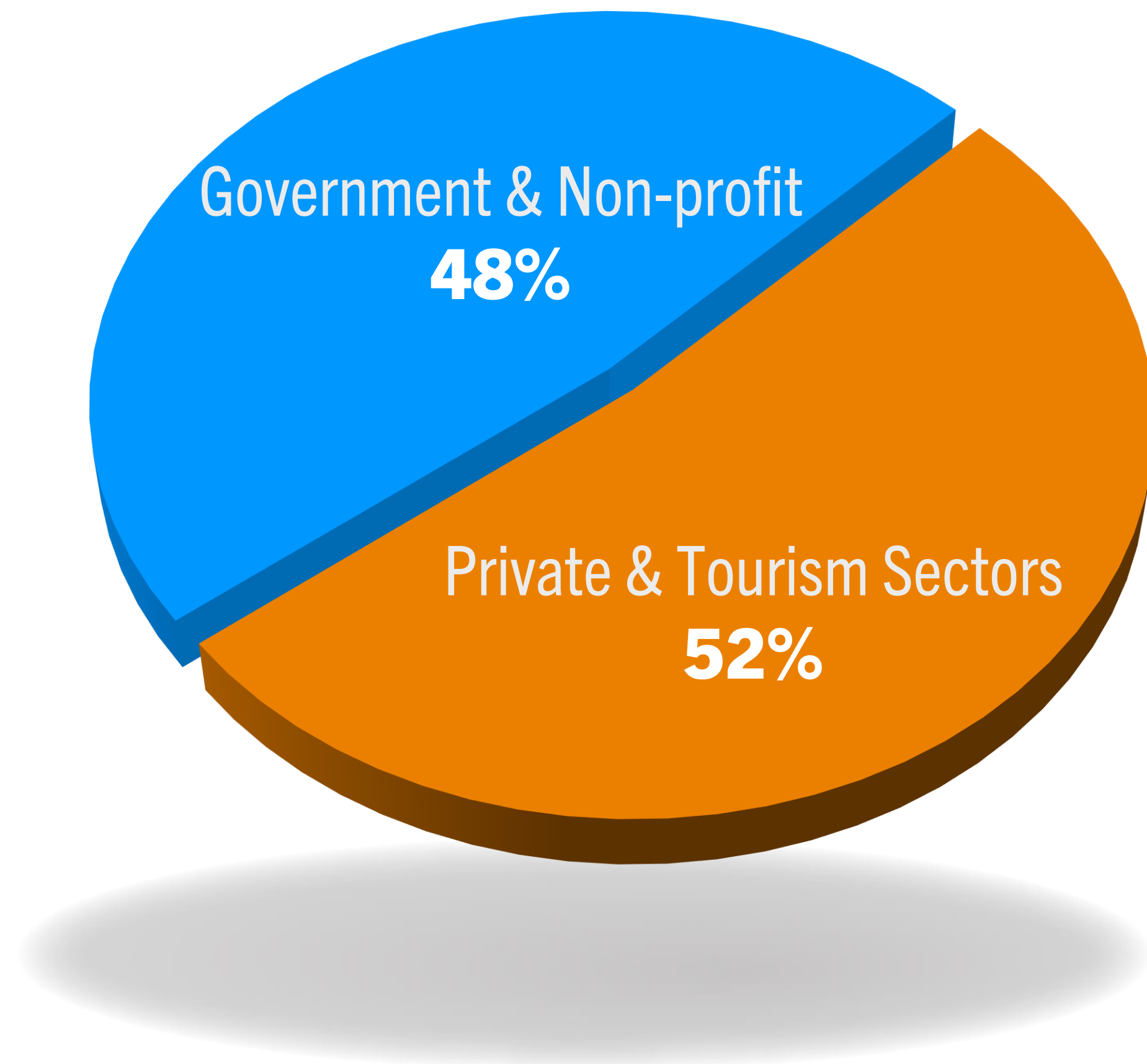
Response Findings

- ▶ Both sectors agreed that better information flows and better clarity of information would improve future responses.
- ▶ Private businesses also had numerous comments on improving financial support while it was barely mentioned on public responses. However, the private sector did list Funding as what was done well during the response.
- ▶ The private sector also gave high marks to Health Services.
- ▶ Government officials relied heavily on Federal, State and Local government sources for pandemic information. Private business used more sources for their information but also listed the Government as their main source of information.
- ▶ Overwhelmingly, respondents felt adequately informed by their sources.
- ▶ For private businesses, only 31 percent of their workforce transitioned to working from home during the pandemic. Moving forward, businesses might or will transition up to 16 percent to home-based work.
- ▶ There is tremendous support by all respondents for a remote-worker recruitment campaign to increase population and wealth in the area.
- ▶ Businesses cite job availability and wages as why they lose workers to other companies or out of the region.
- ▶ Government leaders also think job opportunities and wages are a reasons why workers leave the region. They also think lack of things to do, shopping and healthcare contribute.
- ▶ 71 percent of private businesses are having challenges rehiring or hiring employees with many listing Federal aid as the reason.
- ▶ Considering new businesses that would do well in the area, the top responses were industry, restaurants, accommodations, and outdoor recreation.
- ▶ For public leaders, infrastructure needs focused on continuing to increase broadband in the region.
- ▶ Private sector leaders focused more on support programs for business, education & training and entrepreneurship.
- ▶ To strengthen the tourism industry, more guides & outfitters, better food offerings and more retail & lodging received most of the responses.
- ▶ In envisioning the future, the top responses were more people & jobs, increased livability, a strong tourism economy, and a strong industrial base.

Stakeholder Feedback

Private and Government Sectors

Stakeholder insights are a very important element in developing a resiliency plan. Stakeholders provided input during in person and small group meetings and through an online survey platform.



The overall response rate was 49% with responses almost evenly split between the Private and Government sectors.

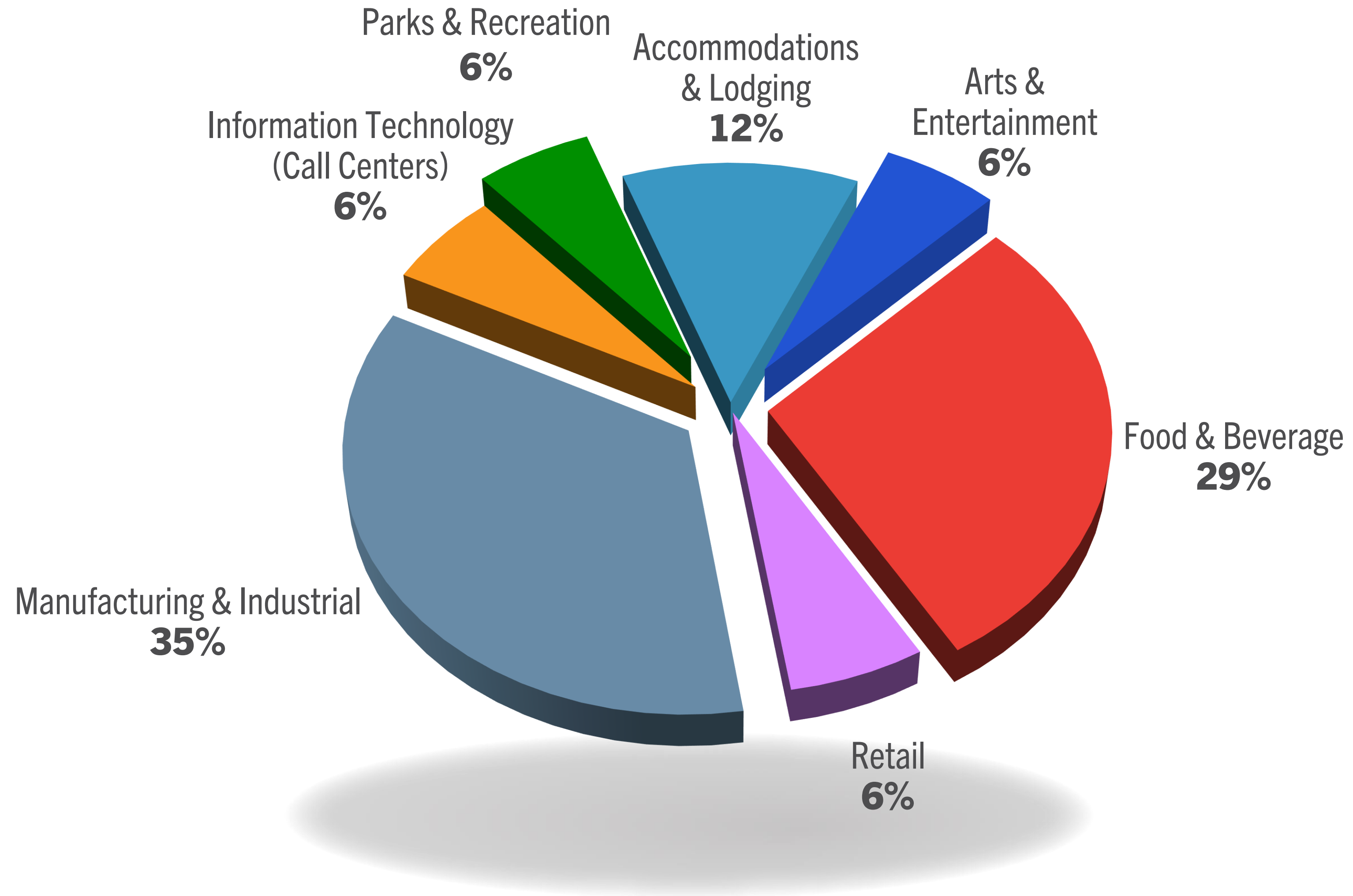
Stakeholder Feedback

Private and Tourism Sector Responses



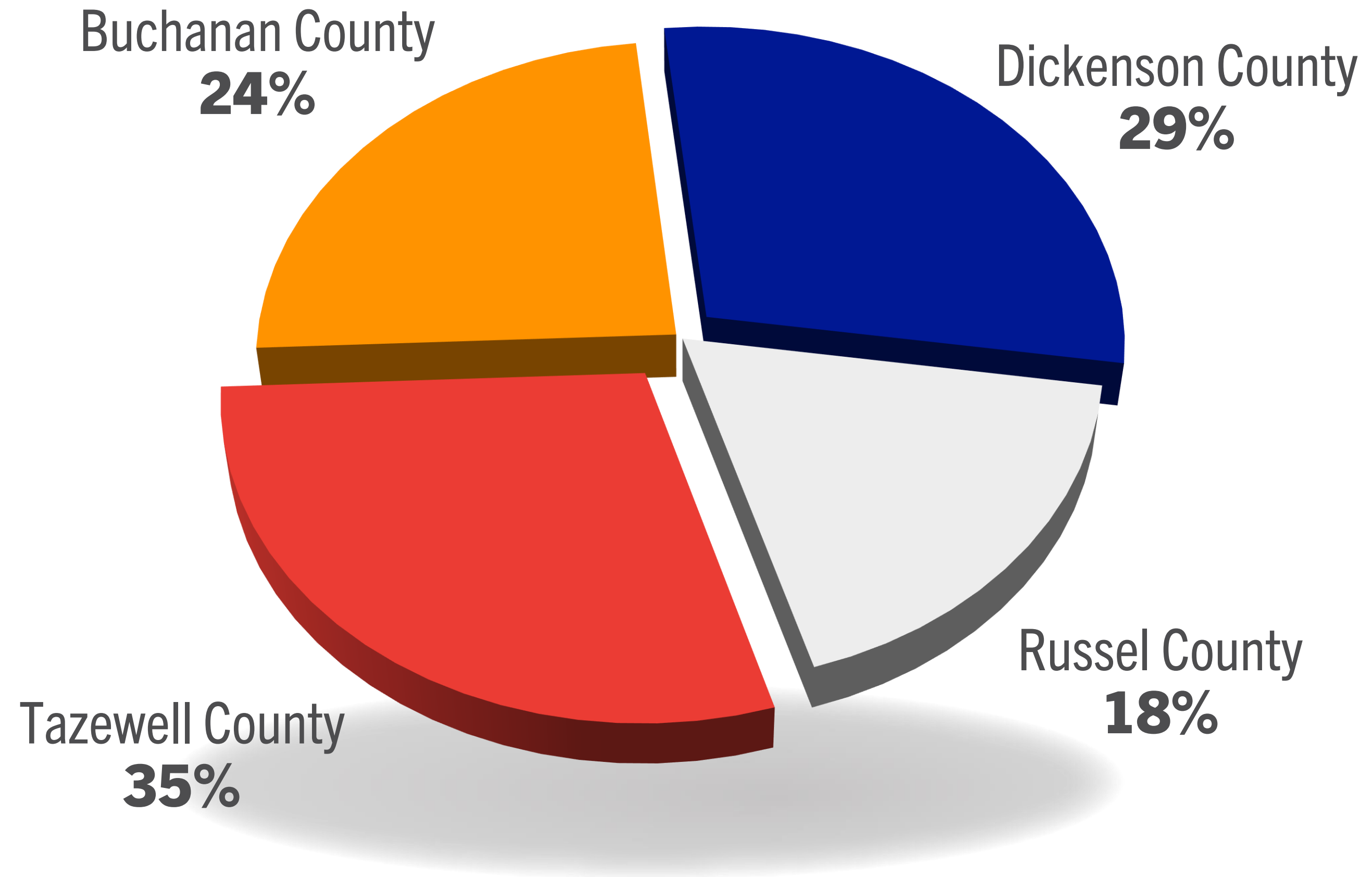
Stakeholder Feedback

Industry Breakdown

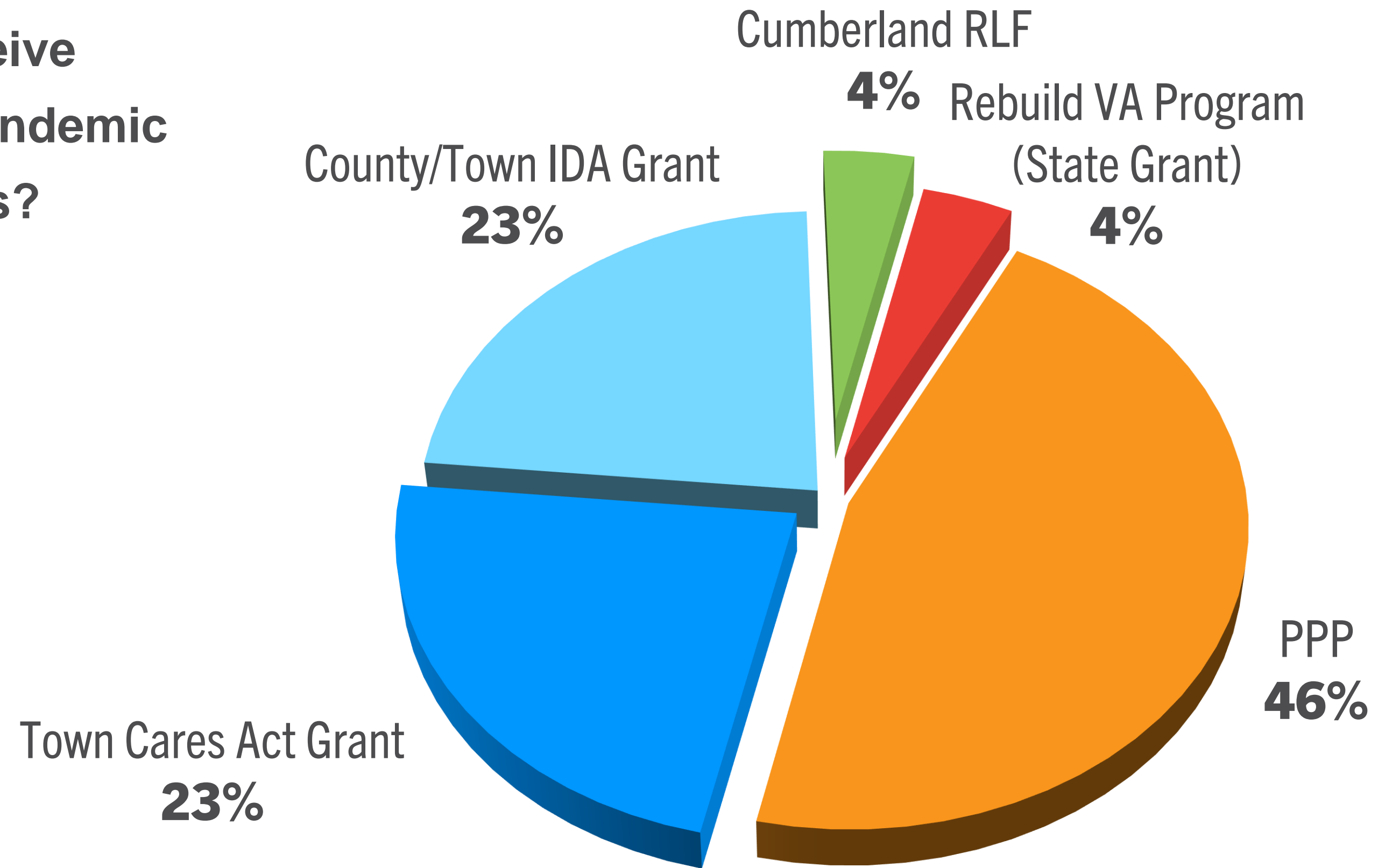


Stakeholder Feedback

Location



Did you use or receive assistance from pandemic response programs?



Stakeholder Feedback

More Effective Pandemic Response

What would have made the region's business-related pandemic response efforts more effective?

Information

- Education component was missing.
- Rules and actual business education around response and guideline.
- Education on the vaccines was lacking.
- More information on actual guidelines as well as information on the reasoning behind those guidelines.
- Banks not informed of grant guidelines.
- Better instructions
- Not much guidance on how to handle COVID guidelines.
- No singular vision for how to handle restrictions and get educated on health needs and safety standards.
- No clear leadership from health department on business specific guidelines.
- Better information
- Difficult to maintain policies for staff and guests due to lack of time, depth of info, lack of clarification.
- Target businesses specifically for information.
- Need better local information source.
- More timely information. Announcements on Friday evenings after close not helpful because you couldn't receive further guidance.

Community Involvement

- More involvement from county and town. Feels like business owners are on their own.
- Coordination between States (border communities).
- Need better regional connection to SBDC.
- Needed better pandemic exit strategy.

Cost

- Would've liked more county support for grants through pandemic and into the future. Matching through VCEDA.
- State grant assistance and PPP wasn't sufficient for small business needs
- Funding a vocational skills program would have been essential to post pandemic recovery.
- Difficulty to get money through larger funds due to restrictions around qualifications.
- Resources got a bit swamped, and grant systems got overwhelmed.
- Costs went up due to reinvestment in businesses and that wasn't covered by grant funding.
- Had to make an investment to meet COVID standards without sufficient funding support for those needs.
- Filled out numerous grants but got bumped back due to grant qualifications. Feels like a waste of time.
- Help with upfront costs to new business to meet pandemic needs.
- People had no information that grant money was being made available.
- Needed funding faster.

Miscellaneous

- Better promotion and active engagement with marketing materials especially when put online.
- Instead of pouring money into individual payments, preferred to see the community colleges funded and staffed with educational programs that can provide skilled workers to the manufacturing industry.
- PPE availability.
- More testing needed.
- Help with Supply Chain issues.

Stakeholder Feedback

Business-related pandemic response

And what was done well (with region's business-related pandemic response efforts)?

Funding

- Grant funding was well run and distributed effectively.
- CARES money was distributed well.
- IDA had funds available quickly. Application process was very easy.
- Turnaround on funds was fast to get people reopened.
- Grant access was smooth and there was assistance in getting funding.
- PPP distribution was done well. Business wouldn't have survived without it.
- The Cumberland Plateau provided me with easy access to funds to build our capabilities which allowed me to hire additional workers.

Community Response

- Board of supervisors were supportive of businesses.
- Help with navigating the language of the mandates.
- County tourism called to check in on reopening; fairly regular communications.
- Everyone worked together.
- Overall, good. Proactive reach out.

Health Services

- Did a great job working with local health department on what was expected.
- Health care stepped up with testing.
- Vaccine rollout did well.
- Contact with local health department office and covid clinics.
- Acted quickly to protect the aging population.
- Rollout of the vaccines went well.
- Hands-on health department. Had active outreach from health department for events.

Marketing

- Promotion for grant programs was done well.
- UVA Wise program helped to develop a website.
- Mask billboards did well.

What sources did you use to gain information about pandemic response, guidelines, and recovery resources?

Government & Nonprofit

- CDC website.
- SBA website
- County did active outreach.
- County website
- CDC website
- SBDC
- Workforce Development Board
- Used small business assistance center at the college.
- County officials
- Heart of Appalachian pushed out recovery information and grant funding
- State briefings
- CDC
- Workforce board
- Workforce development board
- Press releases from governor's office
- DCR had updated and recently refreshed documents.
- Received information from the county with emails.
- IDA let owners know about grant program.
- CDC website.
- Governor's press conferences.
- Local health department on local guidelines and differences.
- Health department for information.
- Straight from health department.
- Health department guidance. Although sometimes document would be issued and then changes.
- Health department provided information, but also acted as enforcement.

Person-to-Person

- Person to person.
- Word of mouth
- Word of mouth
- Lots of word of mouth.

Online

- Online news sources.
- Internet
- Internet
- Internet
- Internet
- Emails
- Facebook
- Found out about grants through Facebook.
- Facebook

Professionals & Organizations

- CPA did application for PPP.
- Information on loans from local banks.
- Accountant
- Chamber
- Chamber emails.
- SVAM - Southwest Virginia Association of Manufactures

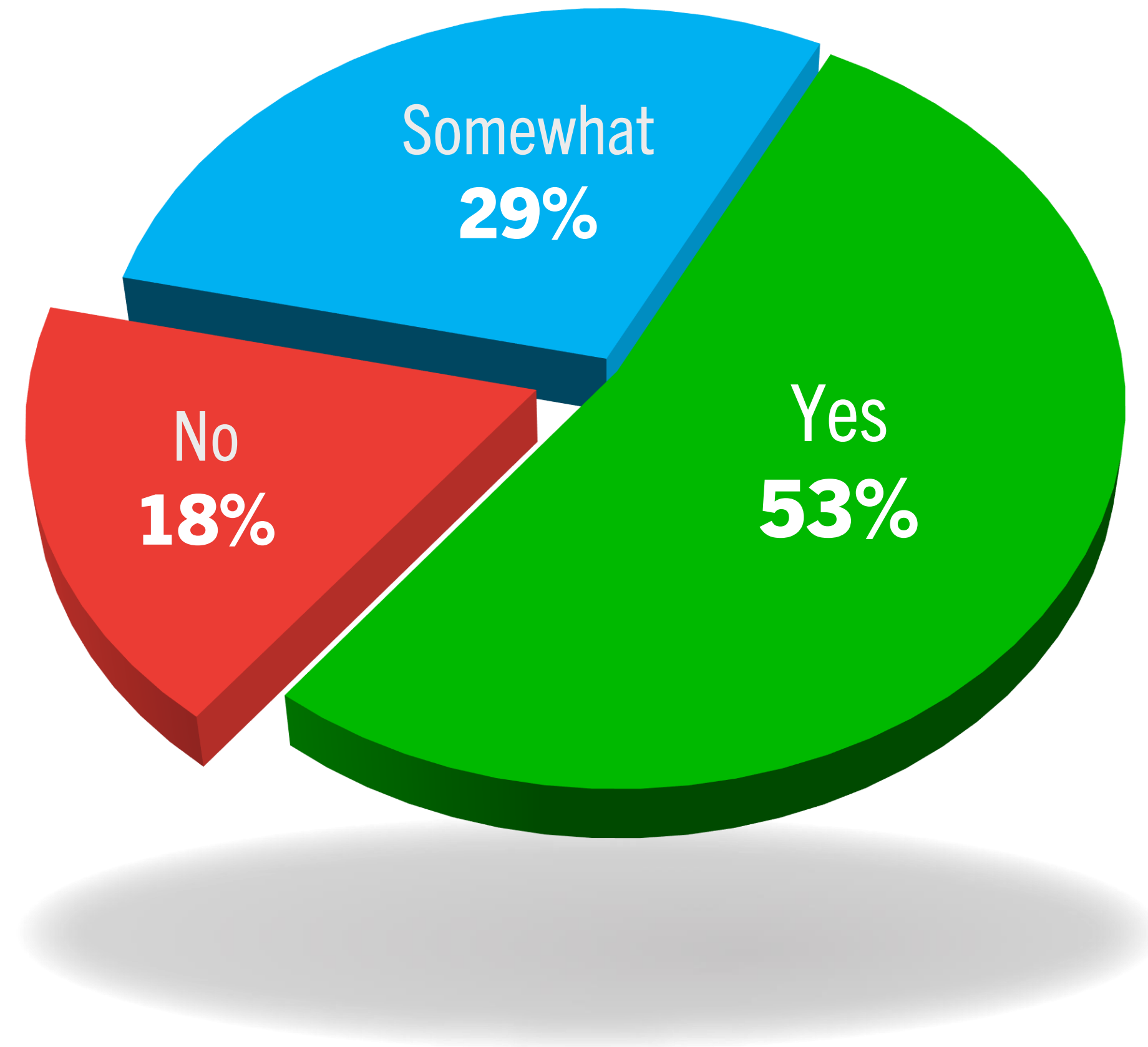
News

- News
- National news but messages were very mixed.
- News
- General news sources.
- Newspaper

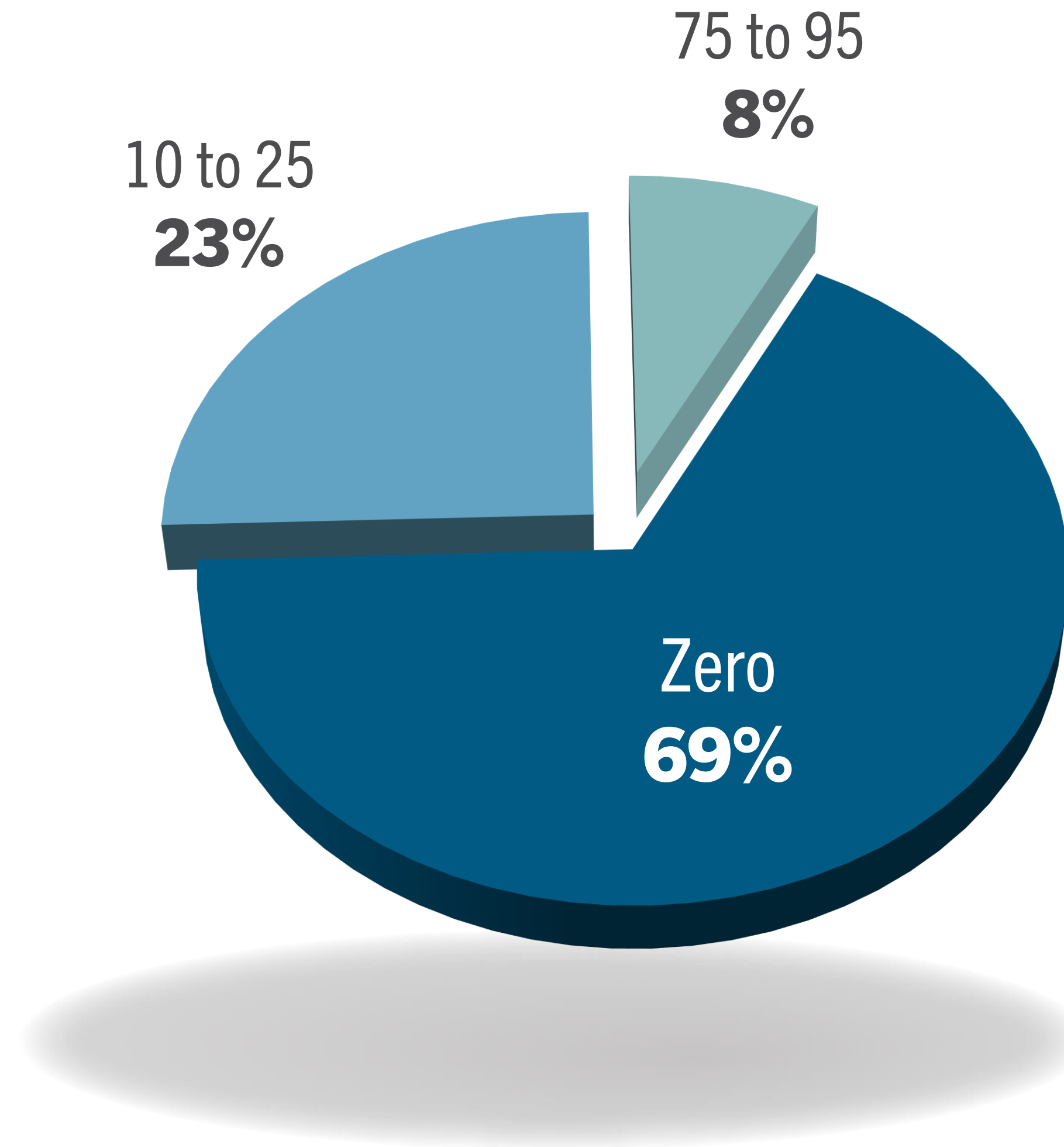
Miscellaneous

- Made a lot of outgoing calls to prepare and ensure within compliance.
- Dual state situation required multi-state coordination. KY and VA response differences.
- Consultant stayed up on information and pushed that out.
- No common leadership sources of information.
- Corporate HQ.

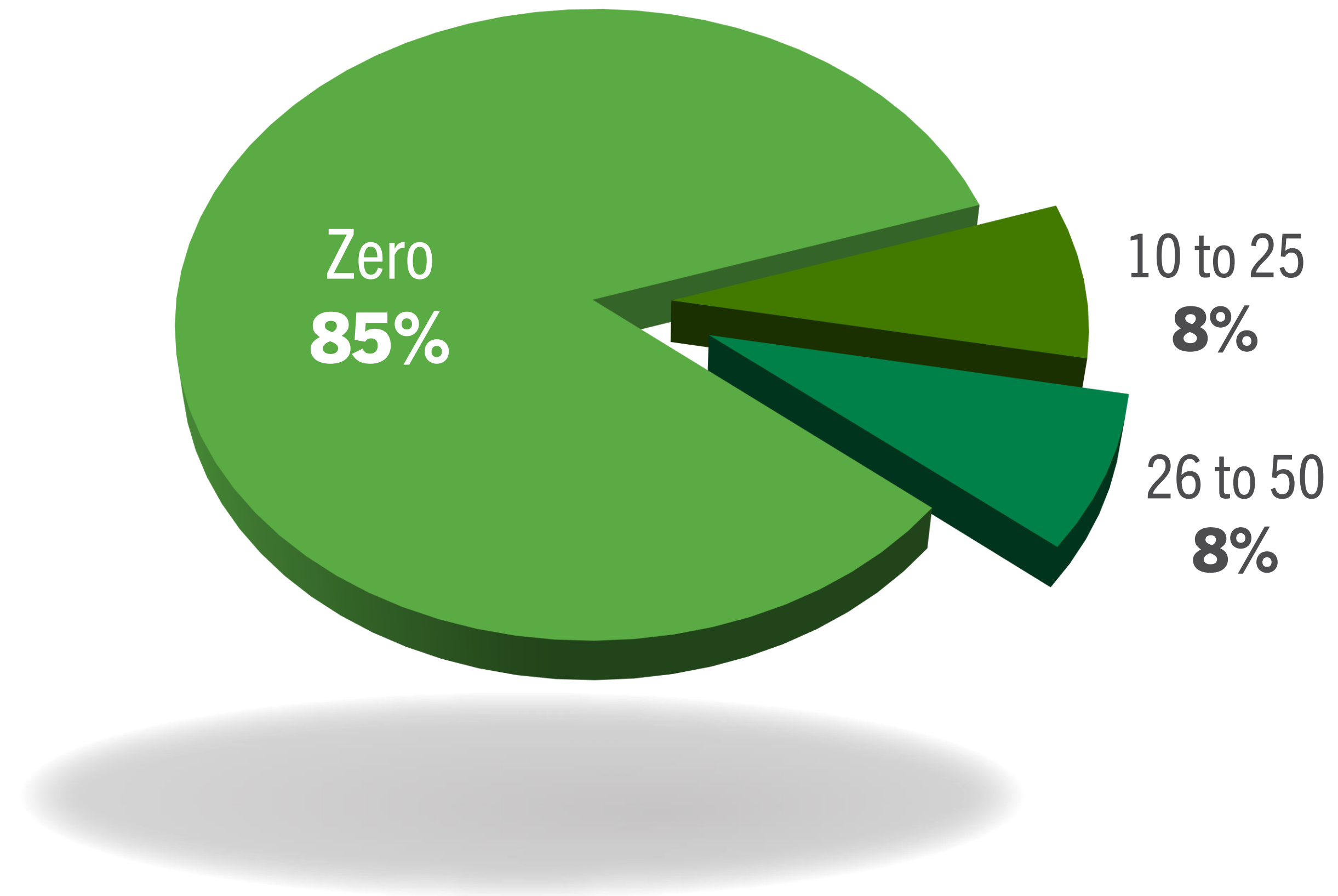
And did you feel adequately
informed by those sources?



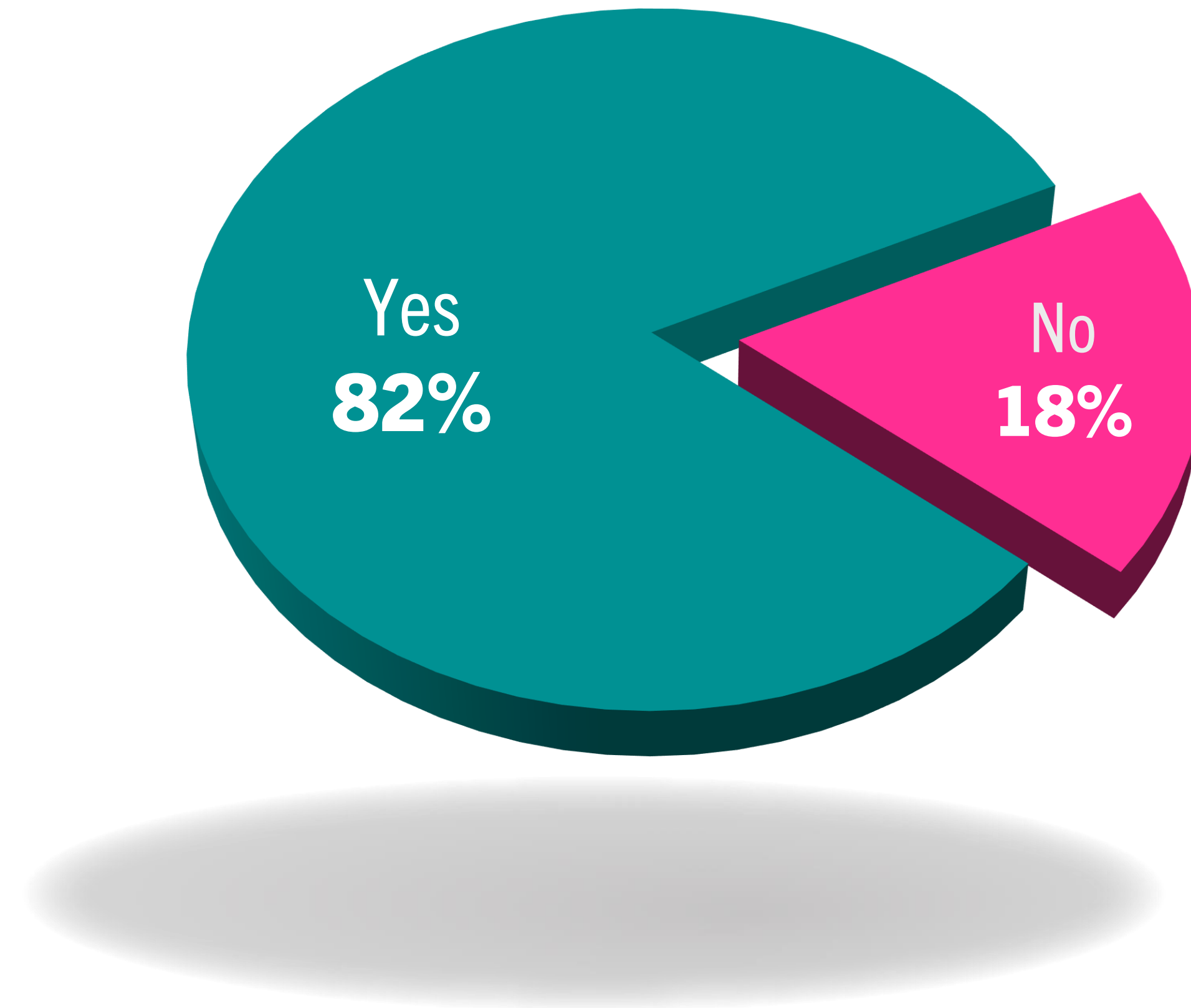
What percentage of your workforce transitioned to remote work at the height of the pandemic?



What percentage of your workforce could or will transition on a permanent basis?



If the region embarked on an aggressive remote-worker recruitment campaign to import a tech-savvy workforce, would it benefit the region?



... if the region embarked on an aggressive remote-worker recruitment campaign to import a tech-savvy workforce, would it benefit the region?

Why?

- There would be a substantial increase in outsiders settling in the area.
- Has seen an increase since the pandemic in remote workers coming to town for travel.
- Would help with population loss.
- Would be helpful for locals increasing restaurant demand.
- Area offers low cost of living.
- Would assist with building back population base.
- More time and space to remote work because the commute is replaced by time to enjoy the community.
- Tax dollar improvement. Additional local support for businesses and buying power of new people coming into town.
- Already seeing some remote worker resettlement in the area.
- Brings in young people with children.
- Anything to get more people to live here.
- Yes, for tech savvy and general workers.
- Need more workers in skilled labor in addition to tech.
- Need IT and cybersecurity staff - FT and PT
- Need IT skills and drafting and engineering.
- Already seeing remote worker relocation.
- Interest in purchasing vacation homes first and then working remote.
- Stemming young population decline and replacing it with remote work.
- Bringing population in from outside to maintain houses and the area.
- Could help support service industry.
- Bring in industry, ideas and experience with new people coming into area.
- Need more technology and marketing workers.
- See more engagement with remote workers who are looking for a break.
- See temporary workers wanting to stay.
- More tax base.
- Fill empty available housing.
- Have seen some remote workers. Can envision a workforce that wants to get away from it all but can also work remotely. Wifi allows that ability.
- Could see the business benefiting, have had some remote workers work from the campsite.

Why Not?

- May become a challenge with housing availability. Rental properties are hard to come by.
- Worried about quality of life.
- Looking to draw in more industry in the county.
- Would love to see the county invest in outdoor recreation tourism instead.
- This region is specifically suited for hands on workers. The tech sector requires access to high-speed infrastructure which does not exist in this county.
- No great housing options, most need renovation.
- Our workers built mines and powered the country. We need to capitalize on those inherent skills.
- Just need basic trainable workers.
- Region has challenges with remote work options, improving access to fast internet.
- Cell service.
- Most people visiting see it as being too far away from major population centers and services.

If your company is routinely losing quality employees, what are they telling you about the factors that led to those decisions?

Job Related

- Issues with minimum wage increase.
- Wage issues
- Wages
- Job availability and wages availability.
- Job availability- seasonality
- Leave because they need more hours.
- Work is a draw, but as options dry up, people are leaving.

Unemployment Benefits

- Fighting against government unemployment.
- No real issues with people leaving prior to pandemic. Now, employees requested layoffs to collect unemployment

Other Companies

- Losing to other companies for driving distance or pay.
- To another business because not a good fit with work.
- Go to another employer for more money and less hours.
- Just go to other businesses.
- Bigger factories are drawing people out of the area. All work related
- People leaving the area are heading to Alabama and Pennsylvania for more steady and higher paid coal mining jobs.

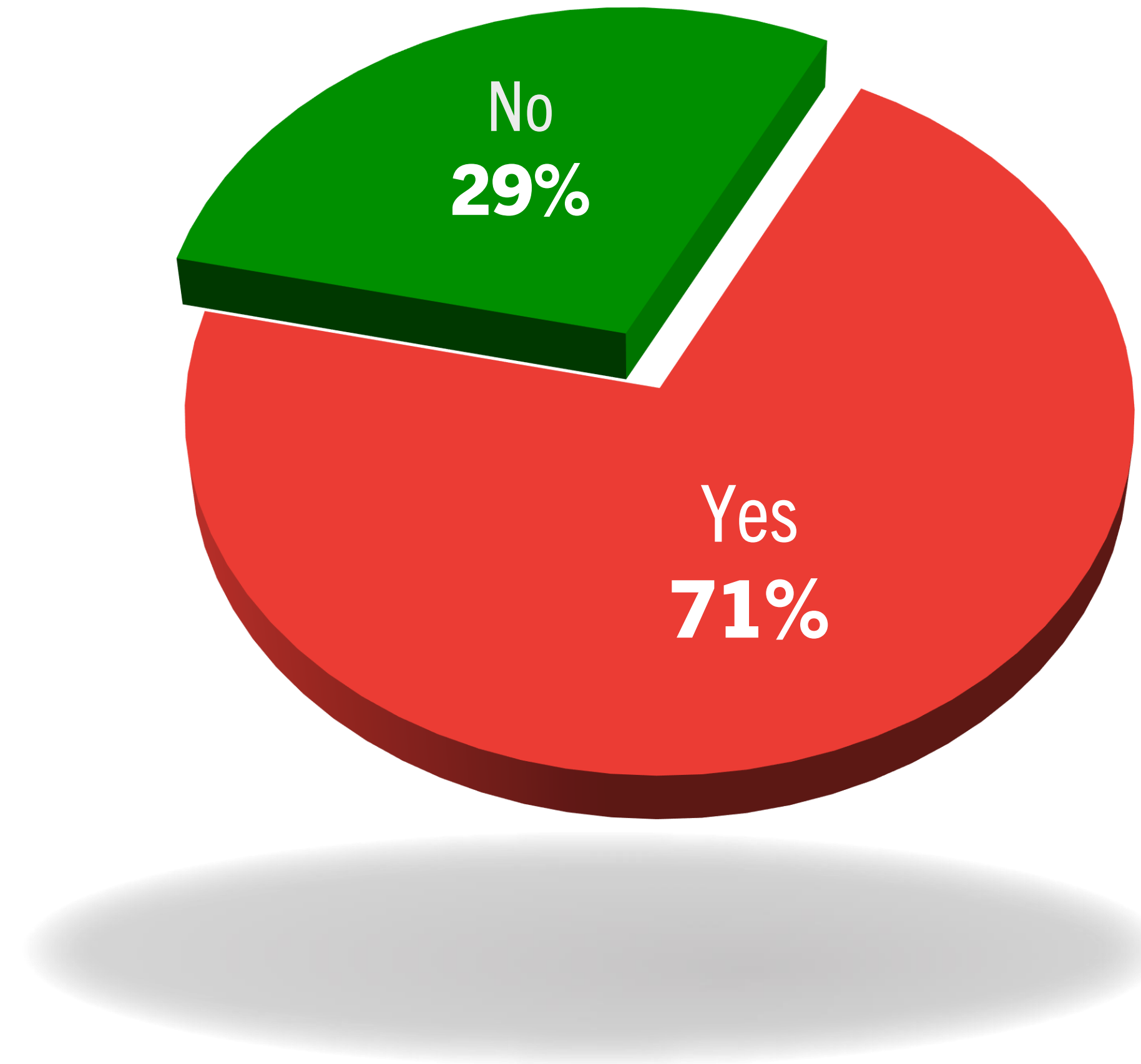
Miscellaneous

- Nothing to do. More activities needed.
- Lebanon is so close to Bristol and Abington that people go there on the weekends and end up moving there.
- Housing
- Lack of daycare
- State parks and tourism have high turnover with seasonal employees.
- Younger population isn't seeing as much opportunity and are going to larger cities for shopping, restaurants, attractions.

Stakeholder Feedback

Challenges Rehiring or Hiring Employees

**Are you having challenges
rehiring or hiring
employees as business
demand increases?**



... are you having challenges rehiring or hiring employees as business demand increases?

Why?

- Initially people were afraid of the virus and exposure.
- Many people just don't want to work weekends.
- Fighting against unemployment insurance
- Unemployment insurance competition
- Dislike of restaurant work
- The county lacks skilled workers
- Federal and State aid
- Uptick of drug use
- Government benefits reducing available labor pool.
- Childcare issues
- No general labor
- Federal stimulus money
- Economic decision based on unemployment benefits.
- Can't pay to compete against Federal aid.
- Cyclical employment.
- People moving out to start their careers.

Why Not?

- No
- Was able to hire out of customer base.
- Have retained entire workforce
- No, small staff

What types of new businesses would do well in the region now and in the future?

Industry

- Manufacturing using skills from coal; hands-on work.
- Manufacturing that complements current businesses
- Additional large companies added to the region as a major employment draw. Love small businesses but sees more opportunity with large companies.
- Manufacturing
- Manufacturing - physical work
- Light steel fabrication
- Mobile home manufacturing
- Boats building
- Windmills
- Industries where people work with their hands
- Aerospace with airport upgrade
- Pallet company
- Trucking (in-bound)
- Battery related businesses
- Energy storage
- Steel manufacturing

Miscellaneous

- Miscellaneous
- Retail stores.
- Business with roots
- Need accommodation.
- Need a grocery store.

Restaurants

- More restaurants with a greater variety of food.
- Visitors ask for restaurant options with sit down dining. Currently going outside of the county.
- Restaurant. Currently no place for people to go late night. Need a nicer, sit-down restaurant.
- Restaurants
- Restaurants, especially breakfast.
- Restaurants - better

Outdoor Recreation

- Outfitter with shuttle, tour, and trip options.
- At headwaters of the Clinch need an outfitters store and sporting goods store.
- Canoe and kayak services.
- Boat launches in the area.
- Bike shop and services like a bike wash.
- Additional water activities on the Clinch River.

What infrastructure or support services are needed to strengthen the region?

Business Support

- Better support for business for emergency events in the future.
- Central information source through the government for business continuation.
- Post pandemic support for how to avoid closures in the future.
- Better centralization of business support offerings going forward to assist locals interested in starting and keeping a business in the area.
- Better building support.
- Construction support for new businesses and buildings.
- Money allocated towards storefront beautification.
- Money towards assistance with staying in business.

Entrepreneurship Support

- Entrepreneurial services for business start up.
- Entrepreneurial support services for people who are interested.
- Start up capital to assist entrepreneurs.
- Grant writing assistance for small business.
- Small business incubator type concept.
- Entrepreneurial support.

Marketing

- Additional collective marketing needs.
- Social media marketing support because when social media has been used, people have arrived directly citing it for visiting.
- More online regional promotion of area itineraries

Education & Training

- Better trade education and funding.
- Education focus - PreK to Community College
- Make UVA Wise more of a high-tech school.
- College trade school is improving but needs a lot of improvement, needs more funding.
- Vocational education
- More certified welders and laser equipment operators.
- Better soft skills training.

Infrastructure

- Better rail access (rail spur)
- Roads have improved but more work needed.
- Logistics hub in region.
- Better rail service.
- Better roads

Miscellaneous

- Continuation of fiber broadband deployment.
- Better cell coverage on 460.
- More daycare options.
- Better hospital services

What is your vision of the region 10 years from now?

Increased Livability

- A walkable, shoppable downtown area.
- Vibrant downtown.
- More main street development.
- Additional retail and restaurants on main street.
- Vibrant storefronts with shopping options and able to walk downtown.
- Coffee shop, outdoor theater for music and arts.
- More walking trails and bike trails.
- Better dining.
- Maintain unique quality and friendliness with expanded business opportunities.
- More for families to do (movies, theaters).
- More cultural activities.
- Better services for younger people.
- Nice parks and water feature for kids.
- Better housing options.

Miscellaneous

- Steady progression, just doesn't want to see a backslide.
- Change mindset, be more self sufficient.
- Quality medical care needs to stay.
- Graduates staying in the area and able to find jobs.

Strong Industrial Base

- A manufacturing center of excellence.
- Business leaders (small businesses) leading the change or advising leaders.
- Better community networking and support between small business owners and county officials.
- A collective business voice for region for all.
- Prosperity.
- Diversified economy.
- Strong manufacturing
- Stability in metalogical coal
- More manufacturing
- Diversified businesses - new and existing
- Better regional cooperation around economy
- Coal will never be replaced, but opportunities in tech.

More People and Jobs

- Community growth through additional jobs.
- More available jobs.
- More high paying jobs
- Improve job growth.
- Need more middle-income jobs
- Job opportunities at all levels needed to retain kids.
- Returning people.
- More full-time permanent residents.
- Higher population
- Want to see a vibrant community to attract people to the area
- Recruit more IT jobs.

Protecting Environment

- More modernization but maintaining community historic beauty.
- Natural beauty preserved.
- Trashcans and dumping out on the side of the road need to go.
- Clean up the community a bit.

Strong Tourism Economy

- More tourism friendly. Pushing out into the community with signage and communication from major tourism draws which already exist.
- See outdoor activities become the center piece of the community's tourism efforts.
- Opportunities for local people to become entrepreneurs in outdoor industry.
- Additional emphasis on the tourism market.
- Bike shops.
- More accommodations.
- Tying ATV and 4-wheel trails into the Tazewell area.
- More services to capture people once they are here.
- More inter-county cooperation in tourism
- More development with smaller lodging, privately owned
- Trail expansion
- A destination for trails and camping.
- Additional rental housing inventory.

What did we not ask, that we should have asked?

What did we not ask, that we should have asked?

- Leadership
- More diversity of investing between different businesses and business owners.
- Not enough for tourists in the winter, indoor activity, things for kids to do.
- Moonshine business gets additional notoriety due to current TV trends.
- Lots of engagement on social media.
- Trying to get more local help with promoting area.
- When events come to the area, would like to see cross-promotion of local business..
- Social media support.
- Home prices increasing. Shortage of housing
- Customers impacted in other more restrictive states hurting our business.
- Lack of childcare.
- School closures preventing work
- Keep progressing.
- Support existing business
- More lodging is the biggest factor. Only a few rental properties
- Would like to see more trail expansion. More people interested in coming back for new trail miles, would eventually lead to business decline with no additional trails added.
- County promotion of Pocahontas Exhibition Mine.
- Would like to see it billed as ATV friendly.
- Wish more people could see the area as a tourist area.
- Lots of preconceived notions about coal towns, towns have a lot to offer.
- There is a lot to offer, and people like it once they're here.

Stakeholder Feedback

Additional Thoughts? – Part 1

- Regional and cross-county cooperation.
- More interaction between county officials and small business owners.
- Has noticed a decline in small business interaction and support within the community.
- More signage and banners between businesses.
- In Summer months we get a lot of people staying in Airbnb properties over Abington due to low cost.
- People using the Lebanon area to push out to other areas.
- Younger people who need lower cost of travel. Most young people traveling are asking about hiking.
- Need additional information on hiking difficulty and trail length. Need online resources for this.
- People are happy to sit on owned properties instead of making those spaces available for businesses to open and develop.
- Weather and water level has been a deterrent for this year. Mostly weekend demand. Lots of local kayaking demand. 70/30 leans local.
- Rental properties are the biggest money makers over the stores. Rentals are somewhat protected from minimum wage increases.
- Had to adjust to seasonal demands to create year-round products. Need to import nearly all products due to supply line issues.
- Back of the Dragon has kept the area's tourism economy strong.
- Need more and better accommodations.
- Competition between communities with trailheads with advantage going to those with better accommodations.
- Locals are using tourism assets in the area- can be seen as a QoL improvement.
- Need additional tourism, but also need local workforce to support increase in demand.
- Hard to find workers staying home with Federal money.
- Need daycare facilities.
- Need schools open to allow workers to come to facility..
- Once stimulus gone, economy will improve; clear example of government and economy disconnect.
- Shift from mining to related strengths.
- Supports tourism for culture.
- Use SVAM to train welders and leadership training.
- Use vocational center students.
- 20% of business comes from Canada. International closures were a huge issue.
- Trying to figure out how to package the BOTD experience into a wider vacation.
- Some shifts in demographics - pulling more from Charlotte region and new biking visitors.
- People find spots on Airbnb and just take the opportunities to get away.
- Supply Chain issues, needed distribution hub for region.
- Stop recruiting coal related industries.
- Need more trade scholarships.
- VEDP Valet Program has helped expand customer base.

Stakeholder Feedback

Additional Thoughts? – Part 2

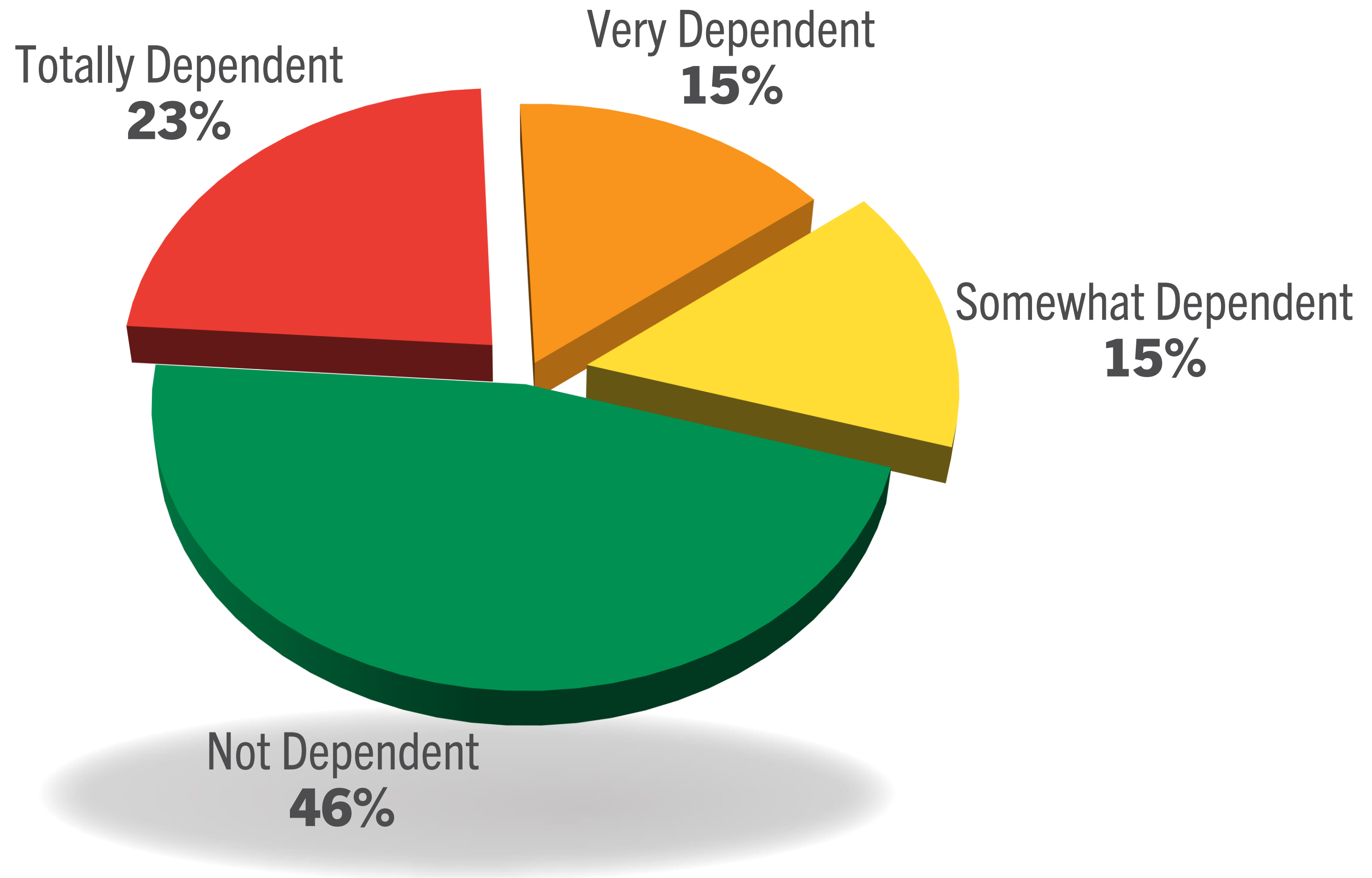
- Residents see the area as declining; tourists see the area as developing.
- Community is transitioning away from extractive resources.
- Would like to see those responsible for decision making go to neighboring communities for partnerships and ideas.
- Currently using Facebook to promote regional attractions to ATV groups and history groups.
- People can find the area and the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine on social media. Have looked at paid social media advertising and rack cards.
- Had a few new businesses open but need additional development.
- UTV Takeover at Southern Gap has been good. More of those kinds of events.
- Have the ideas but finding the people in terms of manpower and finding talent and employees.
- People want more services but are not sure of the community support to actually keep it running in the community.
- Tourism could increase demand but could also be a source of community pride.
- Started business to draw people to the area and support the area.

Stakeholder Feedback

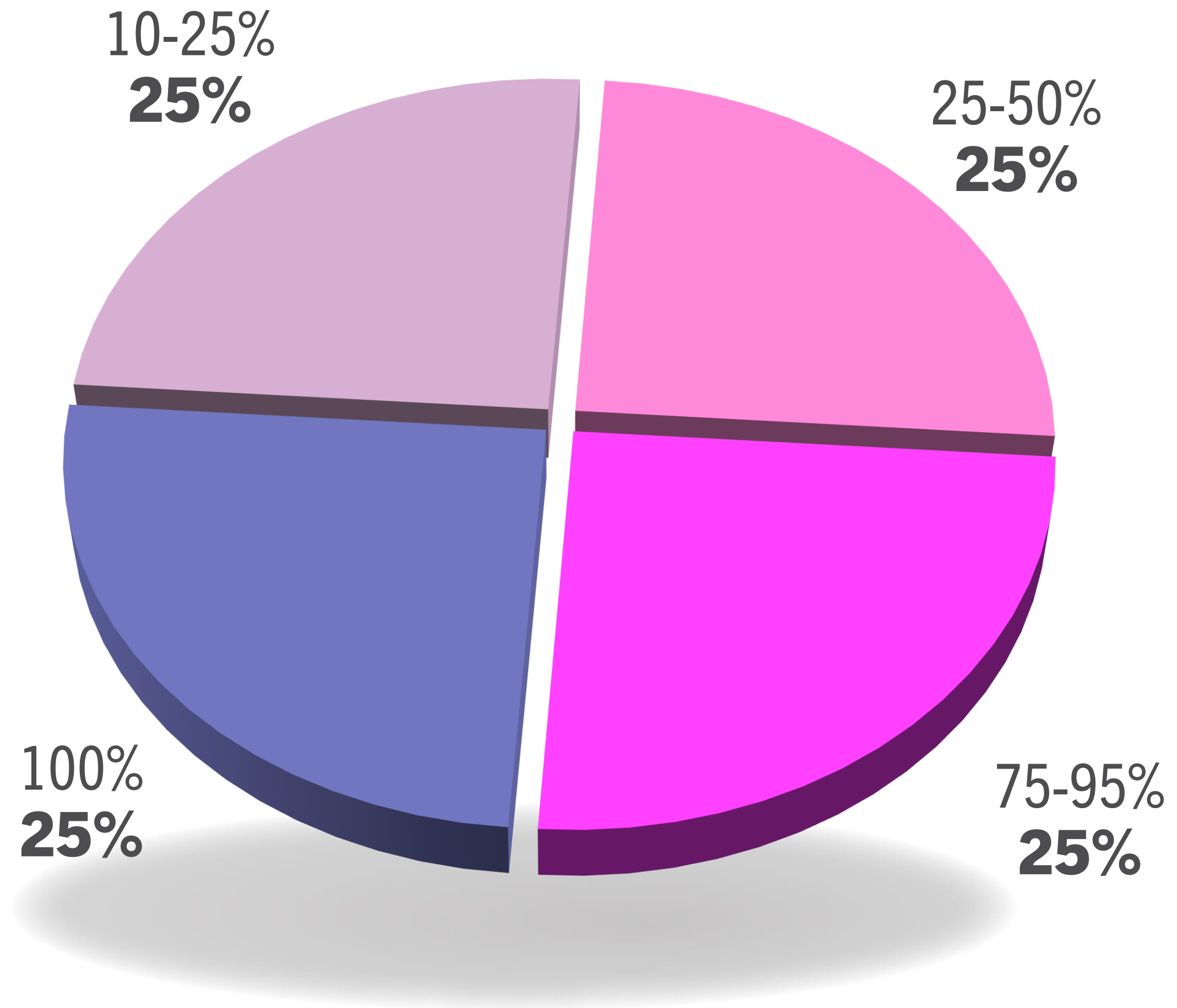
Tourism Specific Responses



How dependent is your business on visitor traffic generated by area tourism?
(Excludes Tourism Exclusive Establishments)



How much of your business comes from tourists outside the region as opposed to local sources?
(Tourism Only)



What additional businesses or services are needed to strengthen the tourism industry?

More Guides and Outfitters

- Lack of outfitters. Newbies to outfitting haven't succeeded.
- Outfitters with guided tours.
- Guides for activities.
- Additional activity guide services.
- Additional guiding services.

Better Food Offerings

- Nice culinary scene.
- Have had a tough time finding concessionaires.
- Restaurants
- Restaurant

Retail and Lodging

- Convenience store
- Gas station
- ATV wash.
- Gas.
- Lodging.
- Rental market for ATVs exists

Miscellaneous

- More regional approach to activities with rotation between recreation sources.
- Additional activities in the Breaks Interstate Park.
- Could use community guide for helping to start new businesses.
- Need additional signage to find trailheads and parking areas for hiking
- Business support related to spearhead trail.

What complaints or frustrations do you hear from tourists about the area?

Accessibility

- Remoteness, difficulty of travel to the area. People expect short drive to everything.
- Lots to do in area but need willingness to drive.
- Some people aren't willing to make the drive to get to these places.
- Roads, and the difficulty of getting to the site.

Connectivity

- Tech complaints- difference in cell coverage between carriers.
- Somewhat of an escape destination, but not a particularly off-grid destination.

Restaurants Choices

- No sit-down mom and pop restaurants. Looking for all local experiences.
- Need more restaurants.
- Need sit down style restaurants and a place to get a drink.
- Restaurants are lacking in variety

Lodging Choices

- Lack of lodging.
- Desire for trail-accessible rustic lodging. Heavy cabin bookings, but desire for larger group facilities.
- Not much lodging.

Miscellaneous

- Desire for water feature- pond, lake, pool- any non-motorized recreational opportunities.
- No place to get gas in town.
- Most satisfied guests are the ones seeking a remote outdoor experience.
- Campfire access, out of the way, reclusive for trail traffic.

Have you seen a shift in tourist demographics during the pandemic? (Examples include age, income, location of origin, interests upon arrival, etc.)

Observations

- Usually pulling from neighboring states.
- 50% of business comes from VA and KY
- Pandemic changes not particularly high. Still seeing similar demographics.
- Big boom in camping. Shifted slightly more local during pandemic.
- Ongoing shift away from older, less experienced community toward more outdoorsy and younger demographic.
- Emphasis on natural assets as opposed to the facilities.
- Anecdotal increase in rock climbing.
- Classic destinations are getting crowded, so people are spreading out. Getting away from urban areas and crowding.
- Mostly returning guests from NC and Ohio. Have seen a pandemic uptick from Pike County and Lecher County KY.
- Shift towards farther flung markets. Heavy influx from NY. Major draw was the ATV trails.
- Most travelers outside of the immediate area are coming from outside of the state entirely. Lots of NC, SC, PA, OH
- Not much shift

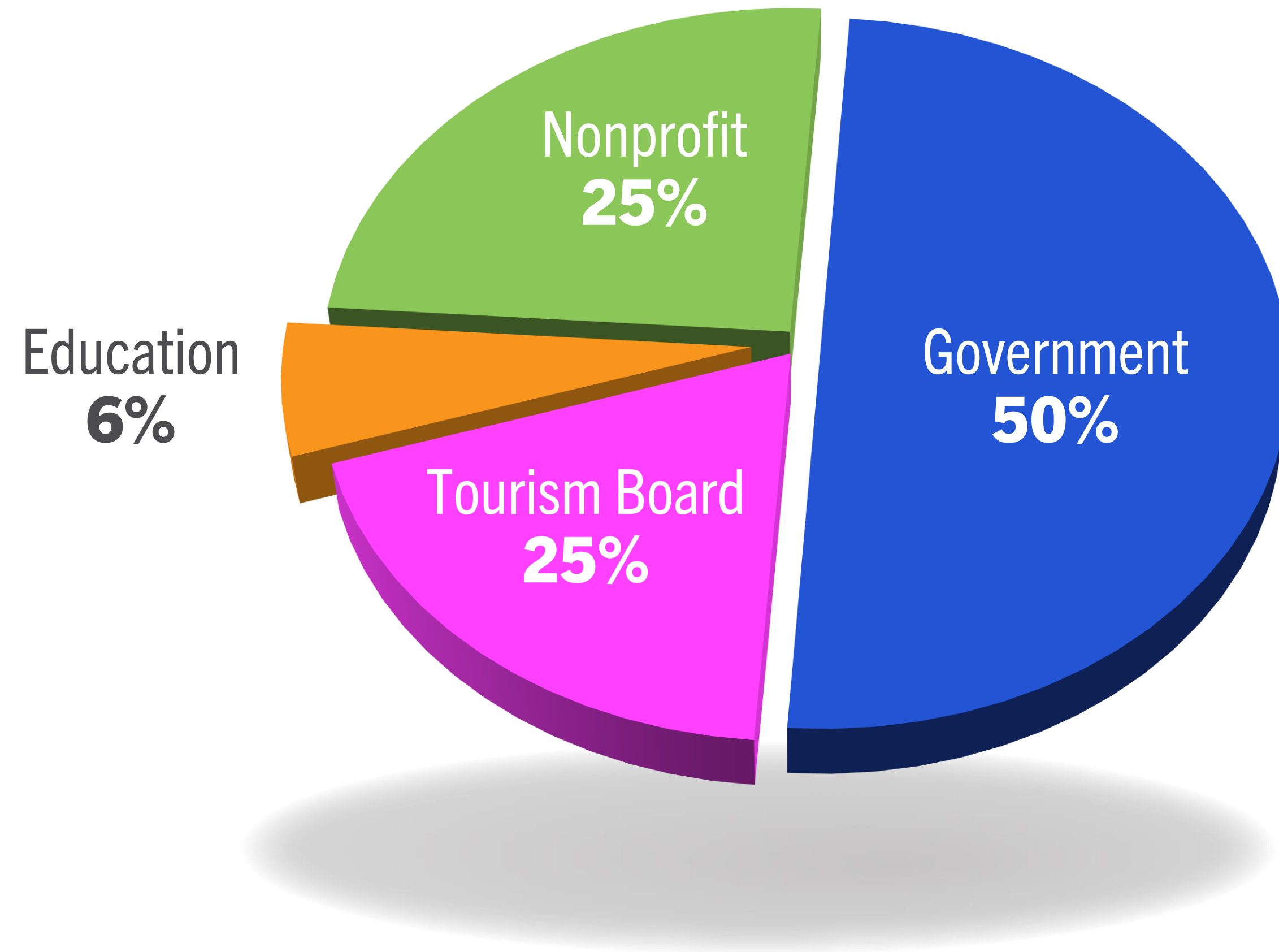
Stakeholder Feedback

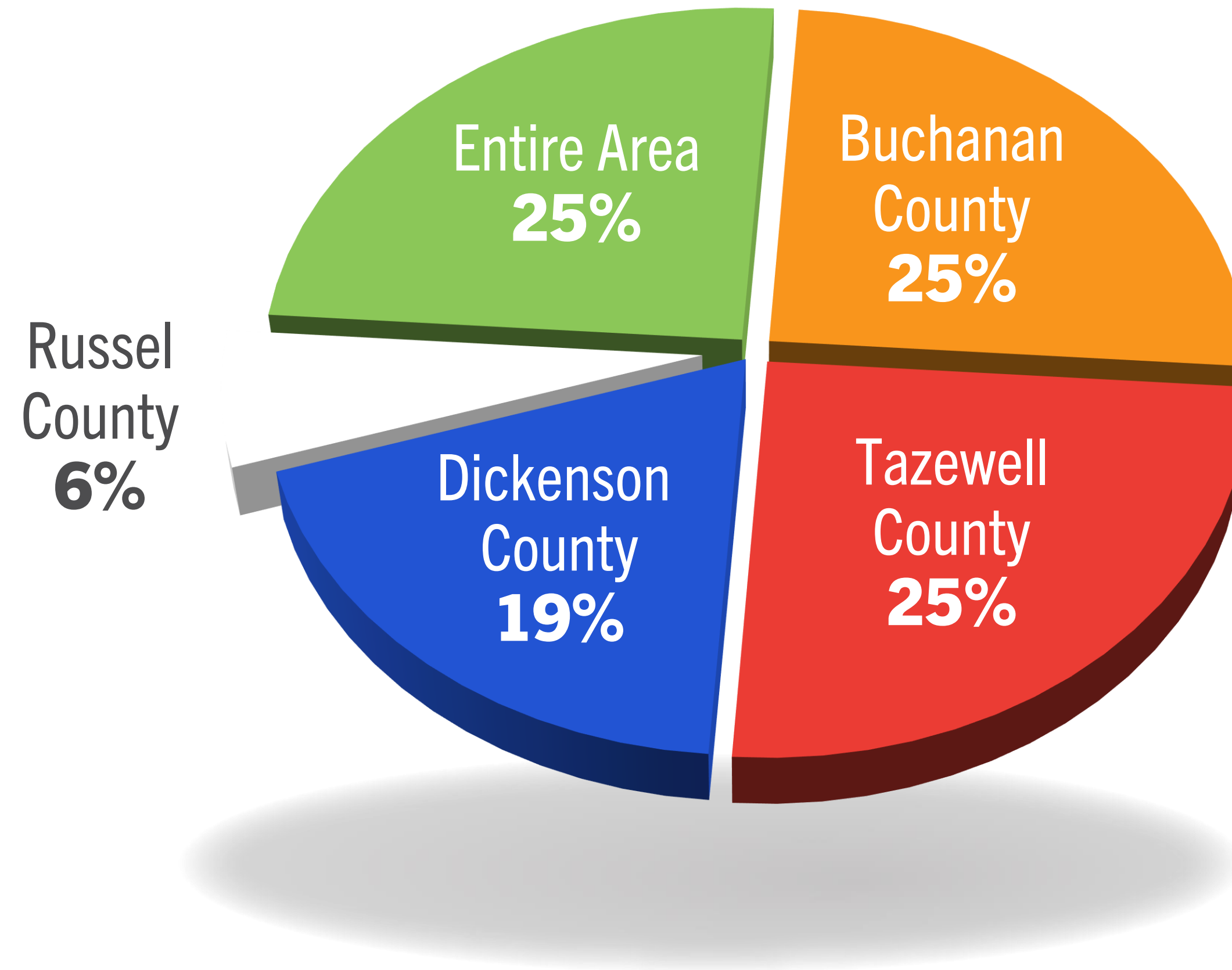
Government and Nonprofit Sector
Responses



Stakeholder Feedback

Sector Breakdown





What would have made the region's business-related pandemic response efforts more effective?

Clarity

- Lack of clarification and diverse interpretation of information available, clearer direction was needed.
- Lots of confusion around qualifications.
- Needed clear process.
- Could have been a central information source since each county also had its own grants so confusion around criteria.
- Early confusion over what would be helpful, try to create a universal application to be able to update each year, have those numbers available, would allow them to know when anything happens what they might be able to do and how they could apply.
- Orders came quickly which caused business panic, business adjustments and learning, right way kept changing, trying to stay up to date, and find unified approach.
- Lack of steady information, info changed constantly with lots of uncertainty of federal and state info.
- More straightforward application.

Nothing

- I think it was handled well.
- Nothing.
- I think business response was about right. It was as effective as could be expected.

Reaction

- Had over reaction and then under reaction.
- The "shut down" imposed by the State should have been imposed on a regional basis. Our economy was prematurely "shut down" when the virus was not present or at least not prevalent here.
- Then when the virus came in the fall residents were fatigued with the limitations. This led to less public cooperation at the critical juncture in October and November.
- Ironically, the "shut down" made the problem worse here and prolonged it.
- Response delayed due to cases in area delayed.

Miscellaneous

- More community outreach for info in rural areas.
- No town representatives to give info for what they can be doing to help the public.
- Federal grants need to be prepared in advance.
- Banks were having a hard time knowing how to loan and distribute funds; PPP loans were hardest

And what was done well?

Communication

- Rally calls gathered info and group camaraderie, communication between organizations increased.
- Calls together plus individual outreach.
- Keeping people updated.
- VTC did industry meetings, monthly calls were helpful.
- Partnered with UVA WISE, gather regularly to provide a resource for those at high level in the industry within gov and non-profit orgs.
- Marketing efforts, pushing people towards time saving tech.
- Rally calls were useful for keeping people calm.
- Communication and togetherness. We were supported from multiple sources.

Funding

- Funding grants
- We were awash in funding to help businesses.

Overall Effort

- Comprehensive response.
- No complaints
- Good job overall
- In general, went well.
- I think it was handled well.

Miscellaneous

- Scarecrow campaign.
- Followed recommendations from State.
- To some extent , quick reaction from business owners.

What sources did you use to gain information about pandemic response, guidelines, and recovery resources?

State Government

- VEDP
- Virginia health webpage
- SBDC
- State Gov
- State Government
- State government
- State
- Department of Treasury
- VDH
- Virginia Department of Health
- Governor's calls were not useful for tourism and funding.
- Governor calls were useful for guidelines
- Gov. Northam's office
- State website
- VDH
- CICV (Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia)

Local Government

- County
- County Administration
- County emergency management
- County administrator
- Local gov't website
- Health Departments
- Health department
- Local Health Department

Federal Government

- Federal website
- CDC
- CDC
- CDC
- CDC
- Federal Government
- Federal Government

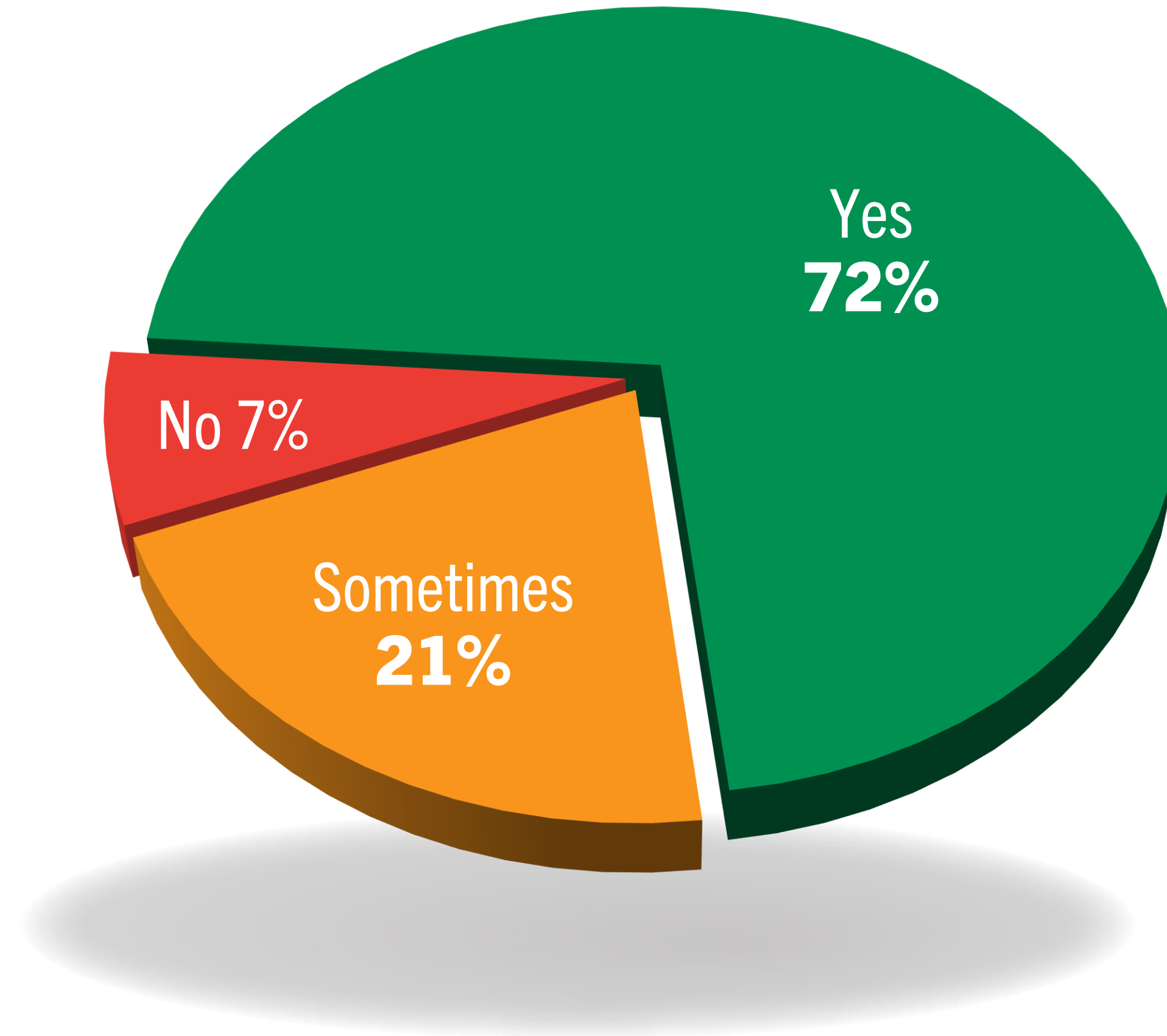
Social Media

- Social media
- Facebook
- Social media
- Industry tourism group on Facebook

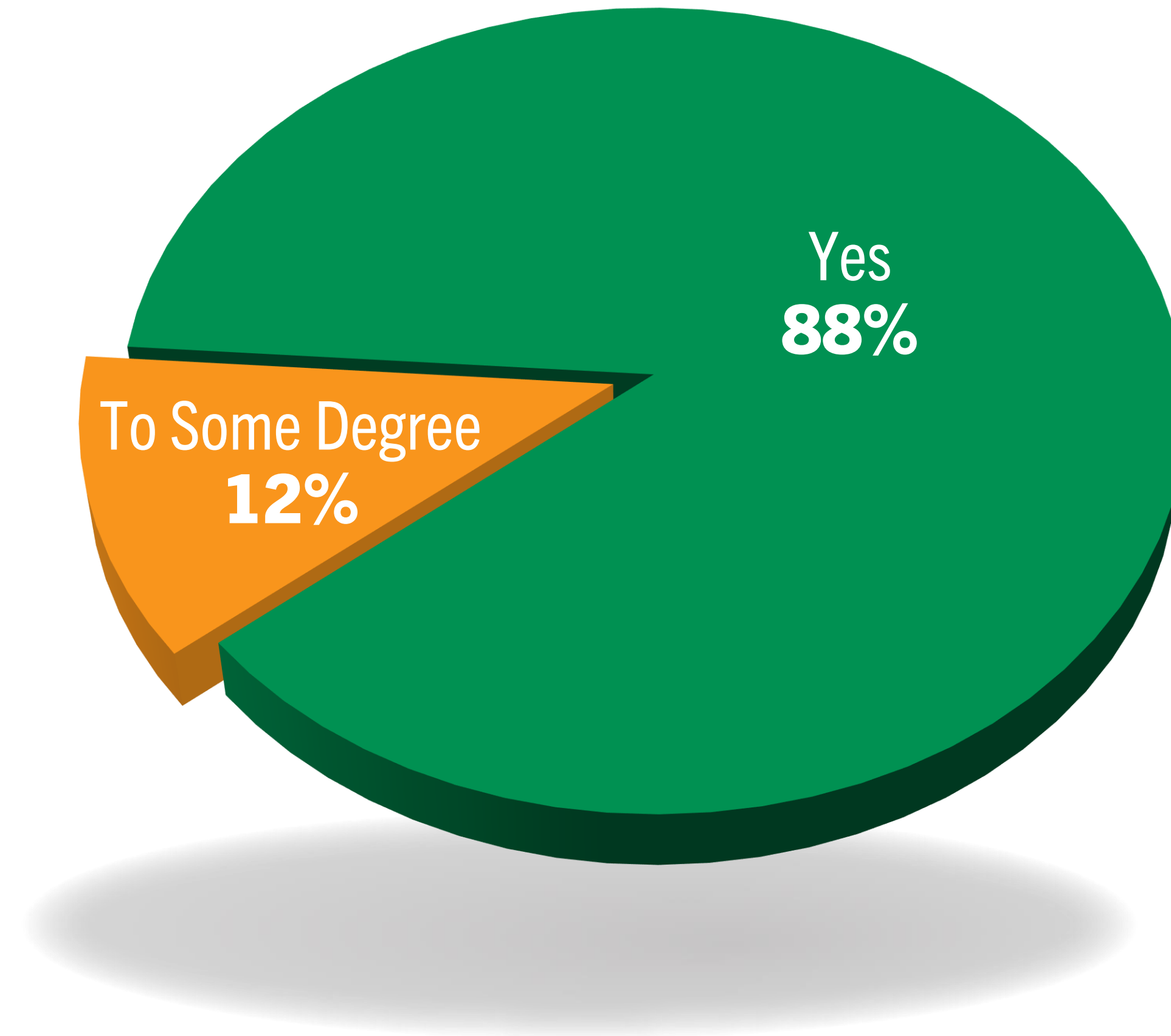
Miscellaneous

- Downtown happy hours.
- RALLY calls
- Internal communications
- Pharmacy school
- Large restaurant chain
- Private organizations

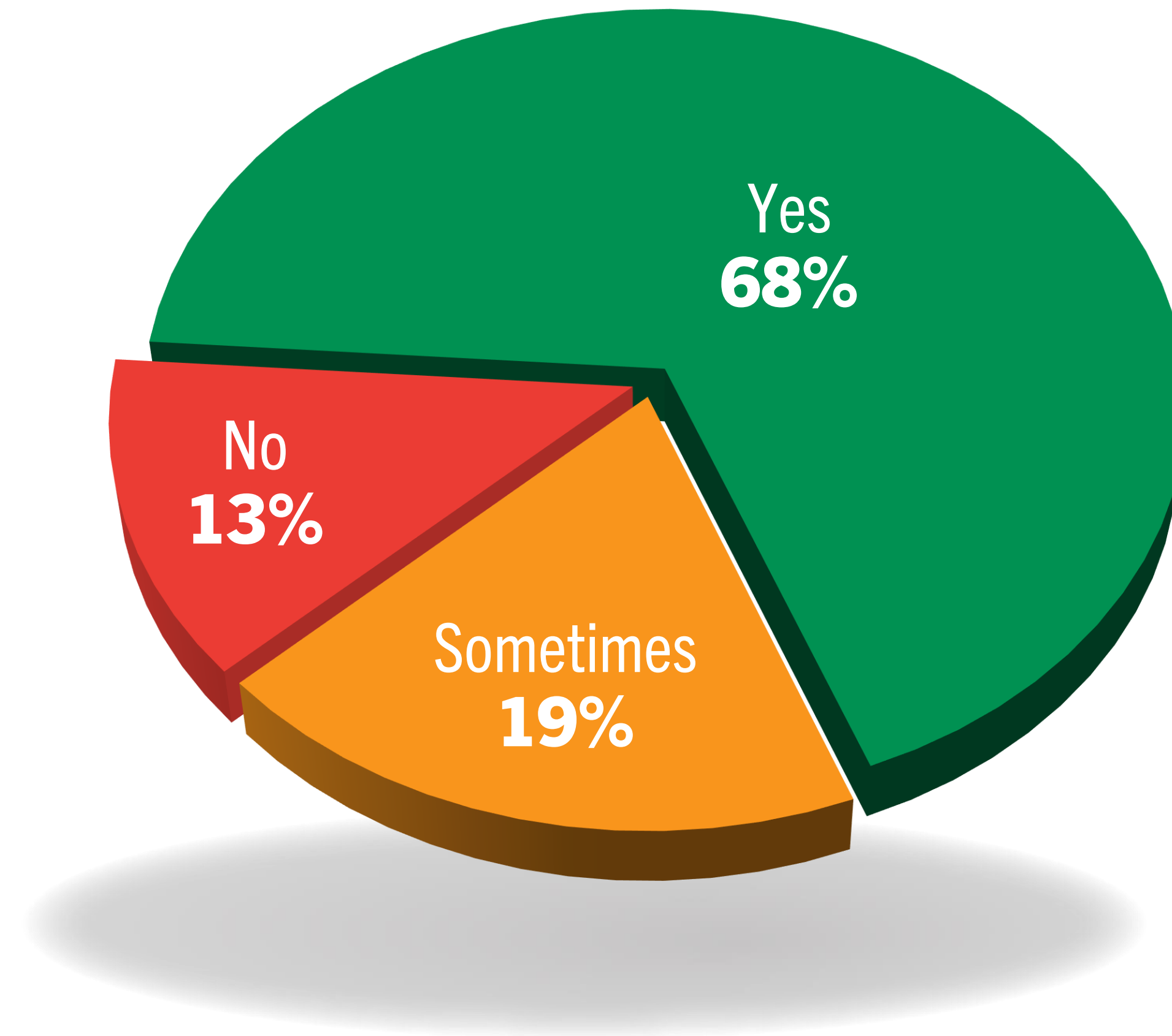
And did you feel
adequately informed by
those sources?



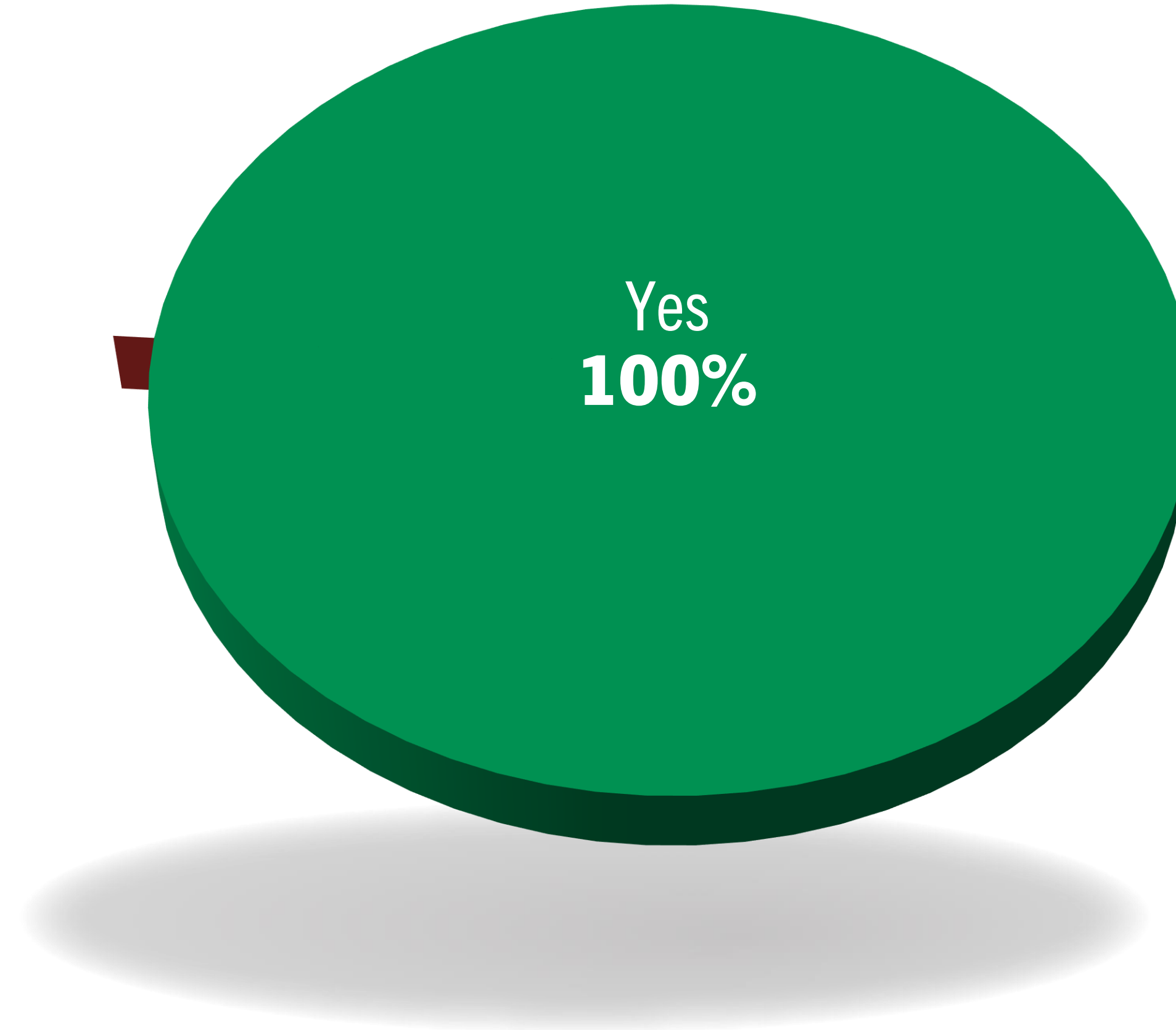
Did you feel you played a leadership role in pandemic response in your sector?



And did you feel capable
in that role?



If the region embarked on an aggressive remote-worker recruitment campaign to import a tech-savvy workforce, would it benefit the region?



... If the region embarked on an aggressive remote-worker recruitment campaign to import a tech-savvy workforce, would it benefit the region?

Why?

- Due to internet, now easier.
- Easier after pandemic.
- Easier here now but also everywhere else too.
- Do you recruit jobs first or workers first.
- Already have top robotics team in area.
- Yes, but jobs as well as workers.
- Remote workers will not necessarily solve population loss and lack of workforce; however, their spouses and children will in the long term.
- Such workers likely will have more discretionary income to support the amenities necessary to attract and retain businesses.
- It's needed.
- I think the region would be very attractive to such a workforce.
- Tide began to shift before pandemic, 25% of real estate was from out of state.
- Seen a shift in work to remote work, pushing office staff towards working at home.
- Communities in the area could use remote workers if internet infrastructure goes forward.
- Frustrating because there is broadband, but people are still using cable instead.
- Remote healthcare might help bring fresh ideas to the table
- Businesses doing a better job at providing for visitors.
- People are looking to small towns for outdoor rec and good outdoor access.
- Realized how vital broadband is, more people means more entrepreneurial opportunities and greater demand for outdoor rec.
- People who have a positive tourism experience are more likely to relocate, outsiders view assets differently than locals.

Why Not?

- Technology in this area is currently hit or miss; had the struggle of not being able to continue working due to limited service.
- There is not much space for brick and mortar, so how do you increase residents without additional buildings.
- Some homes so remote that a fiber connection is hard to establish.

Why do you think workers are leaving the region (wages, housing availability, public access to recreational trails/parks, not enough nightlife)?

Entertainment

- Lack of things to do
- Need more to do
- More to do.
- Restaurants
- Entertainment and Nightlife
- Better quality of life
- No bars or nightlife
- Not enough restaurants
- Quality of life remains low
- Nightlife and entertainment
- Family activities and workout groups.
- Lack of things for kids to do.

Shopping

- Without nationally known retail establishments that cater to middle class shoppers, we cannot retain the middle class.
- Younger generations buy online. They do not necessarily "go shopping." So, the lack of retail shopping will decline as an impediment.
- Lack of retail distribution center in the region, as younger persons will expect same day or next day delivery.

Healthcare

- Healthcare
- Access to health care specialist.
- People do not want to come back and retire due to healthcare.
- Fear of opioid epidemic.

Job Opportunities

- Left for mining jobs outside region.
- Lack of job opportunities
- Lack of jobs
- Not enough opportunities for college degree workers.
- Lack of jobs
- Lack of work, no industry
- Jobs mostly.
- More opportunity.
- Lack of jobs for higher educated workers.

Wages

- Workers are leaving due to low wages.
- Wages
- Availability of high paying jobs
- Wages

Miscellaneous

- Younger people like to have the technology.
- No one likes to drive across the mountain for access to activities.
- Cell coverage.
- Moving your parents to you instead of moving to be near them.
- Housing availability.
- There is a desperate lack of middle-class housing in our area.

What types of new businesses would do well in the region now and in the future?

Industry

- Manufacturing
- Manufacturing
- Materials mfg.
- Parts mfg.
- Manufacturing
- Medical devise mfg.
- Metal manufacturing and machining is the future here.
- Manufacturing jobs with middle of the road skills.
- Bigger industry relocation with stable, good pay jobs.
- Distribution in parts of region.

Accommodations

- Airbnb's are doing well, even the more remote ones.
- Smaller lodging options
- People expanding their own businesses to accommodate additional tourist needs.
- Campgrounds
- Lodging is a missing component which is not allowing tourism expansion.
- Motorcyclists do not want to stay at an Airbnb, demand for more traditional hotel accommodations.

Information Technology

- Tech
- IT
- Data centers
- Data centers

Federal Government

- Food
- Restaurants for tourist needs.
- More restaurants

Miscellaneous

- More specialty small shops with local involvement - outfitters, general retailers, snacks and camping supplies, general store.
- Outdoor industry businesses who put a high value on quality of life.
- A boxing club.
- Movie theater, putt-putt, and music.
- Though I do foresee some undercurrent of robotic metallurgical mining
- Remote working.
- Sports Complex
- Energy
- Medical services
- Healthcare

What infrastructure or support services are needed to strengthen the region?

Broadband

- Broadband
- Broadband
- More Broadband
- Broadband good
- Continue broadband deployment
- Broadband
- Residential Broadband would be very helpful.
- High Speed Internet
- Trending up with internet.

Sites & Buildings

- More sites and larger acre sites
- Shell buildings
- More sites

Transportation

- Passenger rail is another amenity I believe is overlooked. If we are serious about recruiting remote workers, we need an Amtrack station.
- Commuter air travel would help
- Road improvements

Miscellaneous

- Natural gas
- More natural gas
- Really good trade schools in each area of our region.
- Wayfinding and signage to area attractions for people coming through the area.
- Aging community- need for elderly support services.
- Support services for small businesses.
- Existing businesses need better support.
- Industry partnerships on bulk ordering.
- Need for shuttle services to local attractions

What is your vision of the region 10 years from now?

More Jobs

- More job opportunities.
- More jobs.
- Better jobs.
- Jobs to retain workers.
- More IT jobs.
- More IT jobs.
- Promote our area as a great place to live and work remotely.
- Remote workers.

More People

- More people.
- Population increase.
- Low cost of living, low taxes and scenic beauty will see us growing in population again.
- Growth - people, activities, and options.

New Industry

- New manufacturing.
- Diversification of manufacturing.
- Robotic manufacturing and high skilled machining.
- Business recruitment for industry

Expanded Tourism

- Expanded tourism and recreation opportunities for the public.
- Welcoming area with tourism economy.
- Appalachian Mountain wisdom and traditions with focus on remedies, arts and crafts.
- Heart of Appalachia itinerary planning including day trips working out from other attractions outside the area.
- Sufficient lodging.
- Demand for boutique accommodations and attached dining.

Miscellaneous

- If we don't do something DIFFERENT it will fall apart.
- Package based businesses.
- Thriving community of cooperative residents.
- More recreation.
- More entrepreneurs.
- Remote medical care also will serve most of our residents.
- Better health care.

What did we *not* ask, that we should have asked?

What did we *not* ask, that we should have asked?

- More workforce preparedness.
- More education training in general.
- Better medical care.
- Better schools
- Population loss.
- School consolidation to improve cost.
- Youth leadership
- Training future leaders - public and elected.
- Reducing coal revenues.
- Education and how the schools could do a better job of getting our youth ready for the job market.
- Plateau is excelling with infrastructure. Things with government take time but have a good team in place.
- Continuing outreach to other communities.
- Police outreach.
- Community communication and support within the county.
- Sewer treatment will need a long-term solution, recent flood heavily affected it.

Stakeholder Feedback

Additional Thoughts

- Remote worker some potential.
- Info clearing house concept.
- Lack of people to take advantage of new technology.
- Track working from home option to retain people.
- Losing lodging business to Marion and Wytheville and Bristol, more hotels would allow for more group tours.
- One-bedroom public housing- mostly seniors but also families, county did support during the pandemic.
- Need for more teachers who are paid well to compete with surrounding counties.
- Need to do a better job of tracking visitors to be able to market and appeal to them.
- Trying to cross-county partner to push people through the region as an extended

vacation, people who have already driven a long distance do not mind additional driving.

- Lodging along already established byways like Crooked Road like glamping with low barrier to entry and homestead lodging with nicer cabins.
- Accommodations anywhere in the region supports the region, having to work to find the lodging, campgrounds, cabins, yurts.
- More activities or options for individuals to come and stay not just stop by for a few years.

Cumberland Plateau PDC

Virginia

Cluster Verification

August 2021

Overview

The Cluster Verification Process

As part of an ongoing resiliency study, Cumberland Plateau PDC requested Hickey Global identify business and industry targets that are well-suited for the region's geography and demographics and take into consideration the negative economic impacts of future economic downturns.

A cluster verification study was conducted to understand the region's business environment and build a portfolio of clusters that blends risk over multiple industry sectors.

An analysis of the updated clusters as of August 2021 appears on the following pages.

Initially, seven clusters were identified after an analysis of each sector was conducted. In the end six clusters remained, with clear areas of focus in each. In addition to the information contained in this report, clusters were determined using other studies completed as part of the entire project as well as input from stakeholders and staff.

WHAT IS A “CLUSTER”?

The U.S. Small Business Administration defines *clusters* as geographic concentrations of organically interconnected small, medium and large businesses, universities, non-governmental organizations, and economic development organizations in a particular field. Cluster activities increase opportunities for these segments to participate and promote innovation, identify research, create jobs and attract capital within a particular industry and generally enhance regional economic growth.

1.0 FINDINGS



1.1 Cumberland Plateau

Cluster Focus

To grow the Cumberland Plateau Region, the community should focus on the following six clusters.



Mining



**Fabricated
Metal
Manufacturing**



**Machinery and
Equipment
Manufacturing**



**Shared Services
& IT**



Tourism



Healthcare

1.2 Cluster Strategies Overview



Mining

- Take advantage of value chain opportunities as demand grows for metal commodities.
- Bring together industry leaders, entrepreneurs and academics to address the mining industry's most pressing challenges around efficiencies, future of the workforce, data optimization and reducing carbon footprint.
- Promote the capabilities of existing mine supply, manufacturing, and service businesses via an online database to grow opportunities beyond the region.



Fabricated Metal Manufacturing

- Expand upon and market specialized knowledge base to increase company presence in the region.
- Investigate prototyping and short-run manufacturing capabilities to build local manufacturing capacity for product customization.
- Pilot new technologies with local manufacturing companies in Industry 4.0 components and/or partner with research institutions.
- Continue to explore BRE and industrial recruitment initiatives in high-growth sub-sectors including battery storage and electrification.



Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing

- Assist in continued diversification of mining manufacturers into new clusters and markets.
- Develop Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing portfolio by promoting key skills and inputs.
- Take advantage of existing inputs such as coal and fabricated metals to reinforce value chain and offer streamlining to businesses from outside of the region.



Shared Services & IT

- Capitalize on in-region expertise and best-in-class broadband capabilities to generate growth through a remote-worker campaign.
- Develop a shared services program supporting Northern Virginia and DC based companies through a “pipeline” to the Cumberland Plateau.
- With continued residential broadband deployment, train and support citizens working from home.



Tourism

- Continue to expand tourist access to outdoor recreation opportunities due to their recession resiliency among tourism enterprises.
- Develop a mixed accommodations industry with more traditional hotels alongside RV parks and campgrounds which are experiencing high levels of growth in response to current market demands.
- Increase tourism resiliency by tying in with other industries in which the region does well such as agriculture and mining.



Healthcare

- Follow current trajectory to capture revenue and meet the needs of an aging populace.
- Leverage Appalachian College of Pharmacy in recruiting on-line pharmacy operations such as shared services and distribution.
- Conduct a healthcare leakage study to determine needed or improved services to ensure income created in region stays in region.

1.3 Recession Cluster Analysis

Industry Sector Performance During Recessions

Resiliency planning takes into consideration the negative economic impacts of future economic downturns. One aspect is to understand how clusters perform during historic economic downturns. The accompanying chart averages the past two major recessions in 2001 and 2008. Although the total economy declined some industry sectors grew.

Two of the Cumberland Plateau’s largest industry clusters – Manufacturing and Tourism - suffer deep declines during recessions. While its major cluster – Mining – performs well during such events.

Because a sector is hard hit as a whole, it does not mean all the components decline. For instance, outdoor tourism increased during the pandemic as the industry as a whole decrease.

Traded clusters are an important consideration as they are the foundational base of a regional economy. It is not practical to abandon a base cluster solely based on its economic downturn performance.

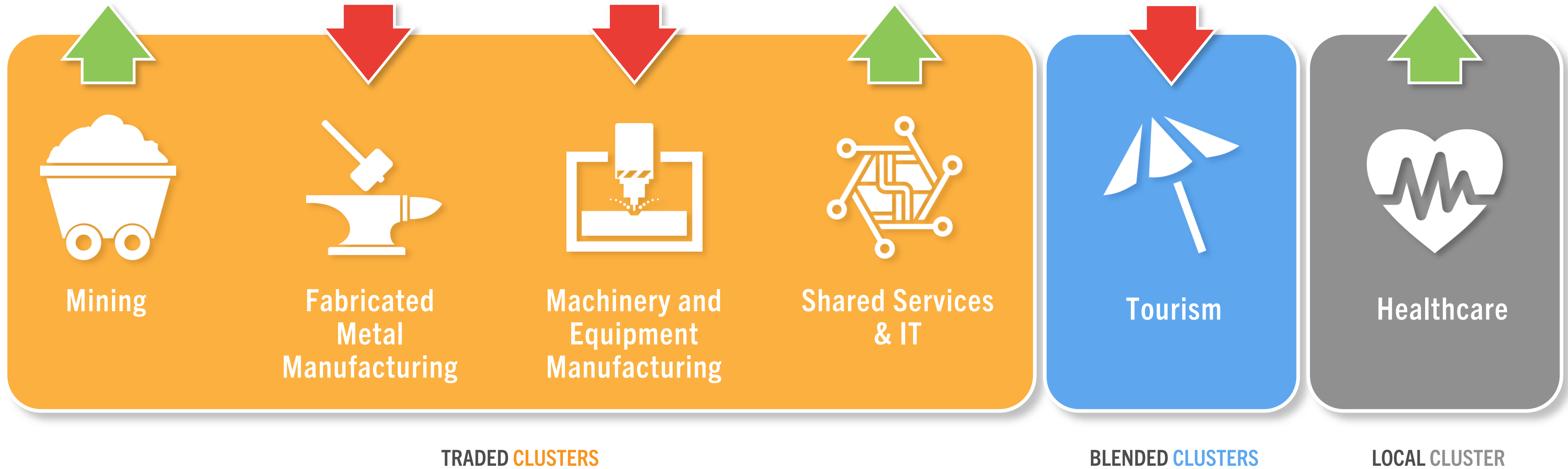
This cluster strategy takes all of this into consideration by blending a portfolio of clusters to lessen the impacts of an economic downturn while growing the economy in the long-term.

AVERAGE QUARTERLY GDP CHANGE BY INDUSTRY 2001 & GREAT RECESSION



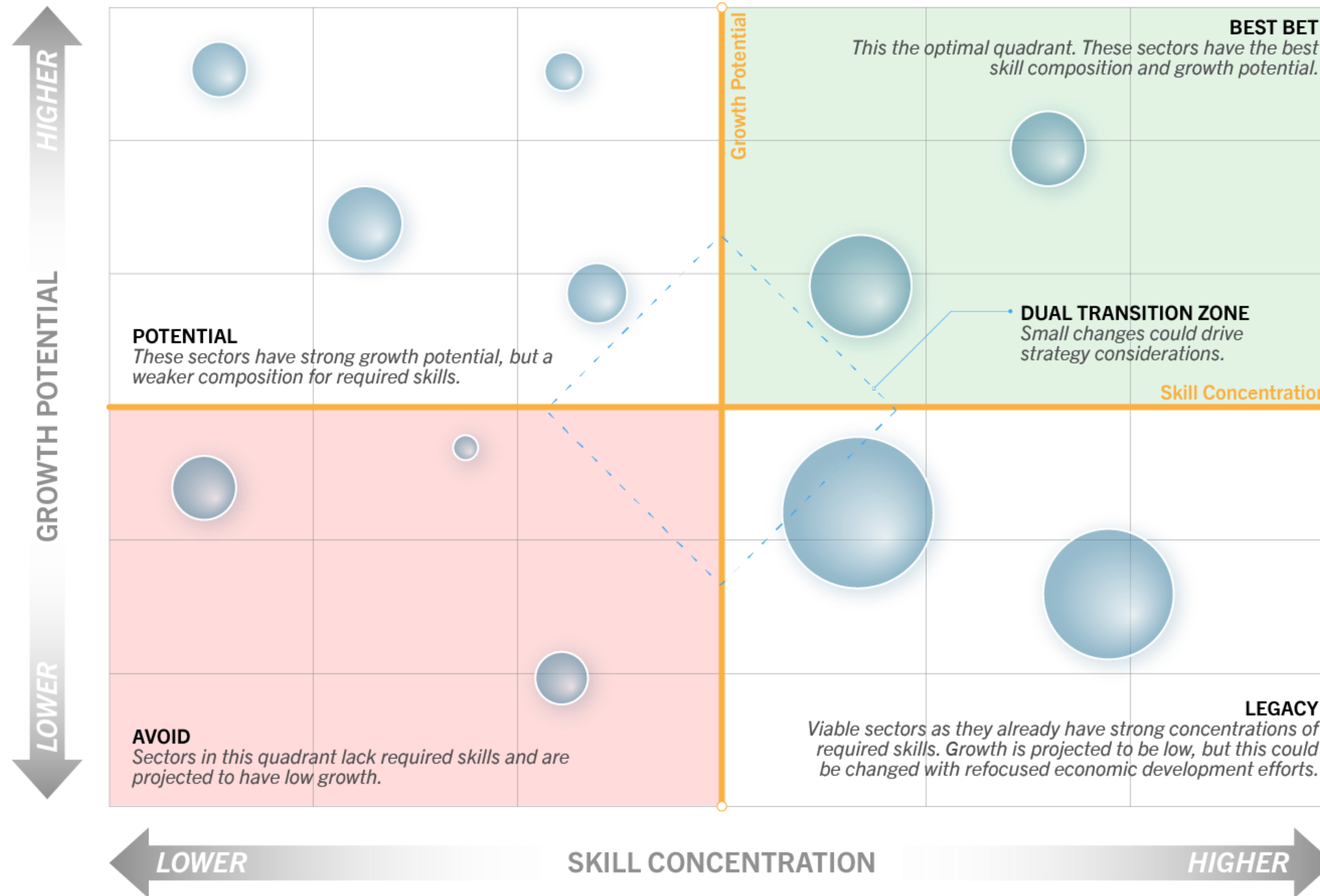
1.4 Cumberland Plateau PDC Blended Cluster Portfolio

Economic Downturn Impact



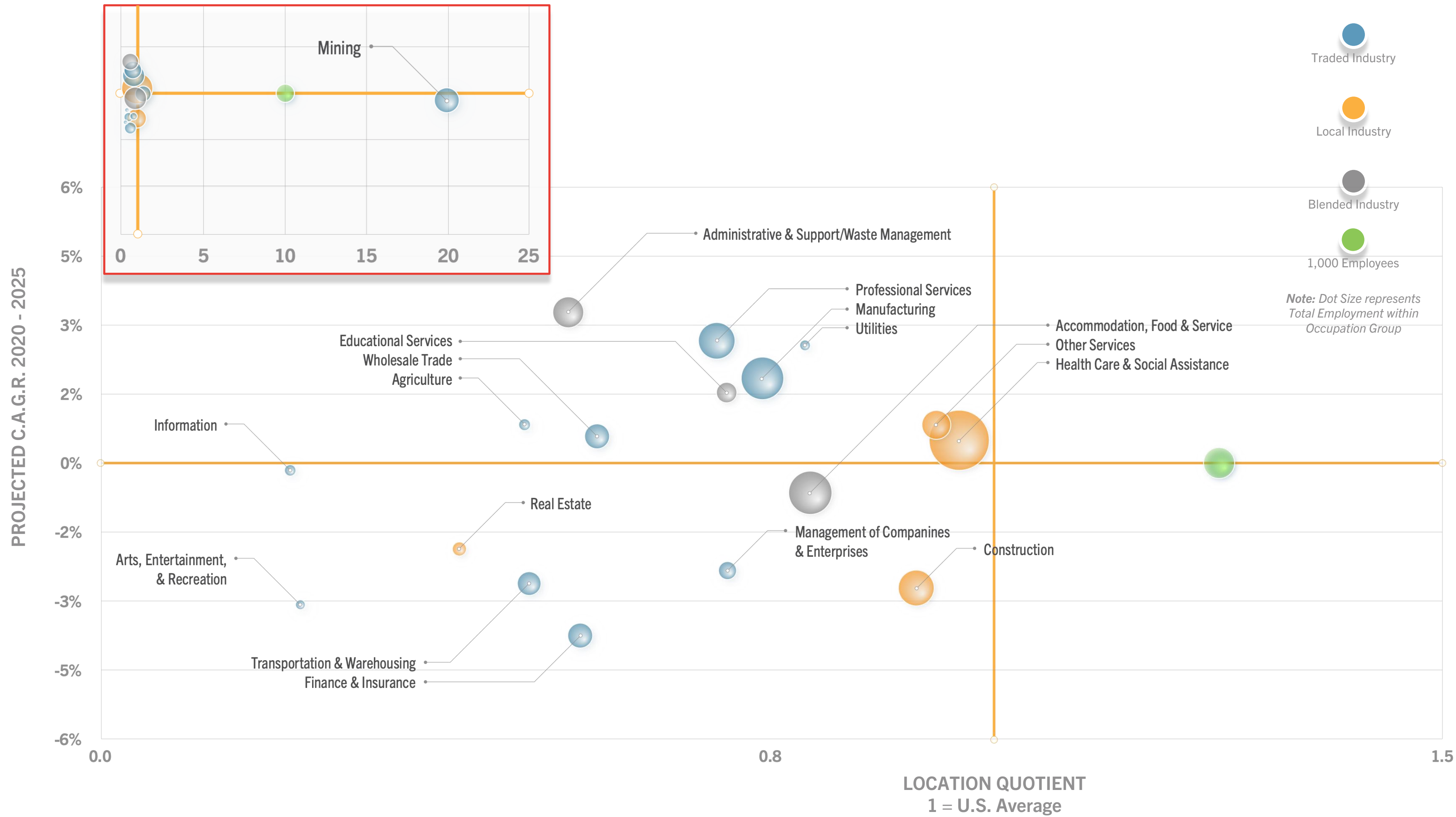
1.5 Target Industry Verification

Cluster Quadrant Key



1.6 Cumberland Plateau Location Quotient vs. Growth Rate

Location Quotient vs. Projected U.S. Compound Annual Growth Rate by Sector



Cumberland Plateau's mining industry is exceptional compared to the rest of the country, but the region has low Location Quotients in each of the remaining sectors.

LOCATION QUOTIENT

- The Cumberland Plateau has the largest competitive advantage (as measured by location quotient) in Mining, Health Care, and Construction. With the exception of Health Care, these industries are projected to decline over the next five years.
- Although Manufacturing and Professional Services have below-average location quotients, those sectors make up a significant portion of the overall workforce and are projected to increase.
- Roughly 8 percent of the region's total workforce is in Mining, resulting in a high location quotient. The pace by which the Mining sector is expected to decline is a moderate compound annual rate of -0.78% but may be higher depending on market trends.

Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

2.0 Focus Cluster Information



2.1.1 Mining - Cluster Overview

Mining

Take advantage of value chain opportunities as demand grows for metal commodities.

▶ CASE TO WIN

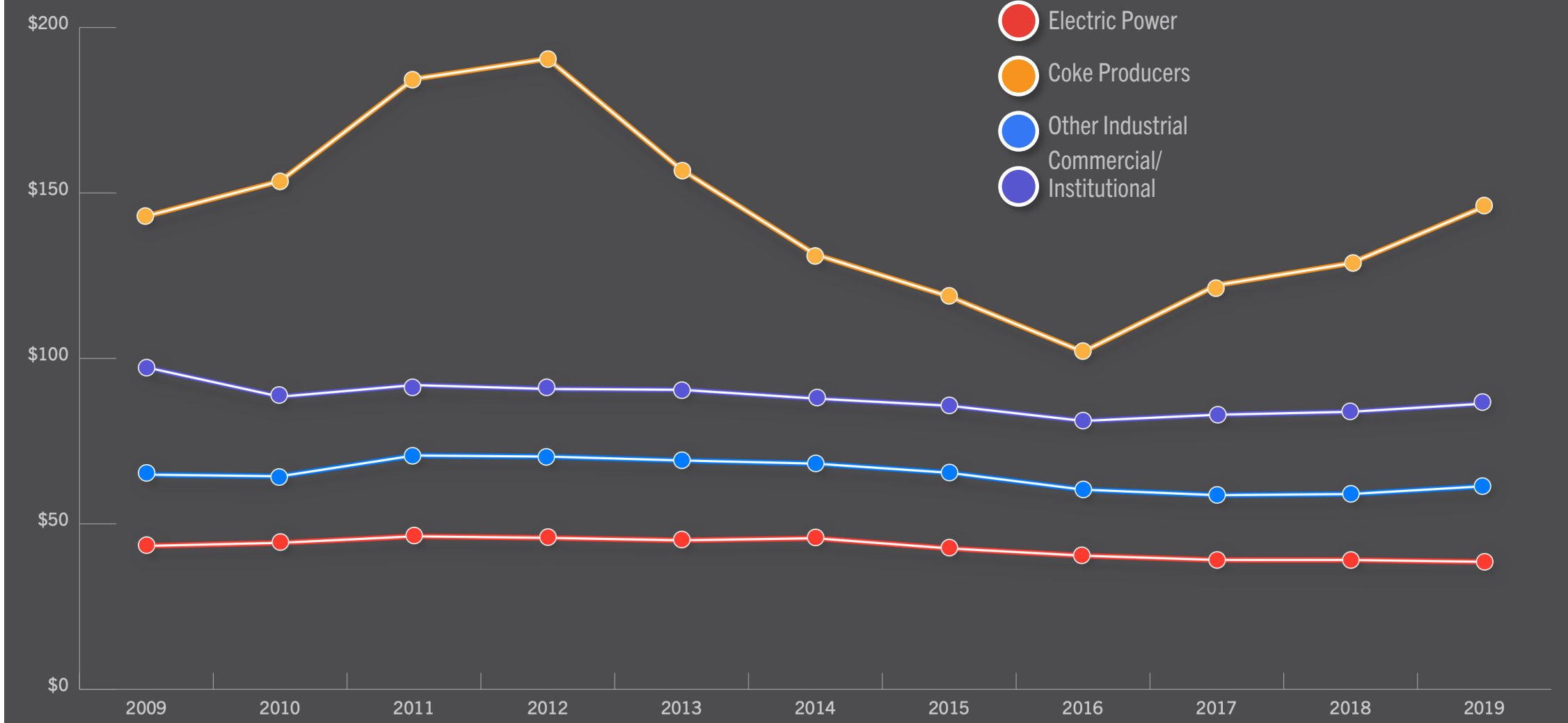
- The Cumberland Plateau’s mining footprint is massive, producing 85% of Virginia’s total output.
- Strong skill density in the region with extraordinarily high location quotients in nearly all industries.
- Bituminous Coal and Limestone production supports auxiliary services such as tunneling and exploration.
- High tech operations allow flexible responses to economic downturns and major health events.
- While production has decreased in the U.S., global demand has remained relatively stable, and exports continue apace.

▶ POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

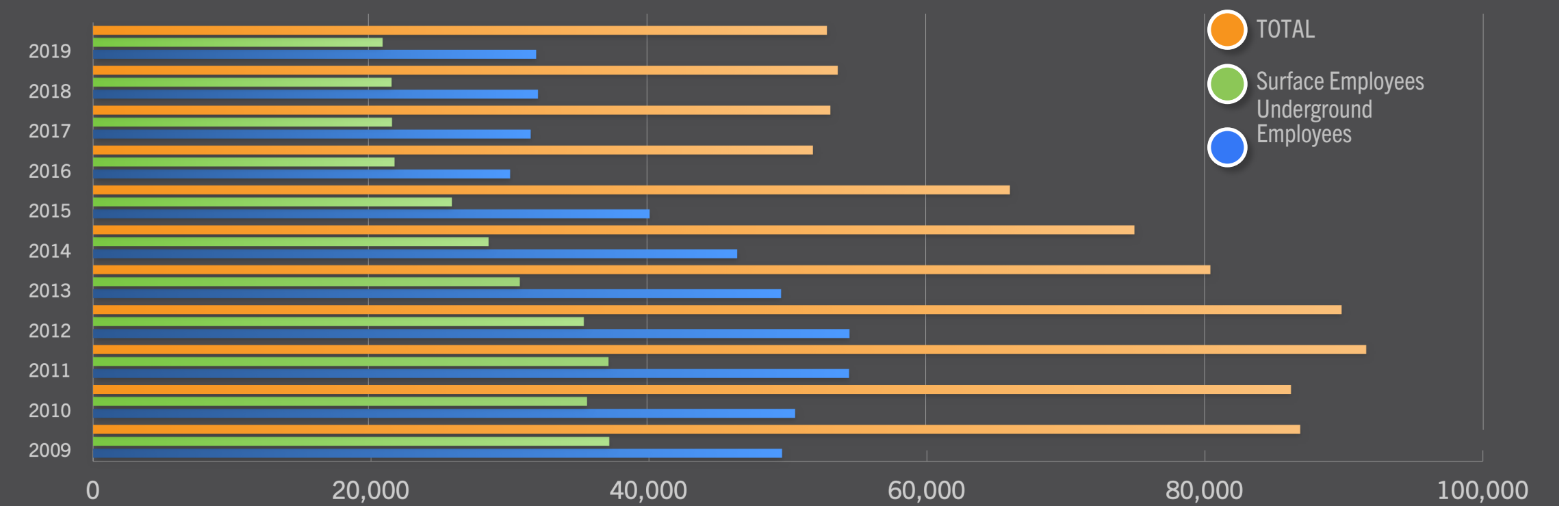
- Take advantage of value chain opportunities as demand grows for metal commodities.
- Bring together industry leaders, entrepreneurs and academics to address the mining industry's most pressing challenges around efficiencies, future of the workforce, data optimization and reducing carbon footprint.
- Promote the capabilities of existing mine supply, manufacturing, and service businesses via an online database to grow opportunities beyond the region.

▶ CLUSTER INFORMATION

AVERAGE PRICE PER SHORT TON (DOLLARS)



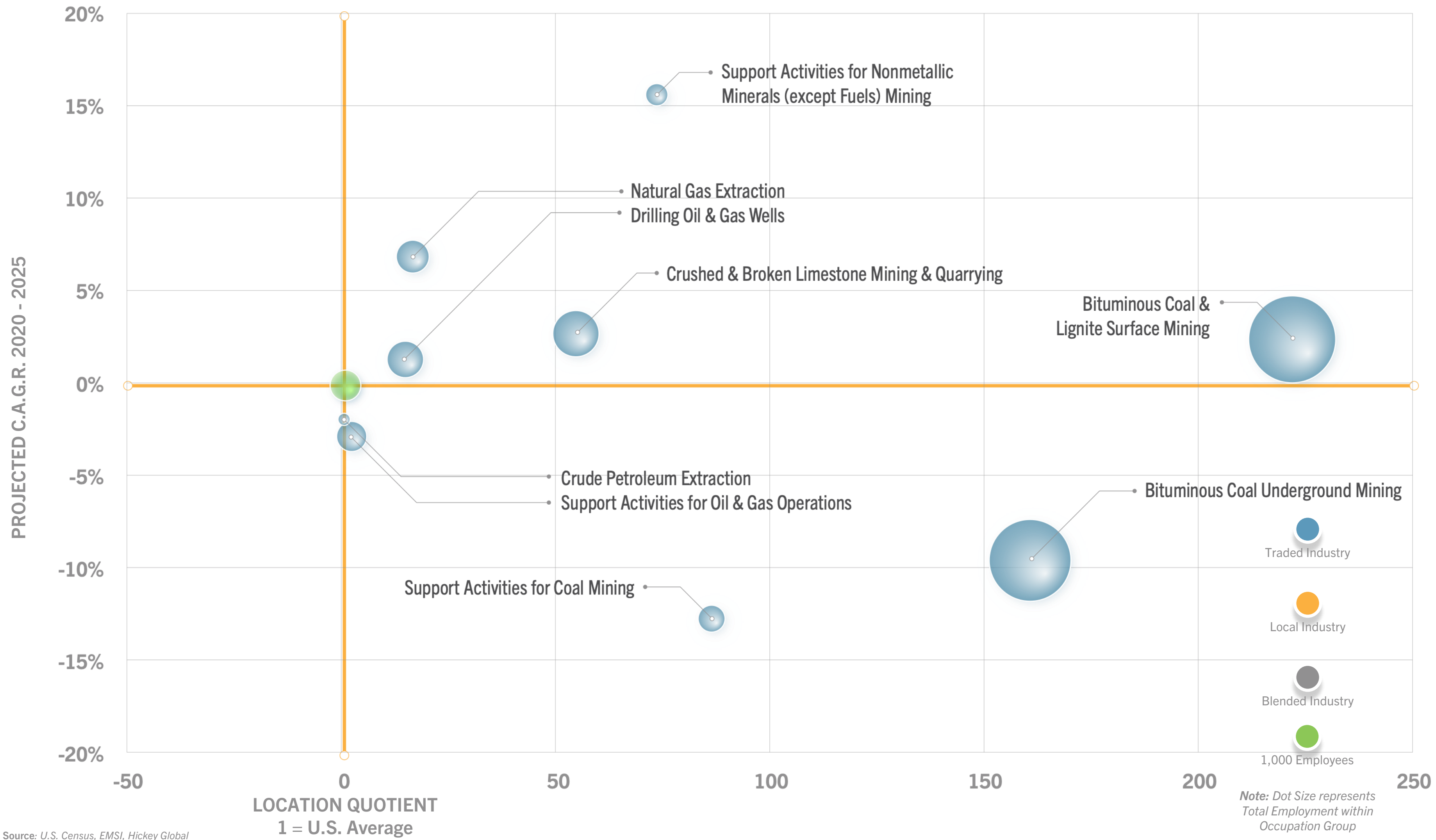
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES BY MINE TYPE



Source: : U.S. Energy Information Administration, Annual Coal Report

2.1.2 Cumberland Plateau Cluster Study

Mining



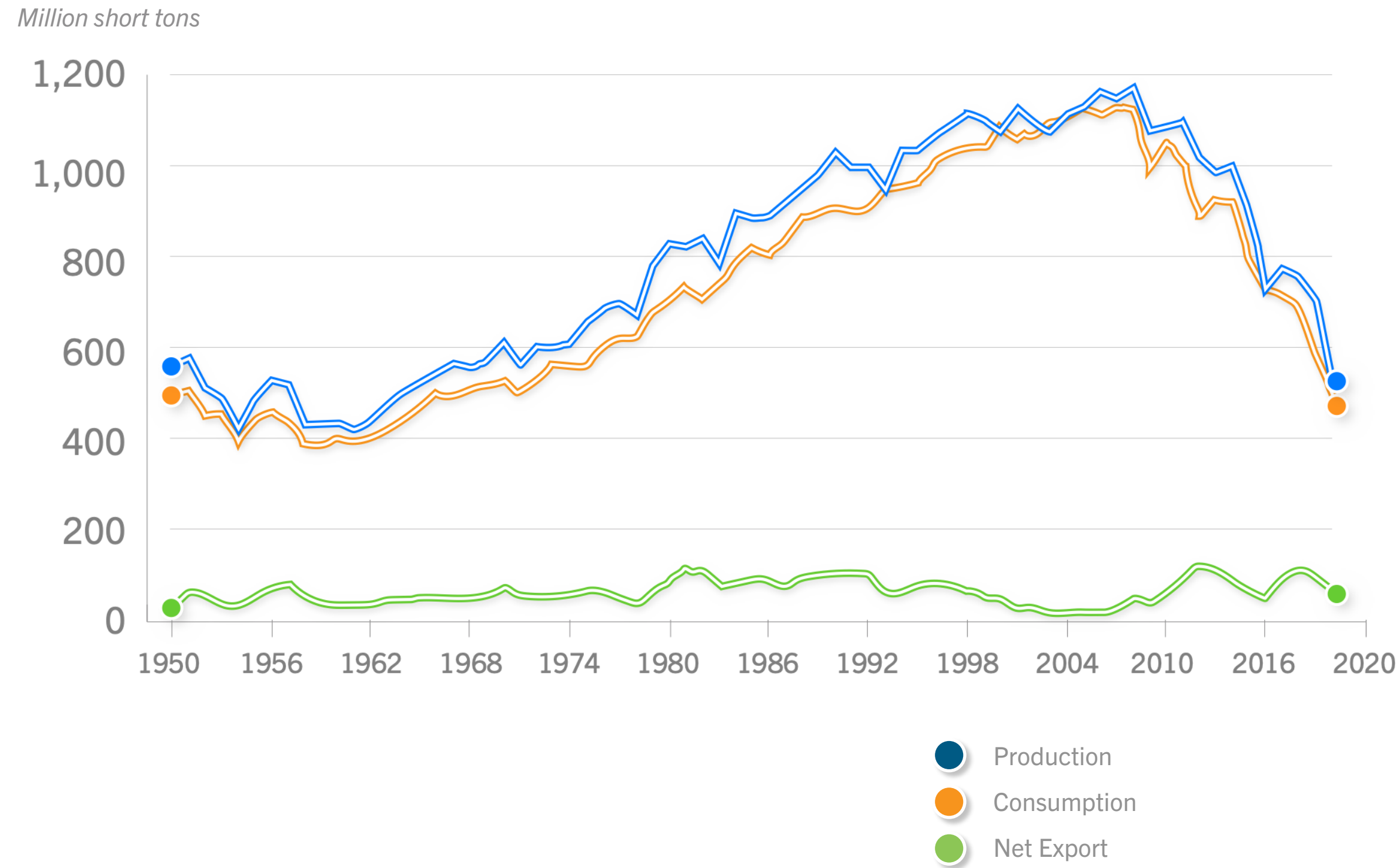
Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

LOCATION QUOTIENT

- Mining factors heavily in the employment landscape for the Cumberland Plateau region, with high employment density in nearly all represented mining industries.
- Projected employment trends show major growth or losses depending on the industry. The highest projected growth is found in Support Activities for Nonmetallic Minerals.
- The location quotient for Bituminous Coal and Lignite Surface Mining is nearly 250 times the national average.

2.1.3 Mining Cluster

U.S. COAL PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION, & NET EXPORTS 1950 - 2020



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Monthly Energy Review, Table 6.1, May 2021, preliminary data for 2020

▶ NAICS CODES IN CLUSTER

- 211120 Crude Petroleum Extraction
- 211130 Natural Gas Extraction
- 212111 Bituminous Coal and Lignite Surface Mining
- 212112 Bituminous Coal Underground Mining
- 212312 Crushed and Broken Limestone Mining
- 212399 All Other Nonmetallic Mineral Mining
- 213111 Drilling Oil and Gas Wells
- 213112 Support Activities for Oil and Gas Operations
- 213113 Support Activities for Coal Mining
- 213115 Support Activities for Nonmetallic Minerals

2.2.1 Fabricated Metal Manufacturing - Cluster Overview

Primary Sub-Clusters: Metal Tank and Plate Work Manufacturing

Expand upon and market specialized knowledge base to increase company presence in the region.

▶ CASE TO WIN

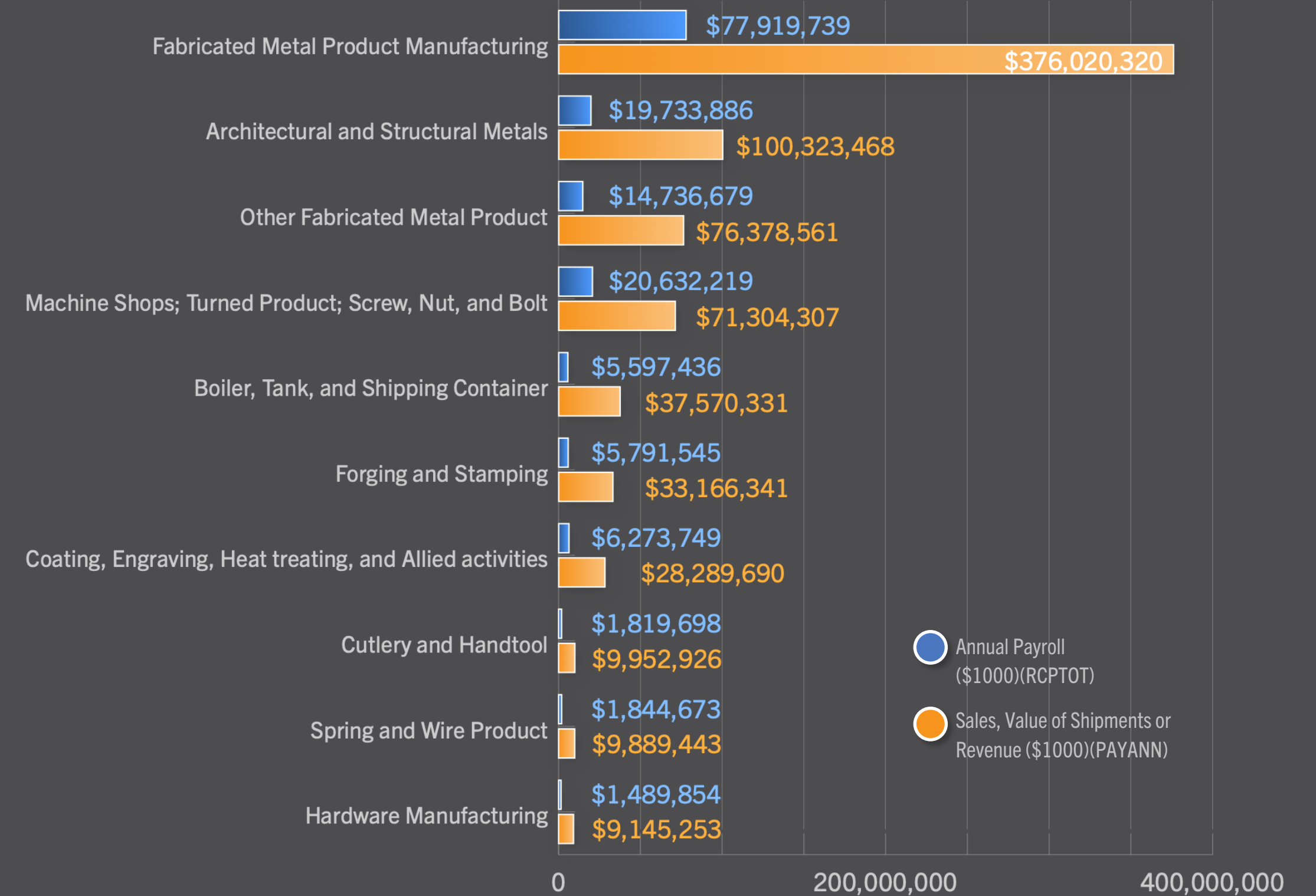
- Large location quotients in Structural Metals and Boiler, Tank, and Shipping container manufacturing indicate competitiveness in a high-skill, in-demand workforce.
- The most prominent Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing industries in the Cumberland Plateau Region make up a large proportion of the cluster's payroll and annual sales.
 - Demand for metal fabricated projects is rising globally.
- Growth opportunities may arise as Fabricated Metal Manufacturing companies engage in reshoring due to increasing global wages.
- Introduction of new technologies into the fabrication process – including automation and IoT – can lead to greater efficiencies and revenue for local businesses. IoT in particular is amplified by the Cumberland Plateau's broadband capabilities.

▶ POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Expand upon and market specialized knowledge base to increase company presence in the region.
 - Investigate prototyping and short-run manufacturing capabilities to build local manufacturing capacity for product customization.
- Pilot new technologies with local manufacturing companies in Industry 4.0 components and/or partner with research institutions.
- Educate local industries on the capabilities of new Industry 4.0 technologies and the benefits of adopting them.

▶ CLUSTER INFORMATION

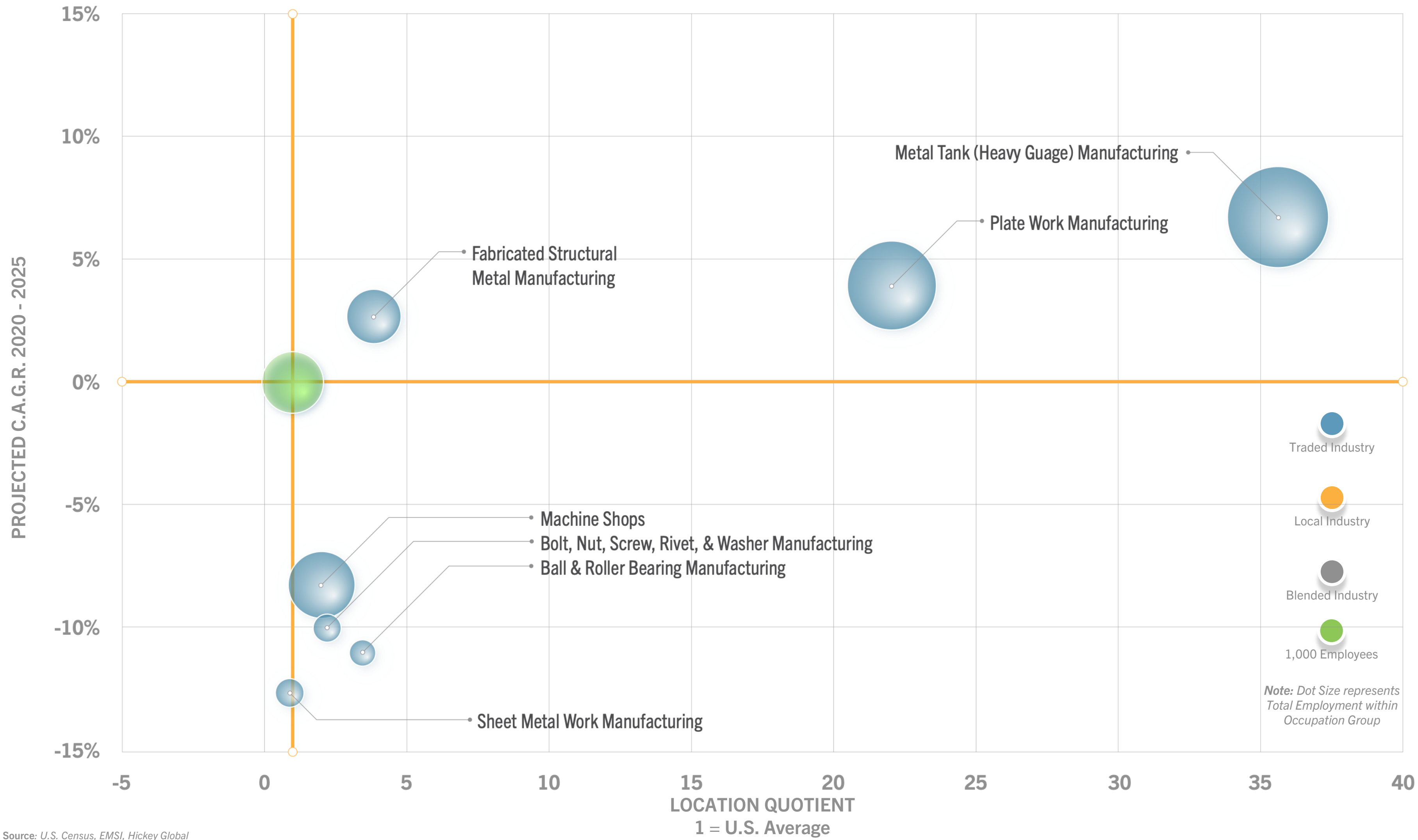
ANNUAL PAYROLL, (\$1,000) SALES, VALUE OF SHIPMENTS, OR REVENUE (\$1,000)



Source: : U.S. Energy Information Administration, Annual Coal Report

2.2.2 Cumberland Plateau Cluster Study

Fabricated Metal Manufacturing – Comparable View




Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

LOCATION QUOTIENT

- Fabricated Metal Manufacturing in the region is largely concentrated in the Metal Tank, Plate Work, and Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing industries. Each of these also project positive employment growth over the next five years.
- Aside from Machine Shops, the low-growth industries within Fabricated Metal Manufacturing that are present in Cumberland Plateau make up a smaller portion of the region's workforce, presenting opportunities for successful job transfers.

2.2.3 Fabricated Metal Manufacturing Cluster



		▶ NAICS CODES IN CLUSTER
332111	Iron and Steel Forging	332813 Electroplating, Plating, Polishing, Anodizing, and Coloring
332112	Nonferrous Forging	332911 Industrial Valve Manufacturing
332114	Custom Roll Forming	332912 Fluid Power Valve and Hose Fitting Manufacturing
332117	Powder Metallurgy Part Manufacturing	332913 Plumbing Fixture Fitting and Trim Manufacturing
332119	Metal Crown, Closure, and Other Metal Stamping (Except Automotive)	332919 Other Metal Valve and Pipe Fitting Manufacturing
332215	Metal Kitchen Cookware, Utensil, Cutlery, and Flatware (Except Precious) Manufacturing	332991 Ball and Roller Bearing Manufacturing
332216	Saw Blade and Handtool Manufacturing	332992 Small Arms Ammunition Manufacturing
332311	Prefabricated Metal Building and Component Manufacturing	332993 Ammunition (except Small Arms) Manufacturing
332312	Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing	332994 Small Arms, Ordnance, and Ordnance Accessories Manufacturing
332313	Plate Work Manufacturing	332996 Fabricated Pipe and Pipe Fitting Manufacturing
332321	Metal Window and Door Manufacturing	332999 All Other Miscellaneous Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing
332322	Sheet Metal Work Manufacturing	
332323	Ornamental and Architectural Metal Work Manufacturing	
332410	Power Boiler and Heat Exchanger Manufacturing	
332420	Metal Tank (Heavy Gauge) Manufacturing	
332431	Metal Can Manufacturing	
332439	Other Metal Container Manufacturing	
332510	Hardware Manufacturing	
332613	Spring Manufacturing	
332618	Other Fabricated Wire Product Manufacturing	
332710	Machine Shops	
332721	Precision Turned Product Manufacturing	
332722	Bolt, Nut, Screw, Rivet, and Washer Manufacturing	
332811	Metal Heat Treating	
332812	Metal Coating, Engraving (except Jewelry and Silverware), and Allied Services to Manufacturers	

2.3.1 Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing - Cluster Overview

Primary Sub-Cluster: Mining Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing

Assist in continued diversification of mining manufacturers into new clusters and markets.

▶ CASE TO WIN

- Strong density of the current Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing workforce can attract similar firms among other verticals.
- Improved workflows and manufacturing processes have created larger market share for smaller OEMs with high growth potential.
- Growth in equipment rentals and distribution chains will sustain positive industry trends in the coming years.

▶ POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Assist in continued diversification of mining manufacturers into new clusters and markets.
 - Develop Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing portfolio by promoting key skills and inputs.
- Take advantage of existing inputs such as coal and fabricated metals to reinforce value chain and offer streamlining to businesses from outside of the region.

▶ CLUSTER INFORMATION

\$835.3M

Earnings (2020)

\$220.4M

Property Income (2020)

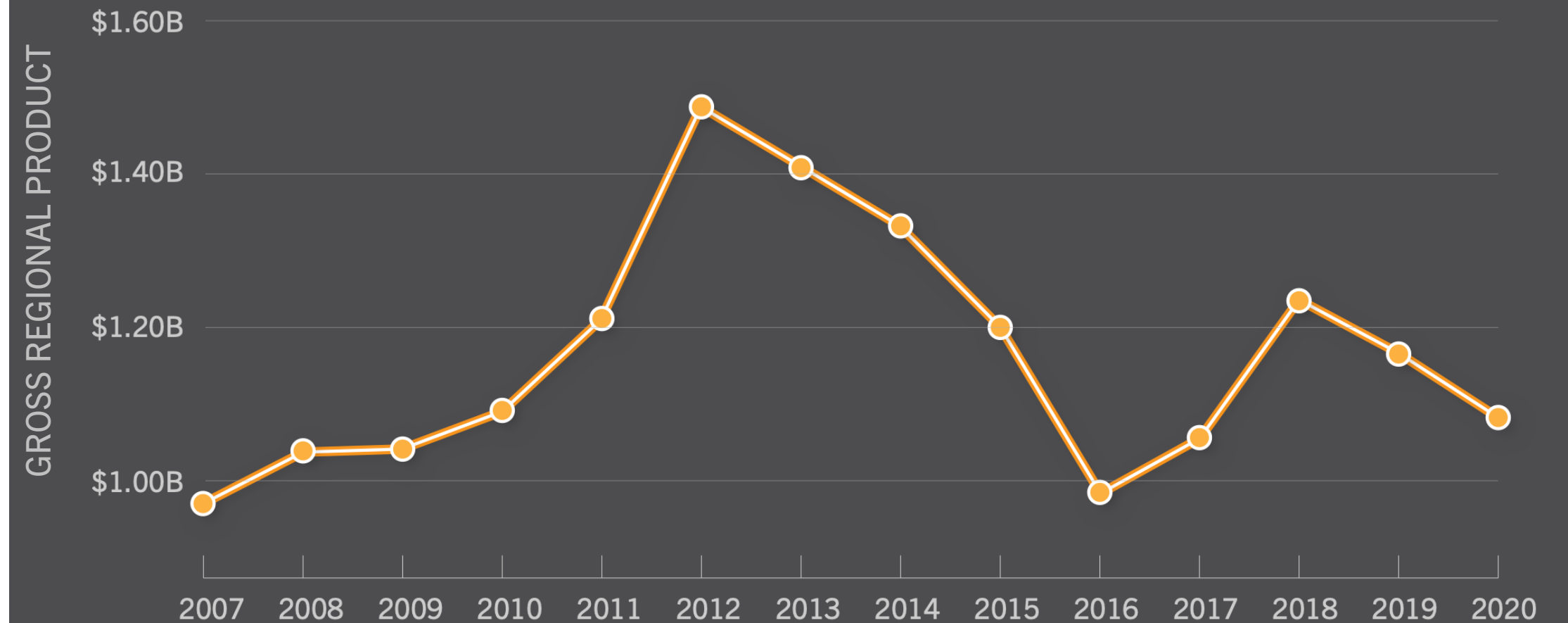
\$25.6

Taxes (2020)

\$1.1B

Total GRP (2020)

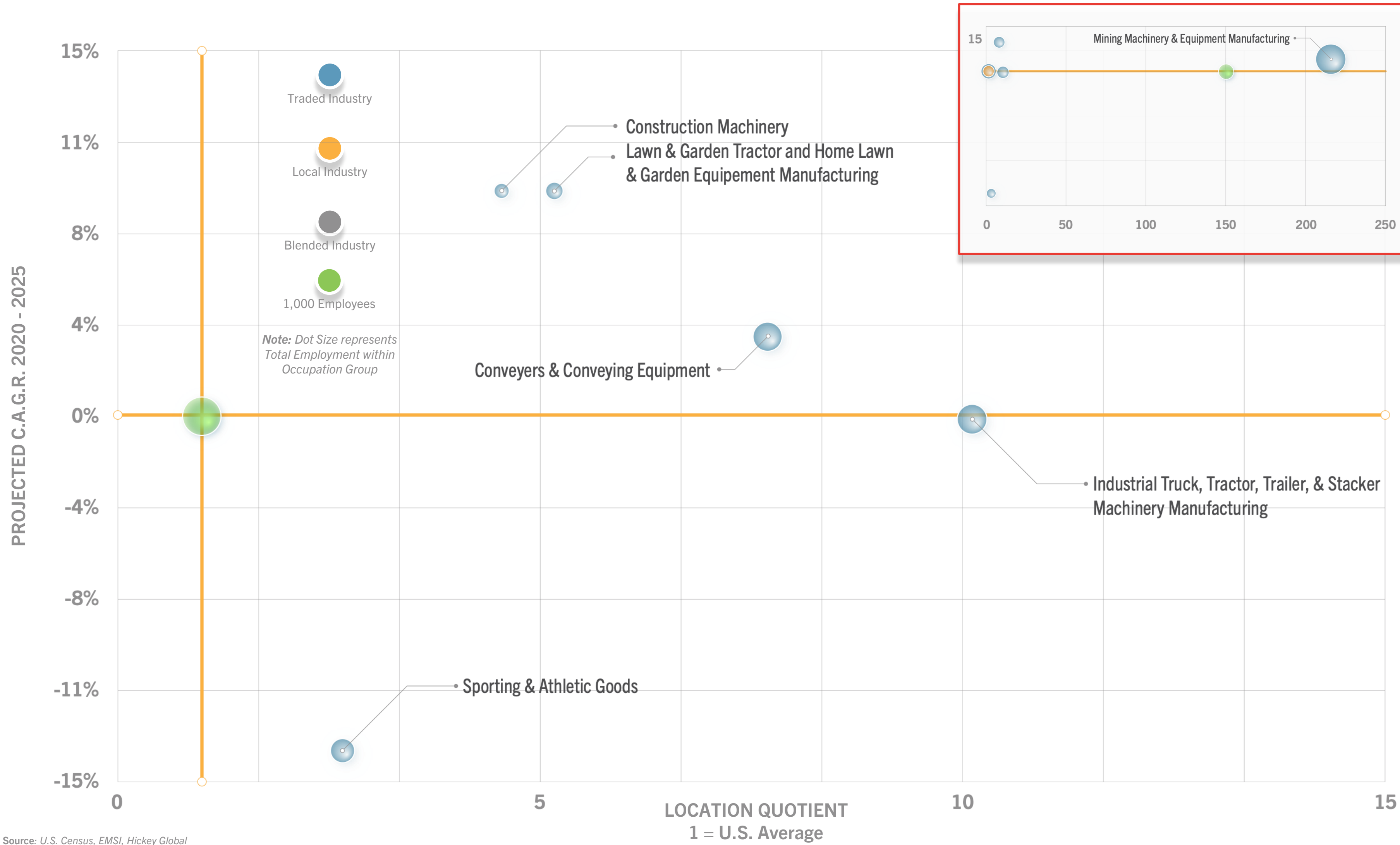
GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT (GRP) FOR MINING MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING IN THE U.S.



Source: : U.S. Energy Information Administration, Annual Coal Report

2.3.2 Cumberland Plateau Cluster Study

Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing – Comparable View



Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

LOCATION QUOTIENT

- Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing in the Cumberland Plateau Region is predominantly found in Mining Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing as a supplier industry to the Mining sector.
- The Mining Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing industry has an exceptional location quotient of 215, with a much higher employment density than the national average..

2.3.3 Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing Cluster

▶ NAICS CODES IN CLUSTER

332111	Iron and Steel Forging	333517	Machine Tool Manufacturing	333995	Fluid Power Cylinder and Actuator Manufacturing	336419	Unit and Propulsion Unit Parts Manufacturing
333111	Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	333519	Rolling Mill and Other Metalworking Machinery Manufacturing	333996	Fluid Power Pump and Motor Manufacturing	336419	Other Guided Missile and Space Vehicle Parts and Auxiliary Equipment Manufacturing
333112	Lawn and Garden Tractor and Home Lawn and Garden Equipment Manufacturing	333611	Turbine and Turbine Generator Set Units Manufacturing	333997	Scale and Balance Manufacturing	336510	Railroad Rolling Stock Manufacturing
333120	Construction Machinery Manufacturing	333612	Speed Changer, Industrial High-Speed Drive, and Gear Manufacturing	333999	All Other Miscellaneous General Purpose Machinery Manufacturing	336611	Ship Building and Repairing
333131	Mining Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	333612	Speed Changer, Industrial High-Speed Drive, and Gear Manufacturing	336111	Automobile Manufacturing	336612	Boat Building
333132	Oil and Gas Field Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	333613	Mechanical Power Transmission Equipment Manufacturing	336112	Light Truck and Utility Vehicle Manufacturing	336991	Motorcycle, Bicycle, and Parts Manufacturing
333241	Food Product Machinery Manufacturing	333618	Other Engine Equipment Manufacturing	336120	Heavy Duty Truck Manufacturing	336992	Military Armored Vehicle, Tank, and Tank Component Manufacturing
333242	Semiconductor Machinery Manufacturing	333912	Air and Gas Compressor Manufacturing	336211	Motor Vehicle Body Manufacturing	336999	All Other Transportation Equipment Manufacturing
333243	Sawmill, Woodworking, and Paper Machinery Manufacturing	333914	Measuring, Dispensing, and Other Pumping Equipment Manufacturing	336212	Truck Trailer Manufacturing		
333244	Printing Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing	333921	Elevator and Moving Stairway Manufacturing	336213	Motor Home Manufacturing		
333249	Other Industrial Machinery Manufacturing	333922	Conveyor and Conveying Equipment Manufacturing	336214	Travel Trailer and Camper Manufacturing		
333314	Optical Instrument and Lens Manufacturing	333923	Overhead Traveling Crane, Hoist, and Monorail System Manufacturing	336310	Motor Vehicle Gasoline Engine and Engine Parts Manufacturing		
333316	Photographic and Photocopying Equipment Manufacturing	333924	Industrial Truck, Tractor, Trailer, and Stacker Machinery Manufacturing	336320	Motor Vehicle Electrical and Electronic Equipment Manufacturing		
333318	Other Commercial and Service Industry Machinery Manufacturing	333991	Power-Driven Handtool Manufacturing	336330	Motor Vehicle Steering and Suspension Components (except Spring) Manufacturing		
333413	Industrial and Commercial Fan and Blower and Air Purification Equipment Manufacturing	333992	Welding and Soldering Equipment Manufacturing	336340	Motor Vehicle Brake System Manufacturing		
333414	Heating Equipment (except Warm Air Furnaces) Manufacturing	333993	Packaging Machinery Manufacturing	336350	Motor Vehicle Transmission and Power Train Parts Manufacturing		
333415	Air-Conditioning and Warm Air Heating Equipment and Commercial and Industrial Refrigeration Equipment Manufacturing	333994	Industrial Process Furnace and Oven Manufacturing	336360	Motor Vehicle Seating and Interior Trim Manufacturing		
333511	Industrial Mold Manufacturing			336370	Motor Vehicle Metal Stamping		
333514	Special Die and Tool, Die Set, Jig, and Fixture Manufacturing			336390	Other Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing		
333515	Cutting Tool and Machine Tool Accessory Manufacturing			336411	Aircraft Manufacturing		
				336412	Aircraft Engine and Engine Parts Manufacturing		
				336413	Other Aircraft Parts and Auxiliary Equipment Manufacturing		
				336414	Guided Missile and Space Vehicle Manufacturing		
				336415	Guided Missile and Space Vehicle Propulsion		

2.4.1 Shared Services & IT - Cluster Overview

Primary Sub-Clusters: Computer Systems Design Services and Telemarketing Bureaus

Capitalize on in-region expertise and best-in-class broadband capabilities to generate growth through a remote-worker campaign.

▶ CASE TO WIN

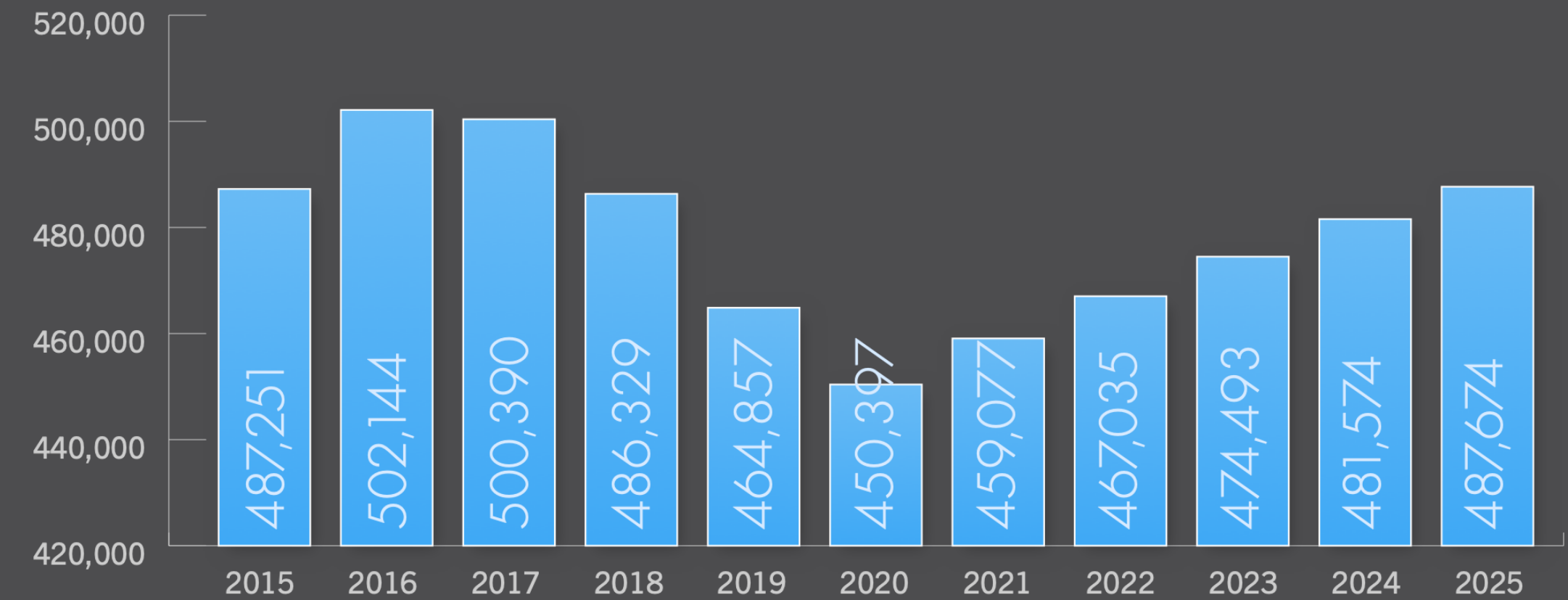
- Cumberland Plateau's Information Technology cluster is driven by employers in the Computer Systems Design Services industry, a high-wage and skill-intensive industry with positive projected growth.
- In June 2021, Governor Northam announced the largest award for broadband in the history of the Commonwealth in the Cumberland Plateau region.
- Above average fiber connectivity and broadband capabilities within the region can be used to attract remote workers as companies continue to pursue flexible office arrangements.
- Call Centers within the region are expected to grow at a Compound Annual Rate of six percent over the next five years.
- A low cost of living paired with strong amenities is important to Call Center employees, creating an avenue for in-migration to the region.

▶ POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

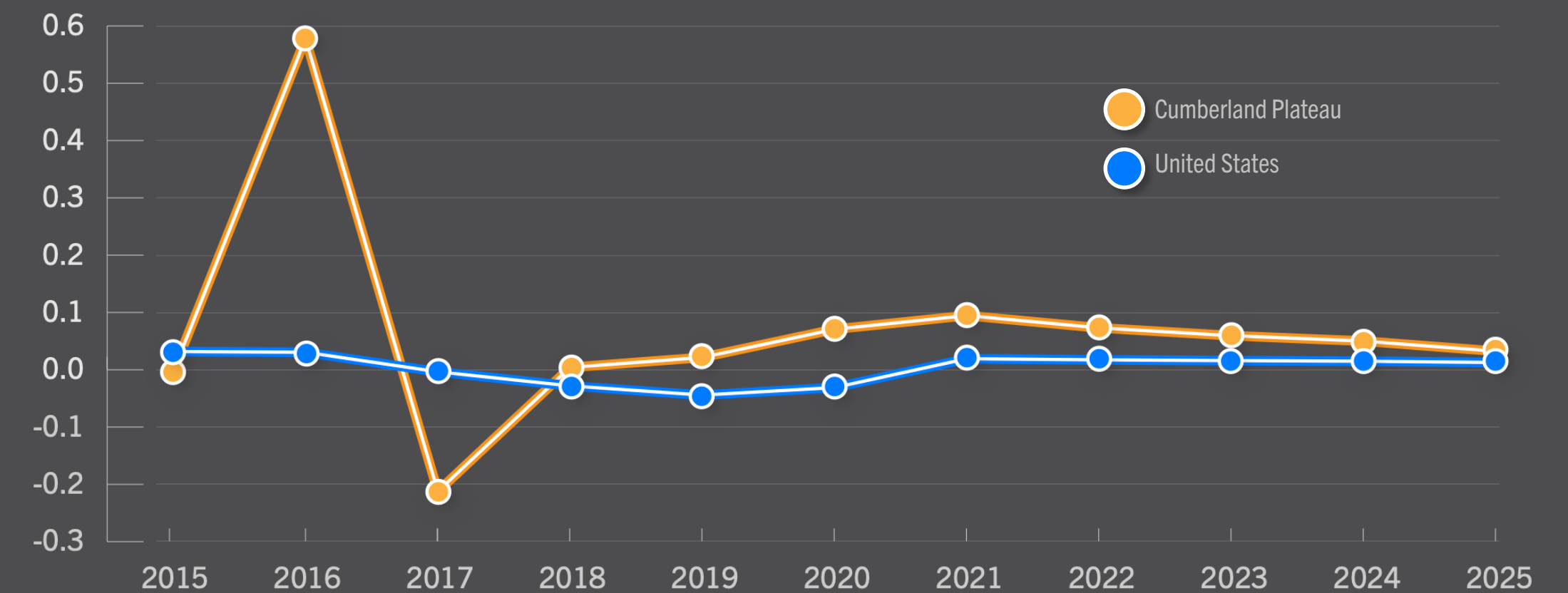
- Capitalize on in-region expertise and best-in-class broadband capabilities to generate growth through a remote-worker campaign.
- Develop a shared services program supporting Northern Virginia and DC based companies through a "pipeline" to the Cumberland Plateau.
- With continued residential broadband deployment, train and support citizens working from home.

▶ CLUSTER INFORMATION

U.S. CALL CENTER EMPLOYMENT 2015-2025

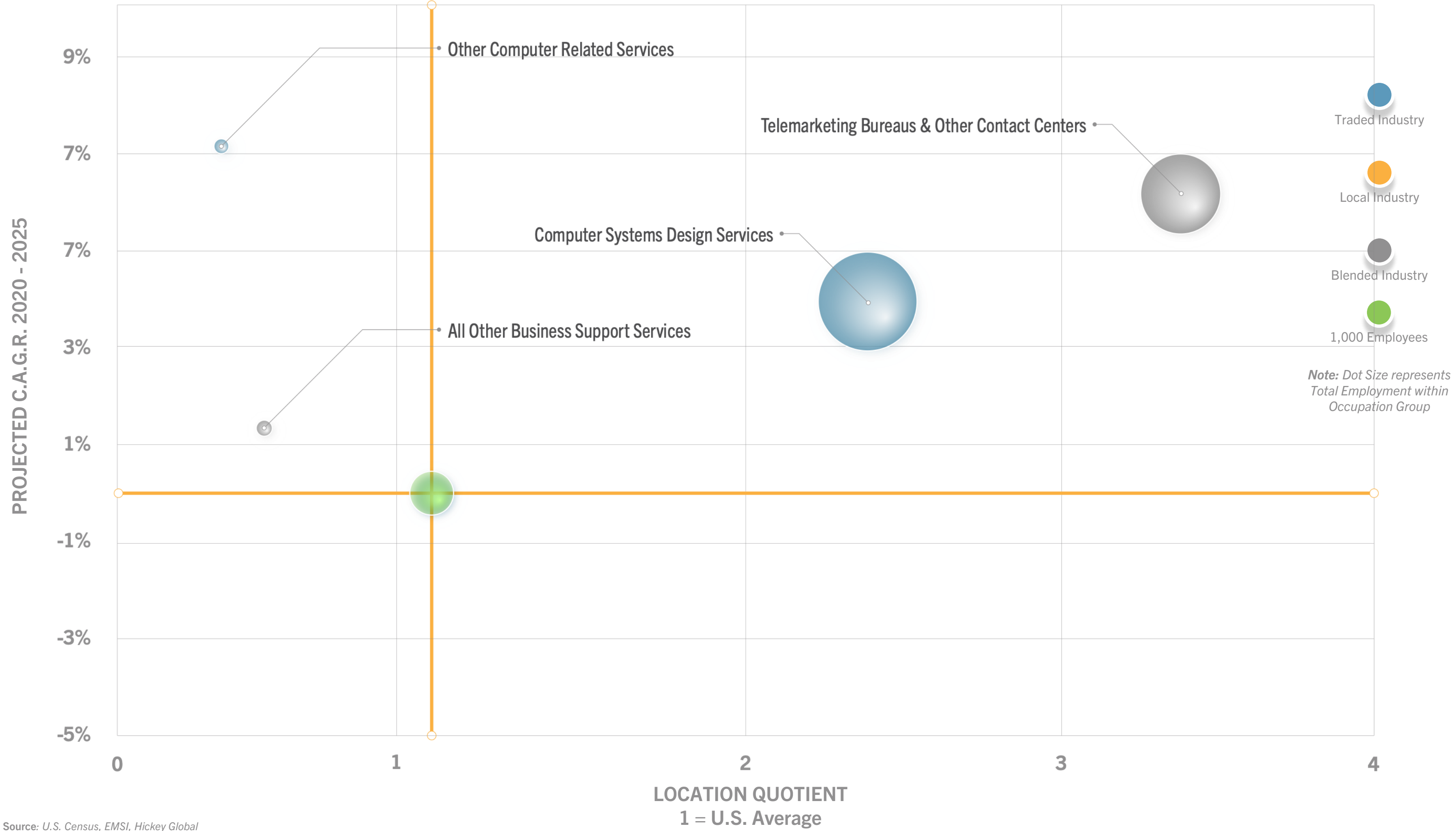


YEAR OVER YEAR EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN CONTACT CENTERS 2015-2025 (PERCENTAGE)



2.4.2 Cumberland Plateau Cluster Study

Shared Services & IT – Comparable View



Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

LOCATION QUOTIENT

- Call Centers and Shared Services are high-growth industries with a strong presence in the Cumberland Plateau Region, particularly in Telemarketing Bureaus and Other Contact Centers.
- Information Technology employment in the region is predominantly in Computer Systems Design Services, with additional employment in Other Computer Related Services.

2.4.3 Shared Services & IT Cluster



▶ NAICS CODES IN CLUSTER

423430	Computer and Software Merchant Wholesalers
519130	Internet Publishing and Web Search Portals
541511	Custom Computer Programming Services
541512	Computer Systems Design Services
541513	Computer Facilities Management Services
541519	Other Computer Related Services
56142	Telephone Call Centers
56143	Business Service Centers
56149	Other Business Support Services
611420	Computer Training
811212	Computer and Office Machine Repair

2.5.1 Tourism - Cluster Overview

Restaurants, RV Parks, Hotels, and Recreational Centers

Build infrastructure to support interest created by national trends in natural resources and eco-tourism.

▶ CASE TO WIN

- Cumberland Plateau's Tourism is largely based on natural attractions such as state parks and forests.
- Restaurants make up the largest portion of the region's Tourism-related workforce with over 1,800 employees.
- Despite few employees in traditional hotels, Cumberland Plateau has a high location quotient for RV Parks and Campgrounds, a growing industry that will benefit from the development of the Clinch River State Park.

▶ POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

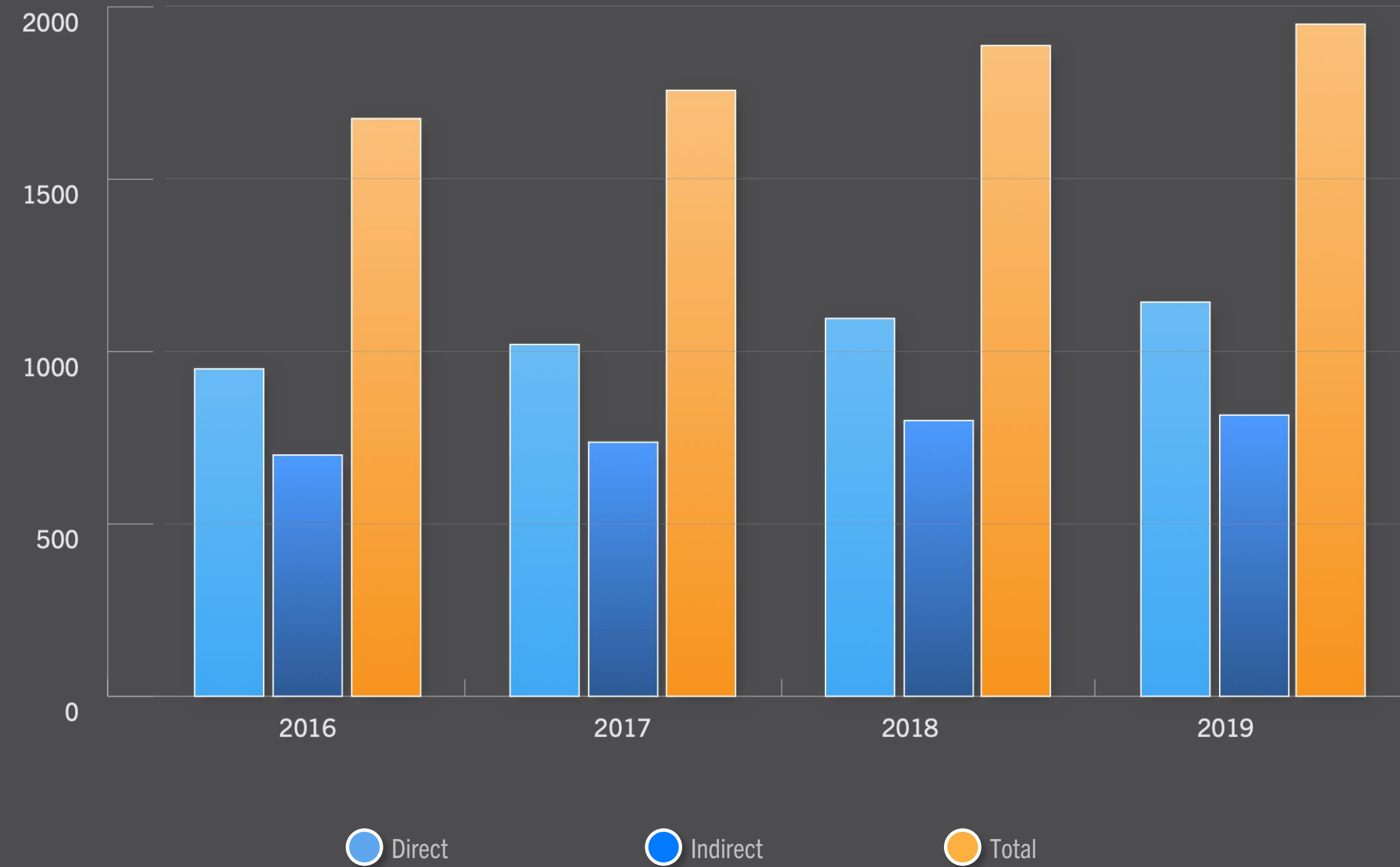
- Continue to expand tourist access to outdoor recreation opportunities due to their recession resiliency among tourism enterprises and strong natural assets.
- Develop a mixed accommodations industry with more traditional hotels alongside RV parks and campgrounds which are experiencing high levels of growth in response to current market demands.
- Increase tourism resiliency by tying in with other industries in which the region does well such as agriculture and mining.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

▶ CLUSTER INFORMATION

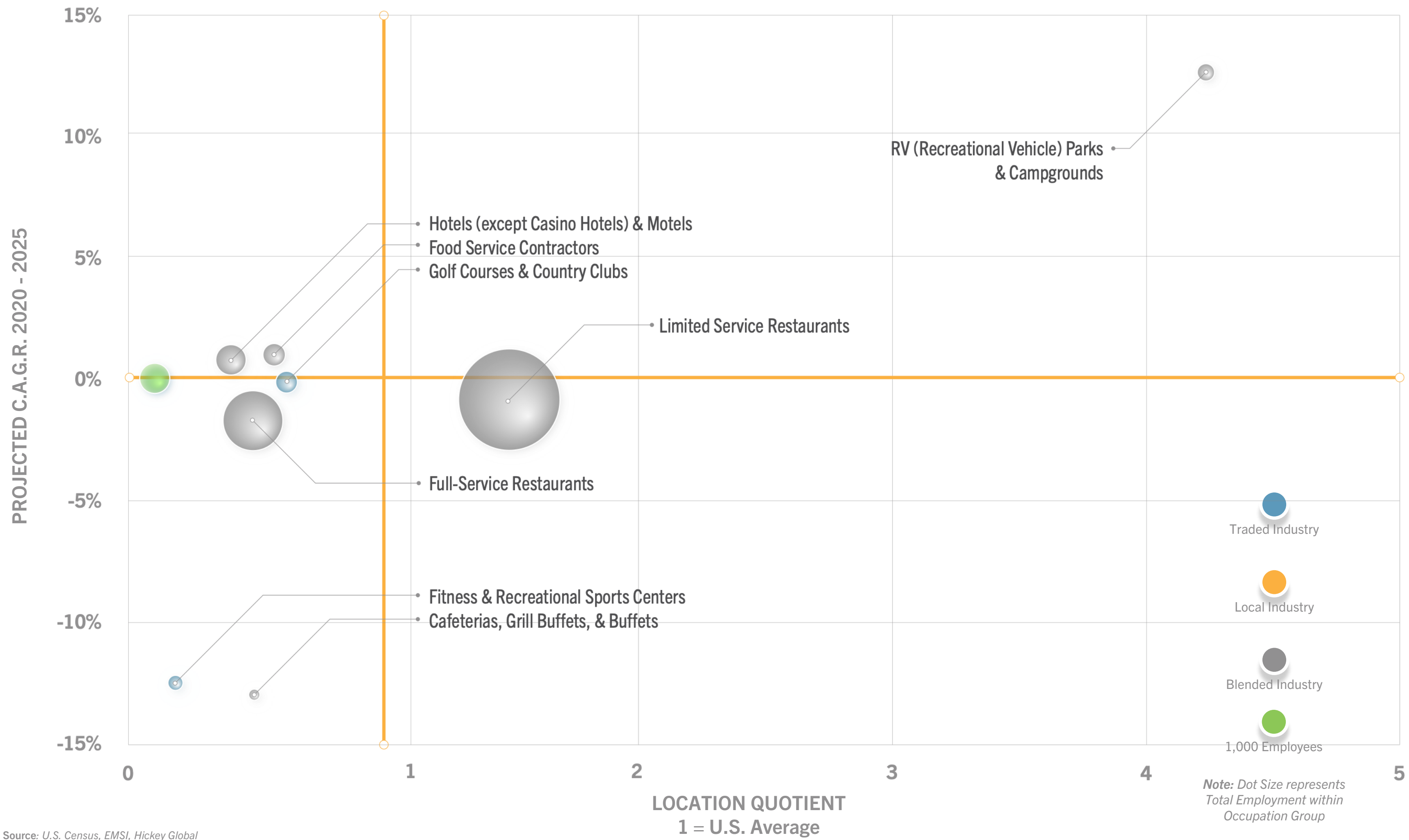
TOTAL U.S. TOURISM-RELATED OUTPUT IN 2016-2019

Billions of Current Dollars



2.5.2 Cumberland Plateau Cluster Study

Tourism – Comparable View



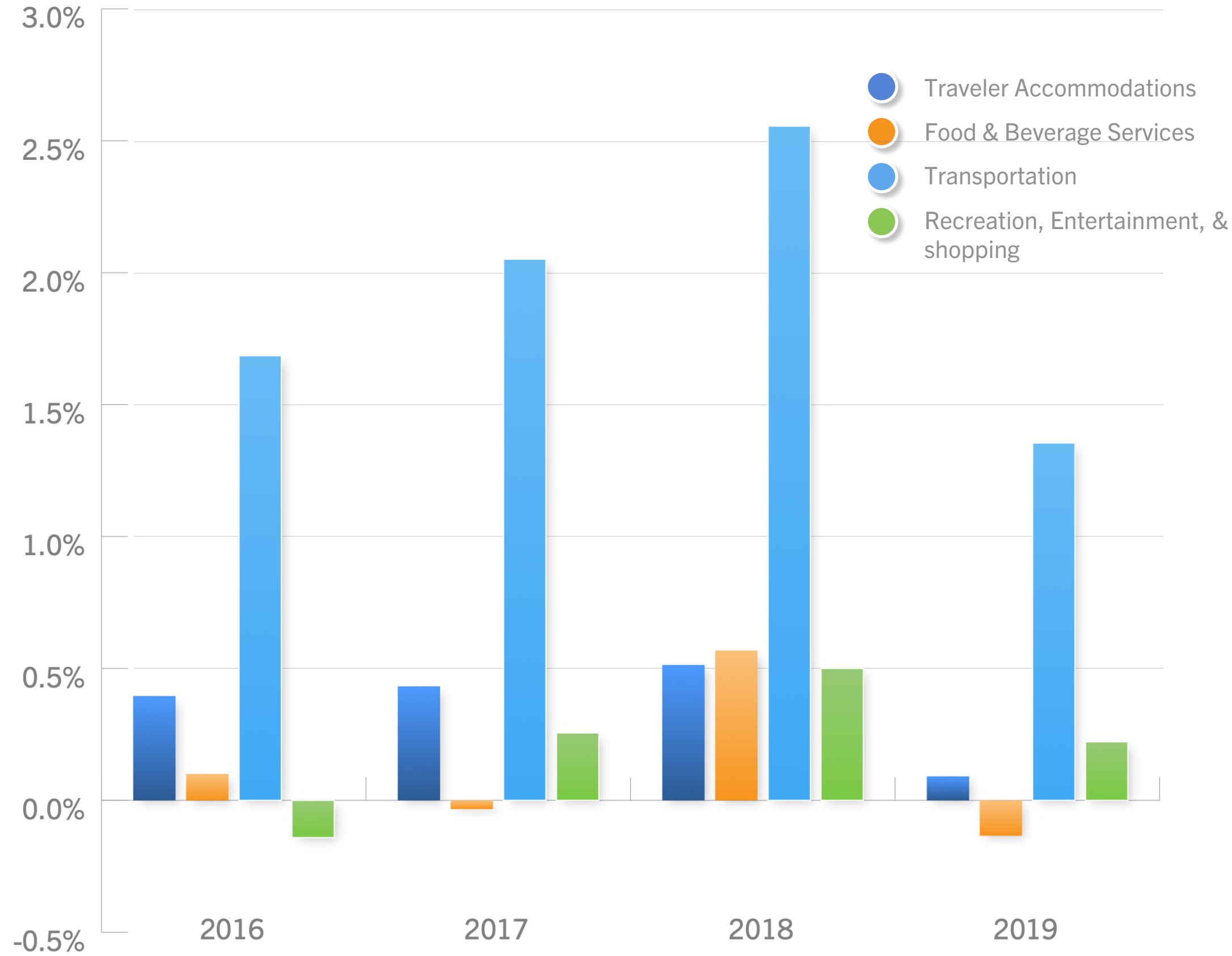
Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

LOCATION QUOTIENT

- Currently, tourism infrastructure industries such as hotels and full-service restaurants do not have a high employment concentration in Cumberland Plateau.
- Limited-Service Restaurants is the largest industry by employment within the Tourism sector with a location quotient of 1.5.
- Although the RV Parks and Campgrounds industry does not require large scale employment for operations, the region is relatively advantaged with both a high growth rate and location quotient.

2.5.3 Tourism Cluster

CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONAL ANNUAL GROWTH IN REAL TOURISM OUTPUT IN 2016-2019



ANNUAL OVERALL TOURISM GROWTH



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

▶ NAICS CODES IN CLUSTER

- 487210 Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Water
- 561510 Travel Agencies
- 561591 Convention and Visitors' Bureaus
- 713910 Golf Courses and Country Clubs
- 713930 Marinas
- 713940 Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
- 721110 Hotels and Motels, Except Casino Hotels
- 721211 RV Parks and Campgrounds
- 722310 Food Service Contractors
- 722320 Caterers
- 722511 Full-service Restaurants
- 722513 Limited-service Restaurants
- 722514 Cafeterias, Grill Buffets, & Buffets
- 722515 Snack & Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars

2.6.1 Healthcare - Cluster Overview

Follow current trajectory to capture revenue and meet the needs of an aging populace.

▶ CASE TO WIN

- Wide range of services offered in the region due to demographics.
- Many industries within Cumberland Plateau's Healthcare cluster have a location quotient above the national average, providing a high density of skills for potential employers.
 - A large number of care providers leads to quality-of-life benefits that extend to other clusters.
- With few exceptions, industries within the Healthcare cluster are expected to experience positive growth over the next five years.

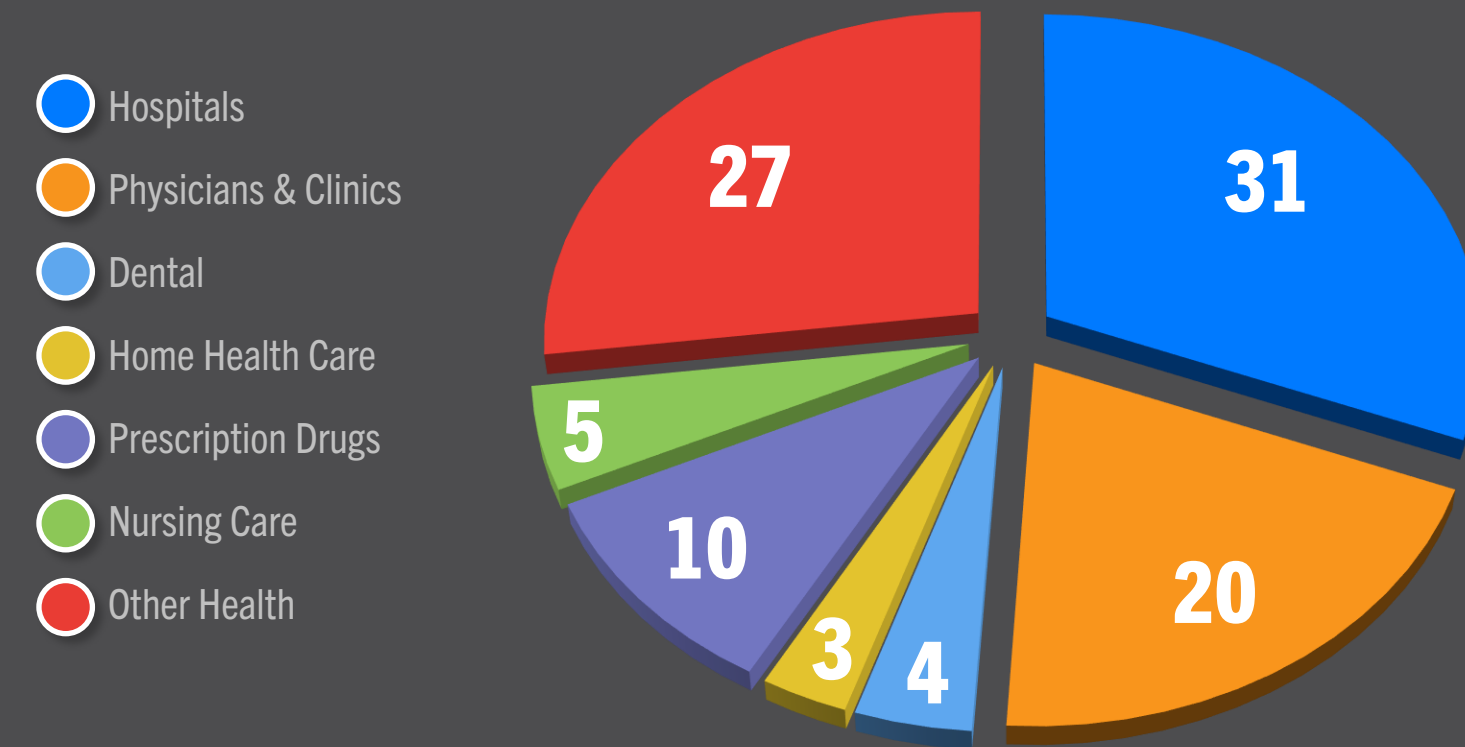
▶ POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Follow current trajectory to capture revenue and meet the needs of an aging populace.
- Leverage Appalachian College of Pharmacy in recruiting on-line pharmacy operations such as shared services and distribution.
- Conduct a healthcare leakage study to determine needed or improved services to ensure income created in region stays in region.

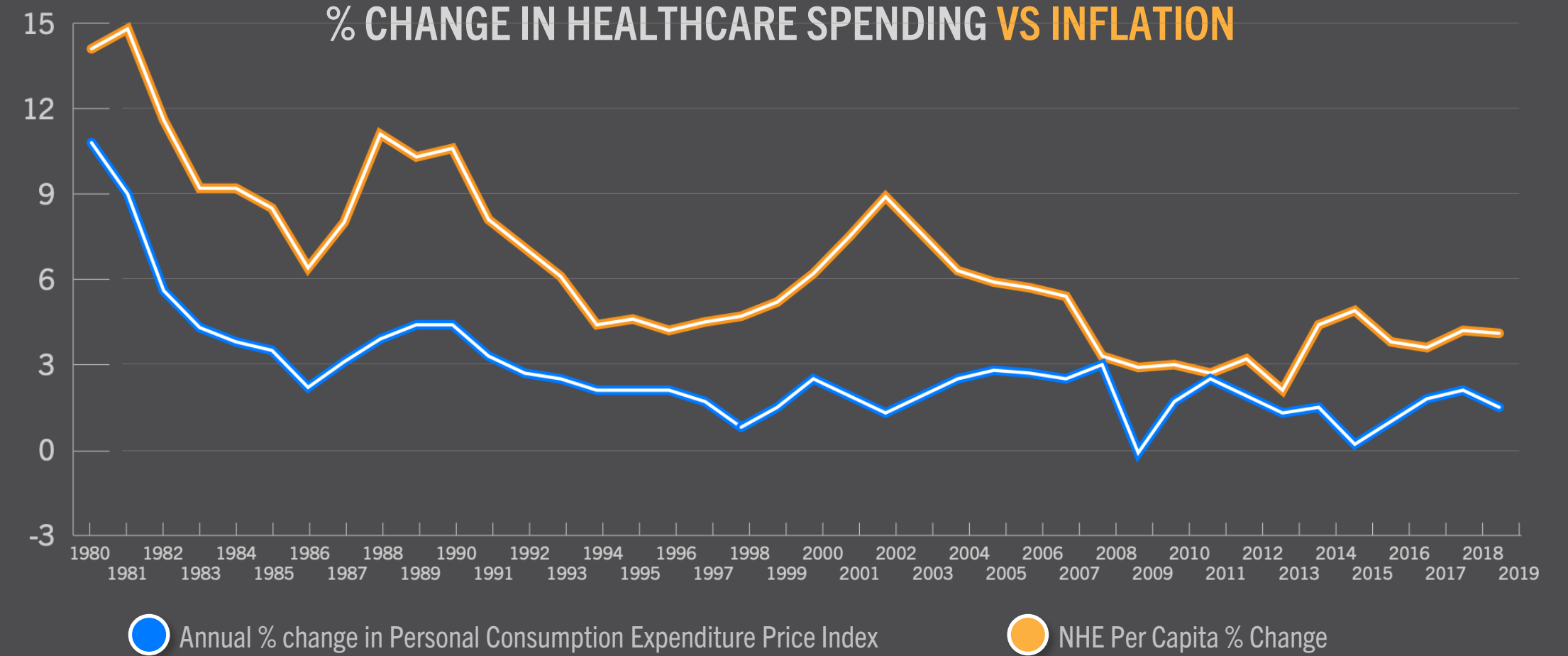
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

▶ CLUSTER INFORMATION

DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL HEALTH EXPENDITURES



% CHANGE IN HEALTHCARE SPENDING VS INFLATION



2.6.2 Cumberland Plateau Cluster Study

Healthcare – Comparable View



LOCATION QUOTIENT

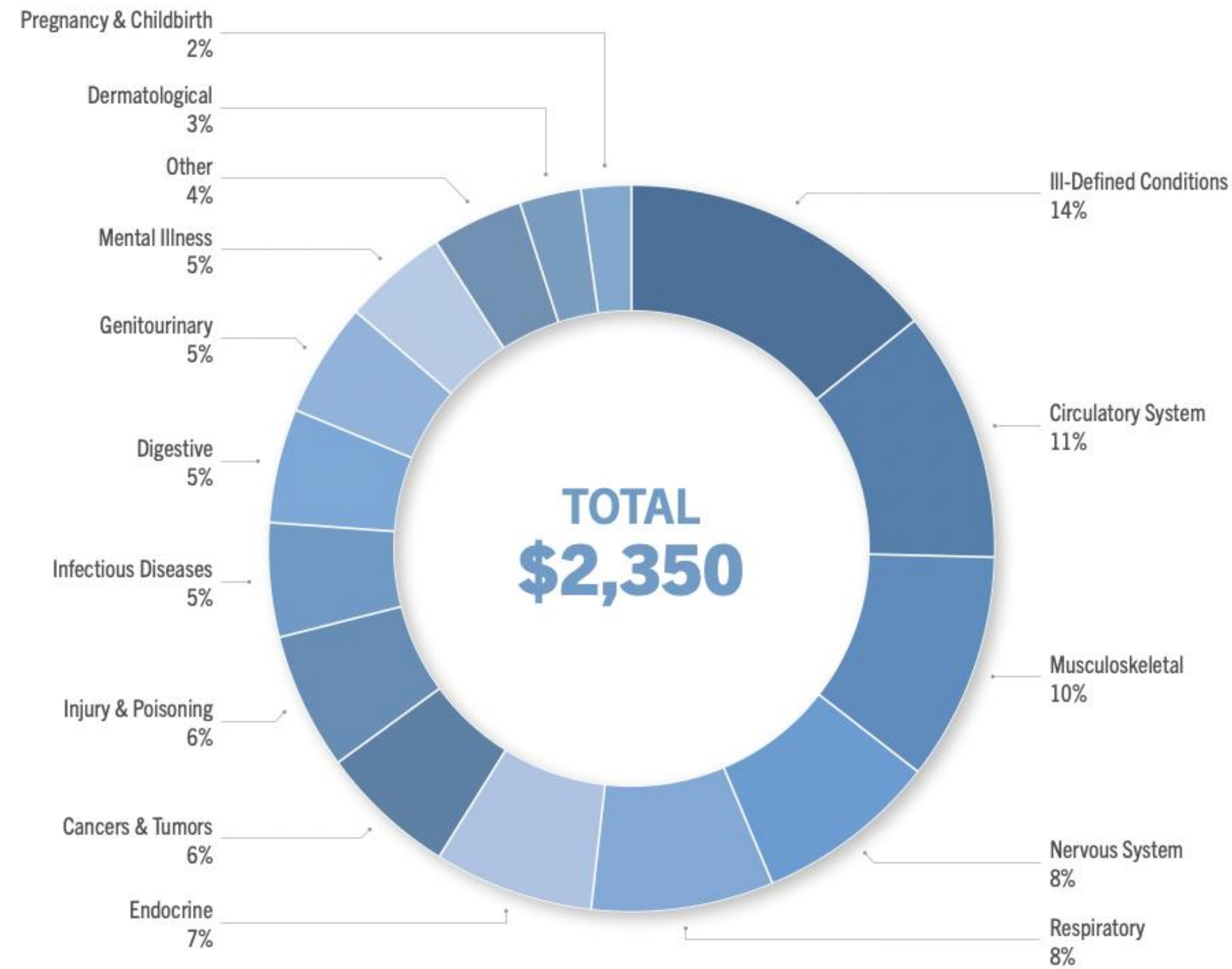
- Hospitals, Nursing Care Facilities, and Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities are the highest employment Healthcare industries in the Cumberland Plateau Region.
- By number of industries, a third of the Healthcare sector in Cumberland Plateau is dedicated to elderly care.
- Ambulance Services has triple the location quotient of the next densest Healthcare industry at 5.4.

Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

2.6.3 Healthcare Cluster

SHARE OF SPENDING BY MEDICAL CONDITION

Distribution of total medical services expenditures (US \$ billions), by medical condition, 2017



Source: KFF analysis of BEA Health Care Satellite Account (Blended Account)

▶ NAICS CODES IN CLUSTER

- 524114 Direct Health and Medical Insurance Carriers
- 621340 Offices of Specialty Therapists
- 621492 Kidney Dialysis Centers
- 621493 Freestanding Emergency Medical Centers
- 621498 All Other Outpatient Care Centers
- 621511 Medical Laboratories
- 621512 Diagnostic Imaging Centers
- 621910 Ambulance Services
- 622110 General Medical and Surgical Hospitals
- 623110 Nursing Care Facilities, Skilled Nursing
- 623210 Residential Developmental Disability Homes
- 623220 Residential Mental and Substance Abuse Care
- 623311 Continuing Care Retirement Communities
- 623312 Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly
- 623990 Other Residential Care Facilities
- 624110 Child and Youth Services
- 624120 Services for the Elderly and Disabled
- 624190 Other Individual and Family Services
- 624210 Community Food Services
- 624310 Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Cumberland Plateau PDC

Virginia

Asset Mapping

August 2021

Overview

The Cluster Verification Process

As part of an ongoing resiliency study, Cumberland Plateau PDC requested Hickey Global identify infrastructure deficits within the four counties that inhibit future economic resiliency as well as assets that support recovery/resiliency.

A gap analysis was completed taking into consideration current and future infrastructure needs based on growth opportunities.

The gap analysis as of August 2021 appears on the following pages.

1.0 FINDINGS



1.1 Regional Assets

Broadband, Outdoor Activities, Low Cost

Broadband is a star asset in the region

- Broadband capabilities are very strong in the Cumberland Plateau.
- The Cumberland Plateau's broadband capabilities are not just locally exceptional but rank highly when compared against the entire nation.
- All four counties rank in the top one-third of the counties and county equivalents across the U.S.

Low cost

- Low labor costs
- Low real estate costs
- Low cost of living

Outdoor Activities & Natural Beauty

- Plentiful outdoor activities (driving, bicycling, hiking, fishing, hunting, water sports, camping, etc.)
- 52 parks
- 49 natural areas
- 45 trails
- 43 scenic drives
- 37 historical areas
- 15 playing fields, sports, and golf facilities

1.2 Regional Deficiencies



Deficiencies in the transportation Infrastructure

- There are presently no commercial airports in the region making accessibility challenging and increasing time costs. The nearest commercial airport is the Tri-Cities Airport in Blountville, TN.
- There are no Interstate Highways in the region.



Elementary school performance and low graduation from high-demand post-secondary programs

- Two of the four regional school districts are low-performing. Students in Buchanan County School District perform well below the state average (63% below). Students in Russell County School District perform 11% below the state average. The other two major school districts perform at or above the state average.
- In addition to professional degreed programs (pharmacy and law), nearby Bluefield College serves the region. However, there is still a ‘brain drain’ of high-performing high school graduates as they leave the region looking for higher educational institutions.
- Low completion numbers from high-demand, high-growth programs such as computer science and business administration.



Lower technology usage among households

- While broadband capabilities are very strong in the Cumberland Plateau, computer and internet usage are low, as evident by the lower percentage of households that own a computer (72% vs. the U.S. average 77%) and small percentage of households with a broadband subscription (47% vs. 69% U.S. average).



Lack of human capital (labor & consumers)

- The region’s low participation rate (43% vs the U.S. average of 63%), coupled with its small population, gives it a low labor force under 38,000 people. This will create challenges in drawing sizeable employers into the region as many will believe that the region doesn’t have a sufficient workforce to support their operations. Labor force participation is particularly low amongst females (38.6%)
- At a rate less than half that of the national average and one-third of the state average, the supply of university graduates is low in the Cumberland Plateau region. However, the supply of graduates from 2-year colleges is slightly above average.
- The number of people in the region with less than a high school degree is almost twice the U.S. average, indicating this should be a focal area for economic development efforts.

Education Sources: greatschools.org, Local School District

Human Capital Sources: US Census; American Community Survey, EASI Analytics

1.3 Business and Industrial Park Parks

Regional Assets & Deficiencies



Regional Assets

- Overall, the Cumberland Plateau region has done a good job continuing to develop industrial parks.
- Industrial parks have good utility infrastructure in place or have plans to do so.
- Although limited in marketability, having a shell building does attract prospects to the region.
- The reuse of existing industrial buildings as “shell” buildings is a good strategy.

Regional Deficiencies

- Although there are sites throughout the region, most are smaller parcels limiting larger impact projects.
- The great majority of sites in region are over 30 minutes from an interstate highway.
- Road access can be challenging for truck traffic.
- Current shell building has limited potential due to design.

2.0 Infrastructure Assessment



2.1 Infrastructure Assessment – Transportation

Air, Rail, and Highway Network

Public Transportation

Four County Transit provides low-cost transit services to all residents and visitors of Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell counties. There are 16 public and 9 college routes that run throughout the day. Four-County Transit also offers a ‘route deviation’ service that, upon request, will deviate up to three-quarters of a mile from their regular fixed route.



Highway Network

There are approximately 4,876 miles of highway infrastructure in the Cumberland Plateau, VA.

HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

COUNTY	TOTAL HIGHWAYS	INTERSTATE HWYS (Total Miles)	PRIMARY ROADS (Total Miles)	SECONDARY ROADS (Total Miles)	FRONTAGE ROADS (Total Miles)
Buchanan County, VA	1,119	0	192	927	0
Dickenson County, VA	980	0	168	812	0
Russell County, VA	1,469	0	284	1,185	0
Tazewell County, VA	1,308	0	367	939	2

DAILY VEHICLE MILES OF TRAVEL

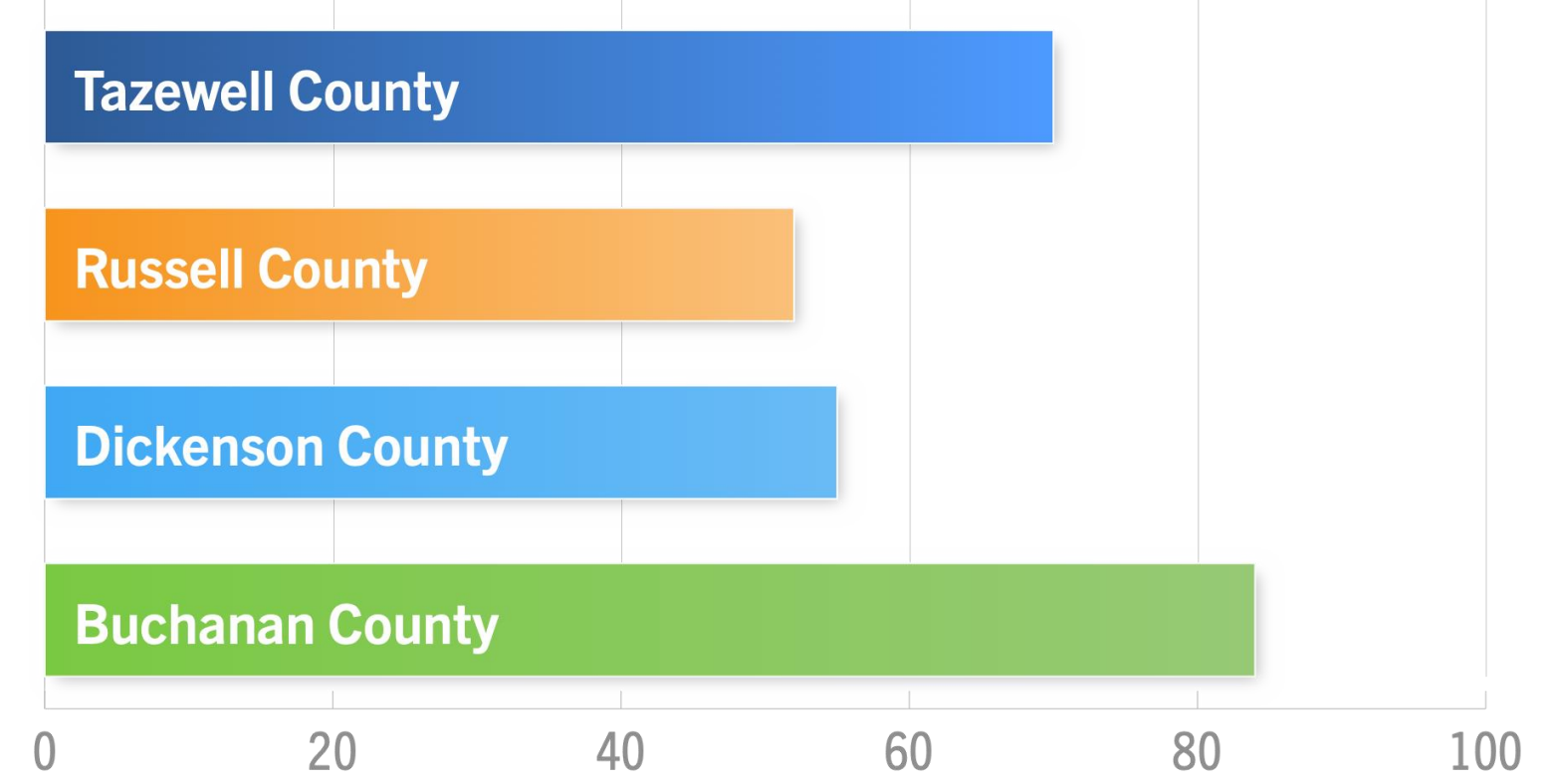
COUNTY	TOTAL DVMT ¹	MILES OF ROADWAY per 1,000 persons	TOTAL DVMT ² (Per Capita)	ANNUAL AVERAGE Daily Traffic on Highways
Buchanan County, VA	501,451	2.2	24.0	1,374
Dickenson County, VA	274,981	3.6	19.2	753
Russell County, VA	656,372	2.2	24.7	1,798
Tazewell County, VA	690,200	1.9	17.0	1,891

Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Source: Virginia Department of Transportation

Rail

There are approximately 263 miles of freight railroad track in the Cumberland Plateau, VA.

MILES OF FREIGHT RAILROAD



Air

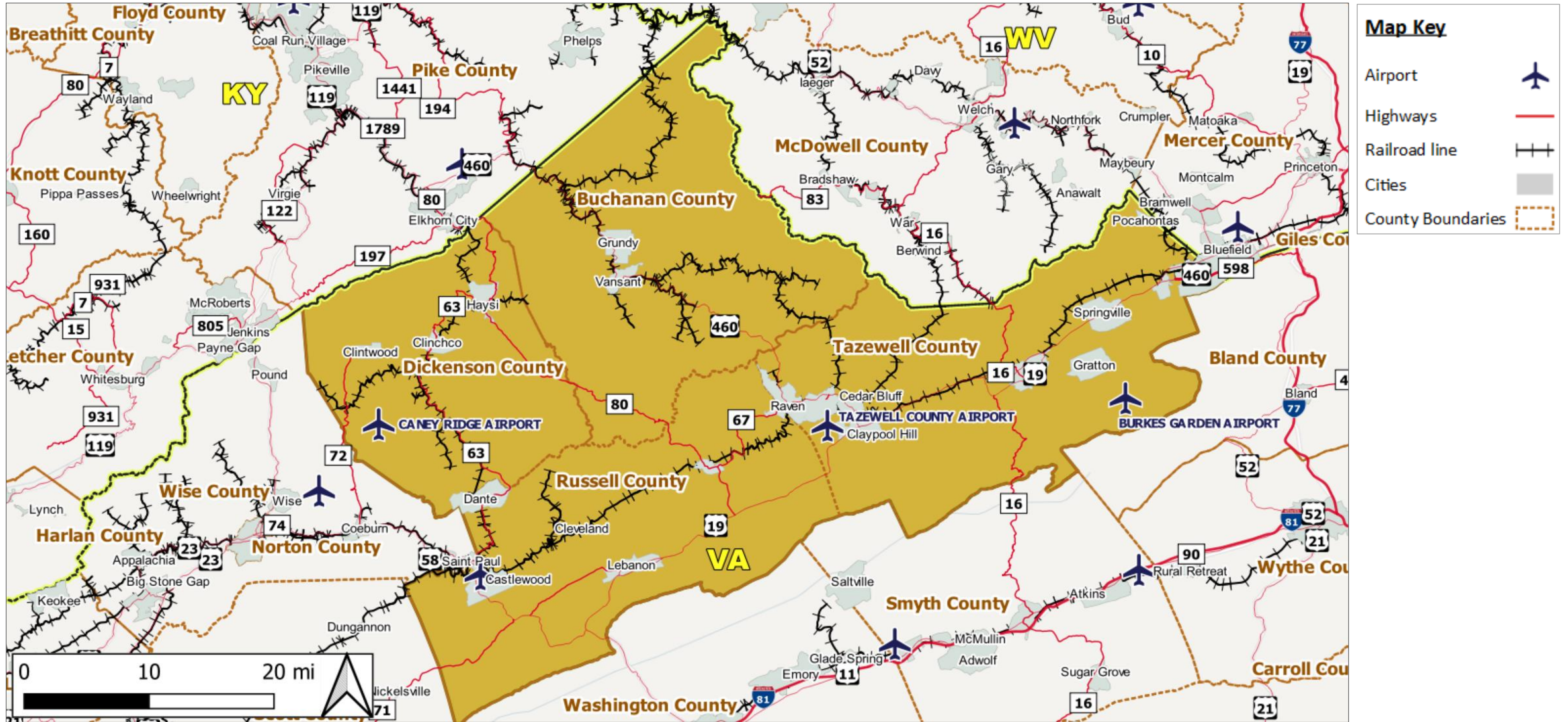
The only significant public airport in the region is Tazewell County Airport. There are three other small private airfields in the region – Caney Ridge Airport, Flying W Airport, and Burkes Garden Airport.

COUNTY	LARGEST AIRPORT	NON-COMMERCIAL AIRPORTS	COMMERCIAL AIRPORTS
Buchanan County, VA	Grundy Municipal Airport closed in October 2019, estimated to reopen in 2025 as Breaks Regional Airport	None	None
Dickenson County, VA	None	None	None
Russell County, VA	None	None	None
Tazewell County, VA	Tazewell County Airport	1	None

Source: Hickey Global Research Services

2.2 Infrastructure Assessment - Transportation

Cumberland Plateau - Airports, Highways, & Railroad Lines



Source: U.S. Census, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Openstreetmaps, Hickey Global Consulting Services

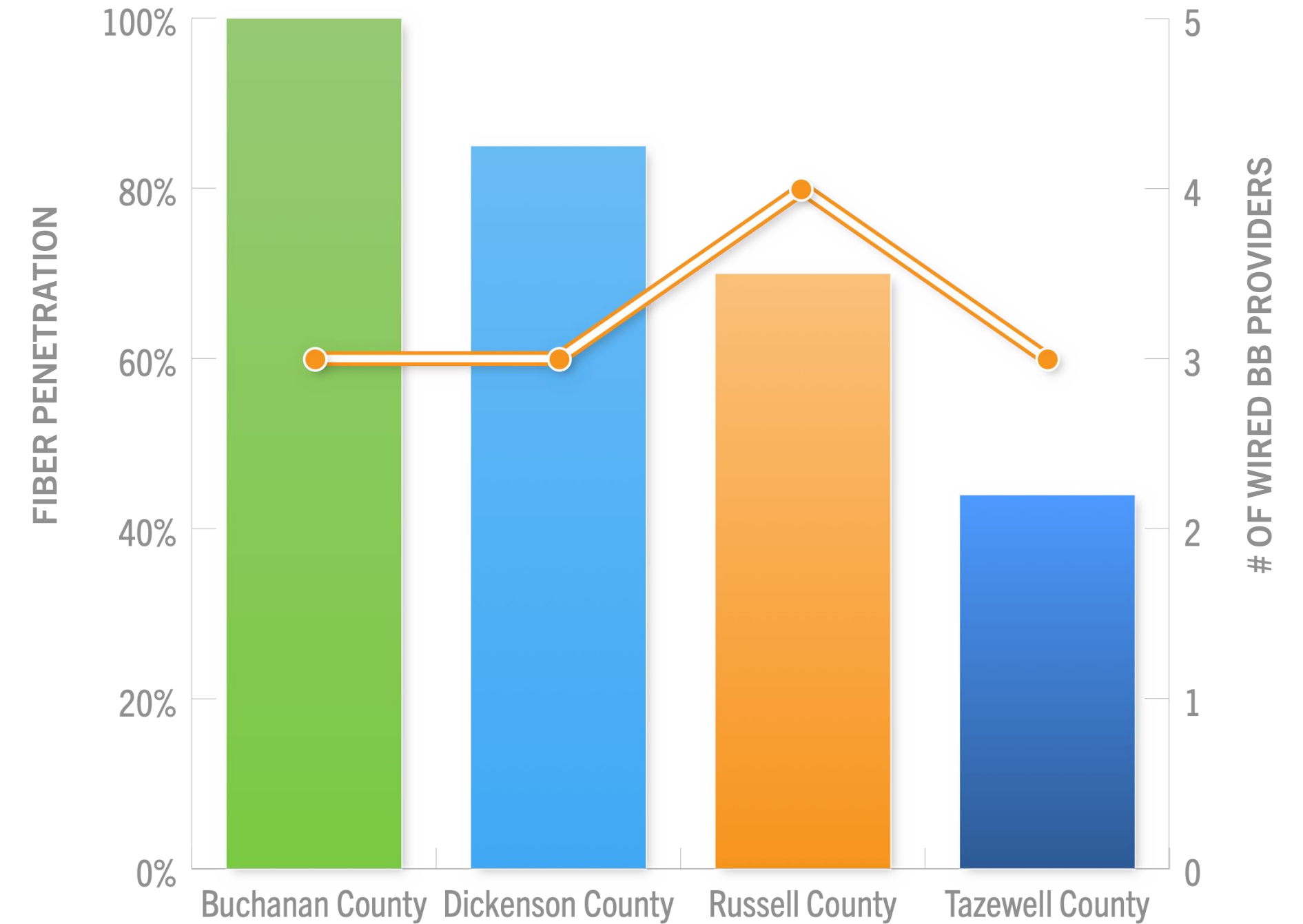
2.3.1 Infrastructure - Technology

Broadband

Companies and site selectors have taken note of a shift in perception around broadband, as reliable high-speed connections become more important for offices and their employees. Fortunately, broadband capabilities are very strong in the Cumberland Plateau. Buchanan County is the strongest county in the region with 100% fiber penetration and 100% of the region's census tracts with access to wired broadband coverage. In the U.S. County Broadband Statistics for 2020 report, by BroadbandNow, Buchanan County ranks 8th highest in the nation (out of 3,143 counties and county equivalents) for broadband service availability.

COUNTY	BROADBAND SERVICE RANK	FIBER PENETRATION	# OF WIRED BROADBAND PROVIDERS	LOWEST MONTHLY PRICE	% OF CENSUS TRACKS WITH WIRED BROADBAND COVERAGE
Buchanan County, VA	8	100.00%	3	\$61.99	100.00%
Dickenson County, VA	423	84.10%	3	\$70.00	97.70%
Russell County, VA	1,131	69.10%	4	\$67.00	88.70%
Tazewell County, VA	611	43.30%	3	\$71.66	95.60%

BROADBAND CAPABILITIES



***Note:** Broadband Now is an initiative developed in the aftermath of the FCC's decision to cut funding for broadband mapping. The analysis is based on FCC and Census data, as well as proprietary datasets such as submissions from ISPs. The Broadband Service Rank is derived from the percentage of census tracts with wired broadband coverage for each U.S. county and independent city (county equivalent).

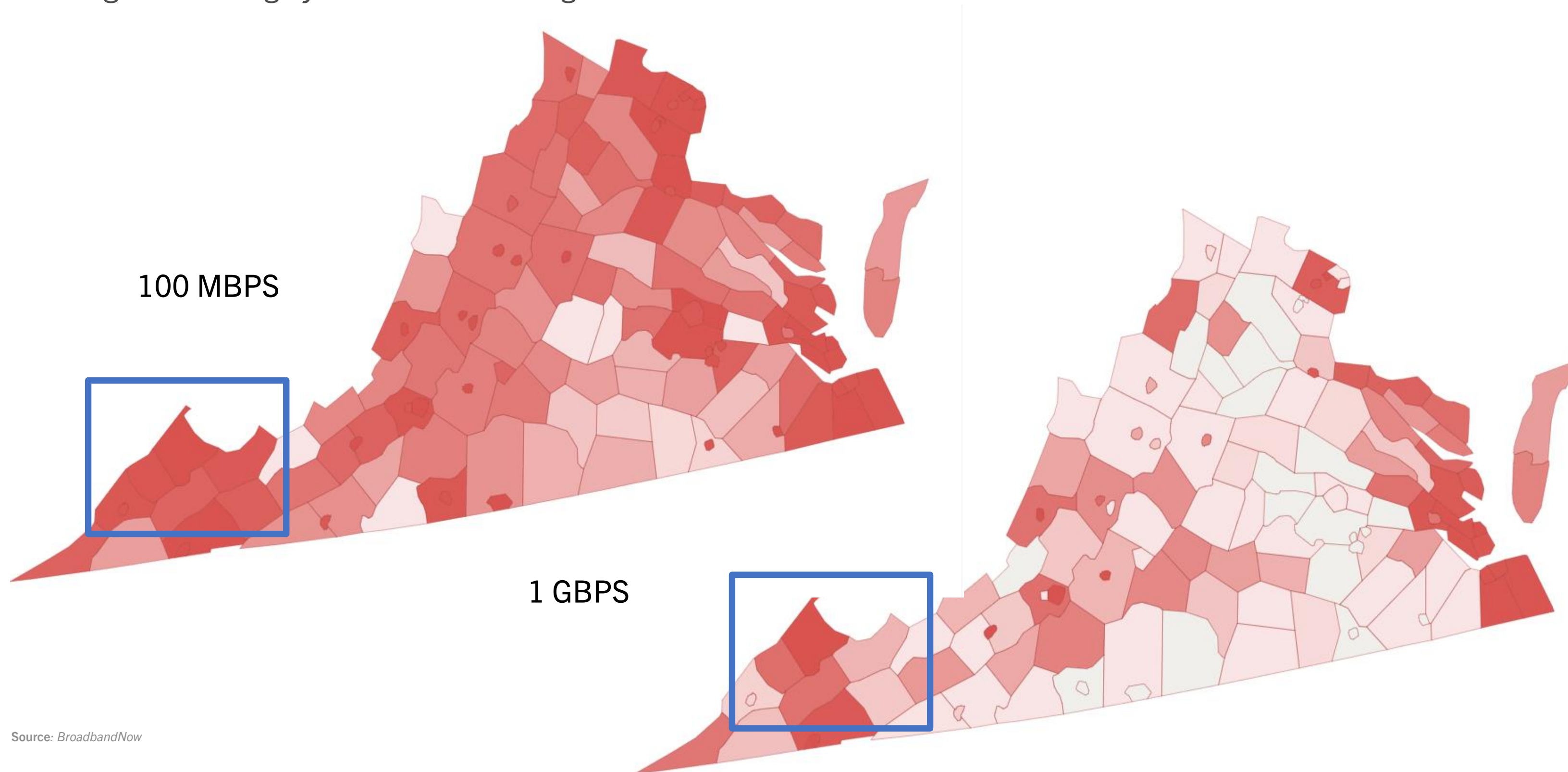
2.3.2 Infrastructure - Technology

Broadband

Virginia's broadband coverage is well distributed throughout the state, as 65% of the state's counties and independent cities have broadband coverage of 80% or more. Cumberland Plateau is well positioned in this competitive environment: in addition to Buchanan County's best-in-class broadband coverage, Dickenson and Tazewell perform above the state's average and Tazewell's 88.7% coverage is equal to the state's median. Outside of Southwestern Virginia, the state's most connected regions are largely concentrated along the eastern border.

TOP VIRGINIA COUNTIES/INDEPENDENT CITIES FOR BROADBAND COVERAGE

AREA	NATIONAL RANK
Buchanan County	8
Bristol	11
Franklin City	17
Bland County	23
Bedford City	24
Manassas Park	82
Lexington	89
Winchester	118
Covington	126
Radford	130
...	...
Dickenson County	423
Tazewell County	611
Russell County	1,131



Source: BroadbandNow

2.3.3 Infrastructure - Technology

Broadband – National Overview

The Cumberland Plateau's broadband capabilities are not just locally exceptional, but rank highly when compared against the entire nation. Buchanan County's rank of 8 is out of 3,143 total regions. Even the lowest ranking county in the region, Russell County, ranks higher than two-thirds of the counties and county equivalents across the U.S.

TOTAL TOP COUNTIES FOR BROADBAND COVERAGE

NATIONAL RANK	COUNTY	STATE
1	Nassau	New York
2	Richmond	New York
3	Sullivan	Tennessee
4	Whitfield	Georgia
5	Bulloch	Georgia
6	Hamblen	Tennessee
7	Meade	Kentucky
8	Buchanan	Virginia
9	Morgan	Tennessee
10	McCreary	Kentucky
...
423	Dickenson	Virginia
611	Tazewell	Virginia
1,131	Russell	Virginia
...
3,141	Esmeralda	Nevada
3,142	Banner	Nebraska
3,143	Yakutat	Alaska

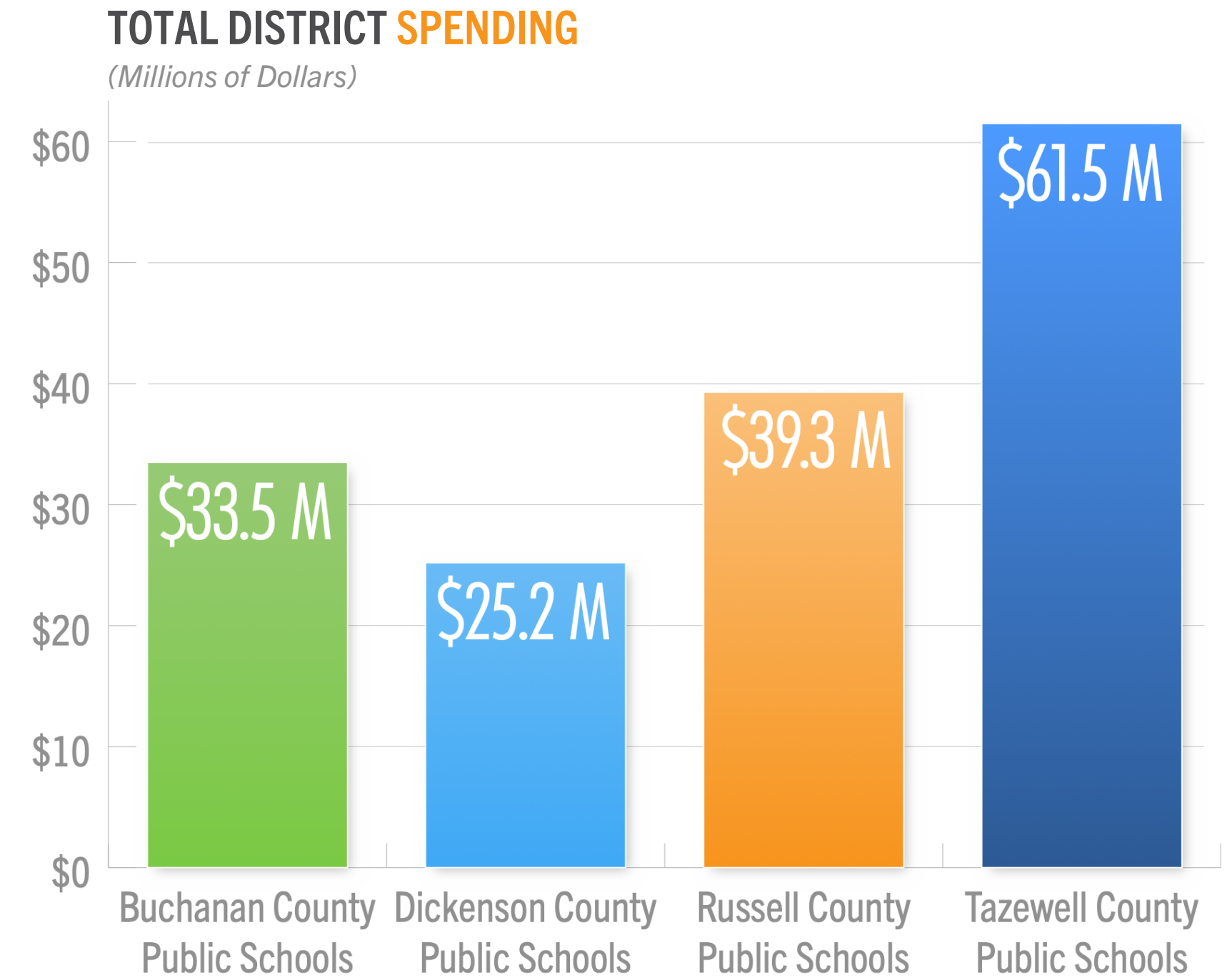
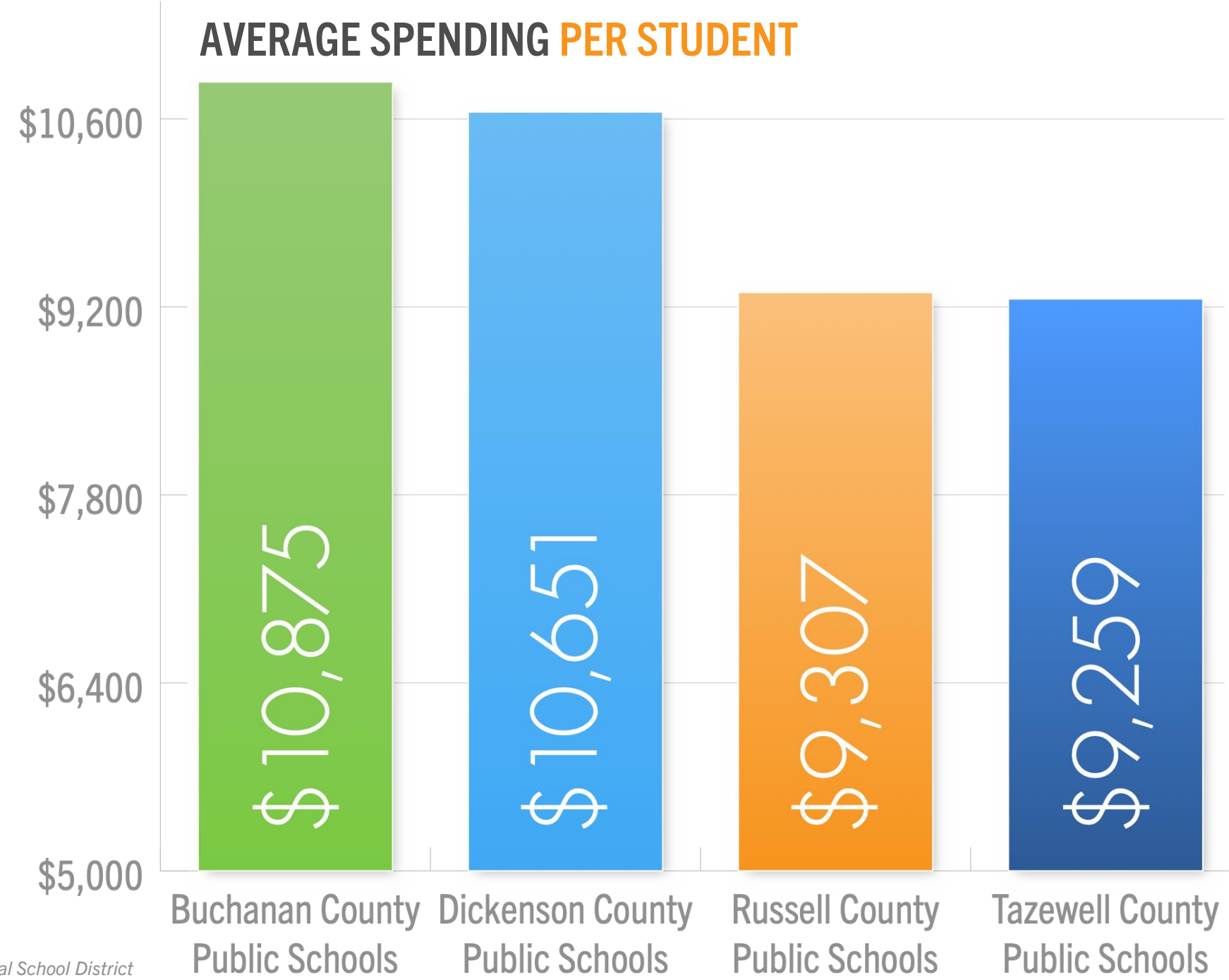


2.4.1 Infrastructure – School System

Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Schools

High school graduation rates are well above the U.S. average (86% in 2018-2019) in the Cumberland Plateau. The Buchanan County School District is reportedly the lowest performing in the region with 63% of its students performing academically below the state’s average. Zero percent of students in Tazewell and Dickenson counties, and 11% of students in Russell County were below the state’s average. Close to 60% of students in Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell reported ‘above average’ academic progress.

DISTRICT NAME	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS	STUDENTS PER TEACHER	TOTAL DISTRICT SPENDING (Millions)	AVERAGE SPENDING PER STUDENT	% STUDENT PROFICIENCY IN SCIENCE	% STUDENT PROFICIENCY IN READING/ENGLISH	% STUDENT PROFICIENCY IN MATH	4-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE
Buchanan County, VA	10	2,758	13	\$33.5	\$10,875	81%	70%	81%	87%
Dickenson County, VA	5	2,054	14	\$25.2	\$10,651	78%	83%	89%	95%
Russell County, VA	14	3,785	14	\$39.3	\$9,307	90%	83%	93%	92%
Tazewell County, VA	16	5,653	14	\$61.5	\$9,259	86%	82%	86%	92%



Source: greatschools.org, Local School District

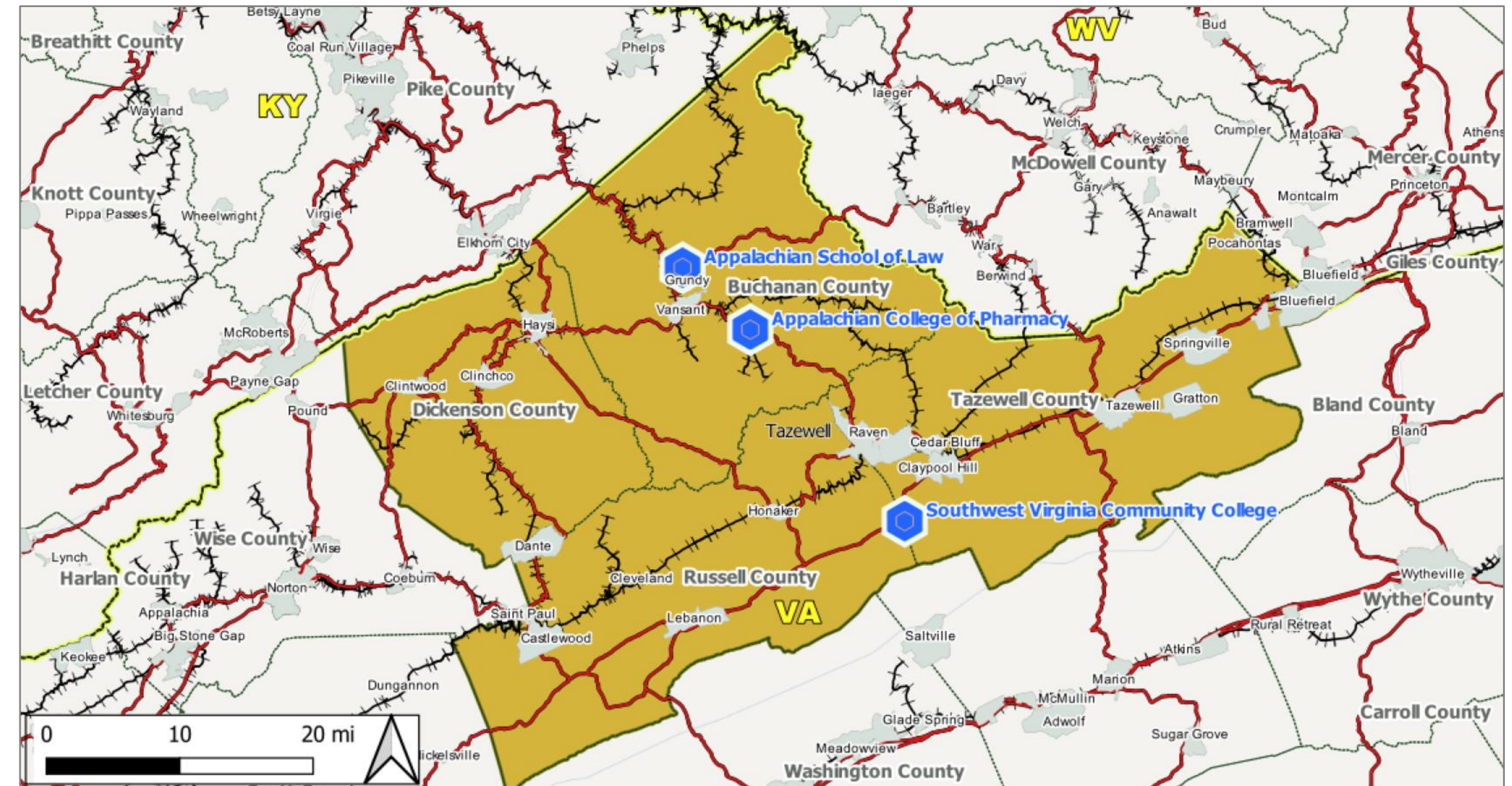
2.4.2 Infrastructure – School System

Post-Secondary Schools

Southwest Virginia Community College is the largest post-secondary school in the region. The Cumberland Plateau also has two institutions specializing in professional degrees with the Appalachian School of Law and Appalachian College of Pharmacy. Altogether, these institutions produced over 600 graduates, with a majority coming from the community college. The largest number of graduates from Southwest Virginia Community College were from Liberal Arts (152), Healthcare (131), Child Care (36), Electronical/Electronics Maintenance (31), and Business Administration (28) programs. There were only 7 graduates from Computer and Information Sciences programs. In addition, nearby Bluefield College serves the region as a four-year university.

POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLS

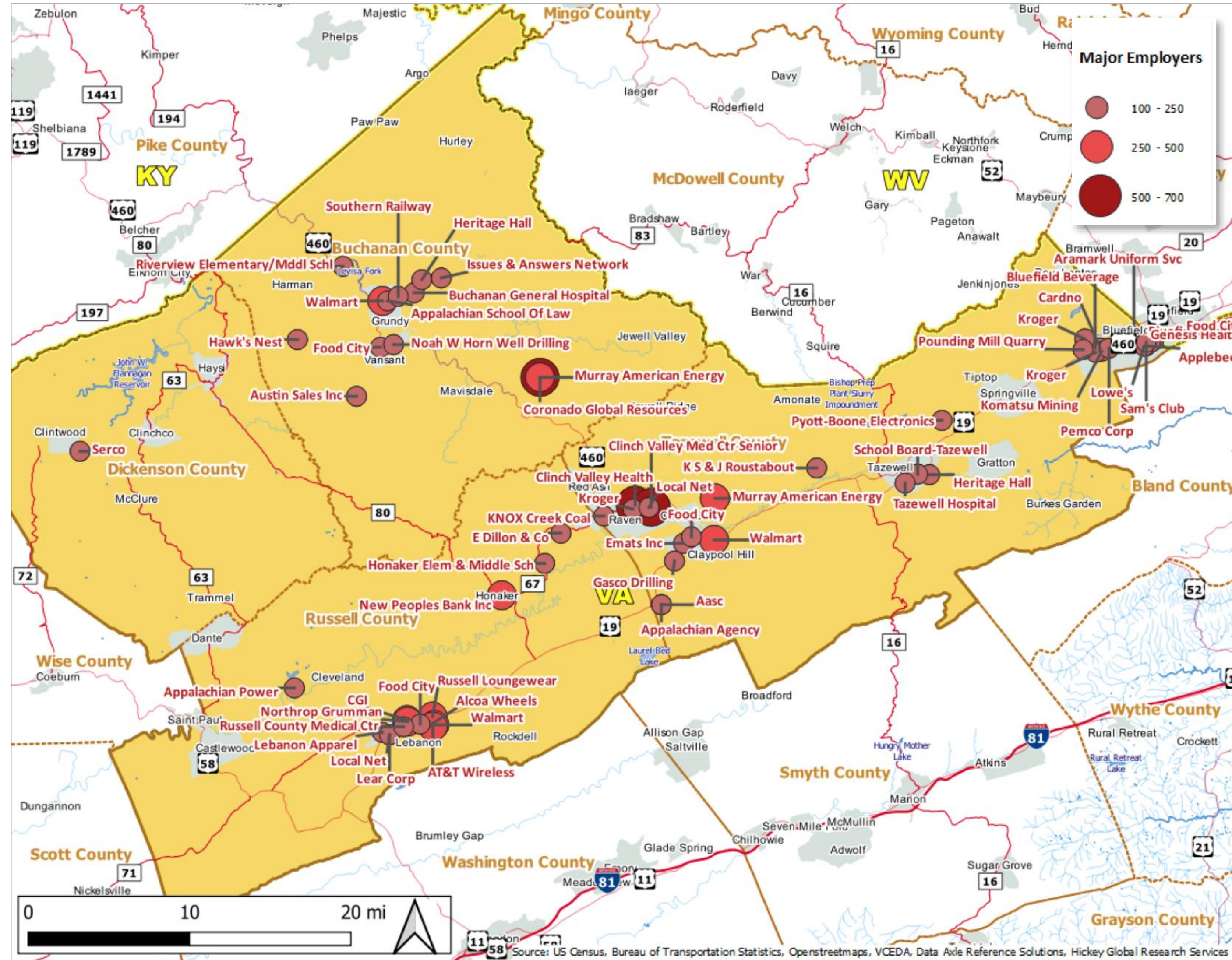
UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE	ENROLLMENT	GRADUATES	CITY	STATE	COUNTY
Appalachian School of Law	164	90	Grundy	VA	Buchanan County
Appalachian College of Pharmacy	216	63	Oakwood	VA	Buchanan County
Southwest VA Community College	2,338	482	Cedar Bluff	VA	Tazewell County



Source: U.S. Census, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Openstreetmaps, Hickey Global Consulting Services, NCES IPEDs

2.5.1 Infrastructure Assessment – Major Employers

Cumberland Plateau



COMPANY	CITY	EMPL
Aasc	Cedar Bluff	100 to 249
Alcoa Wheel Products	Lebanon	250 to 499
Appalachian Agency For Sr	Cedar Bluff	100 to 249
Appalachian Power Co Clinch	Cleveland	100 to 249
Appalachian School Of Law	Grundy	100 to 249
Applebee's Grill + Bar	Bluefield	100 to 249
Aramark Uniform Svc	Bluefield	100 to 249
AT&T Wireless	Lebanon	250 to 499
Austin Sales Inc	Vansant	100 to 249
Bluefield Beverage Co	Bluefield	100 to 249
Bluefield College	Bluefield	100 to 249
Buchanan General Hospital	Grundy	100 to 249
Cardno	Bluefield	100 to 249
CGI	Lebanon	250 to 499
Cimarron Coach Of Virginia	Falls Mills	100 to 249
Clinch Valley Health	Richlands	500 to 999
Clinch Valley Med Ctr Senior	Richlands	500 to 999
CNX Gas Corporation	Cedar Bluff	250 to 499
Coronado Global Resources	Raven	250 to 499
E Dillon & Co	Swords Creek	100 to 249
Emats Inc	Cedar Bluff	100 to 249
First Community Bankshares Inc	Bluefield	100 to 249
Food City	Bluefield	100 to 249
Food City	Cedar Bluff	100 to 249
Food City	Lebanon	100 to 249
Food City	Vansant	100 to 249
Food City	Vansant	100 to 249
Gasco Drilling Inc	Cedar Bluff	100 to 249
Genesis Health Care LLC	Bluefield	100 to 249
Genesis Healthcare LLC	Bluefield	100 to 249
Hawk's Nest	Grundy	100 to 249
Heritage Hall Grundy	Grundy	100 to 249
Heritage Hall Tazewell	Tazewell	100 to 249
Honaker Elem & Middle Sch	Honaker	100 to 249
Honaker Elementary School	Honaker	100 to 249
Issues & Answers Network Inc	Grundy	100 to 249
JENNMAR	Cedar Bluff	100 to 249
K S & J Roustabout	North Tazewell	100 to 249
Kindred Healthcare	Grundy	100 to 249
KNOX Creek Coal Corp	Raven	100 to 249

COMPANY	CITY	EMPL
Komatsu Mining Corp	Bluefield	100 to 249
Kroger	Bluefield	100 to 249
Kroger	Bluefield	100 to 249
Kroger	Richlands	100 to 249
Kroger	Richlands	100 to 249
K-VA-T Food Stores	Cedar Bluff	100 to 249
Lear Corp	Lebanon	100 to 249
Lebanon Apparel Corp	Lebanon	100 to 249
Local Net	Lebanon	100 to 249
Local Net	Richlands	100 to 249
Lowe's Home Improvement	Bluefield	100 to 249
Lowe's Home Improvement	Pounding Mill	100 to 249
Mountain Materials	Castlewood	100 to 249
Murray American Energy Inc	Mavisdale	250 to 499
Murray American Energy Inc	Raven	500 to 999
New Peoples Bank Inc	Honaker	250 to 499
New Peoples Bankshares Inc	Honaker	100 to 249
Noah W Horn Well Drilling Inc	Oakwood	100 to 249
Northrop Grumman	Lebanon	250 to 499
Pemco Corp	Bluefield	100 to 249
Pounding Mill Quarry Corp	Bluefield	100 to 249
Pyott-Boone Electronics Inc	North Tazewell	100 to 249
Richlands High School	Richlands	100 to 249
Richlands Middle School	Richlands	100 to 249
Riverview Elementary/Mddl Schl	Grundy	100 to 249
Russell County Medical Ctr	Lebanon	100 to 249
Russell Loungewear	Lebanon	250 to 499
S T Pipeline	Clintwood	100 to 249
Sam's Club	Bluefield	100 to 249
Samuel Pressure Vessel Group	Lebanon	250 to 499
School Board-Tazewell County	Tazewell	100 to 249
Serco	Clintwood	Up to 100
Southern Railway System	Grundy	100 to 249
Tadano Mantis Corporation	Richlands	250 to 499
Tazewell Community Hospital	Tazewell	100 to 249
Walmart Supercenter	Grundy	250 to 499
Walmart Supercenter	Lebanon	250 to 499
Walmart Supercenter	Pounding Mill	250 to 499

2.5.2 Infrastructure Assessment – Natural Resources

Timber and Forestry

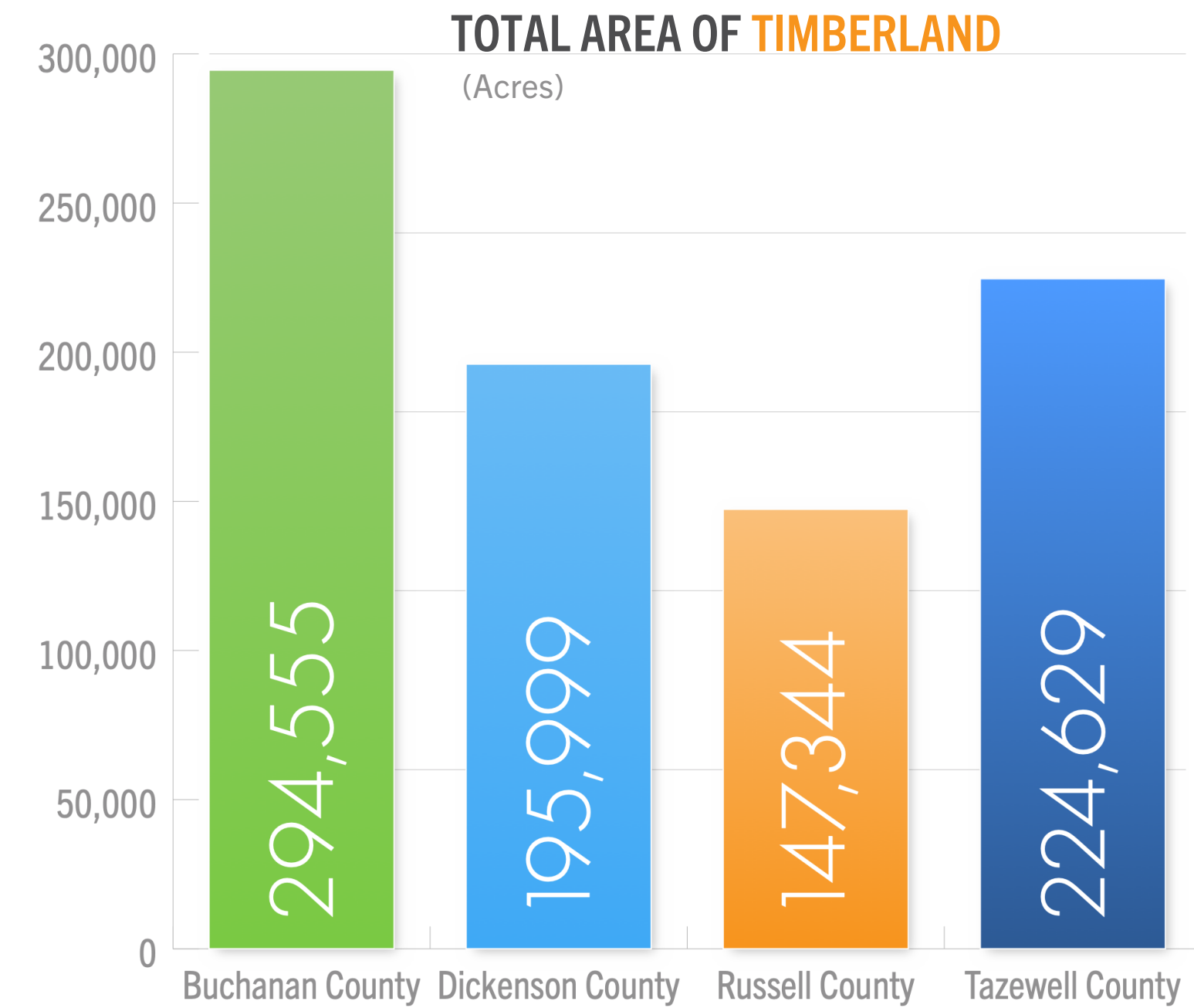
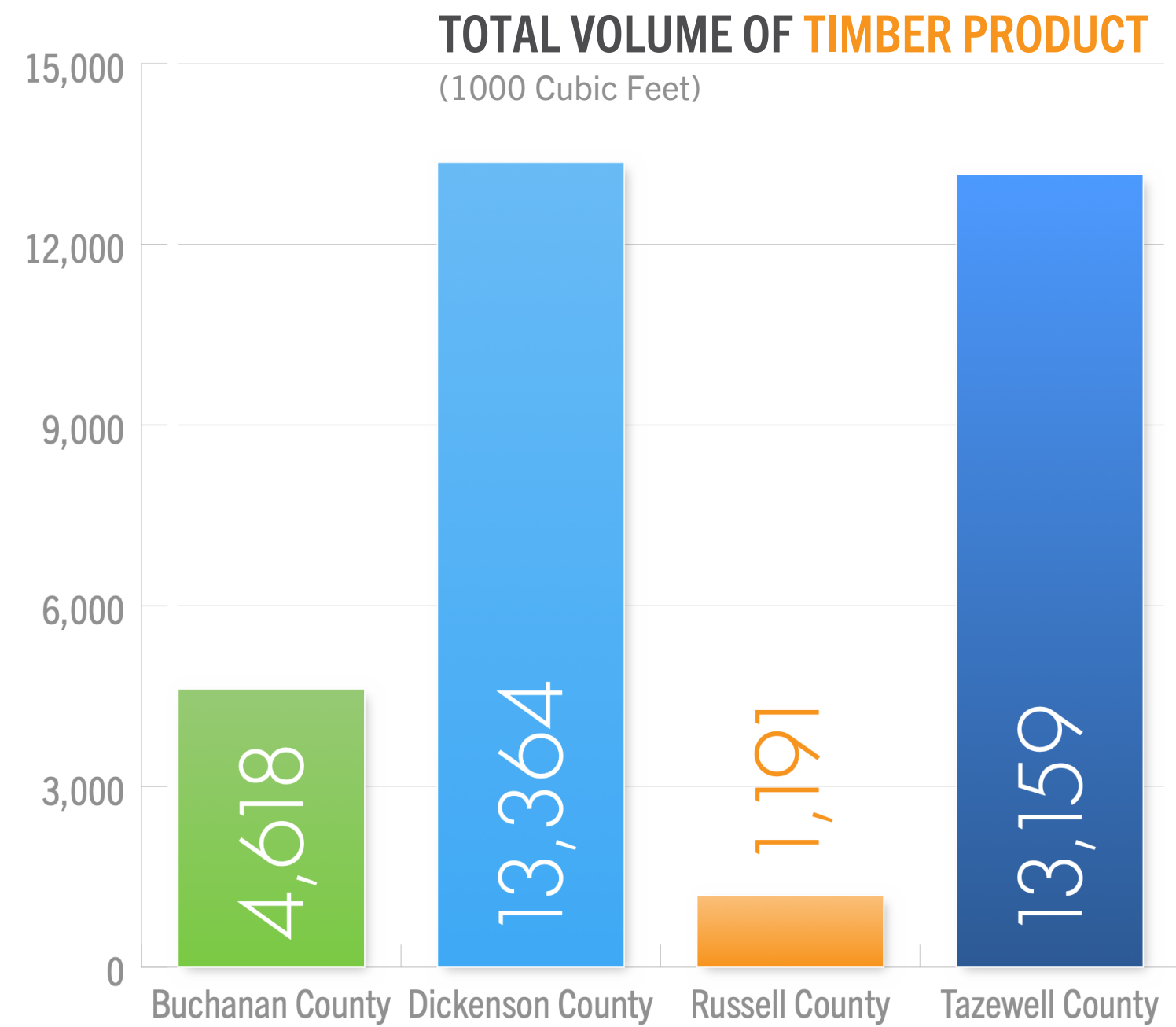
Cumberland Plateau’s total timberland area is 862,527 acres, roughly 6% of Virginia’s total. The vast majority of timberlands are privately owned. Products created by Cumberland Plateau’s roundwood timber include bioenergy, pulpwood, and saw logs. The Cumberland Plateau had two mills listed in the 2019 survey, one in Buchanan County and the other in Tazewell County, both producing saw logs.

VOLUME OF TIMBER PRODUCT BY COUNTY 2019

REGION	TOTAL VOLUME OF TIMBER PRODUCT (MCF)	VOLUME OF ROUNDWOOD (GREEN TONS)
Buchanan County	4,618	169,306
Dickenson County	13,364	493,054
Russell County	1,191	44,184
Tazewell County	13,159	486,422
Cumberland Plateau	32,332	1,192,966

AREA OF TIMBERLAND BY COUNTY AND MAJOR OWNERSHIP GROUP

REGION	TOTAL	PUBLIC OWNERSHIP	PRIVATE OWNERSHIP
Buchanan County	294,555	6,138	288,417
Dickenson County	195,999	17,261	178,738
Russell County	147,344	11,360	135,984
Tazewell County	224,629	2,939	221,690
Cumberland Plateau	862,527	37,698	824,829



Source: USDA Forest Service

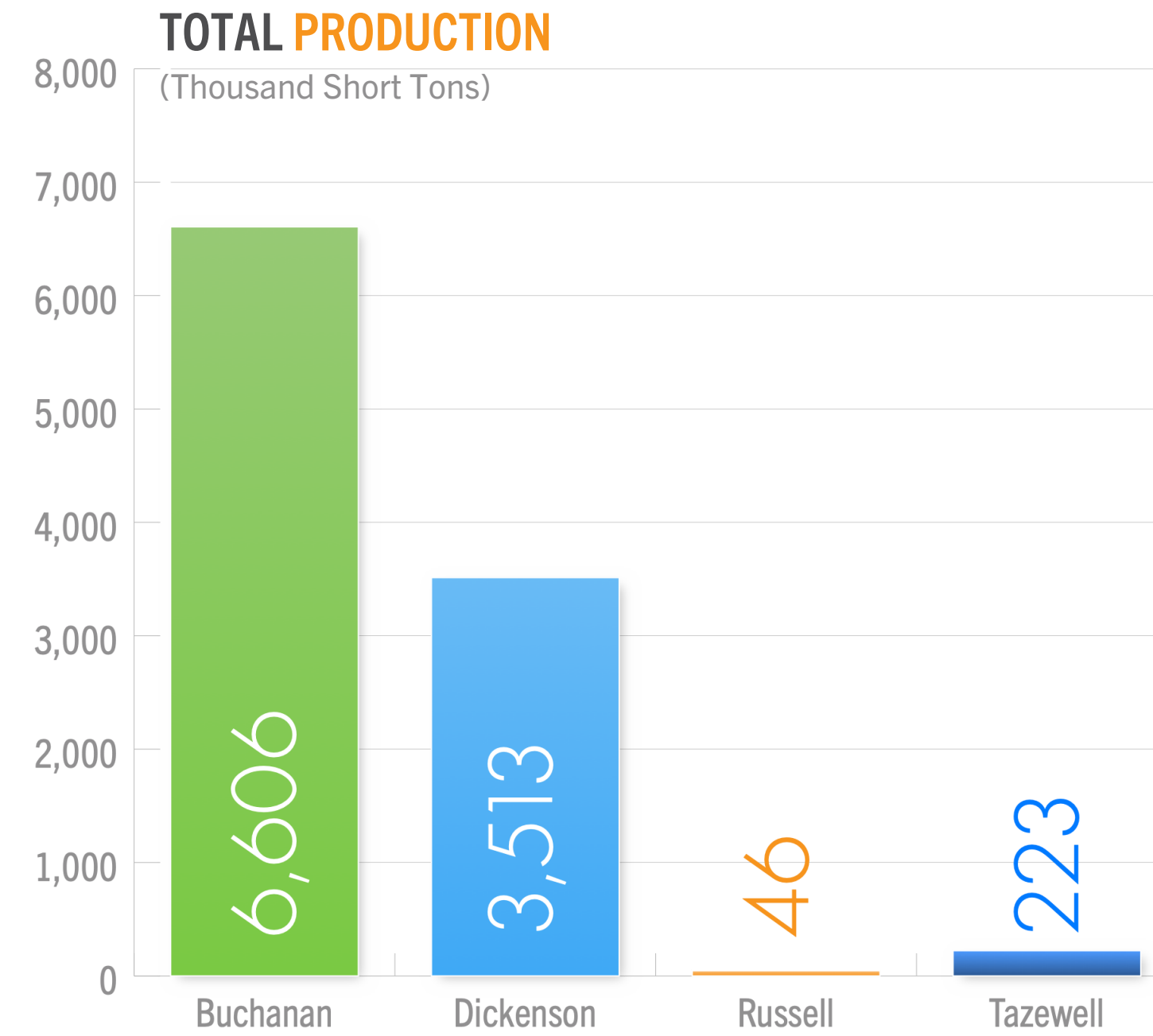
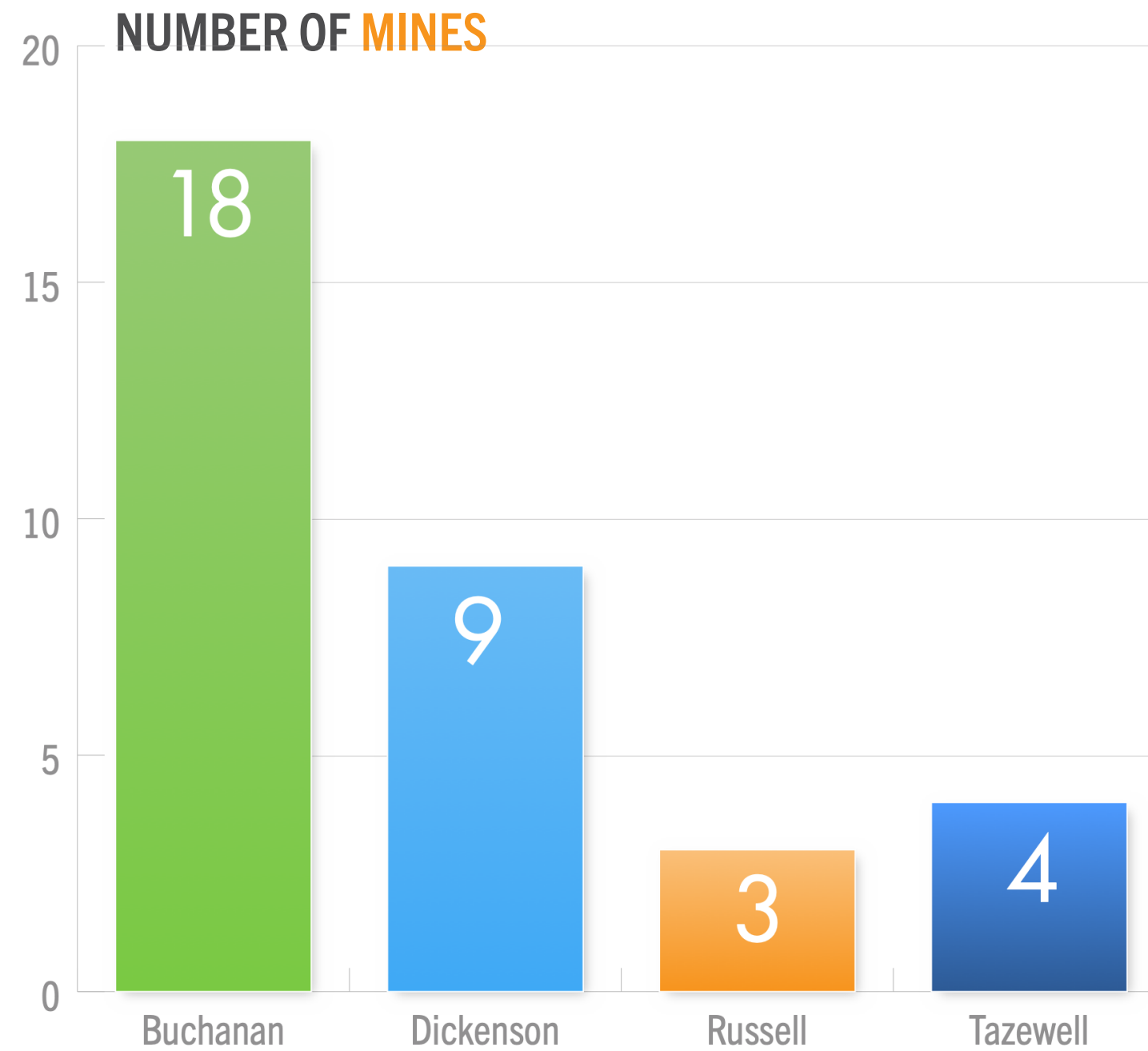
2.5.3 Infrastructure Assessment – Natural Resources

Coal Production

With 34 mines within the region, Cumberland Plateau has two-thirds of the state’s mines and 84% of the state’s total production. While operations are spread throughout the region, over half of the total production occurs in Buchanan County’s 8 underground and 10 surface mines. Dickenson County rounds out much of the remaining production, making those two regions the most vulnerable to market movements away from coal.

COAL PRODUCTION AND NUMBER OF MINES BY STATE, COUNTY, AND MINE TYPE 2019 (Thousand Short Tons)

	UNDERGROUND		SURFACE		TOTAL	
	Mines	Production	Mines	Production	Mines	Production
Cumberland Plateau	15	8,056	19	2,333	34	10,388
Buchanan	8	5,600	10	1,007	18	6,606
Dickenson	6	2,455	3	1,058	9	3,513
Russell	-	-	3	46	3	46
Tazewell	1	1	3	222	4	223
<i>U.S. Total</i>	226	267,373	432	438,445	669	706,309
Virginia	20	8,716	33	3,582	53	12,297



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration Form 7000-2, 'Quarterly Mine Employment and Coal Production Report.'

2.6.1 Labor Market

Workforce Demographics – Basic Demographic Characteristics

- The region has only seen around 3.4% of total population growth over the last ten years (the United States grew 7.6% in that same period of time). The area's population from 2020 to 2025 is projected to decline slightly.
- The Cumberland Plateau has a larger group of workers in prime working years (40-64). Likewise, the composition of younger generations (up to 39 years) is well below the U.S. average (41.1% vs. 48.8%).
- 68% of households are families, which is slightly higher than the U.S. average.
- The population of Tazewell County is about 38% of the entire Cumberland Plateau region.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	UNITED STATES	STATE OF VIRGINIA	BUCHANAN COUNTY, VA	DICKENSON COUNTY, VA	RUSSELL COUNTY, VA	TAZEWELL COUNTY, VA	CUMBERLAND PLATEAU
POPULATION SIZE AND GROWTH							
2010 Total Population	308,745,538	8,001,024	24,098	15,903	28,897	45,078	113,976
2020 Total Population	333,793,107	8,684,166	25,340	16,374	31,537	44,784	118,035
2025 Total Population Projection	346,021,282	9,008,218	25,187	16,125	32,074	43,280	116,666
2010-2020 Population: Annual Growth Rate	0.76%	0.80%	0.49%	0.29%	0.86%	-0.06%	0.34%
2020-2025 Population: Projected Annual Growth Rate	0.72%	0.74%	-0.12%	-0.31%	0.34%	-0.68%	-0.23%
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, 2020							
Total Households	126,083,849	3,306,451	10,695	6,733	13,154	18,455	49,037
Total Family Households	82,747,156	2,187,607	7,263	4,614	9,108	12,561	33,546
Average Family Size	3.16	3.09	2.77	2.86	2.85	2.83	2.82
AGE OF RESIDENTS, 2020							
19 and Younger	23.2%	23.0%	18.1%	20.1%	19.6%	19.1%	19.2%
20 to 39	25.6%	26.0%	22.4%	22.3%	21.4%	22.0%	21.9%
40 to 64	29.5%	30.8%	35.2%	34.4%	34.5%	33.1%	34.1%
65 to 74	9.2%	9.2%	12.7%	12.8%	12.9%	13.0%	12.9%
75 and Older	6.4%	6.1%	7.6%	7.7%	7.6%	8.4%	7.9%
RACE IDENTIFICATION							
2020 White Population	231,522,079	5,667,763	24,137	16,036	30,591	42,224	112,988
2020 Black/African American Population	43,241,563	1,687,062	800	78	304	1,386	2,568
2020 American Indian/Alaska Native Population	3,287,423	33,483	29	31	93	97	250
2020 Asian Population	19,671,498	609,644	135	34	69	299	537
2020 Pacific Islander Population	657,766	7,727	2	0	1	7	10
2020 Other Race Population	23,546,963	349,290	42	48	194	162	446
2020 Population of Two or More Races	11,865,815	329,197	195	147	285	609	1,236
2020 Hispanic Population	62,637,732	880,213	197	178	425	505	1,305

2.6.2 Labor Market

Workforce Demographics – Wealth Characteristics

- Labor costs are very low in the Cumberland Plateau. The median household income is over 40% lower than the U.S. average.
- Persons at or below the poverty level are higher than the U.S. average (12.2% vs. 7.4%). As a result, the rate of households receiving food stamps is high in the region – particularly in Dickenson and Buchanan counties.
- The median home value is very low in the Cumberland Plateau – 62% lower than the U.S. average. Rental rates are low as well.
- The rate of homeownership is well above the U.S. average.

WEALTH CHARACTERISTICS

	UNITED STATES	STATE OF VIRGINIA	BUCHANAN COUNTY, VA	DICKENSON COUNTY, VA	RUSSELL COUNTY, VA	TAZEWELL COUNTY, VA	CUMBERLAND PLATEAU
HOUSEHOLD WEALTH AND INCOME							
2020 Total Households	126,083,849	3,306,451	10,695	6,733	13,154	18,455	49,037
2020 Median Household Income	\$62,203	\$73,543	\$30,848	\$32,956	\$38,312	\$39,147	\$36,634
2020 Median Disposable Income	\$51,505	\$57,487	\$26,209	\$27,770	\$31,982	\$32,870	\$30,466
Disposable Income as a percentage of MHHI	82.8%	78.2%	85.0%	84.3%	83.5%	84.0%	83.2%
Median Net Worth	\$96,701	\$127,472	\$40,086	\$44,585	\$52,545	\$72,223	\$54,715
ECONOMIC STRESS INDICATORS							
Persons at or Below Poverty Level	7.4%	5.5%	16.7%	14.0%	11.7%	9.6%	12.2%
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	11.7%	8.2%	19.7%	21.5%	14.9%	16.3%	17.4%
No Vehicle	15.5%	15.4%	14.3%	13.4%	12.7%	24.4%	16.9%
HOUSING VALUES AND COSTS							
2020 Total Housing Units	142,148,018	3,643,841	12,373	7,706	15,041	21,426	56,546
2020 Median Home Value	\$235,127	\$285,102	\$78,496	\$76,581	\$103,025	\$94,340	\$90,212
2020 Average Home Value	\$328,824	\$363,579	\$128,749	\$98,576	\$142,441	\$130,245	\$128,958
Percent of Homes Occupied by Owner	56.4%	59.6%	68.8%	67.0%	69.0%	67.5%	68.1%
2019 Median Gross Rent (HHs Paying Cash Rent)	\$1,062	\$1,234	\$617	\$592	\$582	\$656	\$621

2.6.3 Labor Market

Workforce Demographics – Labor Force Characteristics

- *The region’s low population growth is evidenced by the small labor pool of 37,623. Tazewell County has the largest labor force, nearly doubling the runner-up Russell County.*
- *Cumberland Plateau’s unemployment rate is higher than both the national average and that of Virginia, with Buchanan County experiencing the rate of 7.2%.*
- *Despite the strong broadband capabilities within the region, household technology usage is below average. Only 71.5% of households own a computer in the Cumberland Plateau (compared to the U.S. at 76.7%), and the percentage of households with broadband subscriptions is 22 percentage points below the U.S. average.*

LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

	UNITED STATES	STATE OF VIRGINIA	BUCHANAN COUNTY, VA	DICKENSON COUNTY, VA	RUSSELL COUNTY, VA	TAZEWELL COUNTY, VA	CUMBERLAND PLATEAU
SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF LABOR FORCE							
2020 Estimated Labor Force	163,555,585	4,356,868	6,903	4,575	9,935	16,210	37,623
2020 Employed Civilian Population Age 16+	154,842,185	4,156,018	6,405	4,352	9,296	15,160	35,213
Employed Population Male	81,305,624	2,146,081	3,511	2,253	4,874	8,466	19,104
% of Employed Population	52.5%	51.6%	54.8%	51.8%	52.4%	55.8%	54.3%
Employed Population Female	73,536,561	2,009,937	2,894	2,099	4,422	6,694	16,109
% of Employed Population	47.5%	48.4%	45.2%	48.2%	47.6%	44.2%	45.7%
UNEMPLOYMENT							
2019 Unemployment Rate	5.3%	4.6%	7.2%	4.9%	6.4%	6.5%	6.4%
2020 Average Commute Time to Employment in Minutes	26.9	28.7	27.3	27.8	28.0	25.1	26.6
ADDITIONAL LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS							
2019 Civilian Population 18+: Veteran	18,230,322	677,533	806	925	1,268	2,429	5,428
2019 Persons with a disability 65 years and younger	8.6%	8.0%	20.3%	21.5%	20.6%	16.0%	18.8%
2019 Households with a computer	76.7%	81.2%	72.7%	68.1%	74.7%	70.1%	71.5%
2019 Households with a broadband subscription	68.9%	70.0%	47.0%	37.8%	39.4%	55.0%	46.9%

2.6.4 Labor Market

Workforce Demographics – Labor

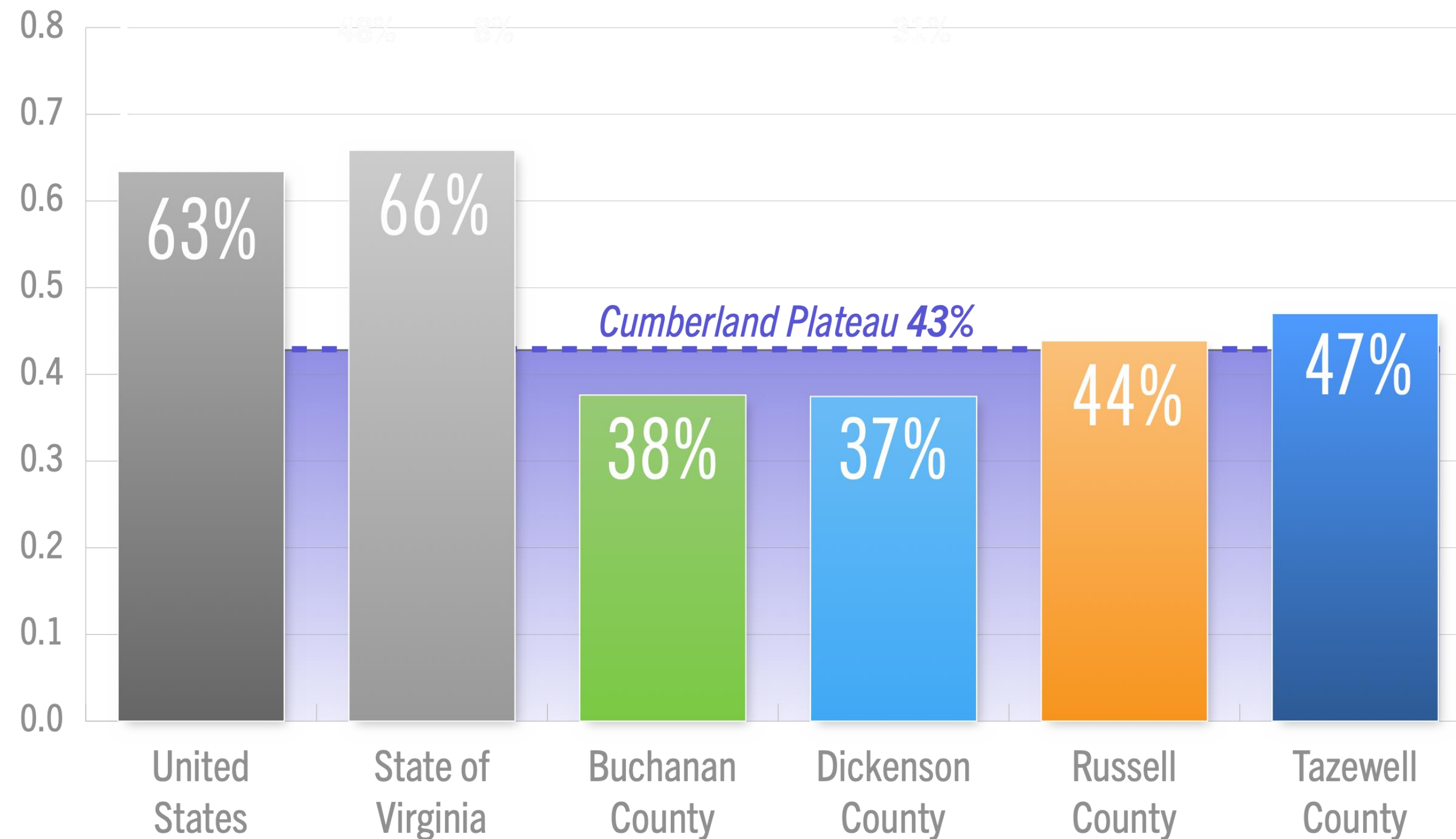
Force Participation Rate

- Labor force participation is very low in the Cumberland Plateau, as shown by the orange line below. The region's labor force participation rate is more than 20% lower than the U.S. average (42.9% vs. 63.4%).
- The labor force participation rate is closely tied to the demographic makeup of each county. Tazewell County has the highest participation within the region, whereas Buchanan and Dickenson are nearly equal at the bottom with an almost 10% gap from Tazewell and nearly 30% from the state overall.
- Virginia's labor force participation rate is higher across all groups than the U.S. average, indicating a strong labor pool in areas near the Cumberland Plateau.
- At only 38.6%, the labor force participation rate is especially low for the female population.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

	UNITED STATES	STATE OF VIRGINIA	BUCHANAN COUNTY, VA	DICKENSON COUNTY, VA	RUSSELL COUNTY, VA	TAZEWELL COUNTY, VA	CUMBERLAND PLATEAU
2019 Labor Force Participation Rate	63.4%	65.9%	37.6%	37.5%	43.9%	47.0%	42.9%
2019 Female Labor Force Participation Rate	58.5%	61.1%	33.3%	35.7%	39.7%	41.7%	38.6%
2019 Male Labor Force Participation Rate	67.1%	69.0%	39.7%	37.5%	45.9%	51.2%	45.4%

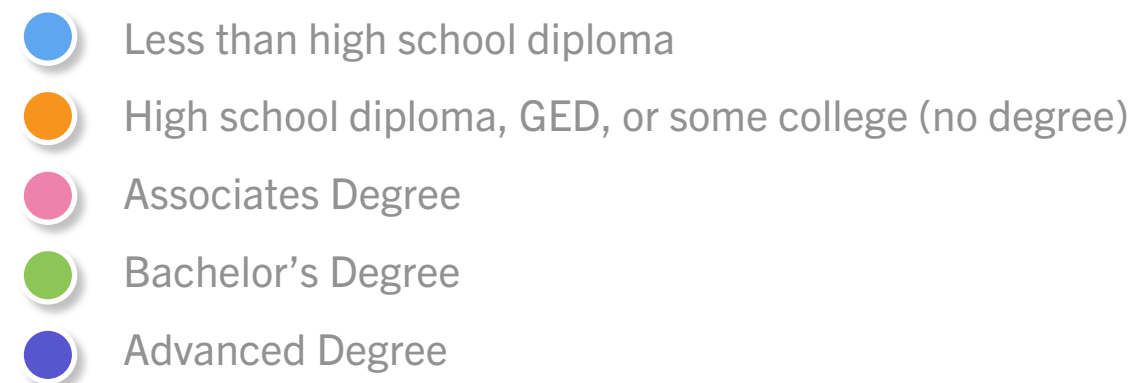
2019 LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE



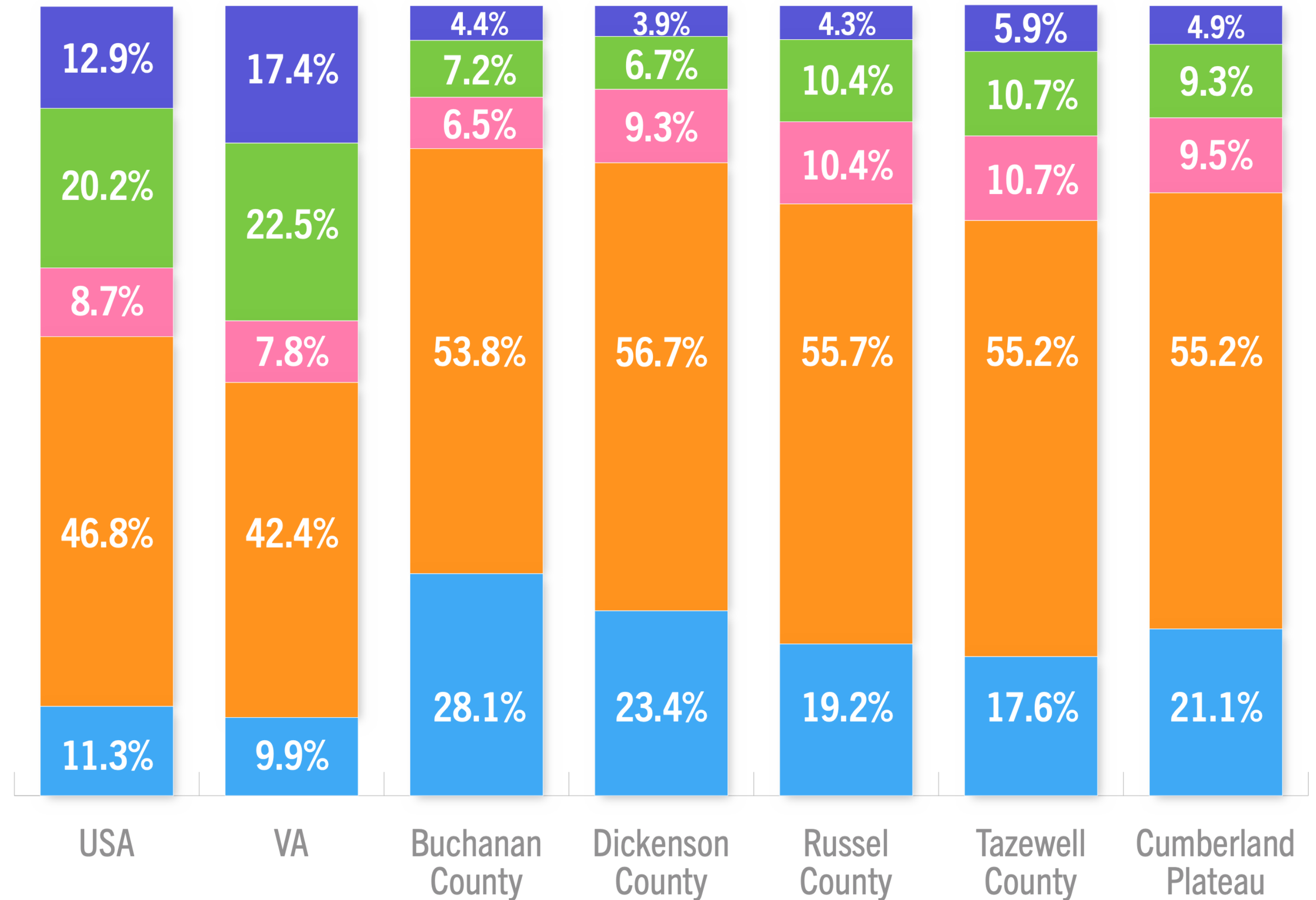
2.6.5 Labor Market

Educational Characteristics - Attainment

- At a rate less than half that of the national average and one-third of the state average, the supply of university graduates is relatively low in the Cumberland Plateau region.
- The supply of graduates from 2-year colleges is slightly above average.
- The number of people in the region with less than a high school degree is almost twice the U.S. average, indicating this should be a focal area for economic development efforts.



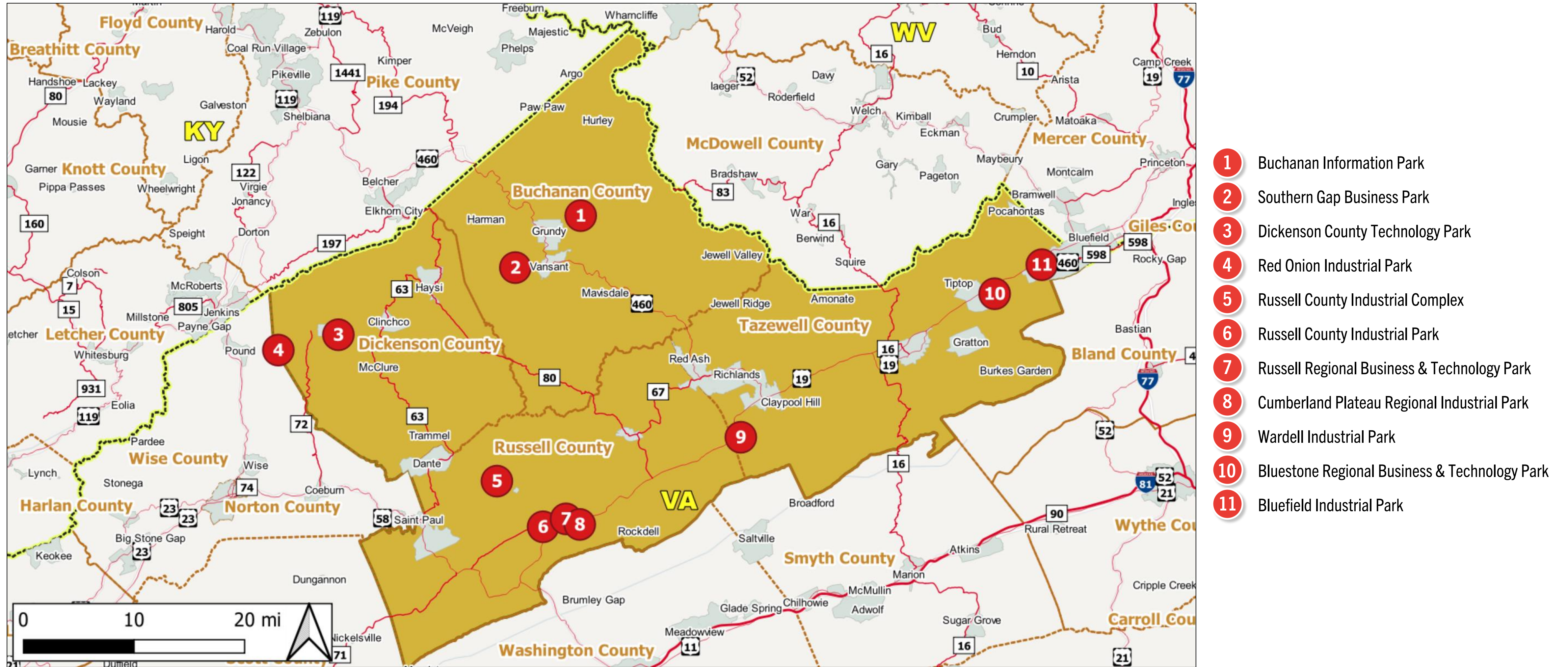
HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (AGES 25+)



Source: US Census; American Community Survey, EASI Analytics

2.7.1 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Cumberland Plateau – Industrial Parks - *Select Parks Highlight on Following Pages*



Source: U.S. Census, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Openstreetmaps, Hickey Global Consulting Services

2.7.2 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Southern Gap Industrial Park

2



SOUTHERN GAP INDUSTRIAL PARK

Current Tenants	VEC (Call Center), Paul's Fan Company, Southern Gap Outdoor Adventure, Southern Gap Transportation and Logistics Center
Owner	Industrial Development Authority of Buchanan County
Other	Flat grading within the developable acres; fiber recently added to site; incoming and outgoing traffic may be an issue

GENERAL INFORMATION

COUNTY	ZONING	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL ACRES AVAILABLE
BUCHANAN	NONE REQUIRED	3,000	1,100
LARGEST CONTIGUOUS PARCEL	DISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL AIRPORT		
40	66 miles (Tri-Cities Regional Airport)		

UTILITIES

ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	WATER	SEWER
Appalachian Power; substation and transmission lines offsite	Virginia Natural Gas	Buchanan County PSA; 600,000 gpd available capacity; 14" line	Buchanan County PSA; 1,000,000 gpd available capacity

2.7.3 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Dickenson County Technology Park



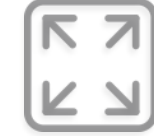



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DICKENSON COUNTY TECHNOLOGY PARK

Current Tenants	Serco, SAIC
Owner	Industrial Development Authority of Dickenson County
Other	

GENERAL INFORMATION

			
COUNTY	ZONING	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL ACRES AVAILABLE
DICKENSON	INDUSTRIAL	11.93	2
			
LARGEST CONTIGUOUS PARCEL	DISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL AIRPORT		
2	80 miles (Tri-Cities Regional Airport)		

UTILITIES

			
ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	WATER	SEWER
Appalachian Power	Appalachian Natural Gas	Town of Clintwood; 800,000 gpd available capacity; 12" line	Town of Clintwood; 500,000 gpd available capacity

2.7.4 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Red Onion Industrial Park



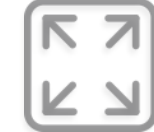



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RED ONION INDUSTRIAL PARK

Current Tenants	None
Owner	Industrial Development Authority of Dickenson County
Other	

GENERAL INFORMATION

			
COUNTY	ZONING	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL ACRES AVAILABLE
DICKENSON	INDUSTRIAL	107.23	34.62
			
LARGEST CONTIGUOUS PARCEL	DISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL AIRPORT		
12	83 miles (Tri-Cities Regional Airport)		

UTILITIES

			
ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	WATER	SEWER
Utility Project in Process - American Electric Power	Utility Project in Process - Appalachian Natural Gas	Utility Project in Process - Town of Clintwood	Utility Project in Process - Dickenson County Public Service Authority

2.7.5 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Russell County Industrial Complex

5



RUSSELL COUNTY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Current Tenants	None
Owner	Industrial Development Authority of Russell County
Other	Currently in development, with bids in place to begin building pads on site; minimum of three 500,000 SF pads; permit in place for 30,000 SF greenhouse operational 2022

GENERAL INFORMATION

COUNTY	ZONING	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL ACRES AVAILABLE
RUSSELL	NONE REQUIRED	232	128
LARGEST CONTIGUOUS PARCEL	DISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL AIRPORT		
128	57 miles (Tri-Cities Regional Airport)		

UTILITIES

ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	WATER	SEWER
Appalachian Power; 480V 3 Phase	Appalachian Natural Gas; 4" line; 55 psi	Russell County PSA; 8" line	Russell County PSA; 8" line

2.7.6 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Russell County Industrial Park



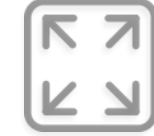



6







RUSSELL COUNTY INDUSTRIAL PARK

Current Tenants	Jennmar; Virginia State Police Investigation Office; 3B Consultants; G&R Gas Company; Cumberland Plateau
Owner	Industrial Development Authority of Russell County
Other	

GENERAL INFORMATION

			
COUNTY	ZONING	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL ACRES AVAILABLE
RUSSELL	M-1	60	4.5
			
LARGEST CONTIGUOUS PARCEL	DISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL AIRPORT		
4.5	50 miles (Tri-Cities Regional Airport)		

UTILITIES

			
ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	WATER	SEWER
Appalachian Power	Appalachian Natural Gas	Town of Lebanon; 650,000 gpd available capacity; 8" line	Town of Lebanon; 400,000 gpd available capacity

2.7.7 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Russell Regional Business & Technology Park

7



RUSSELL REGIONAL BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY PARK

Current Tenants	Northrop Grumman; CGI
Owner	Industrial Development Authority of Russell County
Other	

GENERAL INFORMATION

COUNTY	ZONING	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL ACRES AVAILABLE
RUSSELL	M-1	113	8.9
LARGEST CONTIGUOUS PARCEL	DISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL AIRPORT		
8.9	52 miles (Tri-Cities Regional Airport)		

UTILITIES

ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	WATER	SEWER
Appalachian Power Company; 3 MW on site	Appalachian Natural Gas	Town of Lebanon	Town of Lebanon

2.7.8 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Cumberland Plateau Regional Industrial Park

8









CUMBERLAND PLATEAU REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL PARK

Current Tenants AT&T; Samuel Pressure Vessel Group; Walmart; Holiday Inn Express





Owner Industrial Development Authority of Russell County

Other

GENERAL INFORMATION

			
COUNTY	ZONING	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL ACRES AVAILABLE
RUSSELL	M-1	142	Four Tracts: 8.579 acres; 7.227 acres; 1.341 acres; 2.493 acres
			
LARGEST CONTIGUOUS PARCEL	DISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL AIRPORT		
8	50 miles (Tri-Cities Regional Airport)		

UTILITIES

			
ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	WATER	SEWER
Appalachian Power Company	Appalachian Natural Gas; 4" line	Town of Lebanon; 700,000 gpd available capacity; 8" line	Town of Lebanon; 550,000 gpd available capacity; 8" line

2.7.9 Infrastructure Assessment – Industrial Parks

Bluestone Regional Business & Technology Park



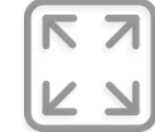



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BLUESTONE REGIONAL BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY PARK

Current Tenants	Bruneaux Bait
Owner	Industrial Development Authority of Tazewell County
Other	

GENERAL INFORMATION

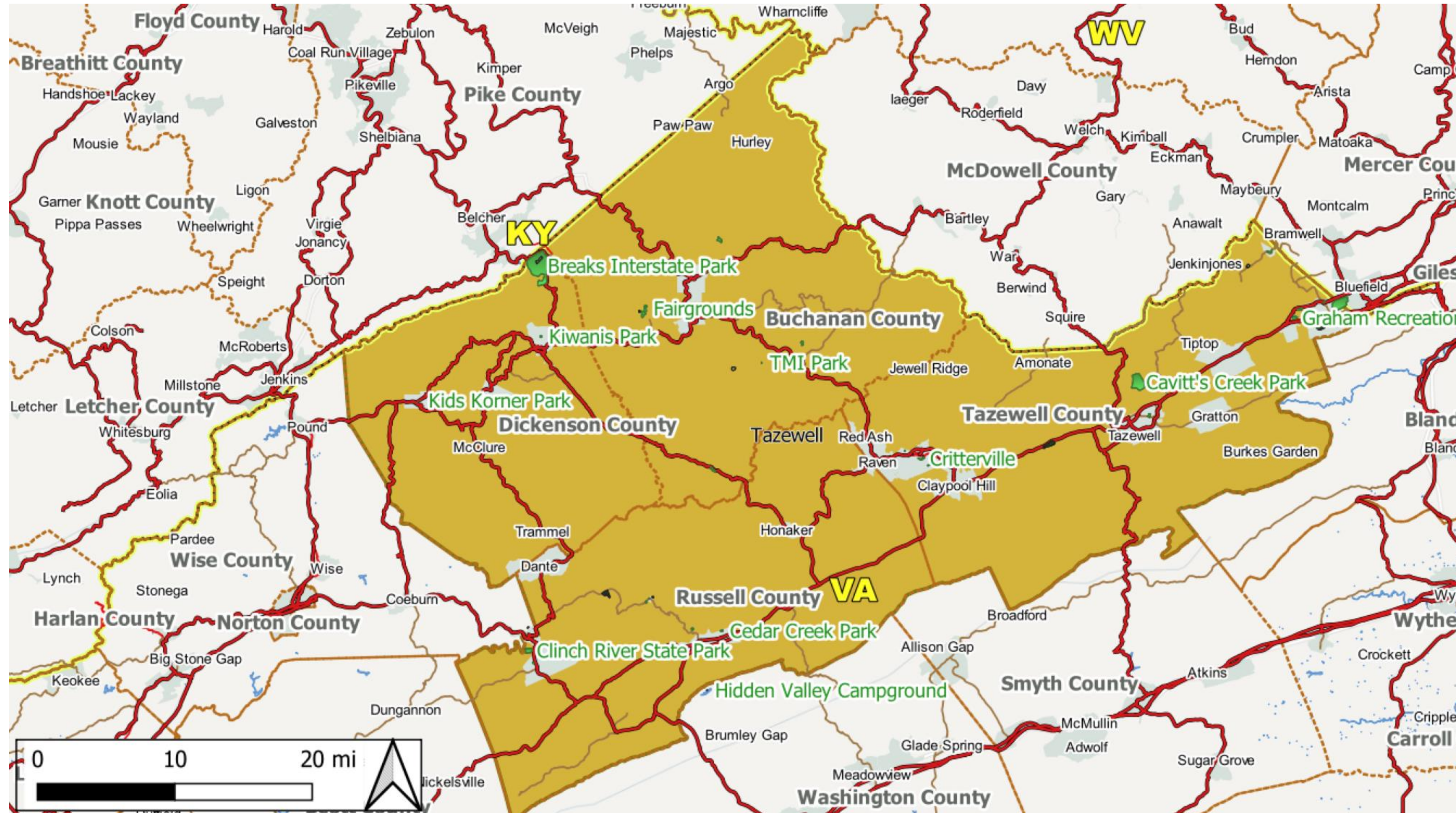
			
COUNTY	ZONING	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL ACRES AVAILABLE
TAZEWELL	NONE	680	180
			
LARGEST CONTIGUOUS PARCEL	DISTANCE TO COMMERCIAL AIRPORT		
30	80 miles (Tri-Cities Regional Airport)		

UTILITIES

			
ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	WATER	SEWER
Appalachian Power Company; 3 MW on site	Gas 2 miles from site - Cardinal Natural Gas	Tazewell County Public Service Authority; 1,000 gpm available capacity; 8" line	Tazewell County Public Service Authority; 0.3 mpgd available capacity with 2.0 mgd reserve

2.8.1 Infrastructure Assessment – Regional Parks

Cumberland Plateau



Source: U.S. Census, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Openstreetmaps, Hickey Global Consulting Services





2.8.2 Infrastructure Assessment – State Parks

Breaks Interstate Park



Jointly administered by Virginia and Kentucky, Breaks Interstate Park is located on a gap in the continuous Pine Mountain Range spanning Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee. Referred to as the “Grand Canyon of the South,” the park boasts the largest canyon east of the Mississippi. The park’s terminus is Dickenson County.

▶ BREAKS INTERSTATE PARK

 YEAR ESTABLISHED	 AREA ACRES	 ANNUAL VISITORS	 NUMBER OF CAMPGROUNDS
1954	4,500	330,000	138
Amenities	Trails, horseback riding, fishing, water park, rock climbing		

2.8.3 Infrastructure Assessment – State Parks

Clinch River State Park



CLINCH RIVER STATE PARK

YEAR ESTABLISHED	AREA ACRES	ANNUAL VISITORS	NUMBER OF CAMPGROUNDS
2021	640	100,000 <i>Projected</i>	0 <i>(Under Construction)</i>
Amenities	Trails, boat launch, fishing		





Recently opened to the public as Virginia’s newest state park, the Clinch River State Park is located in St. Paul on the border of Wise and Russell County. The park will consist of several anchor properties connected by access points traversable by the Clinch River, one of the most biologically diverse rivers in North America. Currently, the Sugar Hill Unit in Wise County and the Artrip Boat Launch in Russell County are open to visitors.

2.8.4 Infrastructure Assessment – State Parks

Jefferson National Forest



JEFFERSON NATIONAL FOREST

 YEAR ESTABLISHED	 AREA ACRES	 ANNUAL VISITORS	 NUMBER OF CAMPGROUNDS
1936	709,500	1,770,000	50 (Both Forests)
Amenities	Trails, fishing, hunting, skiing, horseback riding		

Extending into Tazewell and Russell Counties, the Jefferson National Forest is combined with the George Washington Forest to create one of the largest blocks of public land in the Eastern U.S. Of the 1.8 million acres of land between both National Forests, 1,646,328 acres are located within Virginia. The Jefferson National Forest portion boasts over 400 miles of designated trails and is home to 40 species of trees, 200 species of birds, and 53 federally-listed Threatened or Endangered animal and plant species, offering a wide variety of attractions for ecotourism. 1.22% of the total percentage of land is located in Dickenson County, and 1.42% is in Tazewell County.





2.8.5 Infrastructure Assessment – State Parks

Channels State Forest and Natural Area Preserve



Purchased from a private owner in 2004, the Channels State Forest is managed by the Virginia Department of Forestry in Washington and Russell Counties. Within the State Forest lies the Channels Natural Area Preserve, which includes a high elevation forest, cliff communities, and a 400-million-year-old sandstone rock outcropping known as the Great Channels of Virginia.

CHANNELS STATE FOREST AND NATURAL AREA PRESERVE

 YEAR ESTABLISHED	 AREA ACRES	 ANNUAL VISITORS	 NUMBER OF CAMPGROUNDS
2008	4,836	unknown	0
Amenities	Trails, fishing, hunting, horseback riding		

2.8.6 Infrastructure Assessment – Additional Parks

Cavitt's Creek Park & Pinnacle
Natural Area Preserve

▣ CAVITT'S CREEK PARK



Cavitt's Creek Park consists of a 300 recreational area centered around a 54-acre lake. Various amenities are available for both locals and tourists, including full-service campsites and cabins for rent, kayaks and paddle boards, and fishing. Cavitt's Park is also a well-received location for RV travelers.

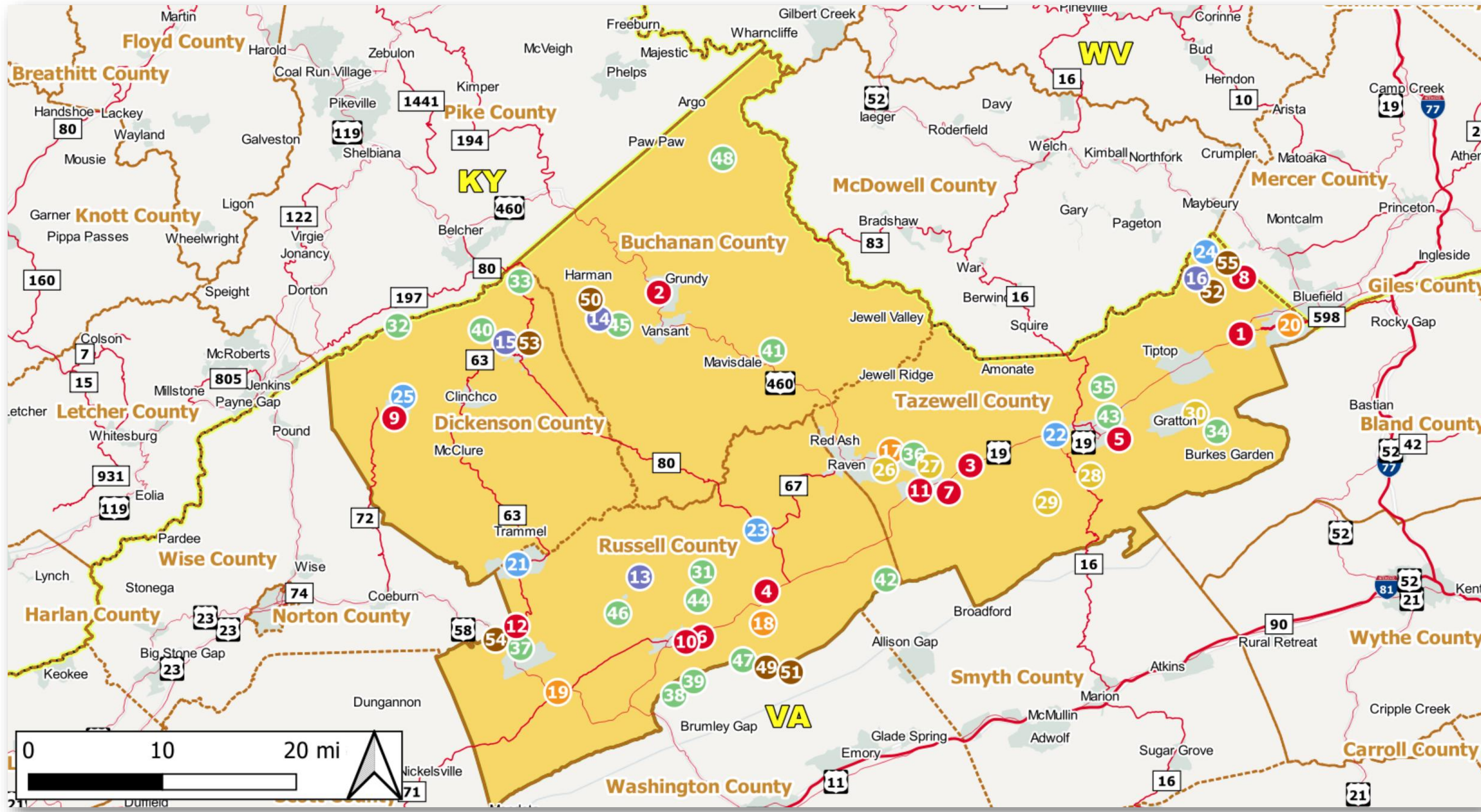
▣ PINNACLE NATURAL AREA PRESERVE



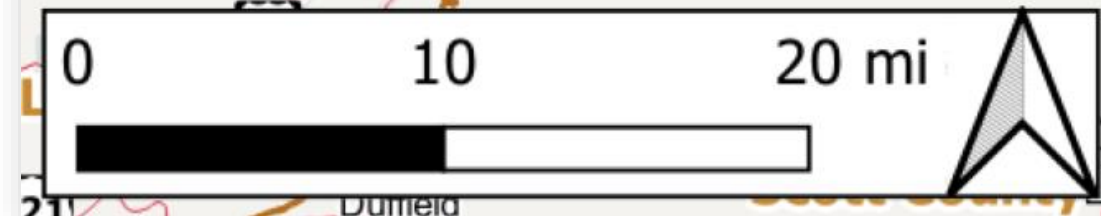
Located on the confluence of the Clinch River and Big Cedar Creek, the Pinnacle Natural Area Preserve covers 889 acres within Russell County. The Preserve has multiple hiking trails and gets its name from a rock formation towering 400 feet above the creek known as the Pinnacle. Big Cedar Creek Falls is another local landmark, covering the width of the creek.

2.9.1 Select Tourism Assets

Cumberland Plateau



- Accommodation
- Campgrounds
- Historical Site
- Museum
- Other
- Park
- Trail



Source: U.S. Census, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, OpenStreetMap, Hickey Global Consulting Services, Regional County Tourism Departments

2.9.2 Select Tourism Assets

Cumberland Plateau

MAP ID NUMBER	Tourist Site
ACCOMMODATION	
1	Comfort Inn
2	Comfort Inn & Suites
3	Cuz's Cabins & Restaurant
4	Elk Garden Methodist Bike Hostel
5	Fincastle Motor Inn
6	Holiday Inn Express & Suites Lebanon, an IHG Hotel
7	Holiday Inn Express Richlands/Claypool Hill
8	Real McCoy Cabins, Country Store and Kitchen
9	Sleep Inn & Suites
10	Super 8 by Wyndham Lebanon
11	Super 8 Richlands/Claypool Hill
12	Western Front Hotel
CAMPGROUNDS	
13	Riverbend Campground
14	Southern Gap Outdoor Adventure
15	Thunder River Campground
16	Trailhead ATV Resort
HISTORICAL SITES	
17	Coal Miners' Memorial
18	Ellenbrook Mansion
19	Old Russell County Court House (Robert Dickenson Home)
20	Walter McDonald Sanders House
MUSEUMS	
21	Dante Coal Miners & Railroad Museum
22	Historic Crab Orchard Museum
23	Honaker Heritage Museum
24	Pocahontas Exhibition Coal Mine & Museum
25	Ralph Stanley Museum

MAP ID NUMBER	Tourist Site
OTHER TOURIST SITES	
26	Citizens for the Arts
27	Clinch River Farms
28	Foxtail Orchards, Inc
29	Plumb Creek Winery
30	Sandy Head Ostrich Farm
PARKS	
31	Big Cedar Creek
32	Birch Knob Observation Tower
33	Breaks Interstate Park
34	Burkes Garden
35	Cavitt's Creek Park
36	Cedar Bluff
37	Clinch River State Park
38	Hidden Valley Climbing
39	Hidden Valley Wildlife Management Area
40	John W Flannagan Dam
41	Keen Mountain Park
42	Laurel Bed Lake
43	Lincolnshire Park
44	Pinnacle Natural Area Preserve
45	Poplar Gap Park
46	Tank Hollow Falls
47	The Channels Natural Area Preserve
48	Verner Blankenship Community Park
TRAILS	
49	Brumley Mountain Trail
50	Coal Canyon Trailhead
51	Great Channels Trailhead
52	Pocahontas OHV Trailhead
53	Ridgeview Trailhead
54	Sugar Hill Trail System
55	The Original Pocahontas Trailhead

Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission

Business Resiliency Strategy

September 2021

Overview

The Business Resiliency Strategy Process

The pandemic has caused a massive disruption throughout the business community. As recovery efforts unfold, the transition is creating opportunities for prepared communities. Early migration patterns favor non-urban areas with high quality of place and digital infrastructure.

To create a Roadmap to Economic Resiliency, Hickey Global conducted three analysis. The first gained insights on past and current pandemic response efforts and future solutions through a Stakeholder Engagement Study. Government, non-profit and business leaders shared insights through in-person meetings and an online survey tool.

The second was an Asset Mapping process that analyzed community-level infrastructure deficits as well as assets. Attention was given to infrastructure that inhibited or supported future recovery efforts.

The third analysis was a Cluster Verification Study that provided insights to economic drivers in the regional business community. Using a methodical model, a blended portfolio of business clusters was developed containing potential growth industries.

In addition, a review of information was completed using the International Economic Development Council's work on disaster recovery and their joint website with the U.S. Economic Development Administration - RestoreYourEconomy.org.

Overview

Envisioning the Future of the Cumberland Plateau

The goal of this Roadmap to Economic Resiliency is to help local leaders achieve their vision for this region. Through the stakeholder engagement process the top characteristics of that vision are grouped below. The health of the business community is integral in achieving long-term prosperity.

BUSINESS LEADERS VISION

Increased Livability

Strong Industrial Base

More People and Jobs

Strong Tourism Economy

COMMUNITY LEADERS VISION

More Jobs

Expanded Tourism

More People

New Industry

Recommendations

Key Recommendations Based on
Stakeholder Feedback and Research
Studies



Stakeholder Engagement

Recommendations

1. A pandemic response board should be established for all business, including tourism, inclusive of subject matter experts and industry representatives to ensure a consistent regional approach and smooth information flow.
2. A review of financial support programs used during the pandemic is necessary to improve future efforts as needed.
3. There is tremendous support by all respondents for a remote-worker recruitment campaign to increase population and wealth in the area.
4. To support business clusters and to disseminate critical information during pandemics and economic downturns, a continued focus on increasing the very successful broadband network in the region is needed.

Cluster Verification

Recommendations

1. The region should pursue a blended portfolio of Traded, Blended and Local clusters in balancing recruiting and existing business efforts.
2. Economic development efforts should be focused on Mining, Fabricated Metal and Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing, Shared Services & IT, Tourism and Healthcare.



Mining



**Fabricated
Metal
Manufacturing**



**Machinery and
Equipment
Manufacturing**



**Shared Services
& IT**



Tourism



Healthcare

3. Attention should be given to specific strategies for each cluster (listed on the Cluster Strategies Overview page).

1. Continue successful efforts to deploy broadband throughout the region; especially in residential areas to support work-from-home opportunities. Broadband was the number one infrastructure answer from government and community leaders for strengthening the region.
2. Develop a campaign or program to increase computer ownership and internet usage. While broadband capabilities are very strong in the Cumberland Plateau, computer and internet usage are low.
3. Create a taskforce to address the region's low worker participation rate (43% vs the U.S. average of 63%), especially among females (38.6%). Disengaged residents are a source of labor that could overcome current and future workforce needs.
4. Continue to develop larger industrial sites and shell buildings that could support a greater range of industrial clients.
5. Based on stakeholder feedback from business leaders, more small business and entrepreneurial support services are needed in the region.

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE)

Recommendations

Using a BRE program to prepare companies in the region for a disaster or economic downturn and then support them during recovery is a key resiliency strategy for the community. BRE strategies enhance capacity for recovery and strengthen existing business networks. **The region should support their local economic developers in implementing these strategies:**

1. Encourage businesses to develop business continuity plans by providing workshops to small and mid-sized firms (see following page).
2. Encourage businesses to develop business preparedness plans by providing workshops to small and mid-sized firms (see following page).
3. Support each county in developing its own economic planning and recovery team using engaged business leaders (see guidance on building a team).
4. Establish a business recovery fund so there is an immediate and locally-controlled source of financial support for existing businesses.
5. Establish plans with local utilities and emergency management authorities to facilitate the prioritization of utilities to key business parks and industries.
6. Include local economic developers on the county emergency management teams.
7. Encourage local economic developers to develop their own preparedness and continuity plans to create a capacity to support businesses in an economic crisis.

Stakeholder Engagement

Input and Ideas from Business and
Community Leaders



Stakeholder Engagement

Recommendations

1. A pandemic response board should be established for all business, including tourism, inclusive of subject matter experts and industry representatives to ensure a consistent regional approach and smooth information flow.
2. A review of financial support programs used during the pandemic is necessary to improve future efforts as needed.
3. There is tremendous support by all respondents for a remote-worker recruitment campaign to increase population and wealth in the area.
4. To support business clusters and to disseminate critical information during pandemics and economic downturns, a continued focus on increasing the very successful broadband network in the region is needed.

Stakeholder Feedback

More Effective Pandemic Response

What would have made the region's business-related pandemic response efforts more effective?

Better, more accurate and more streamlined information was the most frequent suggestion in improving area pandemic response. Even in many of the recommendations around costs, additional information is the key with better information on grant program qualifications and costs associated with a pandemic operating environment. The calls for additional community engagement also echo desires for communication and a streamlined flow of information.

Information

- Education component was missing.
- Rules and actual business education around response and guideline.
- Education on the vaccines was lacking.
- More information on actual guidelines as well as information on the reasoning behind those guidelines.
- Banks not informed of grant guidelines.
- Better instructions.
- Not much guidance on how to handle COVID guidelines.
- No singular vision for how to handle restrictions and get educated on health needs and safety standards.
- No clear leadership from health department on business-specific guidelines.
- Better information.
- Difficult to maintain policies for staff and guests due to lack of time, depth of info, lack of clarification.
- Target businesses specifically for information.
- Need better local information source.
- More timely information. Announcements on Friday evenings after close not helpful because you couldn't receive further guidance.

Community Involvement

- More involvement from county and town. Feels like business owners are on their own.
- Coordination between States (border communities).
- Need better regional connection to SBDC.
- Needed better pandemic exit strategy.

Cost

- Would've liked more county support for grants through pandemic and into the future. Matching through VCEDA.
- State grant assistance and PPP wasn't sufficient for small business needs.
- Funding a vocational skills program would have been essential to post pandemic recovery.
- Difficulty to get money through larger funds due to restrictions around qualifications.
- Resources got a bit swamped, and grant systems got overwhelmed.
- Costs went up due to reinvestment in businesses and that wasn't covered by grant funding.
- Had to make an investment to meet COVID standards without sufficient funding support for those needs.
- Filled out numerous grants but got bumped back due to grant qualifications. Feels like a waste of time.
- Help with upfront costs to new business to meet pandemic needs.
- People had no information that grant money was being made available.
- Needed funding faster.

Miscellaneous

- Better promotion and active engagement with marketing materials especially when put online.
- Instead of pouring money into individual payments, preferred to see the community colleges funded and staffed with educational programs that can provide skilled workers to the manufacturing industry.
- PPE availability.
- More testing needed.

Stakeholder Feedback

Sources for Business

What sources did you use to gain information about pandemic response, guidelines, and recovery resources?

There is a strong willingness in the business community to use government information. Businesses used numerous sources for information with Government & Nonprofit being the number one source.

Government & Nonprofit

- CDC website.
- SBA website
- County did active outreach.
- County website
- CDC website
- SBDC
- Workforce Development Board
- Used small business assistance center at the college.
- County officials
- Heart of Appalachian pushed out recovery information and grant funding
- State briefings
- CDC
- Workforce board
- Workforce development board
- Press releases from governor's office
- DCR had updated and recently refreshed documents.
- Received information from the county with emails.
- IDA let owners know about grant program.
- CDC website.
- Governor's press conferences.
- Local health department on local guidelines and differences.
- Health department for information.
- Straight from health department.
- Health department guidance. Although sometimes document would be issued and then changes.
- Health department provided information, but also acted as enforcement.

Person-to-Person

- Person to person.
- Word of mouth
- Word of mouth
- Lots of word of mouth.

Online

- Online news sources.
- Internet
- Internet
- Internet
- Internet
- Emails
- Facebook
- Found out about grants through Facebook.
- Facebook

Professionals & Organizations

- CPA did application for PPP.
- Information on loans from local banks.
- Accountant
- Chamber
- Chamber emails.
- SVAM - Southwest Virginia Association of Manufactures

News

- News
- National news but messages were very mixed.
- News
- General news sources.
- Newspaper

Miscellaneous

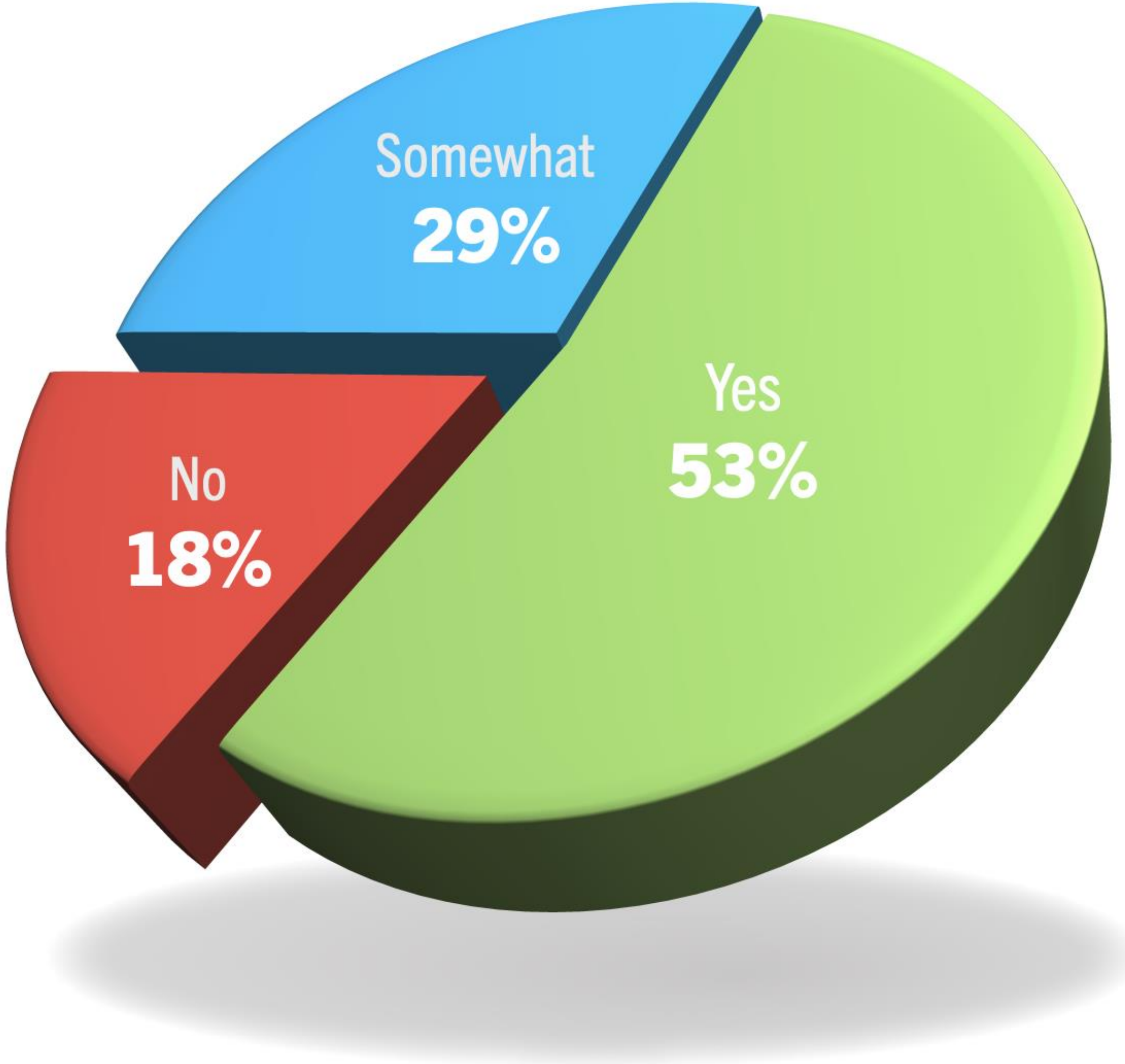
- Made a lot of outgoing calls to prepare and ensure within compliance.
- Dual state situation required multi-state coordination. KY and VA response differences.
- Consultant stayed up on information and pushed that out.
- No common leadership sources of information.
- Corporate HQ.

Stakeholder Feedback

Information Sources for Business

And did you feel adequately informed by those sources?

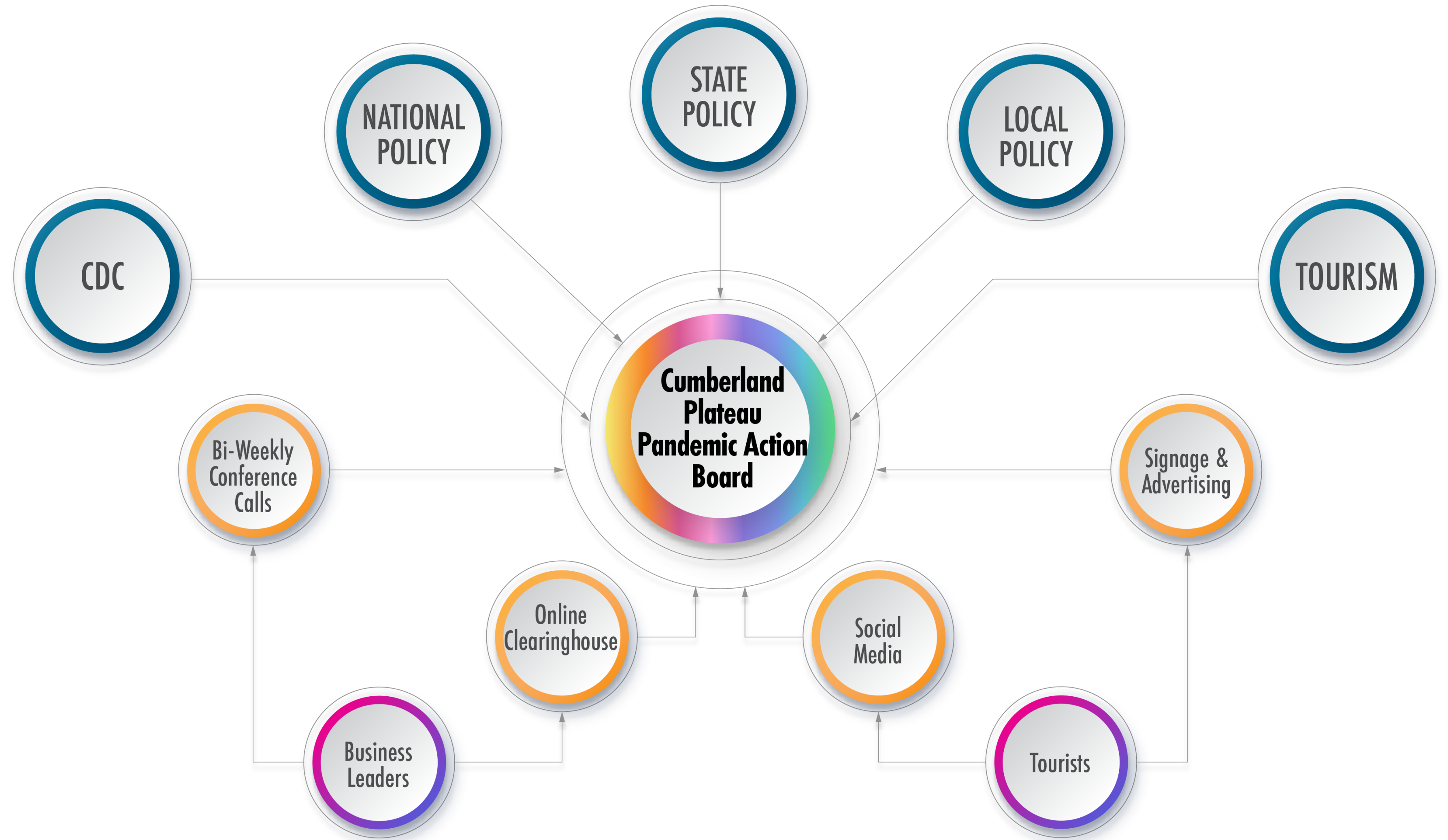
Just under 50% of stakeholders did not feel adequately informed by the multiple sources of information they used to craft their pandemic response.



Recommendations

COVID-19 Management and Response

The Cumberland Plateau should create a communications structure that allows information to be disseminated quickly and effectively. Information should be aggregated from reliable sources by government entities which already have a community presence and then distributed throughout the region.



Stakeholder Feedback

Business-related Pandemic Response

And what was done well (with region's business-related pandemic response efforts)?

Most responses focused on the multiple financial support programs developed and implemented and the work of the local health departments. Review and improvement of the funding programs regarding clarity, process and implementation is needed.

Funding

- Grant funding was well run and distributed effectively.
- CARES money was distributed well.
- IDA had funds available quickly. Application process was very easy.
- Turnaround on funds was fast to get people reopened.
- Grant access was smooth and there was assistance in getting funding.
- PPP distribution was done well. Business wouldn't have survived without it.
- The Cumberland Plateau provided me with easy access to funds to build our capabilities which allowed me to hire additional workers.

Community Response

- Board of supervisors were supportive of businesses.
- Help with navigating the language of the mandates.
- County tourism called to check in on reopening; fairly regular communications.
- Everyone worked together.
- Overall, good. Proactive reach out.

Health Services

- Did a great job working with local health department on what was expected.
- Health care stepped up with testing.
- Vaccine rollout did well.
- Contact with local health department office and covid clinics.
- Acted quickly to protect the aging population.
- Rollout of the vaccines went well.
- Hands-on health department. Had active outreach from health department for events.

Marketing

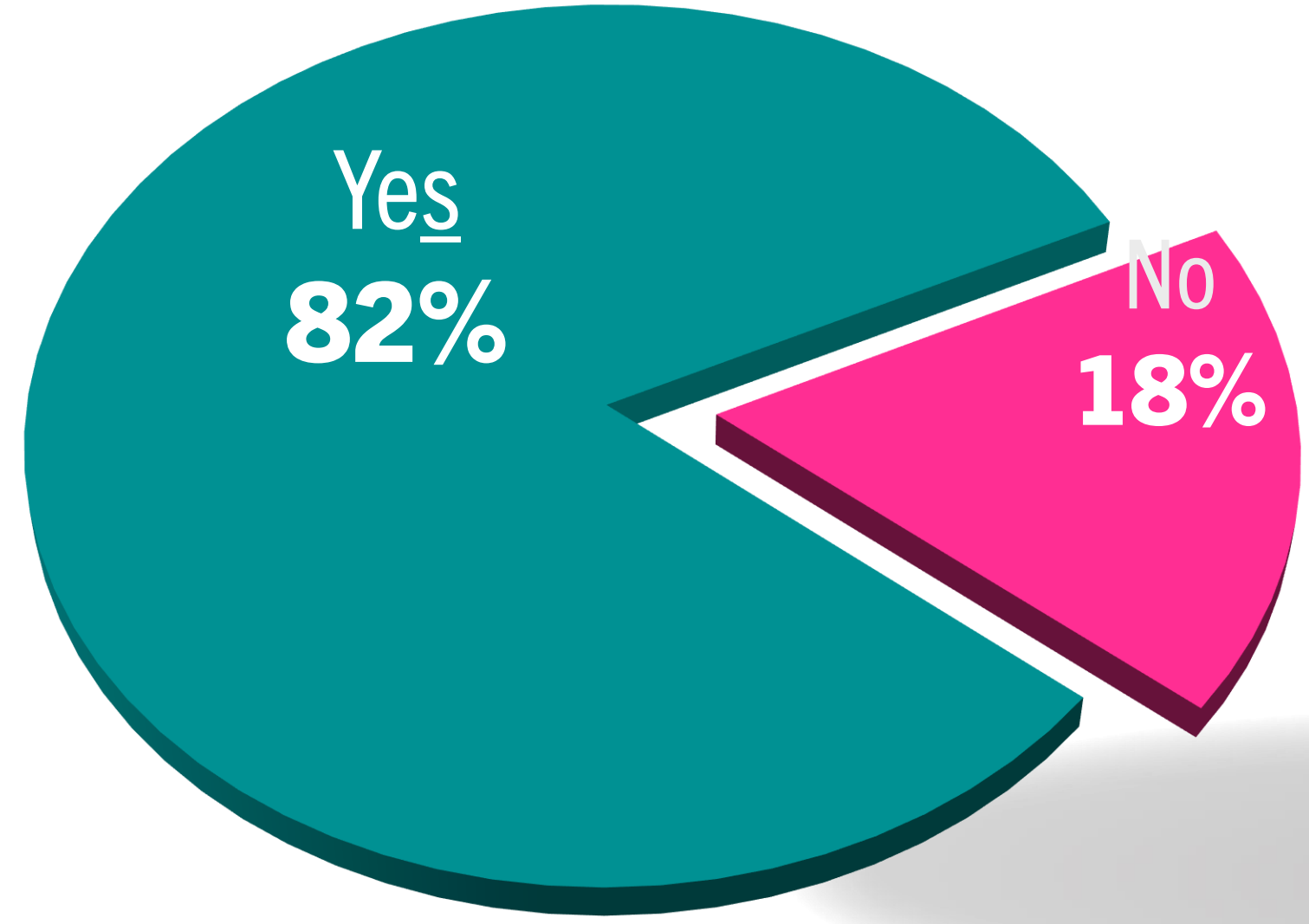
- Promotion for grant programs was done well.
- UVA Wise program helped to develop a website.
- Mask billboards did well.

Stakeholder Feedback

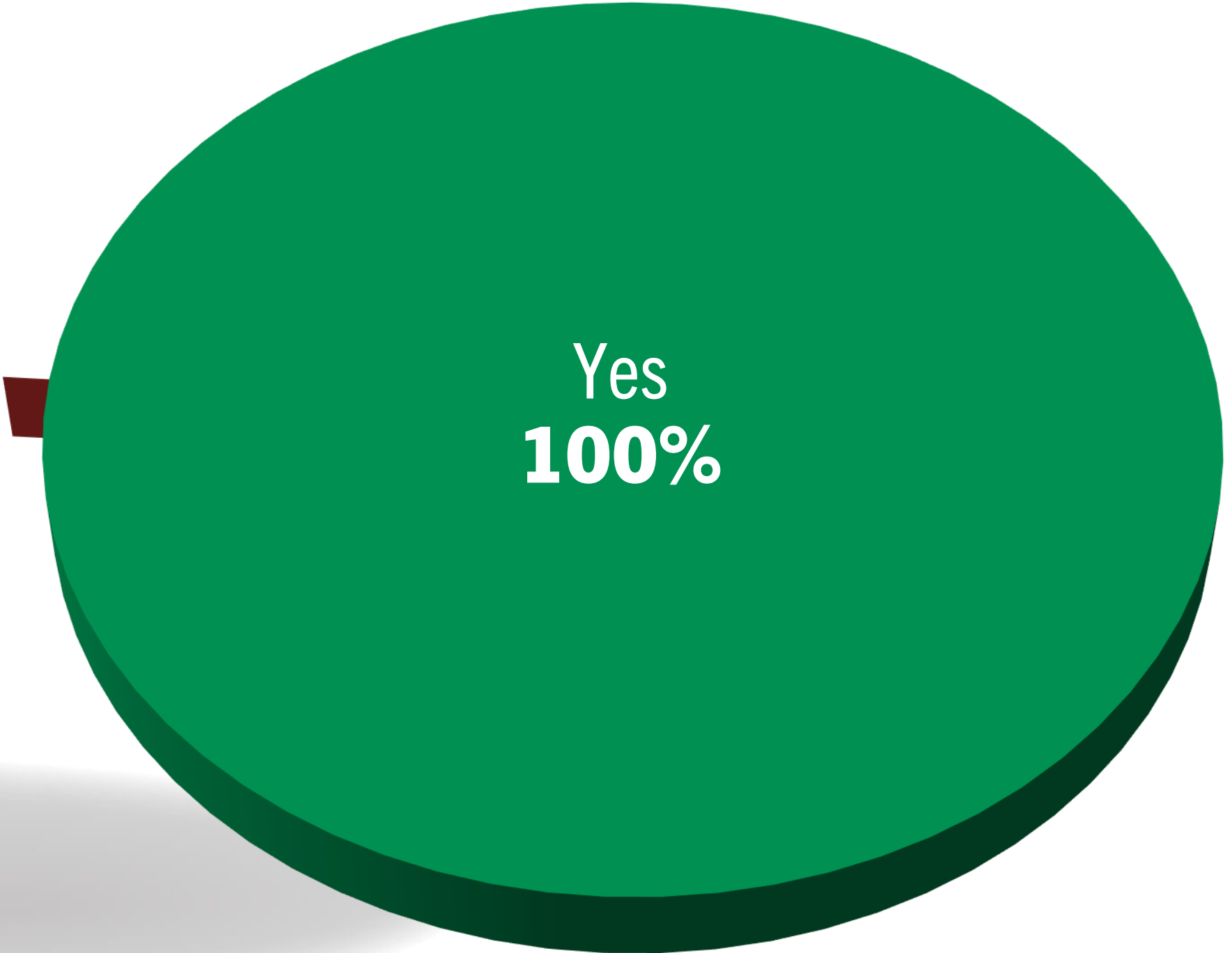
Remote Worker Recruitment

If the region embarked on an aggressive remote-worker recruitment campaign to import a tech-savvy workforce, would it benefit the region?

Business Leaders Response



Community Leaders Response



Stakeholder Feedback

Why Businesses Support the Initiative

... if the region embarked on an aggressive remote-worker recruitment campaign to import a tech-savvy workforce, would it benefit the region?

With best-in-class broadband capability in the region, recruiting and supporting remote-workers is considered a major benefit to the region.

Why?

- There would be a substantial increase in outsiders settling in the area.
- Has seen an increase since the pandemic in remote workers coming to town for travel.
- Would help with population loss.
- Would be helpful for locals increasing restaurant demand.
- Area offers low cost of living.
- Would assist with building back population base.
- More time and space to remote work because the commute is replaced by time to enjoy the community.
- Tax dollar improvement. Additional local support for businesses and buying power of new people coming into town.
- Already seeing some remote worker resettlement in the area.
- Brings in young people with children.
- Anything to get more people to live here.
- Yes, for tech savvy and general workers.
- Need more workers in skilled labor in addition to tech.
- Need IT and cybersecurity staff - FT and PT
- Need IT skills and drafting and engineering.
- Already seeing remote worker relocation.
- Interest in purchasing vacation homes first and then working remote.
- Stemming young population decline and replacing it with remote work.
- Bringing population in from outside to maintain houses and the area.
- Could help support service industry.
- Bring in industry, ideas and experience with new people coming into area.
- Need more technology and marketing workers.
- See more engagement with remote workers who are looking for a break.
- See temporary workers wanting to stay.
- More tax base.
- Fill empty available housing.
- Have seen some remote workers. Can envision a workforce that wants to get away from it all but can also work remotely. Wifi allows that ability.
- Could see the business benefiting, have had some remote workers work from the campsite.

Stakeholder Feedback

Why Governments & Nonprofits Support the Initiative

... If the region embarked on an aggressive remote-worker recruitment campaign to import a tech-savvy workforce, would it benefit the region?

Government & Nonprofits leaders mirror business leaders in supporting this program to increase the workforce and wealth in the community.

Why?

- Due to internet, now easier.
- Easier after pandemic.
- Easier here now but also everywhere else too.
- Do you recruit jobs first or workers first.
- Already have top robotics team in area.
- Yes, but jobs as well as workers.
- Remote workers will not necessarily solve population loss and lack of workforce; however, there spouses and children will in the long term.
- Such workers likely will have more discretionary income to support the amenities necessary to attract and retain businesses.
- It's needed.
- I think the region would be very attractive to such a workforce.
- Tide began to shift before pandemic, 25% of real estate was from out of state.
- Seen a shift in work to remote work, pushing office staff towards working at home.
- Communities in the area could use remote workers if internet infrastructure goes forward.
- Frustrating because there is broadband, but people are still using cable instead.
- Remote healthcare might help bring fresh ideas to the table
- Businesses doing a better job at providing for visitors.
- People are looking to small towns for outdoor rec and good outdoor access.
- Realized how vital broadband is, more people means more entrepreneurial opportunities and greater demand for outdoor rec.
- People who have a positive tourism experience are more likely to relocate, outsiders view assets differently than locals.

Cluster Verification

Attraction and Existing Business
Strategies



Cluster Verification

Recommendations

1. The region should pursue a blended portfolio of Traded, Blended and Local clusters in balancing recruiting and existing business efforts.
2. Economic development efforts should be focused on Mining, Fabricated Metal and Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing, Shared Services & IT, Tourism and Healthcare.



Mining



**Fabricated
Metal
Manufacturing**



**Machinery and
Equipment
Manufacturing**



**Shared Services
& IT**



Tourism

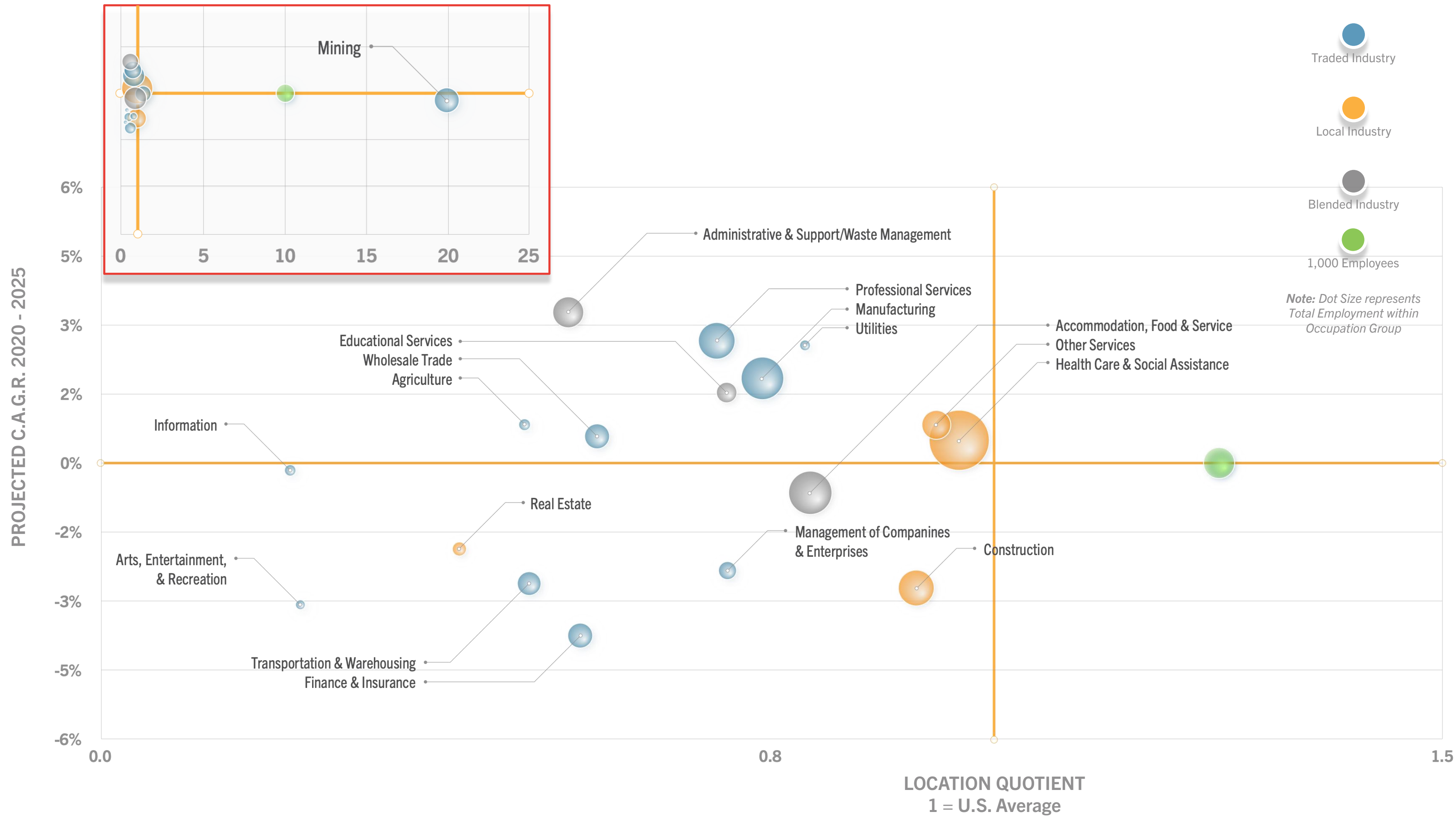


Healthcare

3. Attention should be given to specific strategies for each cluster (*listed on the Cluster Strategies Overview page*).

Cumberland Plateau Location Quotient vs. Growth Rate

Location Quotient vs. Projected U.S. Compound Annual Growth Rate by Sector



Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

Cumberland Plateau's mining industry is exceptional compared to the rest of the country, but the region has low Location Quotients in each of the remaining sectors.

LOCATION QUOTIENT

- The Cumberland Plateau has the largest competitive advantage (as measured by location quotient) in Mining, Health Care, and Construction. With the exception of Health Care, these industries are projected to decline over the next five years.
- Although Manufacturing and Professional Services have below-average location quotients, those sectors make up a significant portion of the overall workforce and are projected to increase.
- Roughly 8 percent of the region's total workforce is in Mining, resulting in a high location quotient. The pace by which the Mining sector is expected to decline is a moderate compound annual rate of -0.78% but may be higher depending on market trends.

Recession Cluster Analysis

Industry Sector Performance During Recessions

Resiliency planning takes into consideration the negative economic impacts of future economic downturns. One aspect is to understand how clusters perform during historic economic downturns. The accompanying chart averages the past two major recessions in 2001 and 2008. Although the total economy declined, some industry sectors grew.

Two of the Cumberland Plateau's largest industry clusters – Manufacturing and Tourism - suffer deep declines during recessions. The region's major cluster – Mining – performs well during such events.

Because a sector declines as a whole does not mean that all the components decline. For instance, outdoor tourism increased during the pandemic as the overall industry decreased.

Traded clusters are an important consideration as they are the foundational base of a regional economy. It is impractical to abandon a base cluster solely based on its economic downturn performance.

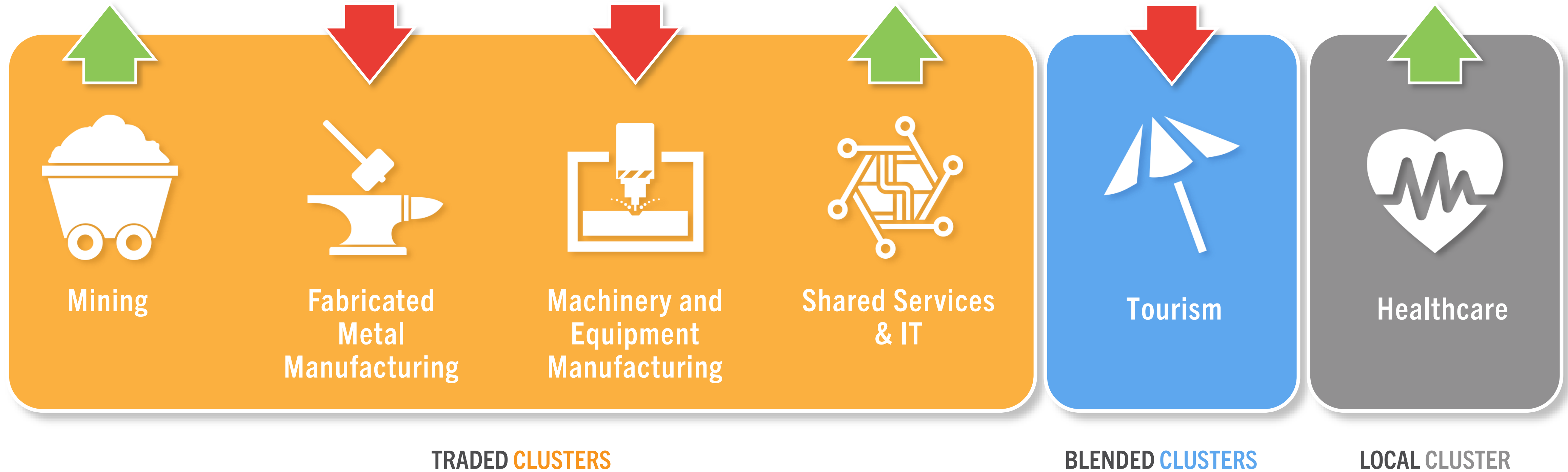
This cluster strategy takes all of this into consideration by blending a portfolio of clusters to lessen the impacts of an economic downturn while growing the economy in the long-term.

AVERAGE QUARTERLY GDP CHANGE BY INDUSTRY 2001 & GREAT RECESSION



Cumberland Plateau PDC Blended Cluster Portfolio

Economic Downturn Impact



Cluster Strategies Overview



Mining

- Take advantage of value chain opportunities as demand grows for metal commodities.
- Bring together industry leaders, entrepreneurs and academics to address the mining industry's most pressing challenges around efficiencies, future of the workforce, data optimization and reducing carbon footprint.
- Promote the capabilities of existing mine supply, manufacturing and service businesses via an online database to grow opportunities beyond the region.



Fabricated Metal Manufacturing

- Expand upon and market specialized knowledge base to increase company presence in the region.
- Investigate prototyping and short-run manufacturing capabilities to build local manufacturing capacity for product customization.
- Pilot new technologies with local manufacturing companies in Industry 4.0 components and/or partner with research institutions.
- Continue to explore BRE and industrial recruitment initiatives in high-growth sub-sectors including battery storage and electrification.



Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing

- Assist in continued diversification of mining manufacturers into new clusters and markets.
- Develop Machinery & Equipment Manufacturing portfolio by promoting key skills and inputs.
- Take advantage of existing inputs such as coal and fabricated metals to reinforce value chain and offer streamlining to businesses from outside of the region.



Shared Services & IT

- Capitalize on in-region expertise and best-in-class broadband capabilities to generate growth through a remote-worker campaign.
- Develop a shared services program supporting Northern Virginia and DC based companies through a “pipeline” to the Cumberland Plateau.
- With continued residential broadband deployment, train and support citizens working from home.



Tourism

- Continue to expand tourist access to outdoor recreation opportunities due to their recession resiliency among tourism enterprises.
- Develop a mixed accommodations industry with more traditional hotels alongside RV parks and campgrounds which are experiencing high levels of growth in response to current market demands.
- Increase tourism resiliency by tying in with other industries in which the region does well such as agriculture and mining.



Healthcare

- Follow current trajectory to capture revenue and meet the needs of an aging populace.
- Leverage Appalachian College of Pharmacy in recruiting on-line pharmacy operations such as shared services and distribution.
- Conduct a healthcare leakage study to determine needed or improved services to ensure income created in region stays in region.

Asset Mapping

Infrastructure and Support Service Strategies



1. Continue successful efforts to deploy broadband throughout the region; especially in residential areas to support working from home opportunities. Broadband was the number one infrastructure answer from government and community leaders for strengthening the region.
2. Develop a campaign or program to increase computer ownership and internet usage. While broadband capabilities are very strong in the Cumberland Plateau, computer and internet usage are low.
3. Create a taskforce to address the region's low worker participation rate (43% vs the U.S. average of 63%), especially among females (38.6%). Disengaged residents are a source of labor that could overcome current and future workforce needs.
4. Continue to develop larger industrial sites and shell buildings that could support a greater range of industrial clients.
5. Based on stakeholder feedback from business leaders, more small business and entrepreneurial support services are needed in the region.

Regional Assets

Broadband is a star asset in the region

- Broadband capabilities are very strong in the Cumberland Plateau.
- The Cumberland Plateau's broadband capabilities are not just locally exceptional but rank highly when compared against the entire nation.
- All four counties rank in the top one-third of the counties and county equivalents across the U.S.

Low cost

- Low labor costs
- Low real estate costs
- Low cost of living

Outdoor Activities & Natural Beauty

- Plentiful outdoor activities (driving, bicycling, hiking, fishing, hunting, water sports, camping, etc.)
- 52 parks
- 49 natural areas
- 45 trails
- 43 scenic drives
- 37 historical areas
- 15 playing fields, sports, and golf facilities

Regional Deficiencies



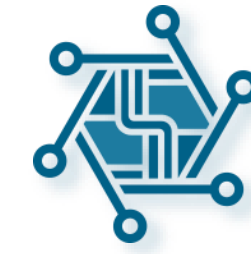
Deficiencies in the transportation Infrastructure

- There are presently no commercial airports in the region making accessibility challenging and increasing time costs. The nearest commercial airport is the Tri-Cities Airport in Blountville, TN.
- There are no Interstate Highways in the region.



Elementary school performance and low graduation from high-demand post-secondary programs

- Two of the four regional school districts are low-performing. Students in Buchanan County School District perform well below the state average (63% below). Students in Russell County School District perform 11% below the state average. The other two major school districts perform at or above the state average.
- In addition to professional degree programs (pharmacy and law), nearby Bluefield College serves the region. However, there is still a 'brain drain' of high-performing high school graduates as they leave the region looking for higher educational institutions.
- Low completion numbers from high-demand, high-growth programs such as computer science and business administration.



Lower technology usage among households

- While broadband capabilities are very strong in the Cumberland Plateau, computer and internet usage are low, as evident by the lower percentage of households that own a computer (72% vs. the U.S. average 77%) and small percentage of households with a broadband subscription (47% vs. 69% U.S. average).



Lack of human capital (labor & consumers)

- The region's low participation rate (43% vs the U.S. average of 63%), coupled with its small population, gives it a low labor force under 38,000 people. This will create challenges in drawing sizeable employers into the region as many will believe that the region doesn't have a sufficient workforce to support their operations. Labor force participation is particularly low among females (38.6%)
- At a rate less than half that of the national average and one-third of the state average, the supply of university graduates is low in the Cumberland Plateau region. However, the supply of graduates from 2-year colleges is slightly above average.
- The number of people in the region with less than a high school degree is almost twice the U.S. average, indicating this should be a focal area for economic development efforts.

Business and Industrial Parks

Regional Assets & Deficiencies



Regional Assets

- Overall, the Cumberland Plateau region has done a good job continuing to develop industrial parks.
- Industrial parks have good utility infrastructure in place or have plans to do so.
- Although limited in marketability, having a shell building does attract prospects to the region.
- The reuse of existing industrial buildings as “shell” buildings is a good strategy.

Regional Deficiencies

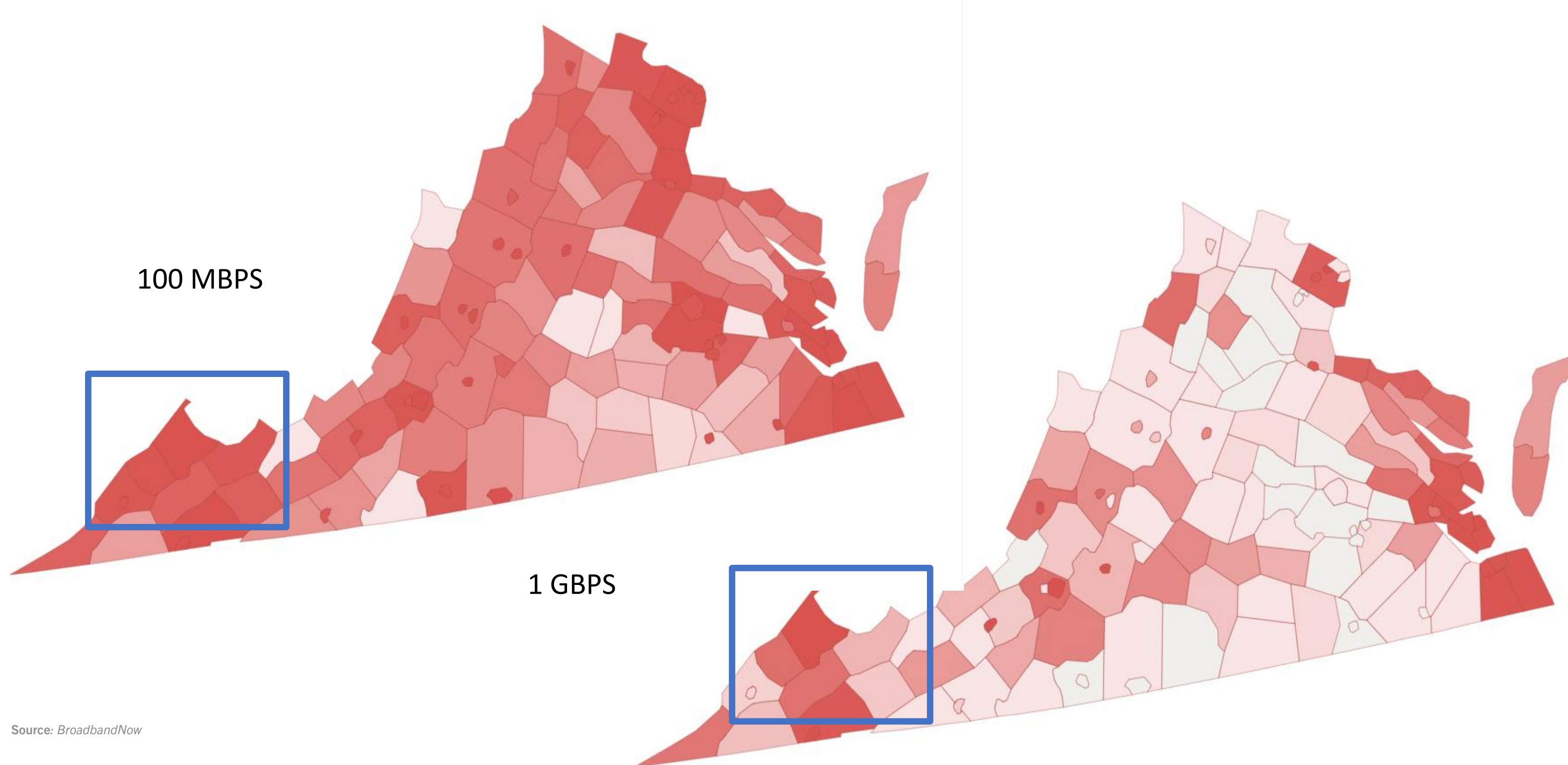
- Although there are sites throughout the region, most are smaller parcels limiting larger impact projects.
- The great majority of sites in region are over 30 minutes from an interstate highway.
- Road access can be challenging for truck traffic.
- Current shell building has limited potential due to design.

Infrastructure - Technology

Broadband

Virginia's broadband coverage is well distributed throughout the state, as 65% of the state's counties and independent cities have broadband coverage of 80% or more. Cumberland Plateau is well positioned in this competitive environment: in addition to Buchanan County's best-in-class broadband coverage, Dickenson and Tazewell perform above the state's average and Tazewell's 88.7% coverage is equal to the state's median. Outside of Southwestern Virginia, the state's most connected regions are largely concentrated along the eastern border.

TOP VIRGINIA COUNTIES/INDEPENDENT CITIES FOR BROADBAND COVERAGE



AREA	NATIONAL RANK
Buchanan County	8
Bristol	11
Franklin City	17
Bland County	23
Bedford City	24
Manassas Park	82
Lexington	89
Winchester	118
Covington	126
Radford	130
...	...
Dickenson County	423
Tazewell County	611
Russell County	1,131

Source: BroadbandNow

Infrastructure - Technology

Broadband – National Overview

The Cumberland Plateau's broadband capabilities are not just locally exceptional, but rank highly when compared against the entire nation. Buchanan County's rank of 8 is out of 3,143 total regions. Even the lowest ranking county in the region, Russell County, ranks higher than two-thirds of the counties and county equivalents across the U.S.

TOTAL TOP COUNTIES FOR **BROADBAND COVERAGE**

NATIONAL RANK	COUNTY	STATE
1	Nassau	New York
2	Richmond	New York
3	Sullivan	Tennessee
4	Whitfield	Georgia
5	Bulloch	Georgia
6	Hamblen	Tennessee
7	Meade	Kentucky
8	Buchanan	Virginia
9	Morgan	Tennessee
10	McCreary	Kentucky
...
423	Dickenson	Virginia
611	Tazewell	Virginia
1,131	Russell	Virginia
...
3,141	Esmeralda	Nevada
3,142	Banner	Nebraska
3,143	Yakutat	Alaska



Stakeholder Feedback

Needed Infrastructure – Community Leaders Perspective

What infrastructure or support services are needed to strengthen the region?

Broadband

- Broadband
- Broadband
- More Broadband
- Broadband good
- Continue broadband deployment
- Broadband
- Residential Broadband would be very helpful.
- High Speed Internet
- Trending up with internet.

Sites & Buildings

- More sites and larger acre sites
- Shell buildings
- More sites

Transportation

- Passenger rail is another amenity I believe is overlooked. If we are serious about recruiting remote workers, we need an Amtrack station.
- Commuter air travel would help
- Road improvements

Miscellaneous

- Natural gas
- More natural gas
- Really good trade schools in each area of our region.
- Wayfinding and signage to area attractions for people coming through the area.
- Aging community- need for elderly support services.
- Support services for small businesses.
- Existing businesses need better support.
- Industry partnerships on bulk ordering.
- Need for shuttle services to local attractions

Stakeholder Feedback

Needed Infrastructure – Business Leaders Perspective

What infrastructure or support services are needed to strengthen the region?

Business Support

- Better support for business for emergency events in the future.
- Central information source through the government for business continuation.
- Post pandemic support for how to avoid closures in the future.
- Better centralization of business support offerings going forward to assist locals interested in starting and keeping a business in the area.
- Better building support.
- Construction support for new businesses and buildings.
- Money allocated towards storefront beautification.
- Money towards assistance with staying in business.

Entrepreneurship Support

- Entrepreneurial services for business start up.
- Entrepreneurial support services for people who are interested.
- Start up capital to assist entrepreneurs.
- Grant writing assistance for small business.
- Small business incubator type concept.
- Entrepreneurial support.

Marketing

- Additional collective marketing needs.
- Social media marketing support because when social media has been used, people have arrived directly citing it for visiting.
- More online regional promotion of area itineraries.

Education & Training

- Better trade education and funding.
- Education focus - PreK to Community College.
- Make UVA Wise more of a high-tech school.
- College trade school is improving but needs a lot of improvement, needs more funding.
- Vocational education.
- More certified welders and laser equipment operators.
- Better soft skills training.

Infrastructure

- Better rail access (rail spur).
- Roads have improved but more work needed.
- Logistics hub in region.
- Better rail service.
- Better roads.

Miscellaneous

- Continuation of fiber broadband deployment.
- Better cell coverage on 460.
- More daycare options.
- Better hospital services

IEDC & RestoreYourEconomy.org Review

Recommendations and Resources to
Support Existing Businesses



Resource Source

RestoreYourEconomy.org

Regarding resiliency, the main economic development resource is RestoreYourEconomy.org. This section uses the International Economic Development Council's work on disaster recovery and their joint website with the U.S. Economic Development Administration - RestoreYourEconomy.org as a basis for recommendations.

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with 'RESTORE YOUR ECONOMY', 'ABOUT', 'PREPAREDNESS & RECOVERY', 'RESOURCES', 'COVID-19', 'VOLUNTEER', and 'CONTACT'. The main content area features a large banner with the 'RESTORE YOUR ECONOMY .ORG' logo and the text 'INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT'. Below the banner, a paragraph states: 'RestoreYourEconomy is your resource for up-to-date information related to COVID-19 and its economic impacts. It is managed by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) with generous support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and IEDC's Economic Development Research Partners program.' A second paragraph invites users to share their stories: 'If you have a resource or example of an effective strategy in your community that would be helpful to other EDOs in responding to COVID-19, let us know using the [Contact Form](#) to share your story.' The left sidebar contains a 'COVID-19' section with a virus icon, 'COVID-19 Webinars', 'EDRP Briefs' with a globe icon, 'Addressing Inequality', and 'Reopening Your Economy' with sub-links for 'Reopening by Industry', 'State, and Municipal Reopening', and 'Research and Resources'. The footer includes the title 'LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR TOURISM RECOVERY IN URBAN CENTERS' and the date 'SEPTEMBER 15, 2020'.

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE)

Recommendations

Using a BRE program to prepare companies in the region for a disaster or economic downturn and then support them during recovery is a key resiliency strategy for the community. BRE strategies enhance capacity for recovery and strengthen existing business networks. **The region should support their local economic developers in implementing these strategies:**

1. Encourage businesses to develop business continuity plans by providing workshops to small and mid-sized firms (see following page).
2. Encourage businesses to develop business preparedness plans by providing workshops to small and mid-sized firms (see following page).
3. Support each county in developing its own economic planning and recovery team using engaged business leaders (see guidance on building a team).
4. Establish a business recovery fund so there is an immediate and locally-controlled source of financial support for existing businesses.
5. Establish plans with local utilities and emergency management authorities to facilitate the prioritization of utilities to key business parks and industries.
6. Include local economic developers on the county emergency management teams.
7. Encourage local economic developers to develop their own preparedness and continuity plans to create a capacity to support businesses in an economic crisis.

Resource Tools

Business Continuity and Business Preparedness Tools

<https://disastersafety.org/business-protection/ofb-ez/>

The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS)

Provides two free useful tools for small businesses, one focused on business continuity, the other on business preparedness. Having both an emergency preparedness and response plan as well as a business continuity plan in place saves time and focuses energy during emergency situations. By taking this action, business owners will help make their communities more resilient, while also protecting their employees and their business' bottom line. Open For Business-EZ (OFB-EZ) is a streamlined kit for small businesses that may not have the time or resources to create an extensive disaster recovery plan. In addition, there is a free OFB-EZ mobile app to complete the same tasks as the toolkit.

Business Continuity and Preparedness Training for Small Businesses

Small- and medium-sized businesses have strong roots in the local economy and are often more vulnerable to disasters than large businesses. Consider the following statistics from IBHS and SBA: one in four small businesses are expected to experience a disruptive disaster in the near future – regardless of their location in the country. Approximately 60 percent of those small businesses do not have even a basic emergency response plan. Of those businesses without a plan, 43 percent won't reopen their doors and 75 percent will fail within three years of a major incident. EDO's should consider hosting workshops and/or webinars to increase awareness of available resources.

Resource Team

Build an Economic Response/Recovery Team

Involving the business community in the disaster preparation process at an early stage will help to ensure their specific needs are addressed in emergency plans and increase their resilience to the disaster's impact. Business owners and executives don't naturally see their role in a community's disaster preparedness effort, so the EDO plays an important role in conveying these understandings. While local government has the legal responsibility to address disaster risks and make emergency management plans, businesses and the business community will recover much more effectively from a disaster if they have taken preparedness steps tailored to business needs.

An EDO should particularly engage those businesses that may have important resources for response and recovery. It is recommended that an economic recovery team be formed ahead of a disaster to specifically address the post-disaster economic recovery issues that a community may face. This economic recovery team would also play a role in working with emergency management personnel to influence a tiered system of reentry for critical businesses that need early access back in the community following a disaster.

The economic recovery team's first initiative should be reviewing the community's existing emergency management and mitigation plans with a focus on the plans' impact on the business community and the local economy. Most emergency management plans are primarily concerned with health and public safety issues and may overlook the economic recovery aspect. These plans discuss business reentry, access to property, and other issues that impact local businesses' ability to respond and recover.

Cumberland Plateau PDC

Tourism Resiliency Strategy

August 2021

Key Recommendations

1. Because the area's tourism industry is still developing, tourist needs should be aligned with resident needs. Any development for tourism will need to also be supported by local residents and should benefit both groups equally.
2. A focus on outdoor recreation tourism benefits the region by appealing to remote workers and resident quality of life. Outdoor recreation benefits residents as much as tourists especially in a pandemic environment.
3. Key, activity-based opportunity zones need to be identified for different facets of outdoor recreation tourism to assure visitor services align with visitor activity to reduce leakage and create a tourism ecosystem.
4. A pandemic response board should be established for tourism from subject matter experts and industry representatives to ensure a consistent regional approach and smooth information flow.
5. Major tourism asset development should be leveraged to bring areas up to a standard of readiness and maintain that standard to ensure areas seeking to increase their tourism market are putting forward a welcoming environment with sufficient visitor services.

1.0 Improving Quality of Existing Outdoor Recreation Jobs



1.1 Existing Outdoor Recreation Job Opportunities

Outdoor Recreation Job Quality

Quality of Outdoor Recreation jobs is lower compared with most tourism jobs due to seasonality of the region with most outdoor recreation opportunities available only during summer and shoulder seasons of Spring and Fall making full time work rare. There does not appear to be any current opportunities to engage in winter outdoor recreation given the landscape and natural resources of the area. This could be an area for future study or planning to increase winter season activity offerings. Current year-round offerings are ATV/UTV trails, but the associated accommodations with these trails are largely camping based which impacts seasonality.

ORSA reports 3.1% value added growth in outdoor recreation for Virginia pre-pandemic, a .5% decrease in employment growth, and a 2.8% compensation growth which was below the national average of 3.9%. This does not relate to Virginia's lack of outdoor recreation opportunities as the latest VTC 2021 Marketing Plan indicates that Virginia is best known for history, outdoor recreation, scenic drives, and beaches. The outdoor recreation job market in the state is simply not keeping pace with compensation growth or added jobs compared with other outdoor recreation areas.

1.2 Existing Outdoor Recreation Job Opportunities

Outdoor Recreation Job Quality

However, outdoor recreation related or supporting fields cause excellent economic multipliers when tourists are spending money in areas with outdoor recreation opportunities. This table from the Outdoor Industry Association indicates annual spend for different Outdoor Recreation Activities along with their total economic impact:

AMERICANS PARTICIPATING IN OUTDOOR RECREATION ANNUALLY SPEND

	Gear, Accessories & Vehicles	Trip Related	TOTAL
Camping	\$31,271,155,486	\$135,591,624,999	\$166,862,780,485
Fishing	\$11,867,666,850	\$23,908,160,290	\$35,775,827,140
Hunting	\$16,059,527,274	\$11,318,772,808	\$27,378,300,882
Motorcycle Riding	\$16,726,560,701	\$47,428,610,964	\$64,155,171,665
Off Roding	\$15,520,574,134	\$35,996,107,969	\$51,516,682,103
Snow Sports	\$12,530,315,740	\$60,190,242,316	\$72,720,558,056
Trail Sports	\$25,342,546,672	\$176,144,141,213	\$201,486,687,885
Water Sports	\$29,059,965,205	\$110,911,844,967	\$139,971,810,172
Wheel Sports	\$13,857,894,195	\$82,864,146,456	\$96,722,040,651
Wildlife Watching	\$12,272,757,581	\$17,947,854,866	\$30,220,612,447
TOTAL	\$184,508,963,838	\$702,301,506,848	\$886,810,470,686

ANNUAL OUTDOOR RECREATION SPENDING DIRECTLY GENERATES

	Retail Spending	Jobs	Salaries & Wages	Federal Taxes	State & Local Taxes
Camping	\$166,862,780,485	1,442,578	\$50,684,882,121	\$12,354,788,124	\$11,183,227,292
Fishing	\$35,775,827,140	287,554	\$10,395,326,785	\$2,540,632,232	\$2,360,293,823
Hunting	\$27,378,300,082	194,973	\$7,415,989,907	\$1,807,179,525	\$1,689,967,918
Motorcycle Riding	\$64,155,171,665	480,182	\$18,370,693,658	\$4,549,055,289	\$4,013,340,008
Off Roding	\$51,516,682,103	386,439	\$15,498,769,234	\$3,789,720,978	\$3,338,430,860
Snow Sports	\$72,720,558,056	694,918	\$24,188,497,260	\$5,813,068,034	\$5,296,608,281
Trail Sports	\$201,486,687,885	1,762,665	\$607,191,555,234	\$14,832,760,478	\$13,505,790,914
Water Sports	\$139,970,810,172	1,234,876	\$43,893,049,709	\$10,618,742,884	\$9,601,521,150
Wheel Sports	\$96,722,040,651	847,559	\$28,543,151,818	\$7,000,352,726	\$6,270,032,370
Wildlife Watching	\$30,220,612,447	235,825	\$8,206,004,990	\$2,006,001,464	\$1,953,449,823
TOTAL	\$886,810,470,686	75,675,690	\$267,915,429,616	\$65,312,301,734	\$59,212,662,439

Source: Outdoor Industry Association. (2017). *The Outdoor Recreation Economy*. p. 18

1.3 Existing Outdoor Recreation Job Opportunities

Outdoor Recreation Job Quality

The Cumberland Plateau is best situated to invest and specialize in the following segments:

1. Camping
2. Trail Sports
3. Water Sports
4. Wheel Sports (Cycling)
5. Motorcycle Riding
6. Off-Roading

The primary focus should be on providing opportunities to spend money while participating in these sports and building high-specialty jobs around these sports to ensure their continuation. Capturing more of the tourism dollar to minimize leakage by assuring appropriate visitor services are available through locally owned, small businesses at major tourist attractions.

1.4 Existing Outdoor Recreation Job Opportunities

Outdoor Recreation Job Quality

In a pandemic environment, outdoor recreation saw the lowest downturn impact among recreation-based segments making it a better tourism employment opportunity than most tourism jobs given this context.

In the pandemic environment, VTC found that 70% of travelers wanted to be outdoors and experience nature on their next trip. 83% are selecting a destination based on rest and relaxation activities which was rated as most important destination attribute in selecting where to go.

The market demand is sufficient to bolster outdoor recreation job quantity, but the quality of the jobs available in this category will be dependent on year-round related opportunities and quality assurance roles which can provide outdoor recreation experiences without actual outdoor sport participation. Cluster study analysis reveals agriculture and mining as two high potential industries within the area that could be tied into tourism initiatives in order to improve tourism resiliency. Outdoor recreation jobs could increase in quality by developing some opportunities around mining tourism and agritourism enterprises.

1.5 Tourism - Cluster Overview

Restaurants, RV Parks, Hotels, and
Recreational Centers

*Build infrastructure to support interest created by national trends
in natural resources and eco-tourism.*

▶ CASE TO WIN

- Cumberland Plateau's Tourism is largely based on natural attractions such as state parks and forests.
- Restaurants make up the largest portion of the region's Tourism-related workforce with over 1,800 employees.
- Despite few employees in traditional hotels, Cumberland Plateau has a high location quotient for RV Parks and Campgrounds, a growing industry that will benefit from the development of the Clinch River State Park.

▶ POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

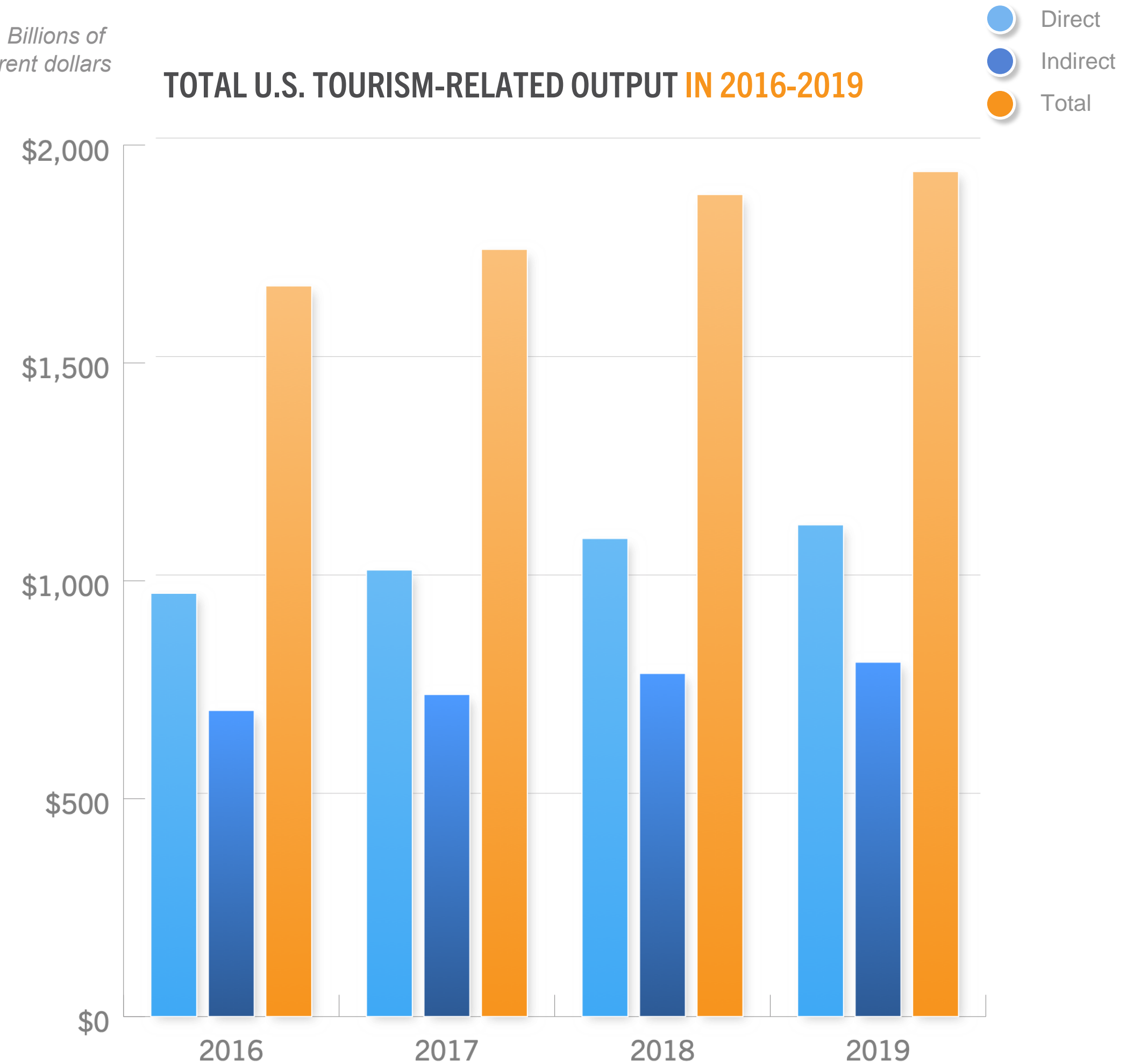
- Continue to expand tourist access to outdoor recreation opportunities due to their recession resiliency among tourism enterprises and strong natural assets.
- Develop a mixed accommodations industry with more traditional hotels alongside RV parks and campgrounds which are experiencing high levels of growth in response to current market demands.
- Increase tourism resiliency by tying in with other industries in which the region does well such as agriculture and mining.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

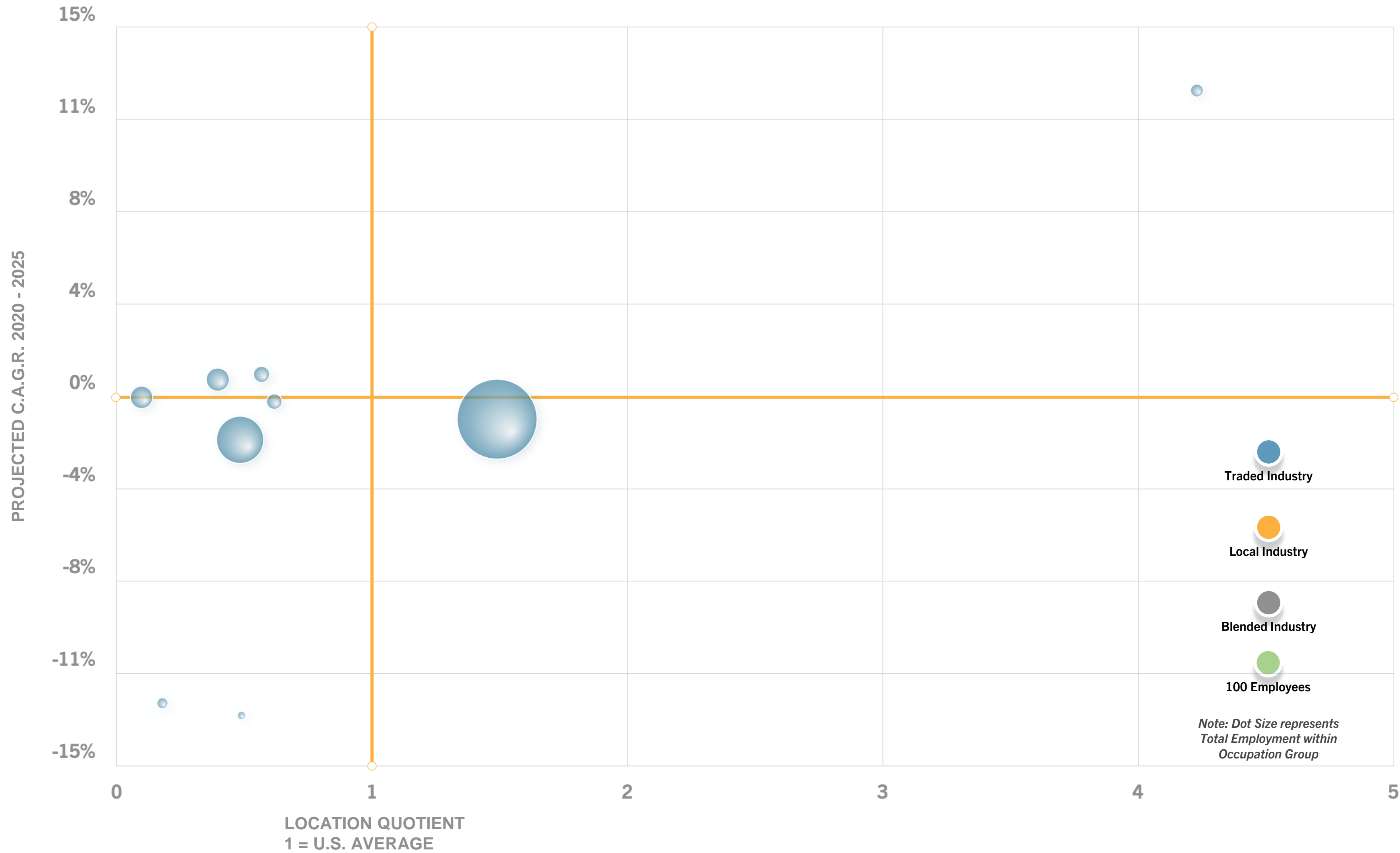
▶ CLUSTER INFORMATION

Billions of
current dollars

TOTAL U.S. TOURISM-RELATED OUTPUT IN 2016-2019



1.6 Cumberland Plateau Cluster Study



LOCATION QUOTIENT

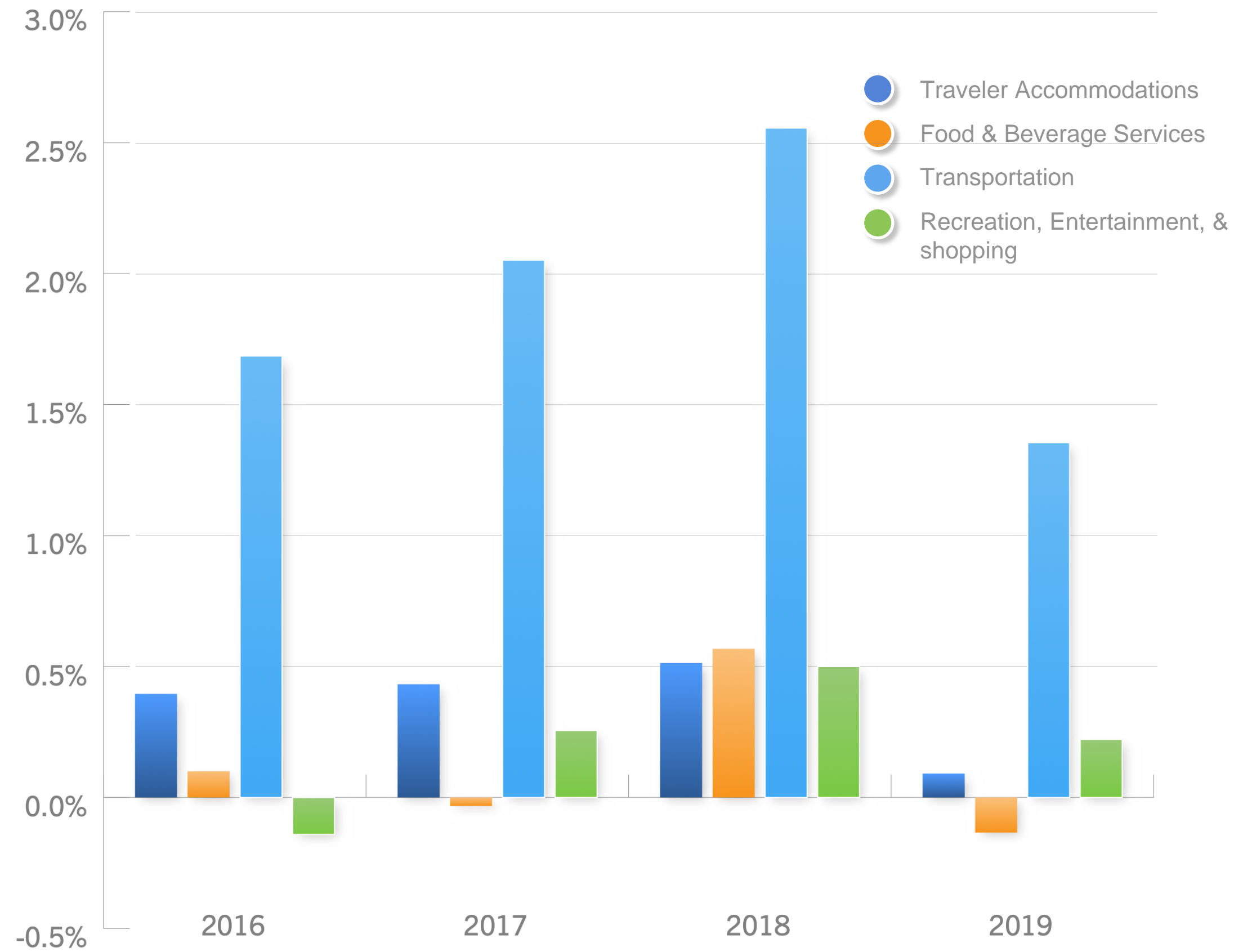
- Currently, tourism infrastructure industries such as hotels and full-service restaurants do not have a high employment concentration in Cumberland Plateau.
- Limited-Service Restaurants is the largest industry by employment within the Tourism sector with a location quotient of 1.5.
- Although the RV Parks and Campgrounds industry does not require large scale employment for operations, the region is relatively advantaged with both a high growth rate and location quotient.

Source: U.S. Census, EMSI, Hickey Global

1.7 Tourism Cluster

Contributions to National Annual Growth in Real Tourism

CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONAL ANNUAL GROWTH IN REAL TOURISM OUTPUT IN 2016-2019



ANNUAL OVERALL TOURISM GROWTH



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

NAICS CODES IN CLUSTER

- 487210 Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Water
- 561510 Travel Agencies
- 561591 Convention and Visitors' Bureaus
- 713910 Golf Courses and Country Clubs
- 713930 Marinas
- 713940 Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
- 721110 Hotels and Motels, Except Casino Hotels
- 721211 RV Parks and Campgrounds
- 722310 Food Service Contractors
- 722320 Caterers
- 722511 Full-service Restaurants
- 722513 Limited-service Restaurants
- 722514 Cafeterias, Grill Buffets, & Buffets
- 722515 Snack & Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars

1.8 Existing Outdoor Recreation Job Opportunities

Recommendations:

Priority should be given to adding jobs which ensure the continuation of outdoor recreation opportunities in the future and provide best year-round possibilities:

1. Water quality management to ensure rivers stay recreation ready and to ensure fish health for continued fishing access
2. Accommodations which are activity inclusive and can offer off-season nature retreats, digital detox retreats, or nature-based relaxation which does not directly require trail access.
3. Working with existing RV Resorts and Campgrounds to introduce similar programming for the off-season period to drive need for long term employment
4. Courting group travel which may be more open to coming during the off season to make use of outdoor recreation areas but may not need actual trail access like schools or nursing homes.
5. Forestry planning which allows for recreation access where possible, perhaps in a guided capacity to ensure safety
6. Working with restaurants to align open hours and menu offerings with tourist preferences for at least the highest visitation portion of the year.

1.9 Existing Outdoor Recreation Job Opportunities

Job Quality Brought by Outdoor Recreation to the Cumberland Plateau

Of new outdoor participants during the pandemic, most stayed closer to home and 62% engaged in outdoor recreation for exercise and health (OIA, 2021). 53% of participants in outdoor recreation during the pandemic reported a greater sense of mental health and wellbeing (UVM, 2020).

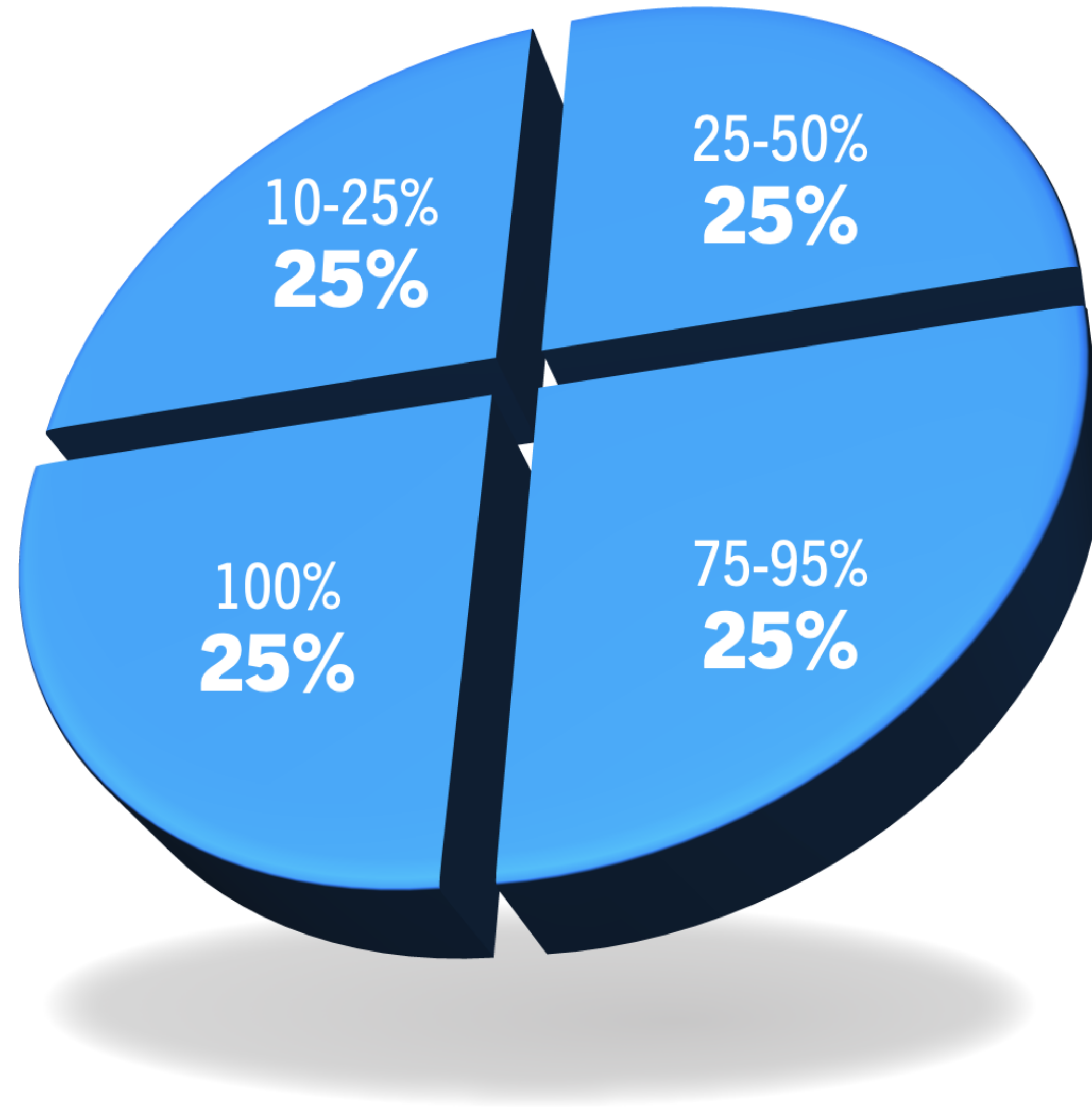
Outdoor industry job quality for year-round employment will be tied to local participation in outdoor recreation providing a draw for remote workers and assisting in worker retention in the area. Local support and participation in outdoor recreation initiatives provides greater resiliency in times of economic downturn.

Outdoor recreation should be considered a quality of life investment for residents and not merely a tourist draw. Most tourist facing businesses in the area report a substantial amount of business coming from the local population.

1.10 Stakeholder Feedback

Non-local Tourism

How much of your business comes from tourists outside the region as opposed to local sources? (Tourism Only)



1.11 Existing Outdoor Recreation Job Opportunities

Job Quality Brought by Outdoor Recreation to the Cumberland Plateau

Live Better, Work Better

Address “brain drain” and bolster remote work attractiveness of the destination by centering outdoor recreation opportunities. Access to outdoor recreation aids in mental strain during the pandemic and has now been shown to be an attractive element in trip planning into the future.

All jobs in the region increase in quality in a pandemic or economic downturn environment where travel becomes restricted financially or physically. The value people see in the outdoors has grown, and this should be part of the pitch when considering remote worker recruitment.

There are numerous campaigns currently running to recruit remote workers offering a variety of incentives. Thus far, there is no hard data on how successful those campaigns have been. However, there is support for the importance placed on access to nature close to home and that becoming a priority for people in remote work environments.

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders agreed that a remote worker recruitment campaign would aid the region. This should be a top priority not only for population maintenance and growth, but also for continued local support of outdoor recreation jobs in the area.

2.0 New Outdoor Recreation Jobs, Small Businesses, and Gap-Filling Entrepreneurship



2.1.1 New Outdoor Recreation Job and Small Business Opportunities

Identify new outdoor recreation job and small business opportunities not currently utilized in the four counties, with a particular emphasis on gap-filling entrepreneurship ventures that support primary tourism drivers (*Breaks Interstate Park, Clinch River State Park, Back of the Dragon, Spearhead Trails, SWVA Outdoors, etc.*).

Pre-pandemic the highest spending rates in outdoor recreation were: **1. Trail sports, 2. Camping, 3. Water sports** with a combined spend of \$508bil annually in the US

Top 5 outdoor activities with new participants during the pandemic were: **1. Walking, 2. Running/Jogging, 3. Cycling, 4. Birdwatching, 5. Fishing** (*OIA, 2021, The New Outdoor Participant*)

New business opportunities could focus around increasing trail access and water access. Ease of access is key which relates to not only physical access but ease of total trip planning and ability to satisfy tourist needs while on vacation.

This aligns with key market cluster study analysis of high impact opportunities in RV Parks and campgrounds, Restaurants, and Water-based Scenic and sightseeing transportation

2.1.2 New Outdoor Recreation Job and Small Business Opportunities

New Business Needs

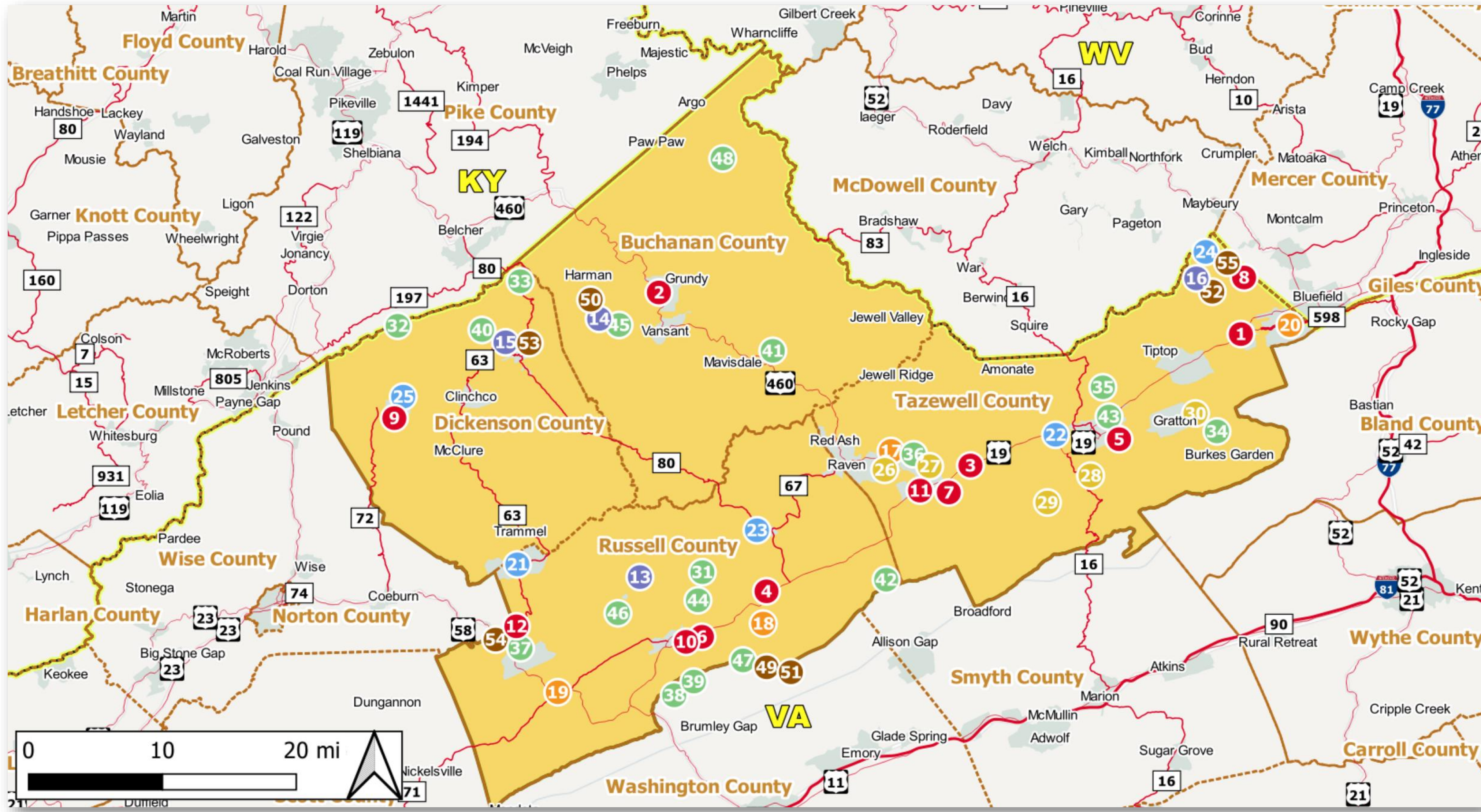
Cluster development around identified access points for outdoor recreation with visitor services like restaurants, accommodations, and guides and outfitters

Replicating high-success models from the region such as Southern Gap with Spearhead Trails access and Back of the Dragon development where multiple tourists needs are met in the same area. The success of these locations is largely due to the proximity of visitor services to area attractions.

Visitor services in the region are currently clustered around major roadways. This is a good model for business travel, but can make planning difficult when considering outdoor recreation leisure travel.

2.2.1 Select Tourism Assets

Cumberland Plateau



- Accommodation
- Campgrounds
- Historical Site
- Museum
- Other
- Park
- Trail

Source: U.S. Census, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, OpenStreetMap, Hickey Global Consulting Services, Regional County Tourism Departments

2.2.2 Select Tourism Assets

Cumberland Plateau

MAP ID NUMBER	Tourist Site
ACCOMMODATION	
1	Comfort Inn
2	Comfort Inn & Suites
3	Cuz's Cabins & Restaurant
4	Elk Garden Methodist Bike Hostel
5	Fincastle Motor Inn
6	Holiday Inn Express & Suites Lebanon, an IHG Hotel
7	Holiday Inn Express Richlands/Claypool Hill
8	Real McCoy Cabins, Country Store and Kitchen
9	Sleep Inn & Suites
10	Super 8 by Wyndham Lebanon
11	Super 8 Richlands/Claypool Hill
12	Western Front Hotel
CAMPGROUNDS	
13	Riverbend Campground
14	Southern Gap Outdoor Adventure
15	Thunder River Campground
16	Trailhead ATV Resort
HISTORICAL SITES	
17	Coal Miners' Memorial
18	Ellenbrook Mansion
19	Old Russell County Court House (Robert Dickenson Home)
20	Walter McDonald Sanders House
MUSEUMS	
21	Dante Coal Miners & Railroad Museum
22	Historic Crab Orchard Museum
23	Honaker Heritage Museum
24	Pocahontas Exhibition Coal Mine & Museum
25	Ralph Stanley Museum

MAP ID NUMBER	Tourist Site
OTHER TOURIST SITES	
26	Citizens for the Arts
27	Clinch River Farms
28	Foxtail Orchards, Inc
29	Plumb Creek Winery
30	Sandy Head Ostrich Farm
PARKS	
31	Big Cedar Creek
32	Birch Knob Observation Tower
33	Breaks Interstate Park
34	Burkes Garden
35	Cavitt's Creek Park
36	Cedar Bluff
37	Clinch River State Park
38	Hidden Valley Climbing
39	Hidden Valley Wildlife Management Area
40	John W Flannagan Dam
41	Keen Mountain Park
42	Laurel Bed Lake
43	Lincolnshire Park
44	Pinnacle Natural Area Preserve
45	Poplar Gap Park
46	Tank Hollow Falls
47	The Channels Natural Area Preserve
48	Verner Blankenship Community Park
TRAILS	
49	Brumley Mountain Trail
50	Coal Canyon Trailhead
51	Great Channels Trailhead
52	Pocahontas OHV Trailhead
53	Ridgeview Trailhead
54	Sugar Hill Trail System
55	The Original Pocahontas Trailhead

2.3 New Outdoor Recreation Job and Small Business Opportunities

Recommended key development locations should each have an outdoor recreation use focus. This will ensure that visitor services are well matched to the actual activities tourists will be engaging in at these locations. A singular location may provide opportunities for multiple activities, but for the sake of development, a primary activity should be identified and developed around:

- Hiking
- Trans-America Trail
- Fishing
- Camping
- Off-Road Trails
- Birding

The ability to provide a rest and relaxation element is, in part, ease of trip planning. Having a robust number of restaurants, places to stay near outdoor recreation activities, and low barriers to entry in participation are all key factors in providing the type of outdoor recreation-based vacation travelers are most interested in as the tourism economy begins to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

2.4 New Outdoor Recreation Job and Small Business Opportunities

Tourist Needs Checklist for Key Areas:

- ▶ **Full service restaurant available for lunch-dinner**
 - Serves some local food products
 - Serves cultural or restaurant specialty item
- ▶ **Grocery Store**
 - Sells packaged goods for travel
 - Some local products available
- ▶ **Accommodations within walking access to area's identified major attraction**
 - Walking access can be substituted for shuttle or other public transit access
- ▶ **Alcohol availability**
 - This can be provided at either a restaurant location or at a grocery store
 - A local alcohol offering should be available along with nationally recognized brands
- ▶ **Visitor Service or Information Area (Does not need to be staffed)**
 - Has maps available
 - Has area guides available
 - Has information on rentals
 - Has any area restrictions or policies
 - Has emergency services information
- ▶ **Outfitter/Guide**
 - Has relevant equipment to purchase or rent
 - Provides at least one guided service
 - Has repair capacities where activity necessitates
- ▶ **Internet and Cell Service availability**
 - Important for emergency services
 - Area encourages social media engagement during trip and after return

2.5.1 New Outdoor Recreation Job and Small Business Opportunities

In many areas, these needs can be combined within a single business. Especially as areas begin to develop and grow, it will be best to focus on those services which serve resident and tourist needs equally.

Additionally, certain services may be unstaffed to start and become staffed as demand grows.

This checklist aligns with needs identified by stakeholders during the interview process.

Aside from accommodations and visitor information, all items on the checklist will also increase overall resident quality of life. As these areas develop, they become more attractive to remote workers and improve walkability for tourists and residents alike. This checklist is designed with improving livability in mind so as to create areas that both tourists and residents may enjoy as opposed to developing areas into tourist only spaces.

In developing these small businesses, preference and funding should be given to encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures in these areas as opposed to new buildings where possible. This will maintain local character and history both of which are highly ranked as attractive to visitors.

2.5.2 New Outdoor Recreation Job and Small Business Opportunities

Overall, better support services are needed for entrepreneurs looking to start these new ventures. The Southern Virginia Community College should be engaged to develop a restaurant and hospitality program as part of their business track offerings to teach business skills around owning and operating these types of businesses.

Counties or a relevant economic interest group should provide scholarships for entrepreneurs interested in starting needed visitor service businesses in identified opportunity and development zones. This program could be used to incentivize business development in a way that is more likely to be sustainable in the long term and ensure that other local grant money is being given to businesses with the best chance of stability.

Especially in a pandemic environment where recovery and businesses continuation funding becomes available, training investments in local small business owners could ensure that recovery funding goes towards businesses that are suffering due to economic downturn as opposed to unsustainable business practice.

3.0 Tourism Pandemic Response Plan



3.1.1 Tourism Best Practices

COVID-19 Management and Response

By now, the primary control and containment protocols for pandemic response are well known. These 5 elements are the cornerstone of pandemic response for all tourism businesses and can be rapidly implemented in a pandemic environment.

1 PHYSICAL DISTANCING	2 TRANSMISSION BARRIERS	3 ENHANCED SANITATION	4 LIMITING IN PERSON INTERACTION	5 HEALTH SCREENINGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintaining government suggested distances between people• Operating businesses at partial capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Face masks• Physical barriers for in person interaction• Face shields• Other PPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces• Use of products proven effective against virus• Hand washing• Hand sanitizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post exposure quarantine• Automated services• Stay at home orders• Contactless services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Testing for viral infection• Symptom monitoring• Vaccination checks

3.1.2 Tourism Best Practices

COVID-19 Management and Response

Recommended equipment and assistance needed to rapidly enact pandemic response varies for each operational category. Access to the following items will be essential in meeting a pandemic threat while keeping businesses operational. Starred items () should be maintained in a small stockpile within the region for rapid deployment in a pandemic scenario.*

1 PHYSICAL DISTANCING	2 TRANSMISSION BARRIERS	3 ENHANCED SANITATION	4 LIMITING IN PERSON INTERACTION	5 HEALTH SCREENINGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage indicating occupancy limitations • Physical markers denoting distancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face masks* • Transparent plastic sheets for barriers • Face shields • Other PPE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDC approved cleaning solutions • Additional soap, cloths, and paper towels* • Hand sanitizer* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technologies which limit person to person interaction • Websites which allow for online ordering and payment processing • Online presence to update open status and business restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing kits • Online platforms for symptom checks and waivers • Vaccination waivers

3.2 Stakeholder Feedback

Business-related pandemic response

What was done well (with region's business-related pandemic response efforts)?

Funding

- Grant funding was well run and distributed effectively.
- CARES money was distributed well.
- IDA had funds available quickly. Application process was very easy.
- Turnaround on funds was fast to get people reopened.
- Grant access was smooth and there was assistance in getting funding.
- PPP distribution was done well. Business wouldn't have survived without it.
- The Cumberland Plateau provided me with easy access to funds to build our capabilities which allowed me to hire additional workers.

Community Response

- Board of supervisors were supportive of businesses.
- Help with navigating the language of the mandates.
- County tourism called to check in on reopening; fairly regular communications.
- Everyone worked together.
- Overall, good. Proactive reach out.

Health Services

- Did a great job working with local health department on what was expected.
- Health care stepped up with testing.
- Vaccine rollout did well.
- Contact with local health department office and covid clinics.
- Acted quickly to protect the aging population.
- Rollout of the vaccines went well.
- Hands-on health department. Had active outreach from health department for events.

Marketing

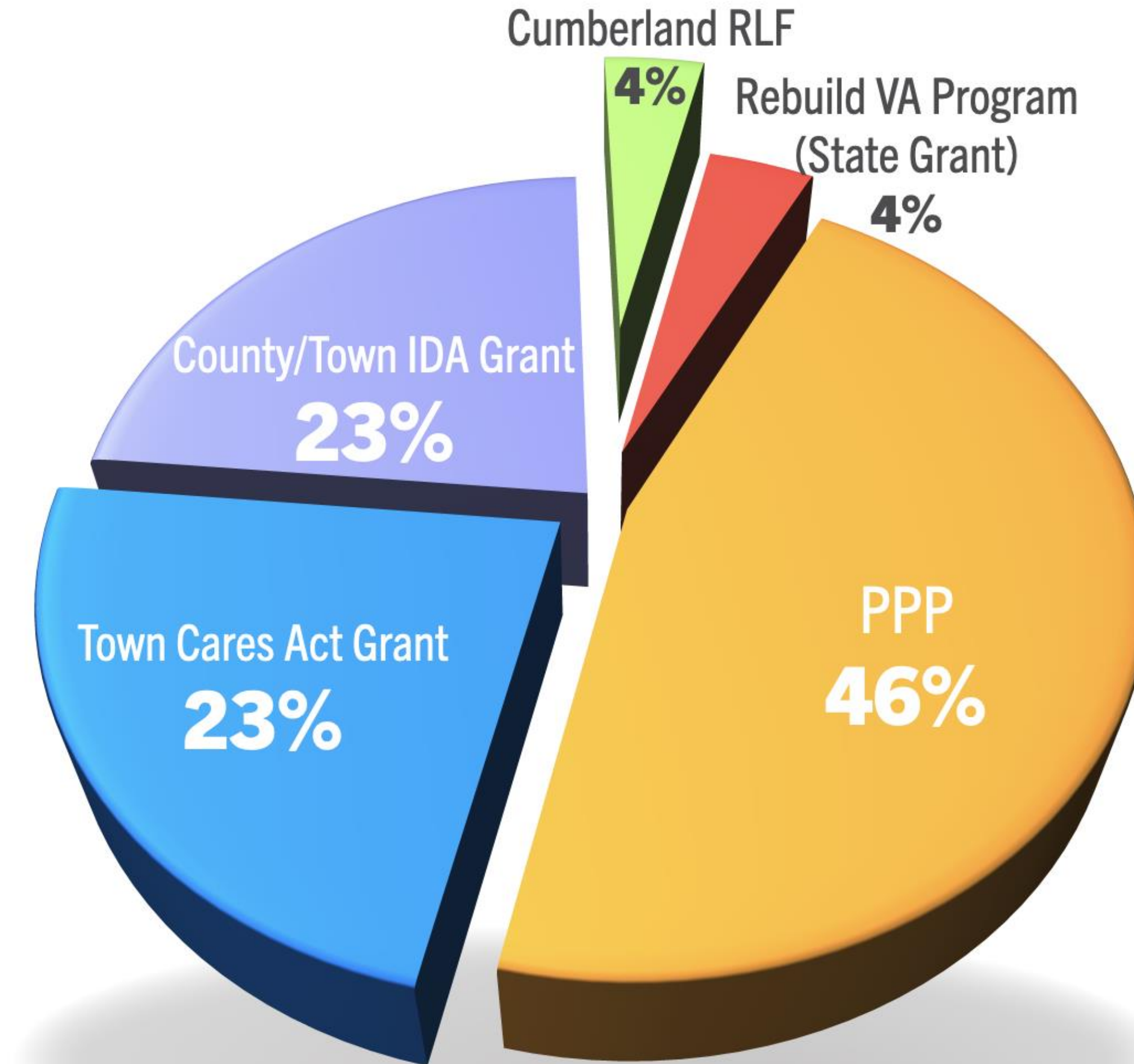
- Promotion for grant programs was done well.
- UVA Wise program helped to develop a website.
- Mask billboards did well.

3.3 Stakeholder Feedback

COVID-19 Assistance

Did you use or receive assistance from pandemic response programs?

Funding efforts were routinely mentioned as a highlight of pandemic response in the area. In a future pandemic event, similar types of funding should be made available to business owners.



3.4 Stakeholder Feedback

More Effective Pandemic Response

What would have made the region's business-related pandemic response efforts more effective?

Better, more accurate, and more streamlined information was the most frequent suggestion in improving area pandemic response. Even in many of the recommendations around costs, additional information is the key with better information on grant program qualifications and costs associated with a pandemic operating environment. The calls for additional community engagement also echo desires for communication and a streamlined flow of information.

Information

- Education component was missing.
- Rules and actual business education around response and guideline.
- Education on the vaccines was lacking.
- More information on actual guidelines as well as information on the reasoning behind those guidelines.
- Banks not informed of grant guidelines.
- Better instructions
- Not much guidance on how to handle COVID guidelines.
- No singular vision for how to handle restrictions and get educated on health needs and safety standards.
- No clear leadership from health department on business specific guidelines.
- Better information
- Difficult to maintain policies for staff and guests due to lack of time, depth of info, lack of clarification.
- Target businesses specifically for information.
- Need better local information source.
- More timely information. Announcements on Friday evenings after close not helpful because you couldn't receive further guidance.

Community Involvement

- More involvement from county and town. Feels like business owners are on their own.
- Coordination between States (border communities).
- Need better regional connection to SBDC.
- Needed better pandemic exit strategy.

Cost

- Would've liked more county support for grants through pandemic and into the future. Matching through VCEDA.
- State grant assistance and PPP wasn't sufficient for small business needs
- Funding a vocational skills program would have been essential to post pandemic recovery.
- Difficulty to get money through larger funds due to restrictions around qualifications.
- Resources got a bit swamped, and grant systems got overwhelmed.
- Costs went up due to reinvestment in businesses and that wasn't covered by grant funding.
- Had to make an investment to meet COVID standards without sufficient funding support for those needs.
- Filled out numerous grants but got bumped back due to grant qualifications. Feels like a waste of time.
- Help with upfront costs to new business to meet pandemic needs.
- People had no information that grant money was being made available.
- Needed funding faster.

Miscellaneous

- Better promotion and active engagement with marketing materials especially when put online.
- Instead of pouring money into individual payments, preferred to see the community colleges funded and staffed with educational programs that can provide skilled workers to the manufacturing industry.
- PPE availability.
- More testing needed.

3.5.1 Stakeholder Feedback

Government and Non-Profit Responses

What was done well?

Governmental and non-profit organizations expressed better satisfaction with regional communication. This makes them a possible resource to businesses who felt communication was less accessible than they'd hoped.

Communication

- Rally calls gathered info and group camaraderie, communication between organizations increased.
- Calls together plus individual outreach.
- Keeping people updated.
- VTC did industry meetings, monthly calls were helpful.
- Partnered with UVA WISE, gather regularly to provide a resource for those at high level in the industry within gov and non-profit orgs.
- Marketing efforts, pushing people towards time saving tech.
- Rally calls were useful for keeping people calm.
- Communication and togetherness. We were supported from multiple sources.

Funding

- Funding grants
- We were awash in funding to help businesses.

Overall Effort

- Comprehensive response.
- No complaints
- Good job overall
- In general, went well.
- I think it was handled well.

Miscellaneous

- Scarecrow campaign.
- Followed recommendations from State.
- To some extent , quick reaction from business owners.

3.5.2 Stakeholder Feedback

Government and Non-Profit Responses

What would have made the region's business-related pandemic response efforts more effective?

Requests for additional clarity from this stakeholder group mostly reveal a desire for a stronger, more centralized regional structure around pandemic response. This group correctly identified the need the business group had for a centralized information source. Additionally, the "Reaction" section further emphasizes the need for a coordinated, regional effort to addressing the appropriate application and timing of pandemic responses.

Clarity

- Lack of clarification and diverse interpretation of information available, clearer direction was needed.
- Lots of confusion around qualifications.
- Needed clear process.
- Could have been a central information source since each county also had its own grants so confusion around criteria.
- Early confusion over what would be helpful, try to create a universal application to be able to update each year, have those numbers available, would allow them to know when anything happens what they might be able to do and how they could apply.
- Orders came quickly which caused business panic, business adjustments and learning, right way kept changing, trying to stay up to date, and find unified approach.
- Lack of steady information, info changed constantly with lots of uncertainty of federal and state info.
- More straightforward application.

Nothing

- I think it was handled well.
- Nothing.
- I think business response was about right. It was as effective as could be expected.

Reaction

- Had over reaction and then under reaction.
- The "shut down" imposed by the State should have been imposed on a regional basis. Our economy was prematurely "shut down" when the virus was not present or at least not prevalent here.
- Then when the virus came in the fall residents were fatigued with the limitations. This led to less public cooperation at the critical juncture in October and November.
- Ironically, the "shut down" made the problem worse here and prolonged it.
- Response delayed due to cases in area delayed.

Miscellaneous

- More community outreach for info in rural areas.
- No town representatives to give info for what they can be doing to help the public.
- Federal grants need to be prepared in advance.
- Banks were having a hard to knowing how to loan and distribute funds; PPP loans were hardest

3.6 Stakeholder Feedback

Business Responses

What sources did you use to gain information about pandemic response, guidelines, and recovery resources?

Businesses received and sought out pandemic response information through a variety of sources. A need appears to guide businesses towards regionally specific and consistently reliable sources of information. Distilling national level restrictions from the CDC may not align with the state level response plan. These discrepancies combined with unofficial sources such as social media and person-to-person communication can lead to businesses picking and choosing strictures to implement.

Government & Nonprofit

- CDC website.
- SBA website
- County did active outreach.
- County website
- SBDC
- Workforce Development Board
- Used small business assistance center at the college.
- County officials
- Heart of Appalachian pushed out recovery information and grant funding
- State briefings
- CDC
- Workforce board
- Workforce development board
- Press releases from governor's office
- DCR had updated and recently refreshed documents.
- Received information from the county with emails.
- IDA let owners know about grant program.
- Governor's press conferences.
- Local health department on local guidelines and differences.
- Health department for information.
- Straight from health department.
- Health department guidance. Although sometimes document would be issued and then changes.
- Health department provided information, but also acted as enforcement.

Person-to-Person

- Person to person.
- Word of mouth
- Word of mouth
- Lots of word of mouth.

Online

- Online news sources.
- Internet
- Internet
- Internet
- Internet
- Emails
- Facebook
- Found out about grants through Facebook.
- Facebook

Professionals & Organizations

- CPA did application for PPP.
- Information on loans from local banks.
- Accountant
- Chamber
- Chamber emails.
- SVAM - Southwest Virginia Association of Manufactures

News

- News
- National news but messages were very mixed.
- News
- General news sources.
- Newspaper

Miscellaneous

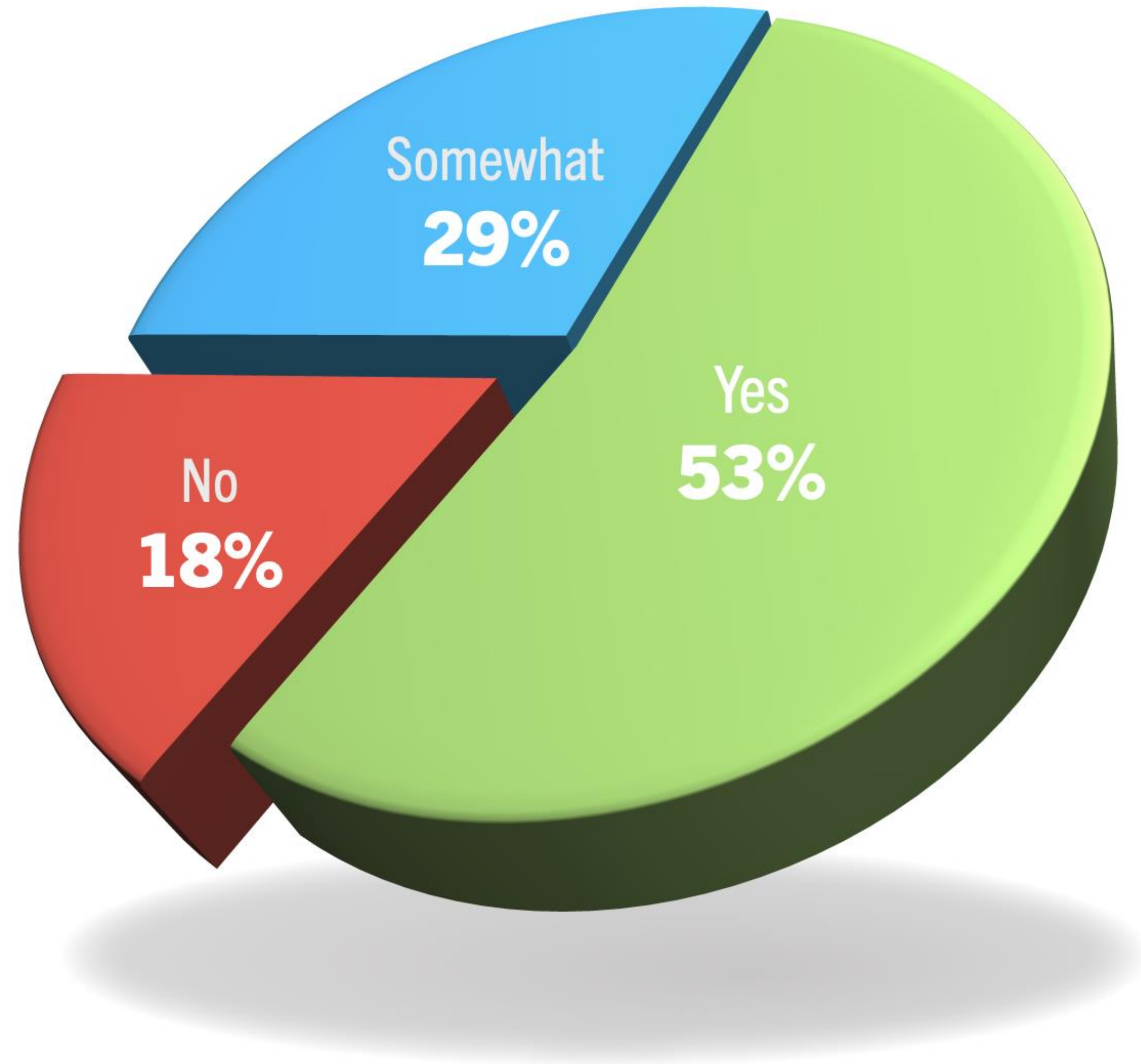
- Made a lot of outgoing calls to prepare and ensure within compliance.
- Dual state situation required multi-state coordination. KY and VA response differences.
- Consultant stayed up on information and pushed that out.
- No common leadership sources of information.
- Corporate HQ.

3.7 Stakeholder Feedback

Information Sources

And did you feel adequately informed by those sources?

Just under 50% of stakeholders did not feel adequately informed by the multiple sources of information they used to craft their pandemic response.



3.8 Stakeholder Feedback

Government and Non-Profit Responses

What sources did you use to gain information about pandemic response, guidelines, and recovery resources?

Government and non-profit entities were more likely to get their information from official sources. All levels of government were consulted which ensures appropriate understanding of differences and similarities in regulation. Fewer types of sources were consulted overall meaning fewer chances to absorb incorrect or unverifiable information.

State Government

- VEDP
- Virginia health webpage
- SBDC
- State Gov
- State Government
- State government
- State
- Department of Treasury
- VDH
- Virginia Department of Health
- Governor's calls were not useful for tourism and funding.
- Governor calls were useful for guidelines
- Gov. Northam's office
- State website
- VDH
- CICV (Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia)

Local Government

- County
- County Administration
- County emergency management
- County administrator
- Local gov't website
- Health Departments
- Health department
- Local Health Department

Federal Government

- Federal website
- CDC
- CDC
- CDC
- CDC
- Federal Government
- Federal Government

Social Media

- Social media
- Facebook
- Social media
- Industry tourism group on Facebook

Miscellaneous

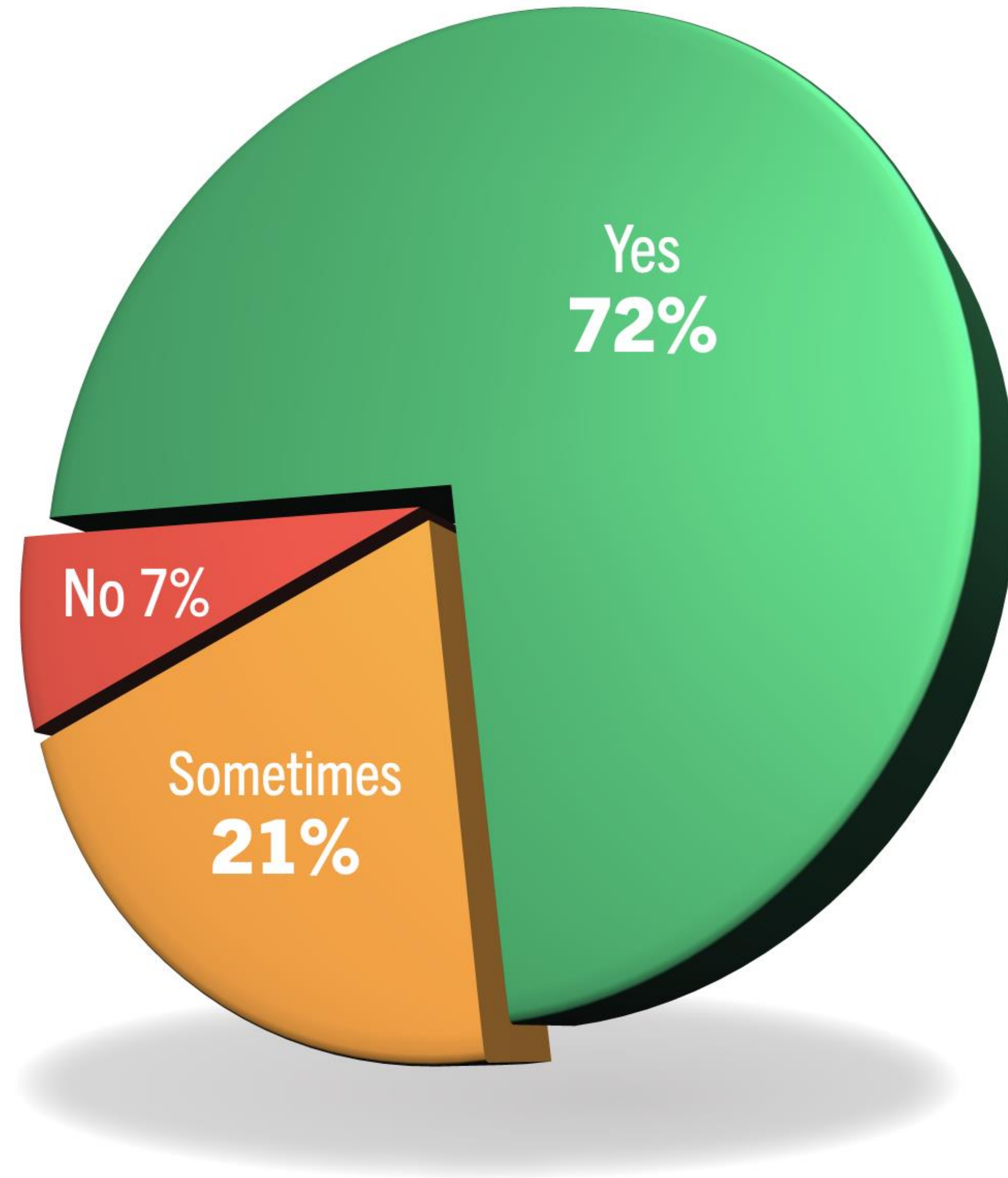
- Downtown happy hours.
- RALLY calls
- Internal communications
- Pharmacy school
- Large restaurant chain
- Private organizations

3.9.1 Stakeholder Feedback

Source Satisfaction

And did you feel adequately informed by those sources?

Governments and non-profits felt better informed by fewer, higher quality sources than did their business sector counterparts.

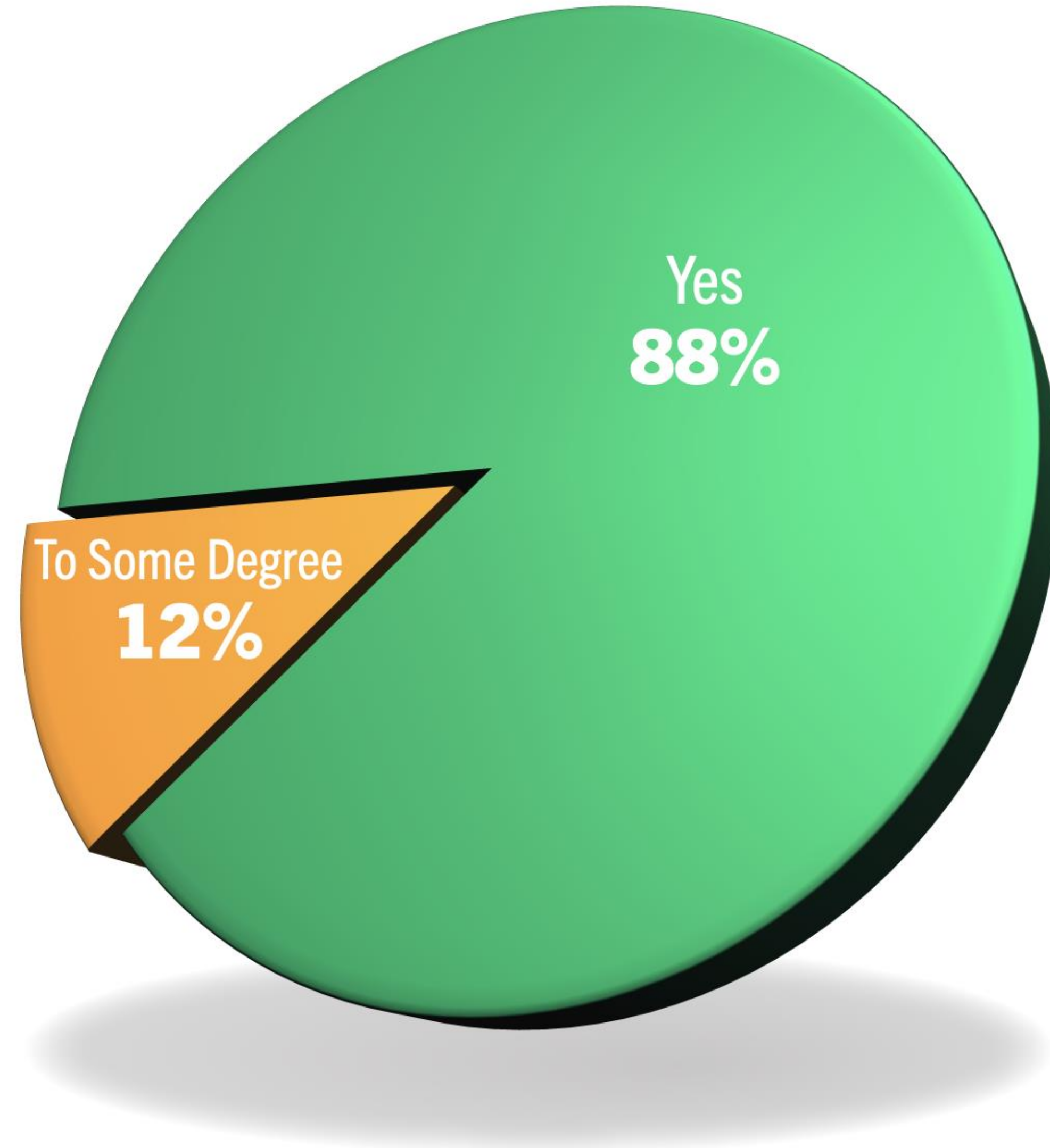


3.9.2 Stakeholder Feedback

Source Satisfaction

Did you feel you played a leadership role in pandemic response in your sector?

All felt they had played at least some kind of leadership role during the pandemic. This was supported by the mentions of assistance in information and distribution of funding and community togetherness by business stakeholders.

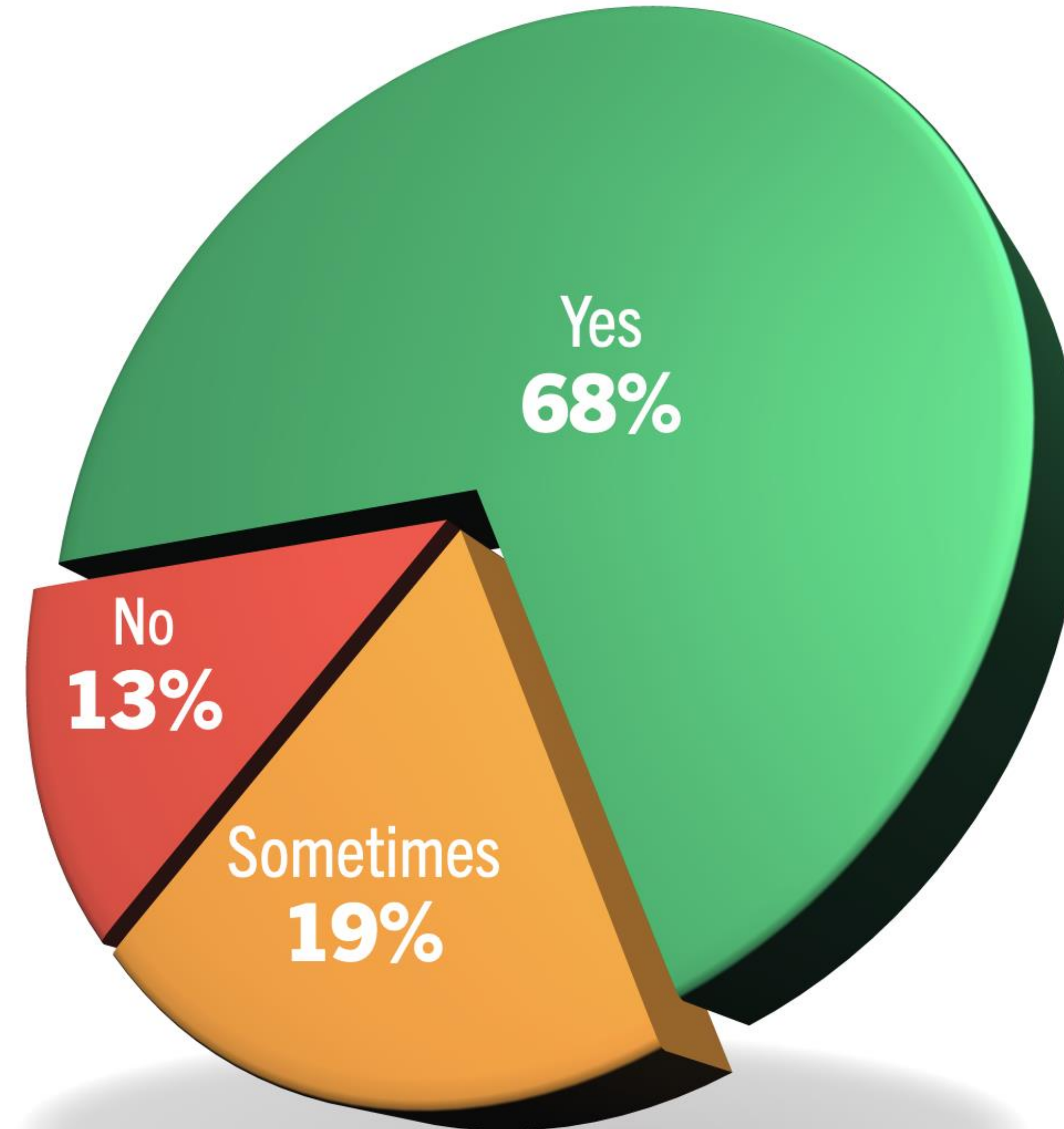


3.10 Stakeholder Feedback

Role Capability

And did you feel capable in that role?

Again, this group expressed a majority feeling capable in a leadership role during the pandemic. This would indicate that this group is ready to take on additional leadership roles especially if they are more officially designated to act in that capacity.



3.11 Recommendations

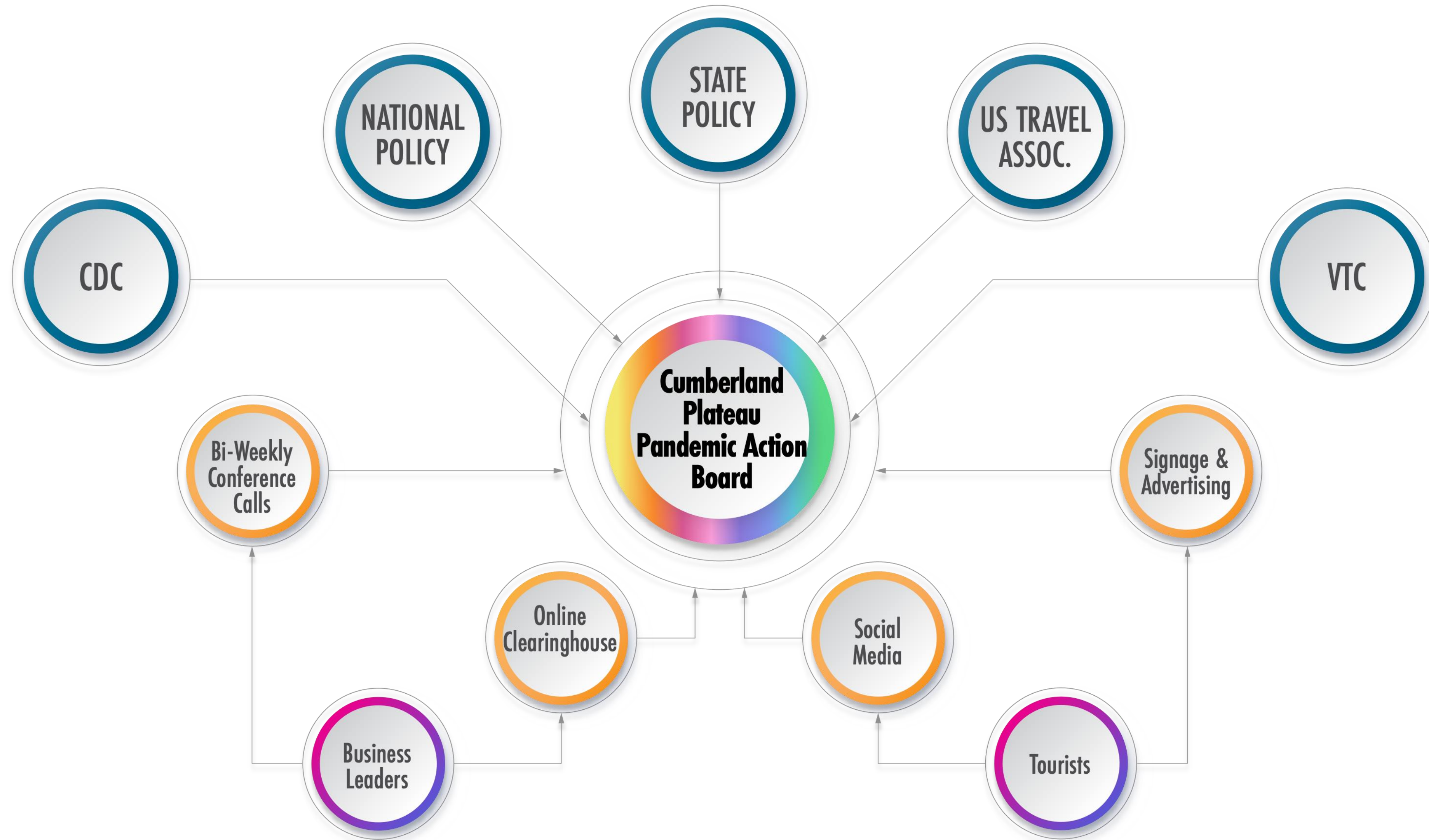
COVID-19 Management and Response

Pandemic scenarios are highly changeable with approaches evolving as more information is discovered, new medical advances are made, and political decision making continues. During the COVID-19 pandemic, different states have taken widely varied approaches within the bounds of national recommendations and regulations to varying degrees of success in controlling spread and continuation of business operations and tourism.

Due to this inherent variability, the most important planning adjustment for the Cumberland Plateau is to create a communications structure that allows information to be passed quickly and effectively. Information should be aggregated from reliable sources by government entities which already have a community presence and then distributed throughout the region.

3.11 Recommendations

COVID-19 Management and Response



3.13 Recommendations

COVID-19 Management and Response

The Pandemic Action Board should consist of the following representative members:

- A tourism administration representative from each county
- Virginia Department of Health
- Restaurants
- Accommodations
- Retail
- Outdoor recreation
- Cultural attractions

These representatives would meet bi-weekly to determine regional strategy. They could assess new information from reputable sources but also check in with industry representatives to determine how policy measures are impacting tourism industry businesses.

4.0 Tourism Asset Proposal



4.1.1 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

What would the event entail?

A 4 day (long weekend) bicycle rally that tours the Cumberland Plateau region with stopover nights in each county that include events such as small festivals celebrating local culture or music festivals highlighting local bands:

- The route would include a night in each of the four Cumberland Plateau region counties.
- Cyclists would ride from county to county and then set up to camp on arrival.
- This event is not intended to be a race, so attractions along the route such as food vendors, natural wonders, and cultural landmarks can be incorporated as stopping points.
- Each host destination would have a nighttime activity to welcome cyclists to the destination. This way, the event takes on the characteristic of being a roving festival as opposed to a bike race or a biking only event.
- Additional, non-cyclist tourists can be incorporated into the fun by allowing them to attend destination events without cycling.
- This event should be ticketed to assist destinations in covering costs associated with hosting and cleanup. Non-cyclist tourists should also be ticketed to attend festival events.
- As a start point, the region should hold this event every 3-4 years to give adequate time for planning, area development, and partnership building.
- In between events, the route with associated agritourism and heritage tourism stops could be made available online and through a brochure to act as a semi-permanent touring route for those visiting the area.

4.1.2 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

Benefits to the region

- Opportunity to highlight natural beauty of the region
- Way to introduce tourists to the region who already have an interest in outdoor recreation
- Chance to highlight areas which are developing as tourism destinations or new assets of the region
- Aligns with region's already developed goals and plans for the region in supporting small, entrepreneurial tourism businesses and creative economies planning.
- Provides ample partnership opportunities to strengthen regional tourism cooperation
- Stopover nights and stops along the route allow highlights of local food and culture
- Makes the region seem inherently more accessible by giving tourists a pre-defined access route
- Supports infrastructure development goals and tourism development goals for the region that are beneficial to tourists and residents

4.2 Stakeholder Feedback

Shift in Tourist Demographics

Have you seen a shift in tourist demographics during the pandemic? (Examples include age, income, location of origin, interests upon arrival, etc.)

This event speaks to the demographics shifts that have been observed at a national level in outdoor recreation as well as at the local level. This event incorporates camping, which has grown in popularity, focuses on the region's natural assets which are a draw for those in more urban environments, and is a more active event speaking to the younger and more outdoorsy demographics currently exploring the area.

Observations

- Usually pulling from neighboring states.
- 50% of business comes from VA and KY
- Pandemic changes not particularly high. Still seeing similar demographics.
- Big boom in camping. Shifted slightly more local during pandemic.
- Ongoing shift away from older, less experienced community toward more outdoorsy and younger demographic.
- Emphasis on natural assets as opposed to the facilities.
- Anecdotal increase in rock climbing.
- Classic destinations are getting crowded, so people are spreading out. Getting away urban and crowding.
- Mostly returning guests from NC and Ohio. Have seen a pandemic uptick from Pike County and Lecher County KY.
- Shift towards farther flung markets. Heavy influx from NY. Major draw was the ATV trails.
- Most travelers outside of the immediate area are coming from outside of the state entirely. Lots of NC, SC, PA, OH
- Not much shift

4.3 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

This event is designed to specifically speak to stakeholder feedback. These elements mentioned in feedback can be enhanced or supported by holding this bike festival.

Government & Nonprofit

- Outdoor industry businesses who put a high value on quality of life.

Expanded Tourism

- Expanded tourism and recreation opportunities for the public.
- Welcoming area with tourism economy.
- Heart of Appalachia itinerary planning including day trips working out from other attractions outside the area.

Tourism and Business:

- More modernization but maintaining community historic beauty.
- Natural beauty preserved.
- Trashcans and dumping out on the side of the road need to go.
- Clean up the community a bit.

Tourism Specific:

- More regional approach to activities with rotation between recreation sources.
- Additional activities in the park area.
- Could use community guide for helping to start new businesses.
- Need additional signage to find trailheads and parking areas for hiking

Accessibility

- Remoteness, difficulty of travel to the area. People expect short drive to everything.
- Lots to do in area but need willingness to drive.
- Some people aren't willing to make the drive to get to these places.
- Roads, and the difficulty of getting to the site.

Strong Tourism Economy

- More tourism friendly- pushing out into the community with signage and communication from major tourism draws which already exist.
- See outdoor activities become the center piece of the community's tourism efforts.
- Opportunities for local people to become entrepreneurs in outdoor industry.
- Additional emphasis on the tourism market.
- Bike shops.
- More services to capture people once their already here.
- More inter-county cooperation in tourism
- Trail expansion
- A destination for trails and camping.

4.4.1 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

Host stopover locations will need:

- ▶ **Large area for tent camping**
 - At least a portion should be available year-round for trail continuation
- ▶ **Restaurants or ability to get food trucks or stands Sells packaged goods for travel**
 - Participating vendors should offer at least one locally distinctive dish for the event
- ▶ **Outdoor venue space for nighttime activity**
 - This could be the same area as the one used for camping if enough space exists
 - This space should be incorporated into the closest main street area
- ▶ **Road accessibility suitable for bikes**
 - This can be provided at either a restaurant location or at a grocery store
 - A local alcohol offering should be available along with nationally recognized brands
- ▶ **Space for those not biking**
 - Additional space should be incorporated for participation in stopover events and camping
- ▶ **A key asset the location hopes to showcase**
 - A key asset the location hopes to showcase

4.4.2 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

Pandemic Resiliency

- ▶ Event is held entirely outdoors
- ▶ Outdoor recreation is seen as highly desirable in a pandemic environment
- ▶ It can be easily accessed from key source markets by car which contributes to pandemic resiliency.
- ▶ Can provide a communal environment while still adhering to distancing guidelines
- ▶ Participation can remain affordable with participants able to choose level of involvement and length of stay
- ▶ Meets pandemic use preferences of new outdoor recreation participants with opportunities for time in nature, a relaxed pace, and food tourism integration which appeals to the younger demographics getting involved.

4.4.3 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

Needed Infrastructure

- Roads must be suitable for packs of bikes to travel along
- Medical services available to cyclists
- Trash collection services at campsites and along routes
- Toilet facilities along route
- Wayfinding signage
- Possible partial road closures or reroutes for biker safety
- Pre-rally beautification and route cleanup

- Road maintenance, wayfinding signage, and pre-route beautification can all be leveraged for year-round viability. These were all stakeholder identified needs during surveying.
- These points can be used to encourage destinations to maintain a “tourist ready” status where the area is clean, well signposted, and roads are well maintained for best access. These community beautification and infrastructure initiatives were identified by business, tourism specific, and government and non-profit stakeholders.

4.5 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

Partnership Potential

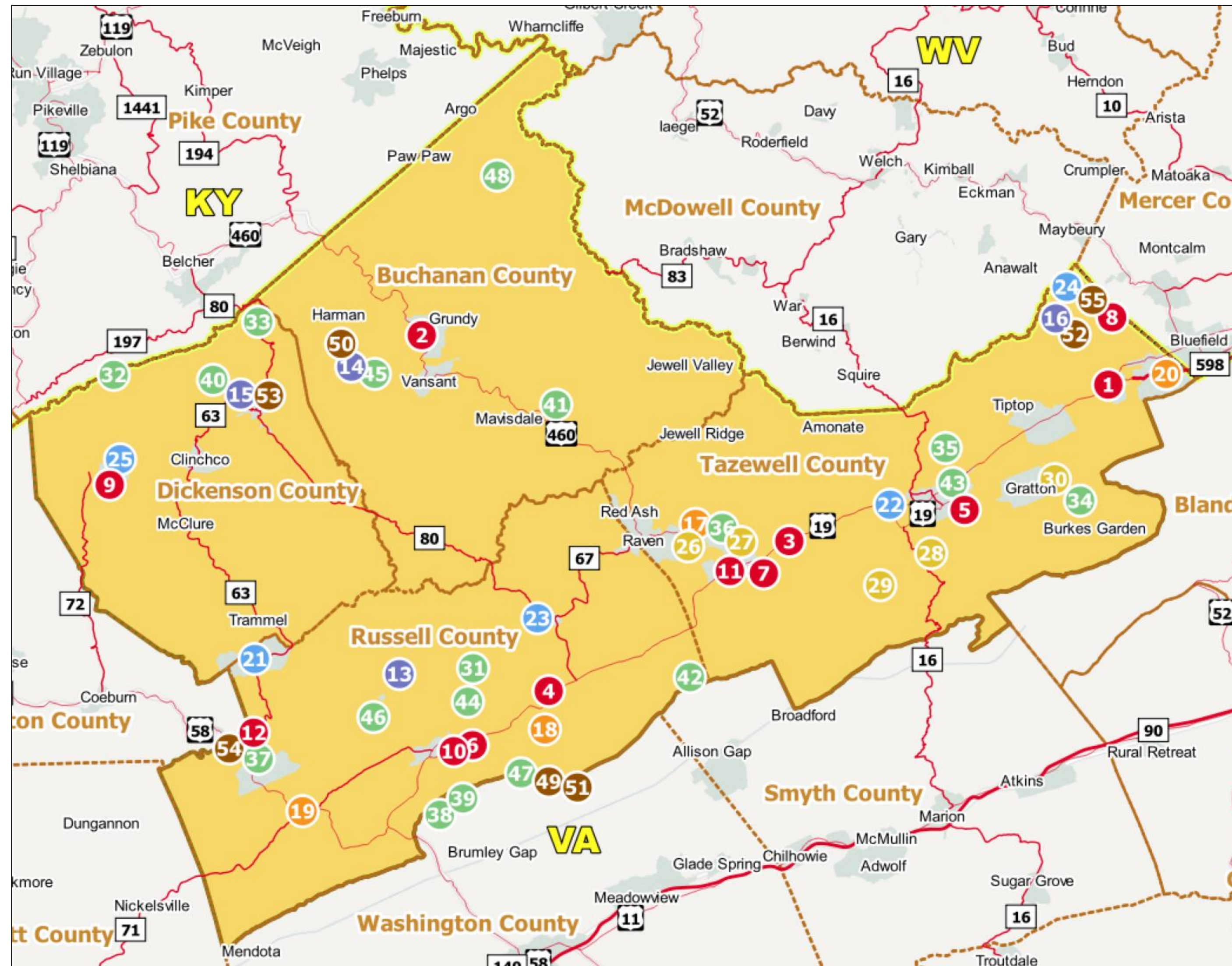
▶ **The rally could directly engage the following partners:**

- The Crooked Road to host local music events at stopovers
- Local small businesses for prizes or booths
- Local food producers and food trucks and restaurants to have food available at stopovers
- As this is not a bike race, there are opportunities for agritourism stops along the main route
- Local volunteers and non-profit organizations should be worked with to sponsor nighttime events, coordinate set up, and assist with cleanup
- Regional partnership between tourism boards and highlighted areas
- Larger manufacturing and industrial businesses for event sponsorship opportunities

- ▶ All of these partnerships necessitate the type of regional cooperation and small business support that stakeholders included in their long term vision of the area. The festival could serve as an industry anchor and introduce tourists to the communities and associated businesses there that are ready to welcome tourists and grow tourist presence. This list is not exhaustive but can be used as a start point for seeking event partners

4.6 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels



- The bike route should run through all four counties in the CPPDC region
- The route can be redone every 4 years when the race is run to highlight new tourism development and bring attention to target areas for tourism development
- Ideally each leg should run 30-50mi to remain accessible to mid-level bikers
- This asset map can be used as a start point for currently developed route options.

- Accommodation
- Campgrounds
- Historical Site
- Museum
- Other
- Park
- Trail

4.7 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

Time of Year and a Note on Seasonality

- This event could be used to extend regional seasonality. As the area seeks to establish itself better as a tourism destination, having a season opening event or season closing event can extend the time period in which the region is presented to tourists as open and viable for outdoor recreation.
- Other cycling events of larger scale start as early as April and are largely concluded by mid-November.
- As this would be an entirely outdoor event, caution must be taken as to selecting a time where the weather is likely to be good. Good weather in this case should be defined as unlikely to cause hazardous conditions. This would include road conditions as well as health factors like risk of heat stroke.
- If the route is posted online and published as a brochure which highlights attractions along the way and the route itself as an informal bike touring trail for the region, this provides year-round use options for individual travelers

4.8.1 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

Predicted Economic Impact

- The average cyclist to the Shenandoah Valley was found to generate \$155 per person per day in direct spending.
- Assuming a fairly conservative participation number of 200 cyclists this festival would generate \$124,000 in direct spending before ticket price.
- A recommended ticket price for this event would be \$250 per cyclist generating an additional \$50,000 in spending.
- Using the Shenandoah Valley's modeling, another \$52,200 would be likely in indirect impact and \$43,500 in induced impact

SPENDING TYPE	ESTIMATED DOLLAR AMOUNT
Direct Spending	\$124,000
Ticket Revenue	\$50,000
Indirect Impact	\$52,200
Induced Impact	\$43,500
Total Predict Impact from Cyclists	\$269,700

4.8.2 Cumberland Plateau Bike Rally

A Festival on Two Wheels

Predicted Economic Impact

- ▶ Additional spending associated with this event would be likely considering the increased spend of:
 - The nighttime events and festivals
 - Non-cyclist, festival-only participants
- ▶ The economic reach of this event is likely to extend beyond the festival itself by prompting return visits to the area for outdoor recreation.
- ▶ The structure of this festival with overnight stays in the region assured also eliminates most traditional sources of tourism leakage.
- ▶ The event would also have additional economic impacts by establishing the Cumberland Plateau as a destination in Virginia for cycling. The Shenandoah Valley found a total annual impact from cycling tourism to be \$13.6 million. By hosting this event, the Cumberland Plateau would position itself to see these higher annual economic impact numbers from cycling tourism.

4.9.1 Additional Ideas

EDA Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Funding

To be developed as part of Tourism Master Plan

- ▶ Water access for fishing and kayaking could grow to become a key asset for the area.
- ▶ Additional water access is needed throughout the county to accommodate activity usage without threatening native species.
- ▶ EDA grant funding in conjunction with the American Rescue Plan could be used to create a water trails system.
- ▶ This trail network should be connected where possible to allow for multi-day water trips. However, the trail system can also just be a regionally organized series of trails.
- ▶ Continued access should be actively planned for including ownership planning for boat launches, access ramps, and fishing platforms or piers.

4.9.2 Additional Ideas

EDA Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Funding

Idea for future mine closure

- ▶ If there is a mine or quarry closure which leaves an open pit style area, it could potentially be developed into a mining play park.
- ▶ This could follow a similar model to Diggerland USA, but with a regionally specific mining theme allowing young people to use heavy machinery and mining equipment under appropriate supervision.
- ▶ Similar mining adventure tours have been implemented in Australia in the Central Deborah Mine to great success with active drilling demonstrations and surface tours where people enjoy the experience of getting to look into a pit mine.
- ▶ These types of developments provide job opportunities for displaced workers who have experience with heavy machinery.



Image: diggerlandusa.org

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