

PRIORITY RATING OF THE CHALLENGES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT FORT SMITH BREAKFAST MEETING

Priority Points	Challenges to this Region's Development	Under our Control?
3.5	Insufficient state funding for airports and surface transportation. The area is not very ethnically diverse & less attractive to some.	S
7.8	State funding for higher education is not keeping pace with enrollment growth Arkansas is a flyover state.	S
9.1	We lose our college graduates and the best of the younger generation to other areas	S
7.4	Businesses face too much uncertainty as they wait for federal government decisions on cap and trade, health care reform, etc.	L
0.9	Environmental restrictions resulting from EPA policies or law suits filed by other states.	N
6.1	It is hard to recruit and retain skilled workers (i.e., those without four-year degrees but with skills in technology, advanced manufacturing, etc.)	S
2.6	The declines in the rural and small community health care system. Amendment 82.	S
	The small and/or declining population.	
5.2	Insufficient high-tech infrastructure, e.g., broadband.	S
1.7	The state's inability to compete with our neighboring states.	S
3.5	The effect of term limits by which we will lose experienced legislators to represent us in the capitol.	S
6.5	We lack the quality of life amenities to attract workers and employers.	H
8.7	Communities do not have a tax with revenue dedicated to economic development.	S
7.4	Our schools are not sufficiently preparing graduates for college or for jobs.	S
0.4	The crime rate and concerns about public safety.	S
0.4	Racial tensions and divisions within our communities.	S
0.9	Insufficient public transportation.	S
7.8	We are not good enough at working together regionally; we get hung up on boundaries; our plans and efforts are not coordinated.	H
2.2	Our per capita tax burden is too great.	S
3.5	We need new leadership; leaders with vision and willingness to work to the greater good; and the next generation of leaders.	S
2.2	Drugs—workers are unable to pass drug tests; they undermine our families and communities.	S
2.2	Site selectors have preconceived notions that work to our disadvantage.	L
3.9	Too much of our available labor pool lacks skills and a work ethic.	S
3.0	Arkansas's usury law.	S
2.2	Card check or employee free choice.	S
0.4	Other: Plan careers and technical education at a state level.	
0.4	Other: Recruit doctors and nurses—medical community.	
0.4	Other: Revitalize downtown and the riverfront.	

The discussion groups allocated a total of ten (10) priority points across the twenty plus challenges. In this table, the priority assessment has been converted to a 100 point scale. The discussion groups then assessed the highest priority challenges on the extent to which we can “control” them locally, regionally, and/or at the state level, with H for high control, S for some, L for low control, and N for no control. This table reports an average assessment of the degree of control.

At this meeting, participants added three additional challenges, which appear at the bottom of the table. No assessment of the extent to which we have control over these challenges was reported.