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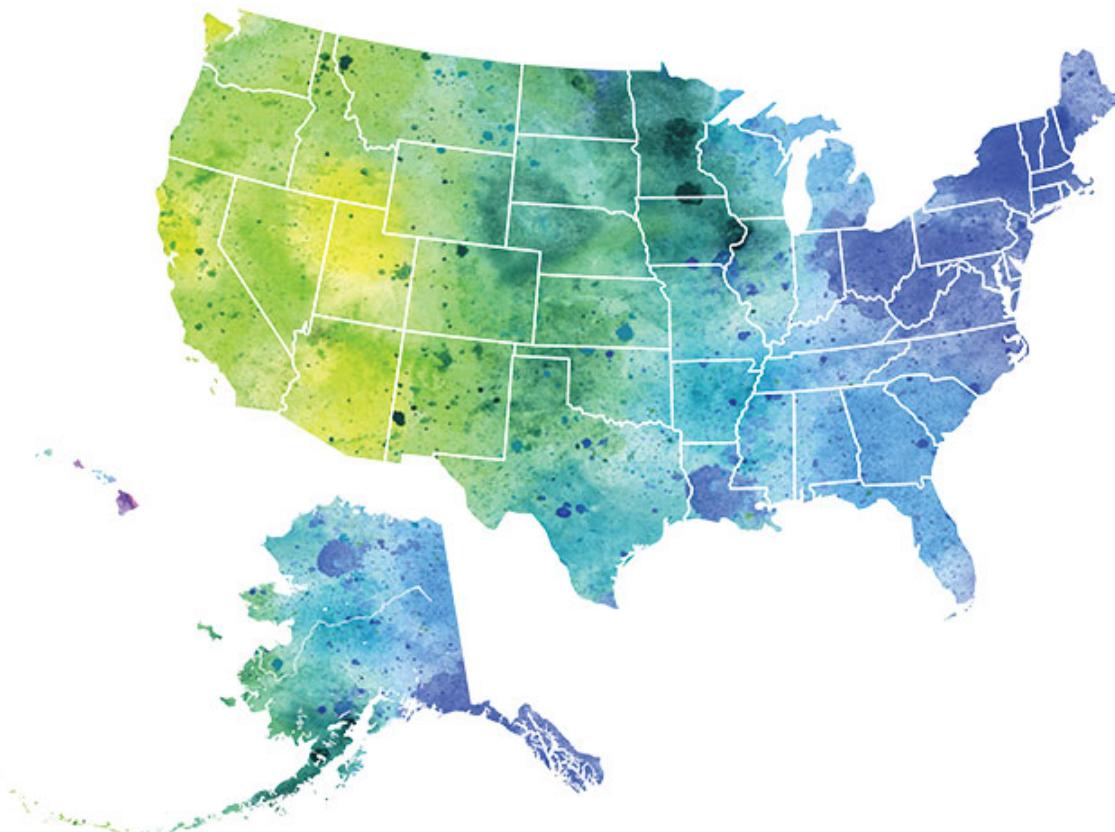
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# The 2022 Regional Workforce Development Rankings



by MARK AREND

Students on the brink of graduating from their community college, university or vocational technology school don't necessarily know whether their state ranks well in workforce development relative to other states. Military personnel ending a tour of duty at a base and transitioning to the private sector are likely in the same situation. Students usually pick the best higher education situation for the degree or certificate program they're after. Soldiers, sailors and other servicemembers were stationed where they were stationed. On graduation or exit from service, they then can evaluate locations where their career aspirations will best be met.

This labor pool may one day find these regional rankings of state workforce development climates of interest. They don't say where the most jobs or the best jobs are. They don't rank state workforce programs or labor boards or systems that link job seekers with job openings. But they can suggest which states have the workforce apparatus most likely to be of use to those seeking jobs and to those on the recruitment side of the table.

The rankings are based on an index of objective criteria that apply to all 50 states. The criteria are: (1) CNBC's America's Top States for Business 2021 Workforce and Education sub-ranking; (2) U.S. News' 2021 Best States for Education rankings; (3) ACT National Career Readiness Certificates for 2021; (4) the Workforce Preparation and Development component of the Council for Community and Economic Research's State Economic Development Program Expenditures Database; and (5) whether or not the charge of the state workforce board or council that connects education to workforce development goes beyond the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, according to the Education and Workforce Development Connections 2021 report from the Education Commission of the United States.

	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Northeast</b>		
New York	1	5
New Jersey	2	8
Connecticut	3	4
Vermont	4	3
New Hampshire	5	1
Massachusetts	6	2
Pennsylvania	7	7
Maine	8	9
Rhode Island	9	6
<b>East North Central</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
Indiana	1	2
Illinois	2	5
Ohio	3	3
Michigan	4	4
Wisconsin	5	1
<b>South Atlantic</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
Virginia	1	2
North Carolina	2	1
Florida	3	4
Georgia	4	3
Maryland	5	6
South Carolina	6	5
Delaware	7	7
West Virginia	8	8
<b>South Central</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
Alabama	1	6
Arkansas	2	7
Louisiana	3	8
Texas	4	2
Tennessee	5	1
Mississippi	6	5
Oklahoma	7	3
Kentucky	8	4

<b>West North Central</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
Iowa	1	2
Kansas	2	7
North Dakota	3	5
Minnesota	4	3
South Dakota	5	4
Missouri	6	6
Nebraska	7	1
<b>Mountain</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
Idaho	1	5
Colorado	2	2
New Mexico	3	8
Nevada	4	3
Utah	5	1
Arizona	6	4
Montana	7	7
Wyoming	8	6
<b>Pacific</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
California	1	3
Washington	2	1
Oregon	3	2
Hawaii	4	5
Alaska	5	4

## Final Score: Rural Counties for the Win



*Drew Repp, Content Manager, Emsi*

McKinsey estimates that by 2020, the world will face a shortage of more than 40 million college workers. It's a shortage that promises to affect and exacerbate every other type of scarcity problem, according to Moscow, Idaho-based Emsi, which specializes in data-driven economic modeling. Without highly skilled workers, innovation that solves global problems, wages that drive economic prosperity, and public investment that funds infrastructure and education, all fall by the wayside.

In November, Emsi released its fourth annual Talent Attraction Scorecard, which shows the large counties (100,000 and above population) and small counties (5,000 to 100,000) that aren't just importing talent. They're making strides with a pre-existing population that's significantly smaller than average. More importantly, they are largely rural counties in the West and the South, and they're punching above their weight in the talent attractiveness arena.

"By leveraging their existing strengths, many communities across the country are spurring talent attraction," explains Drew Repp, Emsi's content manager. "Western cities, small southern counties, and the Sunbelt are all capitalizing on their unique traits, and not chasing something they aren't."

## What Worked Before Works Now

Repp says the Scorecard reinforces what many in the West are feeling: "Cities with outdoor amenities and an attractive lifestyle are luring workers. In the South, small counties are seeing massive capital investments by energy companies, resulting in both construction and new jobs. The Sunbelt continues to take advantage of its post-WWII population growth, now coupling the past migration with skilled jobs. Whether conscious of it or not, these regions are garnering benefits from existing assets."

Examples? Repp says Fort Collins, Colorado, and Kalispell, Montana, are capturing remote workers, potentially as a result of creative class and digital workers fleeing expensive coastal markets. "Respite is found in these local markets largely because of what they've always been: affordable and with accessible outdoors," he relates. "Cameron Parish in Louisiana hasn't shied away from being a transportation and

### Large Counties

Duval County, FL  
Maricopa County, AZ  
Clark County, NV  
Collin County, TX  
Riverside County, CA  
King County, WA  
Fulton County, GA  
Berkeley County, SC  
Wake County, NC  
Denton County, TX

### Small Counties

Cameron County, LA  
Twiggs County, GA  
Burke County, GA  
Johnston County, OK  
Reeves County, TX  
Jackson County, WY  
Moore County, TN

petrochemical center on the Gulf Coast, as seen by existing companies making major investments. The result has been an 88% increase in jobs over the last five years."

Martin County, TX  
Hartley County, TX  
Holmes County, OH

The Talent Attraction Scorecard takes a deeper dive into the trends that can help identify where talent is currently developing, the next potential hot spots and markets that are cooling. "Marshall County, West Virginia, has steadily climbed more than 2,000 spots to No. 40 among counties with fewer than 100,000 people," Repp illustrates. "Meanwhile, Travis County, Texas, home to Austin, ranked No. 1 in 2016 among large counties and has since plummeted while other counties in the Austin metro have been fast climbers."

## Mark Arend

Editor in Chief of Site Selection magazine

Mark Arend has been editor in chief of Site Selection magazine since 2001. Prior to joining the editorial staff in 1997, he worked for 10 years in New York City at Wall Street Computer Review, ABA Banking Journal and Global Investment Technology. Mark graduated from the University of Hartford (Conn.) in 1985 and lives near Atlanta, Georgia.



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