

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Smoothing the Path to a Family-Sustaining Career: Supporting Apprenticeships in Rural America

/ Julianne Dunn

Rural LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) has created regional collaboratives in Arkansas and Mississippi to develop apprenticeship programs that meet the unique needs of rural areas. These programs provide apprenticeships in traditional careers, such as skilled trades and manufacturing, as well as rural-specific occupations such as agricultural pilots.

Challenges

To be successful, apprenticeship programs in rural areas typically need an anchor institution like a local economic development agency or community college. Participants in rural areas face barriers that are both educational (basic skills in math, literacy, and technology) and financial. They often need help with essentials such as rent, child care, elder care, food, travel expenses, tools, uniforms, and equipment — as well as wages during the training experience. Programs also struggle to recruit and retain women, people of color, and those with disabilities.

In fact, the biggest challenge for such programs is adequate funding for the costs beyond the wages of the employees. Many employers are reluctant to cover the costs of intermediaries and related instruction for apprenticeship programs. State and federal support is key.

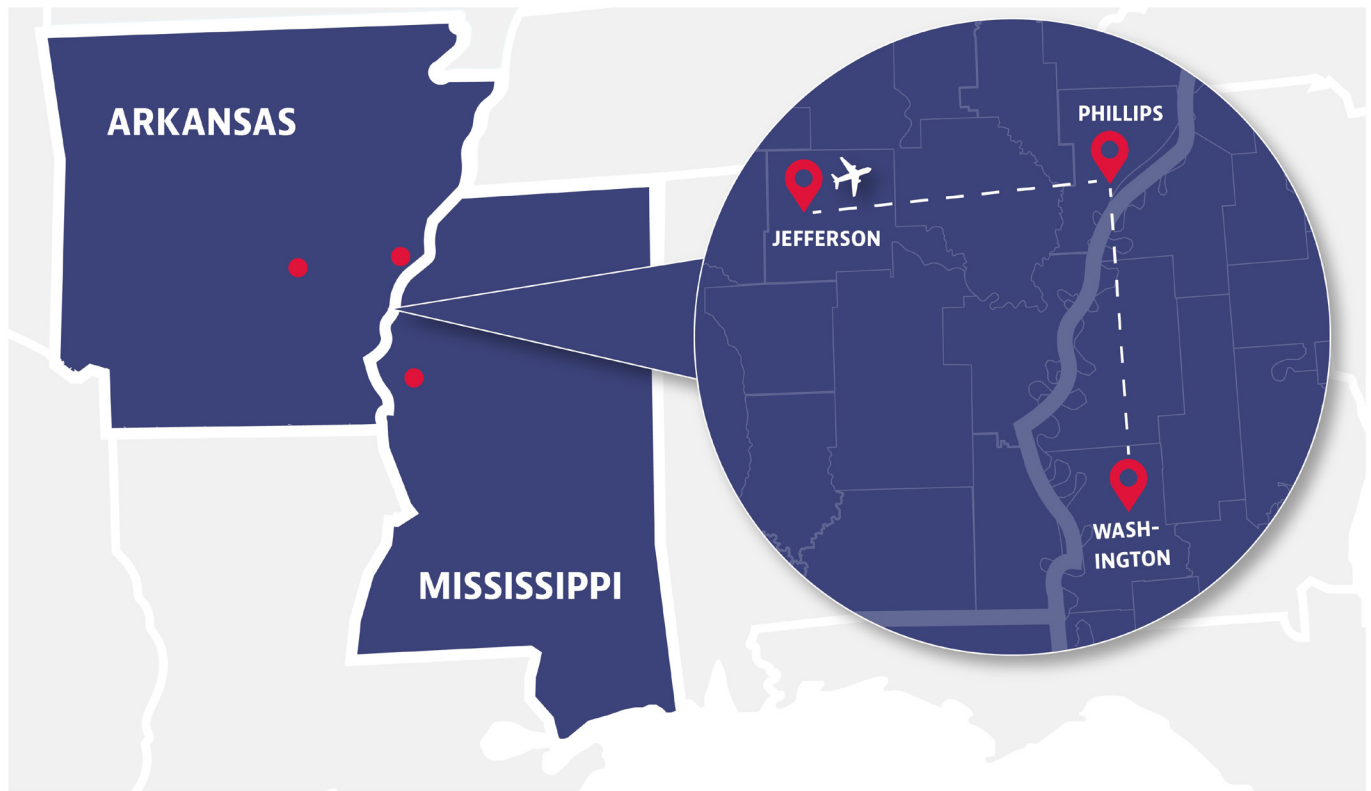
Employer partners are a must, but the education and workforce partners in the community are also important to identify the actual skills already in the local labor force, the training and instructors in place, and the open positions available.

Workforce Realigned, Vol. II

This is a summary of the full chapter included in Workforce Realigned, Volume II available at workforcerealigned.org/chapters/smoothing-the-path-to-a-family-sustaining-career-supporting-apprenticeships-in-rural-america/.



REGIONAL COLLABORATIVES IN ARKANSAS AND MISSISSIPPI



Opportunities

Especially in rural areas, where educational and job opportunities can be limited, apprenticeships provide a vital pathway to stable, well-paying careers.

Rural LISC brought together three regional collaboratives in the Arkansas and Mississippi Delta to develop apprenticeship programs. Each collaborative included stakeholders from industry, the workforce, higher education, and community partners.

The majority of the resulting apprenticeships were in skilled trades and manufacturing. However, one innovative program in Mississippi trained agricultural pilots (such as crop dusters) and fire protection pilots. Every participant in the aviation program was offered a job after completing the training. These jobs came with significant raises: annual earnings ranged from approximately \$100,000 to \$175,000.

Building on their experience, the collaboratives launched an Apprenticeship Toolkit tailored to the rural experience so that other areas could explore starting similar programs.

Next Steps

- Rural LISC is expanding the sectors in which apprenticeships will be offered and revising its toolkit to reflect lessons learned.

