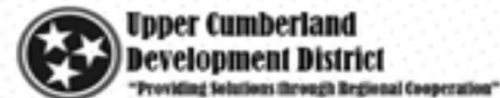


Tennessee Center for Rural Innovation (TCRI)



Tennessee
TECH

Bharat Soni
VP for Research and Economic Development





Economic Development Centers

- Creation and Retention of Jobs
- To Spur Economic Growth & Resiliency
- New Ideas & Creative Approaches

- ❑ 2017 competition focus included:
 - ✓ Innovation & Entrepreneurship
 - ✓ Commercialization & Business Expansion
 - ✓ High-skilled Workforce Development
- ❑ Atlanta Region awarded six new Centers
- ❑ Tennessee has now two Centers:
UTK & TN TECH



TN TECH Research & Economic Development Mission

To foster, promote and inspire **collaborative-interdisciplinary-innovative-creative-entrepreneurial** education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship programs designed to **solve societal and industrial problems** of critical importance to the **economic and community development** of the Upper Cumberland region, the State of Tennessee, the nation and the world.



Why Rural?

- ❑ Tennessee 5th in nation for economic outlook
- ❑ Tennessee climbed two spots to earn the title as one of the most economically competitive states in the country.
- ❑ *Tennessee's credit rating (AAA) is now the highest awarded by all three of the major credit rating agencies.*
- ❑ June 2017 featured the lowest unemployment rate in Tennessee history, with unemployment decreasing in all 95 counties.

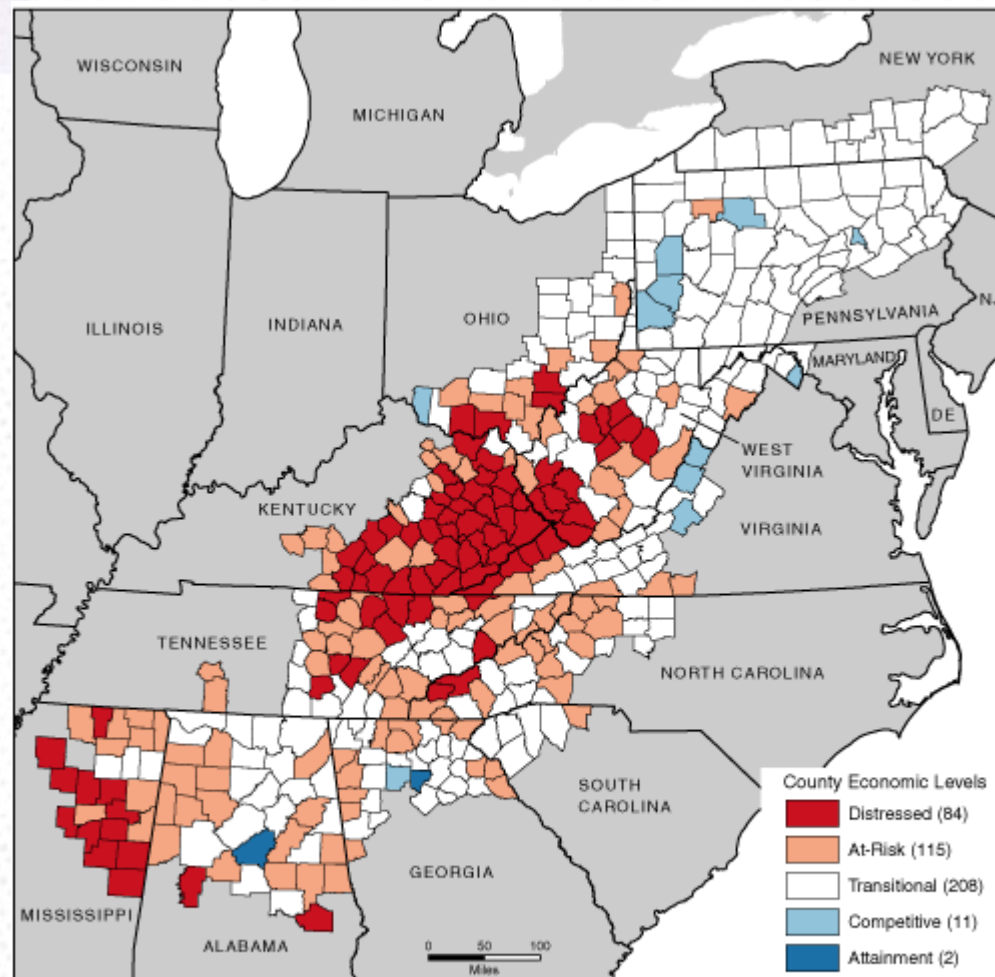
County Economic Status

- Distressed: 19
- At-Risk: 33
- Transitional: 40
- Competitive: 2
- Attainment: 1

Source: <https://www.tn.gov/transparenttn/jobs-economic-development/openecd/tnecd-performance-metrics/openecd-long-term-objectives-quick-stats/distressed-counties.html>



Appalachian Regional Commission County Economic Level



Created by the Appalachian Regional Commission, August 2017
Data Sources:
Unemployment data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2013–2015
Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS, 2015
Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011–2015

Effective October 1, 2017
through September 30, 2018



Governor's Rural Task Force

The Task Force brought together stakeholders from all parts of the state in a grassroots, bottom-up effort to create the recommendations included in this report.

These recommendations will serve as a menu of options for **legislative and budget proposals at the state level and for implementation by individual communities to address their local needs.**



State of TN - ECD

*The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development's mission is to develop strategies which help **make Tennessee the No. 1 location in the Southeast for high quality jobs**. The department seeks to attract new corporate investment in Tennessee and works with Tennessee companies to facilitate expansion and economic growth.*

The following are industries, fields or companies with specific relevance to Tennessee:

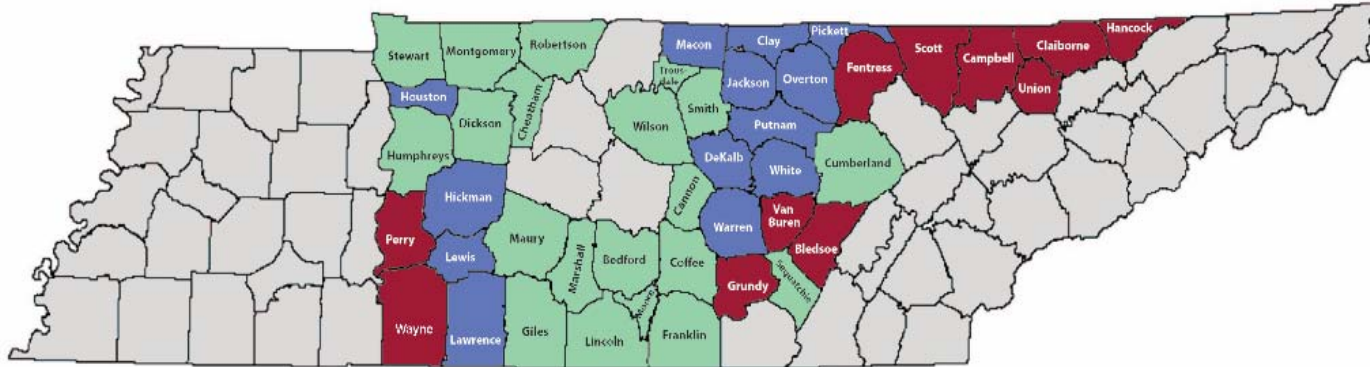
- **Agriculture & Food Production**
- **FEDEX**
- **Music (Silicon Valley of Music, Elvis Presley, Grand Ole Opry & Country Music)**
- **Jack Daniels**
- **Healthcare & Medical Devices**
- **Information Technology**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Energy/Renewable Energy**
- **Education**





TCRi Goals & Activities

Our goal for the TCRi is to create companies and build economic development through manufacturing, health care, information technology, agriculture and tourism sectors to reduce poverty levels and increase prosperity throughout at-risk/distressed rural counties.



High-Skilled Workforce

Cultivating
Innovation &
Entrepreneurship

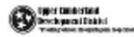
Commercialization
& Business Expansion





Tennessee Center for Rural Innovation

Photo courtesy of the University of Tennessee



Today, Tennessee is ranked first in the nation for advanced industry job growth, first in foreign direct investment, and second in the nation in the growth of household median incomes. Unfortunately, **this unprecedented growth is concentrated in the state's urban areas** located in 17 counties and not shared by the remaining 78 rural counties, leaving many small, rural communities on the losing end of globalization and economic transition.

The U.S. Economic Development Administration-sponsored Tennessee Center for Rural Innovation (TCRI) is created to address this disparity.

The TCRI will spread the message of innovation and entrepreneurship and the tools needed for those rural residents to build their own businesses and explore creative options incorporating:

- a traveling innovation bus (TRuE Bus)
- pop-up innovation and business training modules
- other entrepreneurial support
- high-skilled workforce development
- business expansion
- economic development

High-Skilled Workforce Activities

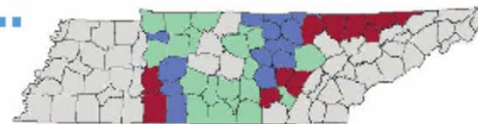
.....
Cultivating
Innovation &
Entrepreneurship
Activities

.....
Commercialization
& Business
Expansion
Activities

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Contact:
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(931) 372-6074)
Michael Aikens
(maikens@tntech.edu)

Our goal for the TCRI is to create companies and build economic development through manufacturing, health care, information technology, agriculture and tourism sectors

to reduce poverty levels and increase prosperity throughout these rural regions.



Counties in red are considered distressed. Those in blue are at-risk, and the green counties represent the others served by the TCRI.

We're not feeding the community, we're teaching them how to fish.



Tennessee Tech is part of the State University and Community College System of Tennessee. REDR130-SEL-18





Guiding Principle

Robust and Vibrant Communities & Economies are built on Vision, Collaboration and Capacity for Innovation

- ❑ Globalization has fundamentally transformed the world's economy.
- ❑ Regions—defined by economic rather than political boundaries—are the new building blocks of prosperity (***Think Globally Act Locally!***).
- ❑ C³: Collaboration, Coordination and Communication using latest IT tools is a key to success.
- ❑ Innovation and entrepreneurship are the new engines of job creation, productivity, growth, economic prosperity and healthy communities & a key to sustainability.
 - *Simply Connecting Dots (You can only connect them looking backward!)*
 - *Creativity is just connecting things ~ Steve Jobs*

TN TECH – A Knowledge Bank for our Region and TN ECD

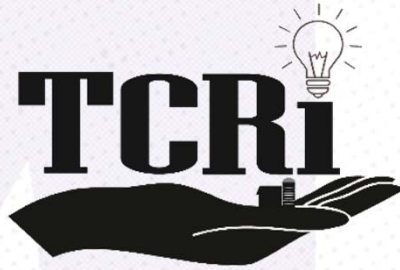




Team & Collaborators

- ❑ Bharat Soni, Michael Aikens (Director of Innovation & Entrepreneurship), Amy Hill, Tom Brewer, Steve Canfield, Curtis Armstrong, Kevin Liska – TN TECH Intellectual capital – Faculty, Students, Centers and Departments
- ❑ Jeff Brown – BizFoundry
- ❑ Mark Farley & UCDD
- ❑ County & City (in our Region) Leadership, Schools & Economic/Business/Industry Stakeholders
- ❑ Leverage:
 - TN ECD – Rural Development
 - USDA
 - TDOT, TDEC, TN Department of Agriculture and other State Agencies
 - LaunchTN
 - ARC

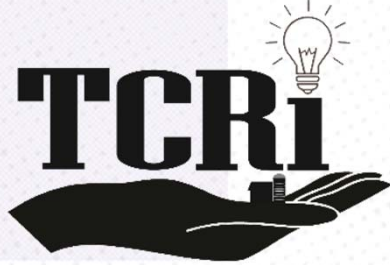




Outreach Programs

- WEB Presence with competitive participation in the TCRI programs (www.techcri.org)
- Annual TCRI Conference
- Significant outreach event and exhibition as well as special sessions at TN Rural Economic Development Conference and Annual Governor's Conference
- Innovation & Entrepreneurship workshops
- Annual TRuE Bus Events in all associated counties (In collaboration with State's ECD Innovation Bus)
- TCRI Quarterly Meetings with all County Mayors and Chamber representatives at Tennessee Tech University
- TCRI visit to counties/chambers

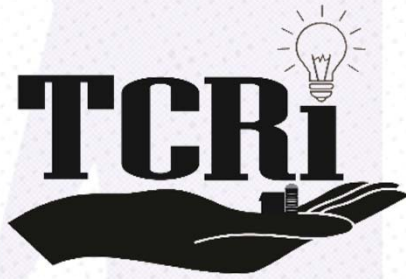




Cultivating Innovation & Entrepreneurship

- ❑ TN TECH's successful I &E Program led by Michael Aikens and faculty (Eagle Works Competition – Shark Tank style) – Four company spinoffs led by student teams in past two years!!!
- ❑ Leverage TN TECH NSF-supported I-Corp program in coordination with BizFoundry to develop Rural I&E Program for community and high-school students:
 - TRuE Bus: Tennessee Rural Entrepreneurship Bus (Collaboration with TN State's Innovation Bus)
 - Pop-Ups: Boot Camp & I & E Training
 - Rural Community Innovation Fellow (RCIF)
 - RI&E Works (Rural Innovation & Entrepreneurship Competition)
- ❑ TECH Support
- ❑ Nature Inspired Tourism & Ag Innovation





High-Skilled Workforce

Leverage & Collaborate with:

- Pathway to Prosperity & TN Reconnect Programs of Highland Regional Economic Partnership
- UCHRA & Middle TN Job Center & Workforce Development
- County & Chamber workforce development initiatives
- TN Rural Taskforce initiatives
- TN TECH Extended Education Program
- TN TECH Intellectual Resources
- Programs
 - K-12 Parental Engagement
 - Soft skill development
 - Leadership training
 - Speakers Program
 - Industry-Specific Training:
 - Manufacturing and Automotive
 - Coding and IT Tools
 - Healthcare
 - Sustainable Agriculture



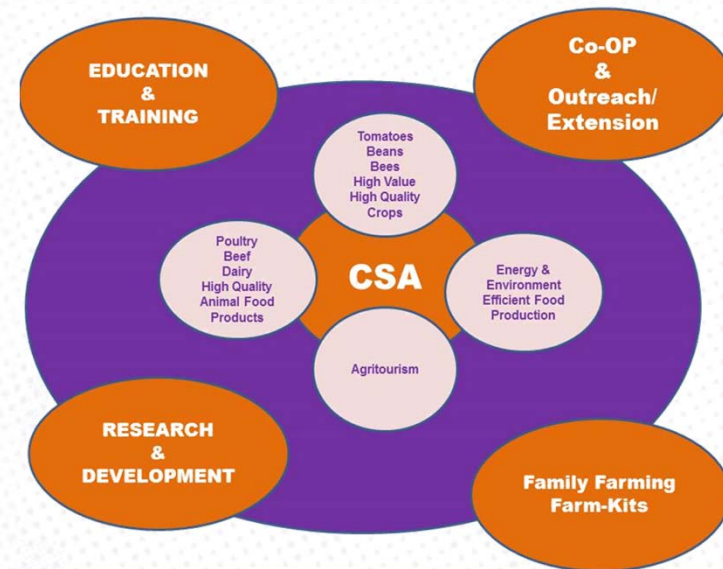


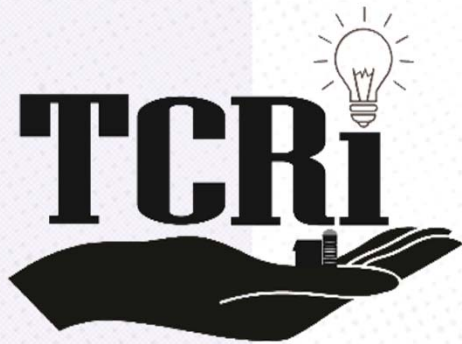
Commercialization and Business Expansion

Through Outreach, understand the need and develop projects in collaboration with counties/chambers leadership, industry and economic agents, USDA, TN Rural Development program, TDEC, Department of Agriculture, TDOT and other state's resources.

Examples (Clay County):

- ❑ Donaldson Park: Recreation with amphitheater, creating tourism and community enrichment
- ❑ High-tunnel farming: In collaboration with TN TECH Sustainable Agriculture Program
- ❑ High school students I&E program in coordination with Appalachian Bioscience and VF Transformer Company
- ❑ Clark Buford Bait Company of Tennessee (Expansion – Fish Production)
- ❑ Collaboration with Appalachian Bioscience and VF Transformer with their expansion





www.techcri.com

**Collaboration is the Key to Success.
&
Innovation is a Key to Sustainability**

Working together, we could inspire rural communities and grow rural economic prosperity through innovative ideas and projects.

Questions ???

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