

Arkansas Delta



The Arkansas Delta Second Generation WIRED region (ADWIRED) is made up of 17 counties on the Eastern border of Arkansas. The region includes more than two million acres of cultivated land, as well as a large concentration of transportation, logistics and communications infrastructure, making it prime for expansion of education, manufacturing, entrepreneurship and technology. The region is challenged by poverty, low wages, low academic achievement and low workforce skills.

The region's close proximity to Memphis – a hub for retail supply-chaining – makes the Arkansas Delta region uniquely positioned for the speedy shipment of goods worldwide. This is an asset to companies providing just-in-time inventory services in industries such as automotive and retail.

To address the region's challenges and leverage its assets, the ADWIRED project will focus on increasing the capacity for research and development (R&D), engineering and workforce and entrepreneurship development in the Arkansas Delta. The project will increase innovation, education and business creation using existing statewide relationships and bringing the state's science and technology organizations into a regional consortium. The region will meet these goals by employing the following strategies:

1. Create the Arkansas Delta Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development Academy.
2. Partner with industry, government, philanthropic organizations and education to:
 - a. Increase biofuel R&D capacity;
 - b. Increase the capacity of Global Positioning System (GPS), Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Radio Frequency Identification Systems (RFID) R&D;
 - c. Create an engine test facility and;
 - d. Create an expansion of the advanced manufacturing support infrastructure.
3. Expand the education infrastructure necessary to support new technologies and foster economic development.
4. Establish an entrepreneurship development system to assist the new high growth, high demand businesses and industries that will result from investment in R&D.
5. Expand the workforce development system infrastructure.



ADWIRED continues to build partnerships and utilize a variety of resources, including a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to create the Arkansas Delta Training & Education Consortium (ADTEC). ADTEC will build capacity in five community colleges, which will provide training in the growing advanced manufacturing and automotive industries.

In addition, the region has won two National Science Foundation (NSF) awards. The first creates the Mid-America Transportation Technology Education Center (MATTEC) to support career pathways and research in the transportation and logistics industries. The second will be used to increase the number of students who choose careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Finally, the workforce system in Arkansas has acquired the Work Keys system which will be used to assess workplace skills and support workforce development in the region (and throughout the state).

Combining these resources and coordinating future opportunities, the ADWIRED region intends to improve the prosperity of the Arkansas Delta and make it a focal point of innovation and commerce to the rest of the country.