

VisionWorks News

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VisionWorks is a program of the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, with VisionWorks partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

The purpose of VisionWorks News is to share insights, resources, and tools that equip community and regional leaders to create breakthroughs, to think and act strategically, and to prosper in the global, knowledge-based economy.

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Will We Be Great Forever?

If you are one of those folks who believe that our nation will be great forever because we are the smartest people on the planet, **hold on to your hat**. Here is your question for the day: What nation fits this description?

- **Richest in the world**
- **Largest military**
- **Center of business and finance**
- **Strongest education system**
- **World center of innovation**
- **Currency the world standard of value**
- **Highest standard of living**

The answer is **England in 1900**. Whoa! What happened to them? That was just a little over 100 years ago. Were they asleep at the wheel? Did they not see it coming?

While there were many factors at work, it is fair to say that **they did not adequately harness the forces of change**. Communities, businesses, regions, states and nations that do not proactively position themselves to ride the waves of change will be left behind, or worse yet, smashed on the rocks. Here are eight major forces that impact our families, communities and nation, **each of which contains opportunities** as well as threats. We may refer to them as

The Eight Horsemen of the 21st Century

1) Broadband connectivity and technology – High speed telecommunications (broadband) are the digital highways of the global economy that enable us to enrich our education, health care, economic development, businesses, local government, tourism and quality of life. If you don't have broadband, you are not at the table in the 21st century economy. If you have it but don't know how to make full use of it, you have one hand tied behind your back.

2) Globalization – Goods, services, capital, knowledge, culture and jobs move around the world like never before, seeking the cheapest labor, the greatest talent and the best value. If we don't learn to market ourselves to the world, we will be overwhelmed by those who do.

3) Innovation – Creating new goods, services, experiences and business models that not only change how things are done, they create new things. Wealth flows to those who innovate, not the last to catch on.

4) Demography – If “demography is destiny,” then our destiny is getting older – much older. Starting in 2010, the impact of the aging boomers will have profound impacts on our work force, our social services and our economy. Have you discovered how your community can benefit?

5) Terrorism and War – The war on terrorism is an example of “asymmetric warfare,” where a dozen guys with box cutters topple the World Trade Center towers, and a teenage suicide bomber can wipe out a city market. It requires us to be smart, to use technology, build partnerships and ultimately win the hearts of those involved.

6) The Rise of Chindia – In just two countries on the other side of the world (China and India), two-and-a-half billion people are hungry and are willing to work for less than we do – often 1/10 as much. We cannot work cheaper than they do; we must work smarter. To be 10 times as productive as they are, smarter requires world class education and training.

7) Increasing Demand for Energy – 2008 is when the world will start using oil at a rate of more than 1,000 barrels per second! According to the International Energy Agency, global oil demand will average 87.8 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2008, which equals 1,016 barrels per second — a sonic boom of energy use. This demand for energy will only grow and greatly stimulate demand for alternative sources.

8) National Debt and Trade Deficit Are Growing – Our federal government debt is expanding by nearly \$1 million a minute, or \$1.4 billion a day. We buy twice as much stuff from the rest of the world than they do from us, and the U.S. trade deficit is nearly \$800 billion a year, or \$2.2 billion a day. These rates have a negative impact on the value of our dollar, will impact our economy and quality of life and are unsustainable over the long term.

Do you hear the sound of the hoof beats of these horsemen? If you believe that we will be able to sustain our standard of living by conducting business as usual, **ask our friends the Brits how they did it**.

The good news is that our nation is very resilient, known for our productivity, our technology and our ability to innovate. **2008 and the rest of this decade stretch out before us like wet cement, just waiting for us to shape it to create a robust economy and high quality of life**

for our children and grandchildren. But we will need to create breakthroughs and not just do more of what we are doing.

What Country Fits This Description – the U.S.

For those of you who answered the above question as the U.S. in 2008, you can make a good case for it, with the U.S. fitting most of those criteria. However, besides the dollar's slipping as the world's reserve currency, consider these facts regarding the "**strongest education system**":

- A 2003 study of 15-year-olds by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), U.S. students ranked 15th out of 29 OECD nations in reading and 24th out of 29 nations in mathematics.
- The U.S. ranks 49th out of 158 nations in literacy. Sixty percent of adults never read books; 6 percent read only one book per year.
- 50 percent of U.S. manufacturers found that their current workers had serious reading, writing and math skill problems. *Source: Edward E. Gordon, The 2010 Meltdown*

Coming Events

January 17, 2008: Arkansas Wind Energy Conference, University of Arkansas Fort Smith, sponsored by the Arkansas Energy Office, AEDC. Contact: Maureen Rose, 501.671.2046, mrose@uaex.edu.

January 25: AgriTourism Workshop and Luncheon, Clarksville. Contact jfoster@uawri.org, 501.727.6219.

January 30-31: 2008 Delta Caucus Conference, Little Rock. Contact Lee Powell, 202.360.6347, Leepowell2@cs.com.

February 1-3: Building Creative Communities Conference, Colquitt, GA. (Home of "Swamp Gravy," Georgia's Folk Life Play). Call 229-758-9633, www.buildingcreativecommunities.com.

February 13: Fourth Annual Regionalism Conference, Peabody Hotel, Little Rock. Sponsored by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, the conference will focus on workforce development and labor shortages. <http://ualr.edu/regionalstewardship>.

March 17-20: The Mid-South Basic Economic Development Course – Meeting the Challenges of the New Economy, UALR, Little Rock. Contact: Ron Swager, rjswager@ualr.edu, 501.569.8519, www.aiea.ualr.edu/econdev/.

April 28-30: Broadband Properties Summit 08, Dallas, TX; go to www.bbpmag.com.

June 1-3: Youth – The Real Future of the South – Southern Growth Policies Board Annual Conference, Peabody Hotel, Little Rock. www.southern.org/conf.shtml.

June 22-25: Community Development Society Annual International Conference, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. For more information, go to www.comm-dev.org.

VisonWorks Breakthrough Solutions Funding Sponsors

Just a note to thank our funding sponsors for their support of the Breakthrough Solutions Conference and Program. We appreciate their investment in the future of Arkansas.

Platinum Program Sponsor – CenturyTel

Gold Program Sponsor – AT&T Arkansas, Arkansas Capital Corporation Group, Arkansas Community Development Society, Arkansas Telecommunications Association, and Regions Bank

Silver Program Sponsor – North Central Arkansas Development Corporation (NCARED)

High-Speed Internet Service Throughout Arkansas

It is easier to say “broadband” than it is to say “high-speed Internet service,” but they mean the same thing. High-speed Internet isn’t just important for students. Future economic development in Arkansas largely depends on making high-speed Internet available to our businesses (current and future), including those that are or would like to be in the most remote areas of the state. This includes businesses that provide health care. “Today, broadband technology is driving innovation in fields like telemedicine, helping to provide quality health care to remote parts of our nation,” said Senator Mark Pryor, D-Ark. He went on to say that broadband “is transforming our work force, increasing productivity and creating new economic opportunities for consumers and businesses alike.” Sen. Pryor made these remarks during a U.S. Senate Commerce Committee field hearing held earlier this year in Little Rock.

Understanding these issues, State Senator John Paul Capps introduced a bill last year aimed at mounting a statewide effort to make broadband accessible to every home and business in Arkansas. That bill met with the support of the Arkansas Legislature, and in March 2007, Governor Beebe signed it into law as Act 604 of 2007.

Because of Act 604, Arkansas now has two organizations created to help bring broadband within reach of every home and organization in Arkansas. The first is Connect Arkansas, a non-profit organization to centrally manage the statewide broadband effort. Connect Arkansas will work with all counties and service providers to provide grass-roots broadband education, map areas of Arkansas counties not served by broadband and establish a vision and plan for each county to make broadband accessible county-wide. Connect Arkansas has already put together its initial plan, talked with a number of state leaders and broadband service providers and is now focused on identifying funding for its statewide mapping effort. More information on Connect Arkansas can be found at www.Connect-Arkansas.com

The second organization resulting from Act 604 is the Arkansas Broadband Advisory Council. This state council will monitor activities in other states and nations to identify successful policies and innovative programs and then make policy recommendations to the governor and legislature to help make broadband available statewide and to help Arkansas citizens and industry make the most of broadband for the benefit of our state. Meetings of the council are open to the public. For more information about the Arkansas Broadband Advisory Council, its meeting schedule, and locations, please visit www.BroadbandAdvisoryCouncil.Arkansas.gov.

Source: James Winningham, Arkansas Broadband Advisory Council

Feb. 13 Regionalism Conference to Focus on Workforce Education, Labor Shortages

“Too many Americans are being prepared for the wrong jobs and not enough are being equipped with the technological and scientific skills needed in the workforce,” states Edward F. Gordon. “This growing labor-market imbalance threatens the future of the U.S. economy.” Author of “The 2010 Meltdown – Solving the Impending Jobs Crisis,” Gordon will be the keynote speaker at the fourth annual UALR Regionalism Conference on Feb. 13, 2008, in Little Rock. Each year UALR hosts a conference exploring regional cooperation on economic

development and other pressing public priorities facing central Arkansas. This year's conference is co-sponsored by the Arkansas Business Publishing Group and KUAR radio. Additional speakers include Jim Clinton, Executive Director of the Southern Growth Policies Board; and Mike Cassidy, President and CEO of the Georgia Research Alliance.

The United States faces a potentially disastrous labor shortage in the years 2010 and following, created by worldwide demographic shift (Baby Boomers retiring, smaller populations following), poor match between worker skills and job demands and developing global economies. This labor shortage can have far-reaching consequences, with breakdowns in technological systems, collapse of pension and health care systems, and erosion of world economies. The conference will engage participants in interactive workshops in the afternoon to discuss strategies for developing, attracting, retaining and nurturing human talent in the state. To register for the conference, go to <http://ualr.edu/regionalstewardship>.

ASBDC Launches New Business Portal for NCARED Region

Timothy Lee, Associate Extension Specialist, UALR Lead Center

The Arkansas Small Business Development Center recently announced the opening of OzarksU.com, a business portal for the North Central Arkansas region. OzarksU.com consolidates news, discussions, learning, events and important resources for businesses and individuals in the Ozarks region. The OzarksU.com business portal is funded under a one-time grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration. The portal provides links to no-cost, online learning resources from Business Week, MIT, and UC Irvine. The Arkansas SBDC is providing free access via OzarksU.com to twenty ASBDC online learning programs through the grant period.

A virtual library provides for the development of ebooks. While starting with over two dozen business ebooks, the portal provides the capability for individuals and groups to create and edit additional ebooks on any topic, including education, health and other areas of regional interest. An interactive events calendar tracks holidays, regional events, networking opportunities and national retail promotion periods. Calendars can be exported in iCal format for use with Google calendars and other calendar software. Partner organizations, such as chambers of commerce, can easily add and edit events for their city or county.

A news aggregator monitors syndicated news feeds from dozens of expert sources. News sources range from official sources such as the SBA and ASBDC to marketing professionals and lawyers. Discussion forums provide a place for businesses and individuals to ask questions on accounting, marketing, and retailing. Additional forums provide for discussions of regional issues related to education, employment, health care and housing. Partners involved in creating the portal included the North Central Arkansas Regional Economic Development (NCARED) and the U of A Cooperative Extension Service. Individuals may register for free access to OzarksU.com at: <http://ozarksu.com/user/register>.

Examples of Strategic Actions/Breakthrough Solutions

Harnessing Broadband to Create Jobs in Small Town America

Los Angeles-based Northrop picked Corsicana and six other small cities, including Lebanon, Va., and Helena, Mont., as locations for employees who develop software and troubleshoot

technical problems for clients hundreds or thousands of miles away. Fort Wayne Journal Gazette; Nov. 11. Go to [Small-town America: The new Bangalore? Northrop Grumman in Helena, Montana](#)

U.S. Still Lags in Broadband Adoption, but Subscriptions Up 21%

A new report from the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) states that 72 percent of Americans now have access to broadband, and slightly more than half of American households now subscribe to broadband. This means that more than 57 million households subscribe to broadband. Broadband subscription rates jumped 21 percent over the past year. The research also revealed that while much of the broadband debate has focused on broadband in the home, many Americans are also accessing broadband connections in numerous places outside the home. Today, adults without broadband in their home access the Internet from work, public libraries, and schools as well as even through portable devices like wireless phones. These results highlight how broadband Internet connections outside of the primary residence have become an ever important component of broadband access. See: http://www.ce.org/Press/CurrentNews/press_release_detail.asp?id=11319.

Source: Southern Compass

Resources and Grant Opportunities

AEDC Economic Development Grant Applications Due March 3

During the 2007 session, \$1,794,714 was appropriated to the Arkansas Economic Development Commission for economic development infrastructure projects or for transportation projects that enhance economic development. Only cities or counties may apply, and applications will be accepted from only those cities or counties that are members of a regional economic development effort. If those cities or counties that are not a member of a regional economic development effort either join or apply for membership before the due date of the grant application (March 3, 2008), their applications will be accepted. For more information, contact Morris Jenkins, Arkansas Economic Development Commission, at MJenkins@ArkansasEDC.com, 1-800-ARKANSAS.

Grant Information Seminar Set for January 25 in NCARED Region

Community, county and economic development leaders in the north central Arkansas region have a unique opportunity to gain first-hand information about the new AEDC grant program mentioned in the above article. North Central Arkansas Economic Development (NCARED) is sponsoring a grants information seminar on Friday, January 25, in Mountain Home for community and county leaders to learn about this funding program.

“We have a new opportunity to fund projects in the NCARED region, but will have to act quickly,” states Gil de Lorenzo, Executive Director of NCARED. “The due date for the grant applications is March 3, 2008.” The seminar will take place at El Chico Cafe in Mountain Home, from 12 noon until 2 p.m. Lunch will be provided, courtesy of NCARED. Morris Jenkins with the Arkansas Economic Development Commission will speak at the seminar, plus representatives from the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District and the White River Planning and Development District. You won’t want to miss out on this opportunity, so please invite other local officials and economic development leaders in your community to attend this seminar. Contact Gil de Lorenzo (gilmar@centurytel.net, 870-424-7473) if you will be able to attend.

Grants Available for Community Development

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The foundation accepts unsolicited proposals for building human capital, leadership, health and healthcare workforce development. Interests include aging, child development, education, voluntarism promotion, etc.

Contact - Richard J. Troth at (888) 631-9989, mail@rwjf.org, <http://www.rwjf.org>.

Union Pacific Foundation

The foundation focuses on community/economic development, education, environment, health care and leadership development that affect the “quality of life” on a national level in areas of company operations. The foundation supports building/renovations, capital campaigns, continuing support, equipment, general/operation, capacity building and program development.

Contact - Darlynn Herweg, Director, (402) 544-5600, upf@up.com, www.up.com/found.

Glass Family Foundation

The foundation supports education and human services in Arkansas, Missouri and Texas.

Contact: David D. Glass, Director, Glass Family Foundation, 17 Glenbrook, Bentonville, AR 72712-3840.

Rebsamen Fund

The foundation supports organizations involved with arts and culture, education, health, youth development, wildlife preservation/protection and human services. Giving is primarily limited to Arkansas. Send application to: Rebsamen Fund, 11219 Financial Centre Parkway, Suite 303, Little Rock, AR 72211.

International Paper Company Foundation

The foundation supports organizations involved with literacy, environmental education, career development, hunger, children, youth, minorities and women. They provide continuing support, curriculum development, general/operating support and seed money for program development. They give on a national/international basis in areas of company operations.

See <http://www.internationalpaper.com>.

The Veterans Corporation

The Veterans Corporation has announced a Veteran Entrepreneurship Grant program that will provide grants of up to \$50,000 for organizations that have designed innovative initiatives that help veterans start new businesses or that help entrepreneurs who need to prepare their firms and employees for potential military deployments. The grants are for service organizations, not for individuals. Visit <http://www.veteranscorp.org/developmentgrants/>.

Economic Development Administration

EDA advances economic growth by assisting communities and regions experiencing chronic high unemployment and low per capita income to create an environment that fosters innovation, promotes entrepreneurship and attracts increased private capital investment. EDA encourages the submission of only those proposals or applications, as appropriate, that will significantly benefit regions with economically distressed communities. Visit

<http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?mode=VIEW&opId=13169>.

The Surdna Foundation

The goal of the Effective Citizenry program is to support young people to take action with others to address meaningful problems in their schools, neighborhoods and the larger society. The Surdna Foundation funds efforts that help young people (ages 13-29) become effective, problem-solving citizens; improve practices and performance of organizations that help young people move through leadership development and into productive action; and develop networks that can anchor and expand a field of effective citizenry.

http://www.surdna.org/grants/grants_show.htm?doc_id=326178&cat_id=949

Entrepreneurial Communities Sought by Rural Development Centers

The Regional Rural Development Centers seek your assistance in identifying communities and practices that support entrepreneurship. If you know of a community/region that has focused on entrepreneurship as a key economic development strategy, please consider nominating them. They are also looking for nominations of best practices in supporting entrepreneurship such as K-12 programs, summer camps, business clubs, etc. To nominate a community, please go to this site:

<http://DILLMAN.soc.iastate.edu/mrlWeb/mrlWeb.dll?I.Project=ENTREPRENEURIALC>.

VisionWorks Partners

We appreciate the continued support of our VisionWorks Partners:

Arkansas Community Foundation	Arkansas Economic Development Commission
Arkansas Farm Bureau	Arkansas Geographic Information Office
AR Human Development Corporation	Arkansas Science and Technology Authority
Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce	Associated Industries of Arkansas
AT & T Arkansas	CenturyTel
Cromwell Architects Engineers	Delta Center for Economic Development, ASU
Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas	Entergy's Teamwork Arkansas
Ken Hubbell and Associates	National Park Community College
U of A Cooperative Extension Service	UALR Institute for Economic Advancement
UALR Institute of Government	UALR Small Business Development Center

Website of the Month – You Really Can Make a Difference – The Story of Johnny the Grocery Bagger

This is an incredible story about a grocery store bagger named Johnny and how he made a real difference in the lives of other people. By the way, Johnny has Down Syndrome. He was challenged to do something to make people feel special – a memory that will make them come back to the store. This has huge implications for communities and businesses, and you will also want to share this with all your friends and relatives. Go to www.stservicemovie.com. Will you be a Johnny today?

Story of the Month - The Earliest Broadband System in the World

In 1998, a British archaeologist was excavating in a new dig 10 meters deep and discovered remnants of copper wire in a village. He announced to the astonished world that British ancestors had a primitive telephone system around 1600 A.D. Three years later, a team of Scottish archaeologists were excavating a village 20 meters deep and discovered remnants of

copper wire, concluding that a primitive telephone system was in use by their ancestors around 1300 A.D. Finally, just last year, Ole and Swen Olson, two North Dakota farmers who are also amateur archaeologists, were digging in a mound on their farm 30 meters deep, when they discovered bones and relics, but no copper wire. They announced to the world that this was the most advanced civilization in the world 1000 years ago because they were using wireless broadband.

How to Strategically Impact Your Community:

If you want to impact your community in a powerful way, forward this e-mail newsletter to other individuals in your community or organization so they can benefit from the resources, insights and strategies covered in VisionWorks News.

More About VisionWorks:

Recipient of the Outstanding Program Award by the international Community Development Society, VisionWorks is a program of the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, with partners in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. VisionWorks' Breakthrough Solutions Program is now available for communities and regions seeking to prosper in the global, knowledge-based economy. For more information about the Breakthrough Solutions Program, go to www.vworks.org, send an e-mail to vworks@uaex.edu or call us at (501) 671-2066.

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