

Rebuild Arkansas Strikes Gold

Rebuild Arkansas has found a wealth of resources right at its back door, in data collected by the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC).

Luke Elliott of the Arkansas Energy Office said AEDC's data help the partnership explain the benefits of Rebuild America to prospective partners. The data include information on population, age, income, education, energy consumption, retail sales, labor force and housing distributions throughout the state. The data also cover infrastructure, tax base, and university and K-12 school facilities in each city in Arkansas.

Elliott also does some data collection of his own. Before presenting to a community, he calls a few large facilities (such as the schools, municipal government, hospitals and major industries) to get information on their annual energy expenditures.

Prepared with the AEDC data and the information he gathered, Elliott can make a compelling presentation. For each facility, he estimates a 25 percent cost savings. Elliott explains that these savings are like a "bank account" that facility owners didn't know that they had but can tap into with the help of Rebuild America.

Elliott also uses AEDC's energy consumption data to extrapolate figures for each community. Since the data cover all sectors, he predicts that Rebuild Arkansas can save communities 10 percent of their total energy expenditures.

Elliott recently met with representatives from the communities of Warren and McGee. In McGee, a town of less than 5,000 residents, he explained that the community could save \$950,000 annually by participating in Rebuild America. In Warren, Elliott estimated that with Rebuild America the school district could save \$50,000 each year in energy expenses. The town of McGee signed up on the spot, and the town of Warren signed up the next day.