



Mountain West NC CREATE BRIDGES Strategic Plan 2022



**Strengthening the Retail,
Accommodation,
Entertainment, and Tourism
Sectors in the Mountain West
Region.**



About CREATE BRIDGES

Funding has been awarded to support a strategic planning process to strengthen the retail, accommodation, tourism, and entertainment sectors in rural areas. NC State Extension is facilitating the process in Western NC.

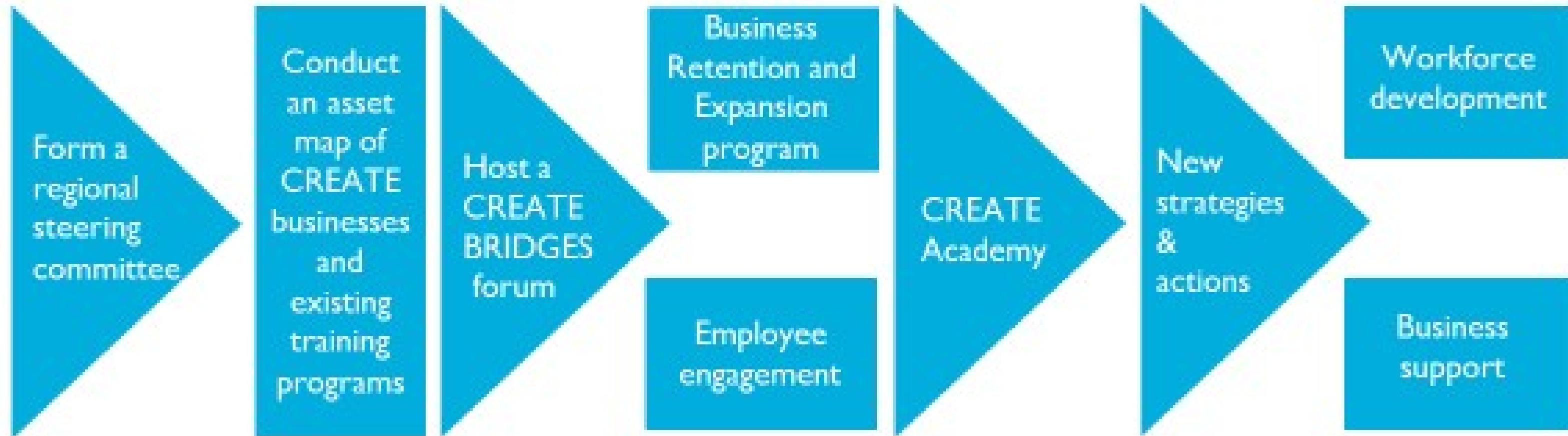
The CREATE BRIDGES initiative was launched to develop and test a process to fill a void in planning for the CREATE sectors, particularly in rural areas. The process is designed to raise awareness of the role these important businesses play in the local economy, determine challenges and barriers negatively impacting those businesses, and develop and implement strategies to strengthen the retail, accommodations, tourism, and entertainment sectors within a region.

NC STATE

EXTENSION



CREATE BRIDGES PROCESS



Funding provided by

Walmart  org

The Problem



While manufacturing and professional services are often the focus of economic development, businesses focused on retail, accommodations, tourism and entertainment (the CREATE businesses) are important to the viability of rural communities and regions. These industries provide needed goods, services and amenities to local residents and visitors and enhance quality of life. They are also a major source of jobs and tax revenue in rural communities and often provide the first work experience for residents who move up the career path within these businesses or go on to work in other sectors. Currently, planning and training focused on these sectors is often neglected or underemphasized despite a need to strengthen it. As a result, small and large businesses alike face high worker turnover rates, a dwindling pool of mid/upper management workers, and difficulty in succession planning. Data specific to this region is in an appendix to this presentation.

In this region, the Tourism industry has increased by 5.6% over the past 10 years while it has decreased by 0.5% in the U.S. overall.

Tourism makes up 11.5% of the total employment in this region and 1.1% of total employment nationally.

Wages within the Tourism industry have risen by 2.5% over the past 10 years and have risen 2.3% in the U.S.

Tourism: - everything under NAICS 713 (Amusement, gambling and recreation industries) + Deep Sea Passenger Transportation; Coastal and Great Lakes Passenger Transportation; Inland Water Passenger Transportation; Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Land; Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Water; All Other Support Activities for Transportation; Travel Agencies; Tour Operators; Convention and Visitors Bureaus

The Opportunities



Placemaking

Natural Assets + Small Town Charm + Proximity to Major Destinations = Huge Tourism Potential and New Resident Draw

Workforce Development

CREATE businesses need an excellent workforce to:

- Attract more tourists

- Attract more residents

- Strengthen the local economy

Regional Collaboration

Working together, CREATE businesses can:

- Build community pride and regional identity

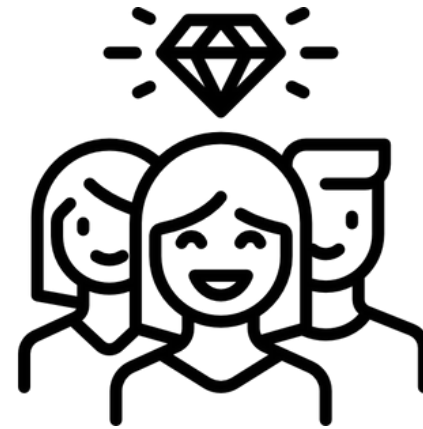
- Solve individual business needs

- Support employee growth and development

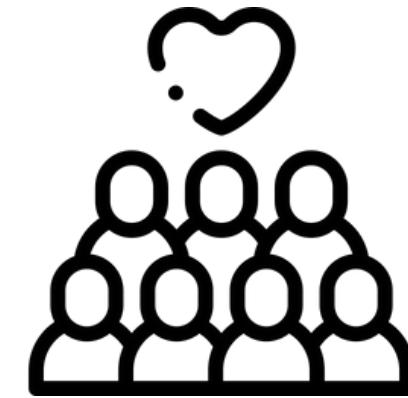
Our Goals



Improve CREATE
Business Viability



Increase CREATE
employee career
growth potential



Enhance Public
Support for CREATE
Sector Regional
Economy



GOAL 1 Strategies

Improve CREATE Business Viability

- 1. Expand the Labor Pool for the CREATE Sector**
- 2. Promote Regional Marketing of Mountain West CREATE Businesses**
- 3. Enhance Communication and Networking Among CREATE Businesses**





Goal 1 strategies respond to the needs expressed by CREATE business owners in the BRE Survey and interviews conducted in Spring 2021.

64% of the businesses surveyed stated that they changed their hours seasonally; all of those who elaborated stated that the winter season change was the reason for the seasonal hour change. Most regional businesses have not experienced a change in their employee hiring in the past 3 years and also did not view their rate of employee turnover as a barrier to their business operations. Of those that did see a change in employee hiring, most saw a need to hire more employees. 57% of businesses offer some sort of benefit to their employees which range from merchandise discounts, vacation time, and health benefits. Of those that elaborated on their employee benefits, 95% of them offer flexible scheduling and 60% offer health benefits.

Through conversations with businesses, BRE surveys, and regional stakeholders, outdoor recreation was identified to be the main economic driver of the Mountain West.

Throughout the pandemic of 2020, this region found itself unprepared for the droves of tourists, most of whom came from large East coast cities hoping to escape the high density urban areas by coming into the open and secluded environments that this region has to offer. Most businesses had to alter their operations because of COVID restrictions and public health guidelines; the majority of businesses closed temporarily to prepare for reopening after lockdown or because of a COVID contraction in their facility.

The entertainment sector experienced the most negative impacts of COVID because of the Governor's mandates on gatherings. This public health policy totally halted any business that depended upon live events, performances, or ticketed events as their main revenue source. Decreased indoor patron capacity had a major impact on the accommodations and retail industries. Even though most businesses saw an increase in patrons, 57% did not see an increase in employees and only 15% saw a decrease.

Strategy

1.1-

Expand the Labor Pool



Research program opportunities for special populations - Veterans, Disabled, Reentry, Recovery

Develop K-12 Pipeline through CREATE Sector Outreach Programs

Target Retirees for Side Gig Opportunities

Create and Promote "Got Your Back Business" Recognition and Programming

Strategy

1.2 -

Promote Regional Marketing



Hire a Regional Marketing Coordinator

Develop a shared events calendar for all
CREATE Businesses

Develop a social media/video series
highlighting CREATE Businesses who are
certified as "Got Your Back Recognized
Businesses"

Cross-Market Tourism Assets through
Employee and Business "I Speak
Flyfishing" Trainings

Strategy 1.3 - Enhance Communication and Networking

Develop a Resource Hub

Identify Co-working Spaces with
Broadband

Create a Facebook page/Slack channel

Develop Regional Monthly Events





GOAL 2

Increase CREATE Employee Career Growth Potential

2.1 Support childcare and other benefits for employees

2. Leadership Development for Incumbent Employees

3. Provide entrepreneurial training for development of worker pools and/or worker-owned businesses to serve CREATE businesses





Goal 2 strategies respond to the needs expressed by CREATE employees in the Survey conducted in Summer 2021.

Most of the employees that completed the survey are full-time workers and overall most participants work in the Food and Accommodations sector. 82 % of the survey participants have completed at least some college coursework with 50 % of the participants having obtained an associates or bachelor's degree. 83 % of participants work in Jackson County and represent the majority of survey participants; 33%, have been with their employer for over 10 years. One third of survey participants make \$11.00- \$15.00 per hour, while 25 % make more than \$25 per hour. 58 % of employees have been promoted at their current employer and 64 % of those that have been promoted were required to complete training in order to receive their promotion, and subsequently those individuals received training to fulfill their new role. Fifty-four percent of employees feel very valued by their employer; most participants stated that they chose their current job because they genuinely enjoy their work environment, and 84 % of participants have no plans to leave their current employer.

Of the employees that are considering leaving their current position, most are doing so because of personal advancements such as growing a family or furthering their education. Some stated that the lack of affordable housing in the region, unhealthy working environment, feeling overworked, and retirement were listed as reasons why they were considering leaving or have left their employer in the past.

Employees stated that Marketing (42.42%), Database management (44.12%), Specialized Equipment skills (46.88%), Safety, CPR, SafeServ (51.43%), and Spreadsheet functionality (56.76%), were amongst the top desired skills. When asked complimentary questions, 68.97% of employers stated that face to face communications was the most desired skill for their employees to improve upon. Employers also stated that Database management (60.00%), Time management (57.69%), Spreadsheets functionality (64.71%), and Being to work on time (60.00%) were amongst the top desired skills for their employees.

Strategy 2.1- Support childcare and other benefits for employees



Subsidize childcare costs for CREATE employees at licensed childcare centers

Leverage Red Cross and SWCC childcare certifications and streamline business licensing

Utilize public spaces for community needs, including extended hour options

Create insurance pool for childcare providers

Strategy 2.2- Leadership Programming for Incumbent Employees



Research customized leadership training options for CREATE employees (NC Rural Center)

Gain employer buy-in through engagement in programming development and identification of employer benefits

Provide employee stipends to attend trainings

Provide vouchers for incumbent employees to attend local attractions/experiences

Strategy 2.3- Entrepreneurial Training to develop worker pools to serve CREATE businesses



Asset map existing businesses that serve
CREATE sector

Survey CREATE businesses on their
interest in engaging worker-owned
businesses

Investigate existing entrepreneurship
and worker-owned business trainings

Hold informational event for CREATE
business owners on filling gaps with
freelancers and worker-owned
businesses



GOAL 3

Enhance Public Support for CREATE Sector Regional Economy

1. Update and Reignite Buy Local Campaigns throughout region
2. Expand year-round Tourism opportunities to create consistent employment in the CREATE sector
3. Develop cross-promotion campaign



Strategy 3.1- Update and Reignite Buy Local Campaigns



Determine existence and effectiveness of current campaigns throughout the region.

Research Buy Local apps and Virtual Store Fronts

Develop template for campaigns in each community throughout region.

Strategy 3.2- Expand year- round Tourism activities



Encourage CREATE Businesses to collaborate on winter events

Engage social influencers to review and post about their off-season experiences

Create and fund secret shopper program to review CREATE Businesses on a regular basis

Desired Impacts



CREATE Businesses

300 - 400

Display SPARK Campaign Flyer
Mar-April 2022

50-100

Attend Got Your Back Summit and/or 2
Networking Events
April - May 2022



200-300

Engage in Biz to Biz facebook group
May 2022



Desired Impacts



CREATE Employees

50-100

Attend Leadership Training
Sept 2022

50-100

Attend Entrepreneurial Training
September 2022

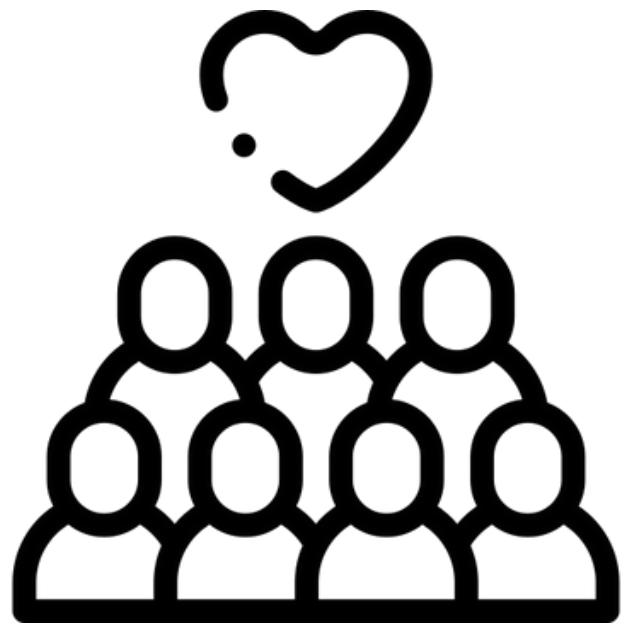
50-100

Attend Soft Skills and Custom Trainings
September 2022

200-300

Receive Incentives to Attend Cross-
Promotion Event ("I Speak Flyfishing")
November 2022

Desired Impacts



Talent Pipeline

200 High School
Students Experience
CREATE Sector
Activities

Community

60

College Students Conduct SecretShopper
Reviews of CREATE Businesses

Sept 2022

120

Businesses Reviewed by SecretShoppers
September 2022

200

CREATE Businesses Participate in Buy Local
Campaign

September 2022

1,000

Community Members Buy into Buy Local
Campaign

November 2022

Award Distribution

BUDGET ITEMS

**STRATEGY
IMPLEMENTATION \$60,000**

**INCUMBENT WORKER
INCENTIVES \$40,000**

Printing

Printing

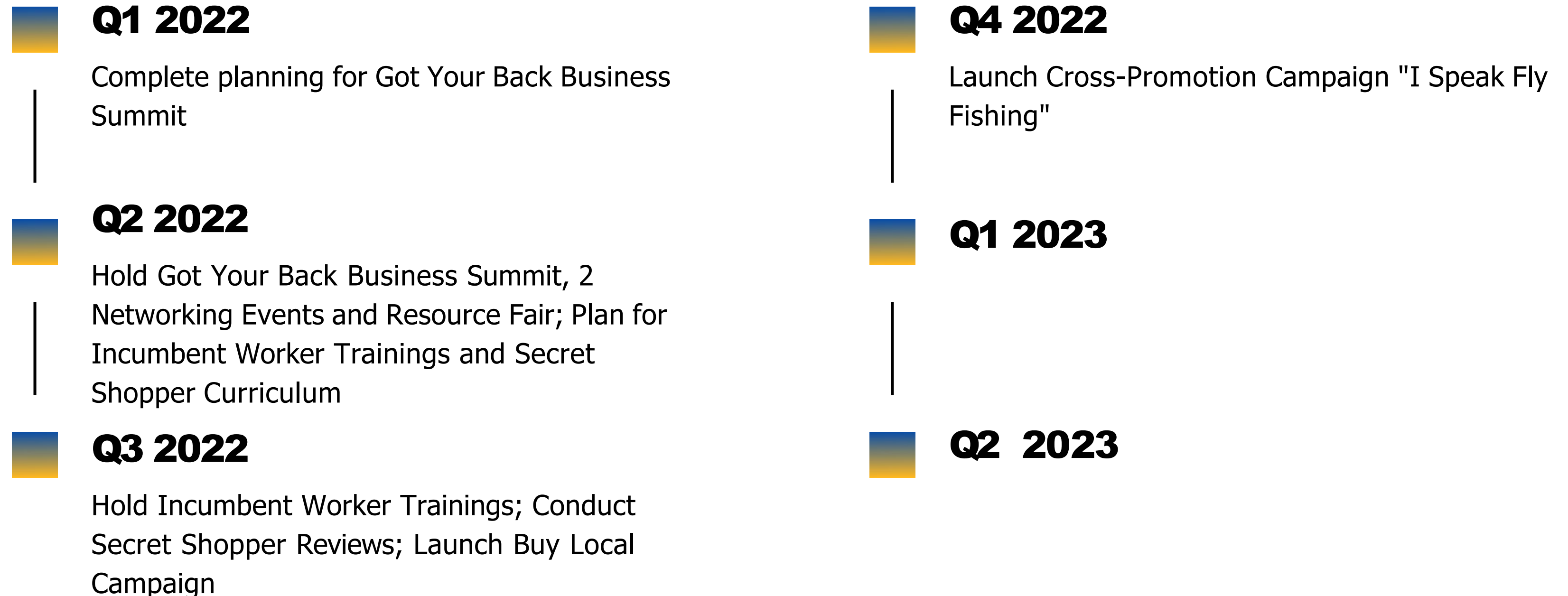
Got Your Back
Business Summit
and Networking
Events

Incumbent
Worker Trainings

Secret Shopper
Reviews

Cross-Promotion
Training

Strategy Timeline





Contact Us

Reach out to us for inquiries
or comments.

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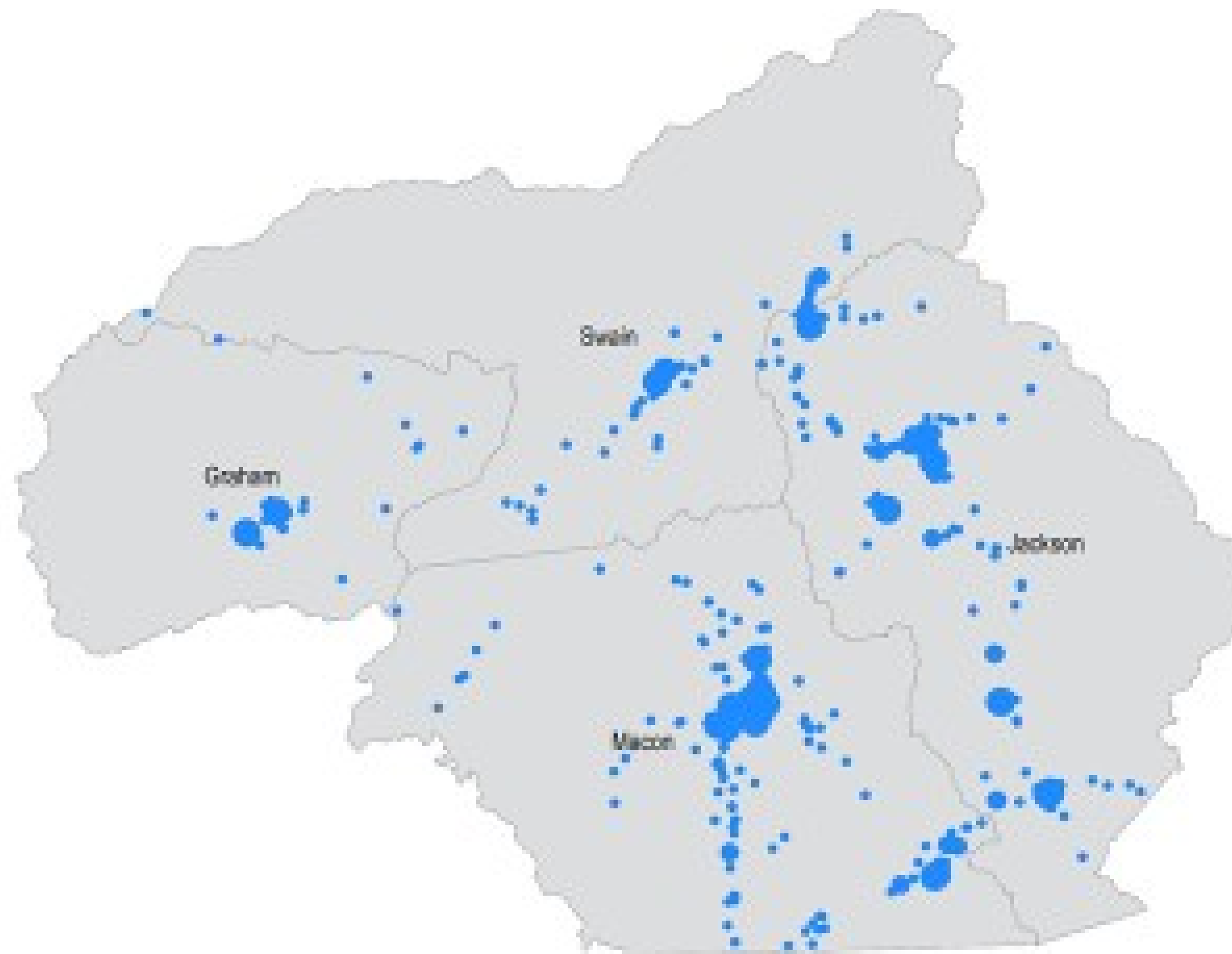
Website
<https://communitydevelopment.ces.ncsu.edu/workforce-development-bre-entrepreneurship/create-bridges/>



APPENDIX

DATA FROM THE CREATE SECTORS IN EACH COUNTY OF THE MOUNTAIN WEST REGION FOLLOWS.

Retail Businesses



Legend

Business Employment

- 1 - 10
- 11 - 25
- > 25

Data Source: ESRI/BA, 2019

Funding provided by

Walmart  org

Retail: Top Occupations



Occupation	Employment	Avg. Ann. Wages	Annual Demand
Retail Salespersons	1,151	\$25,700	162
Cashiers	1,043	\$22,200	181
Stockers and Order Fillers	457	\$25,900	61
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	443	\$43,800	43
Customer Service Representatives	122	\$29,400	14

Funding provided by



Retail Industry



EMPLOYMENT



4,938

Regional employment / 15,624,022 in the nation

WAGES



\$28,173

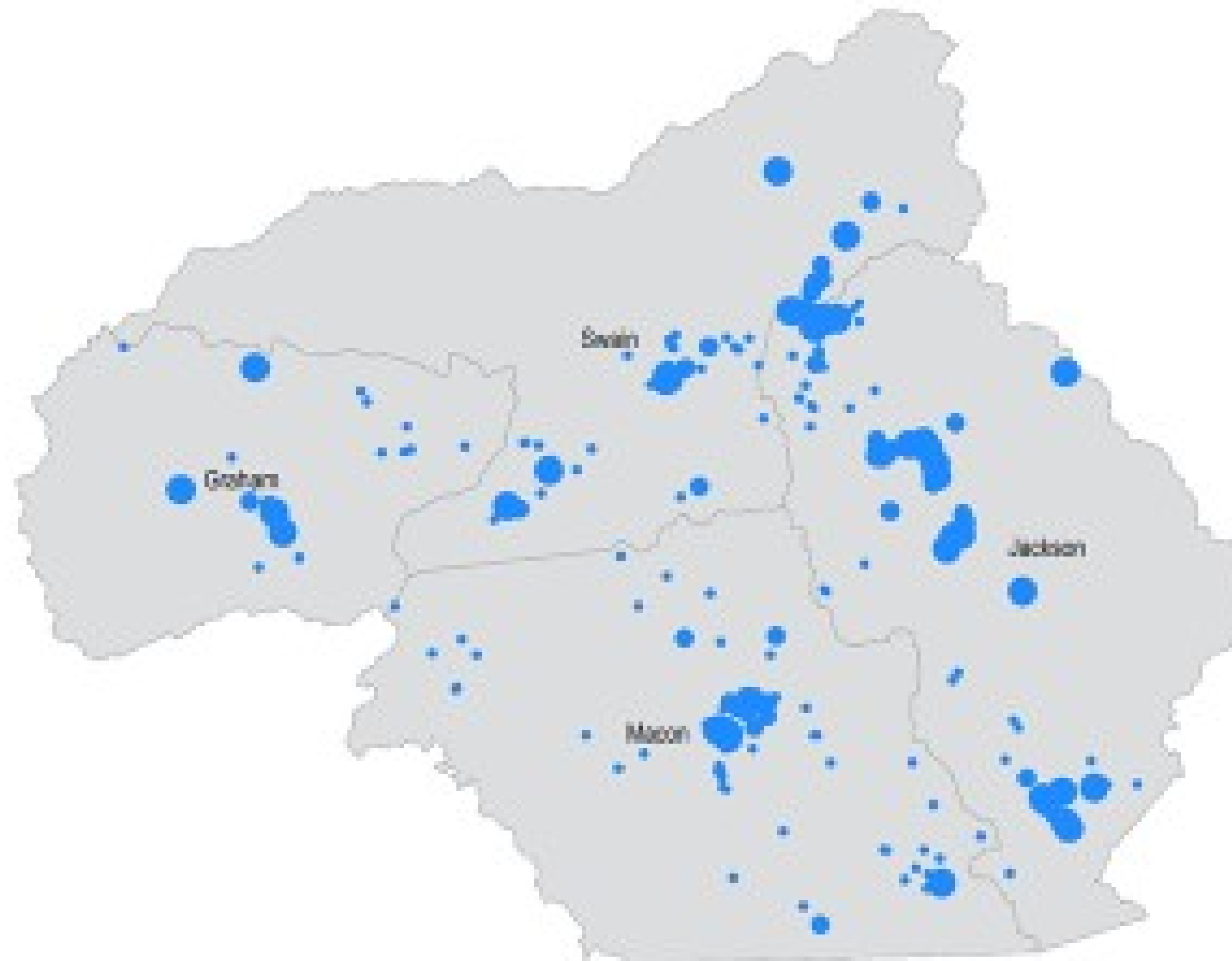
Avg Wages per Worker / \$36,039 in the nation

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2020

Funding provided by

Walmart **org**

Accommodation Businesses



Legend

Business Employment

- 1 - 10
- 11 - 25
- > 25

Data Source: ESRI/BA, 2019

Funding provided by



Accommodation: Top Occupations



Occupation	Employment	Avg. Ann. Wages	Annual Demand
Fast Food and Counter Workers	937	\$21,300	190
Waiters and Waitresses	784	\$22,700	154
Cooks, Restaurant	450	\$25,500	78
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	288	\$24,600	38
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	273	\$38,600	44

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2020

Funding provided by
Walmart  **org**

Accommodation* Industry



EMPLOYMENT



4,706

Regional employment / 12,244,553 in the nation

WAGES



\$21,259

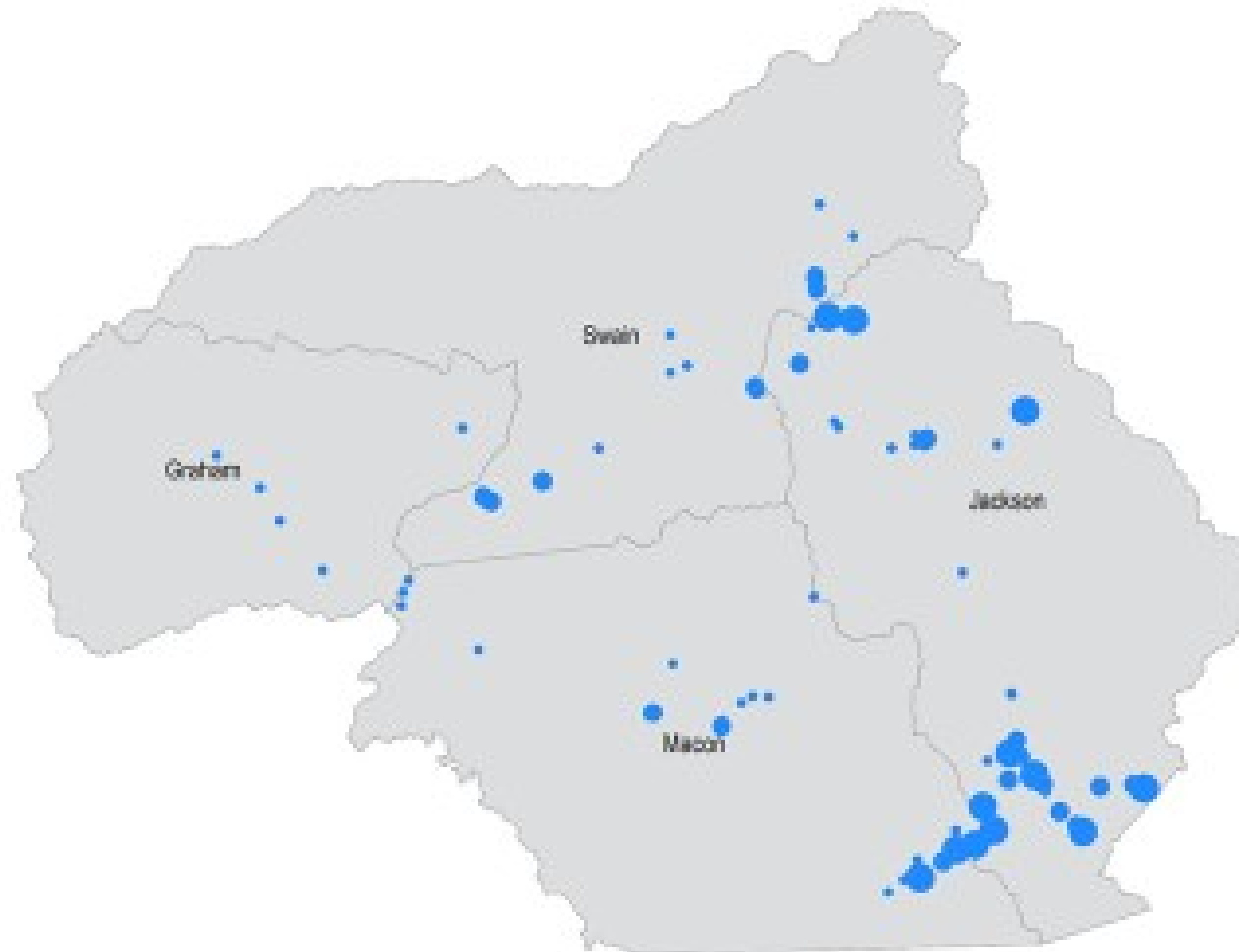
Avg Wages per Worker / \$22,795 in the nation

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2020

* Includes Food Services

Funding provided by
Walmart  **org**

Tourism Businesses



Legend

Business Employment

- 1 - 10
- 11 - 25
- > 25

Data Source: ESRI/BA, 2019

Funding provided by

Walmart  **org**

Tourism: Top Occupations



Occupation	Employment	Avg. Ann. Wages	Annual Demand
Gambling Dealers	599	\$22,100	89
Amusement and Recreation Attendants	323	\$22,900	80
Waiters and Waitresses	287	\$21,900	56
Cooks, Restaurant	194	\$25,800	30
First-Line Supervisors of Gambling Services Workers	177	\$47,800	27

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2020

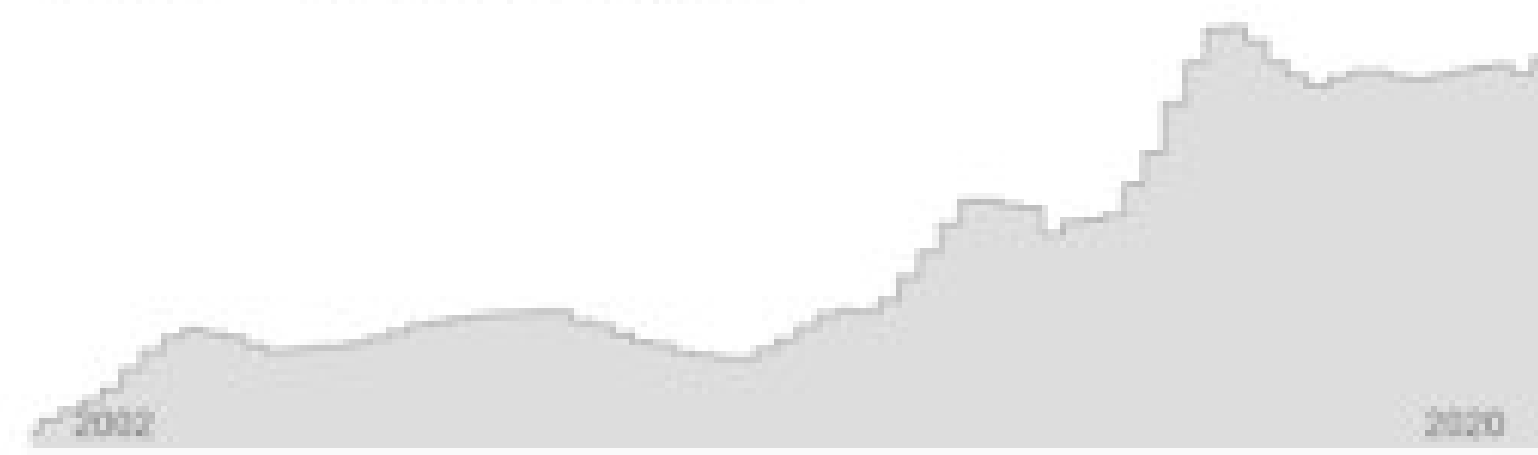
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Tourism Industry



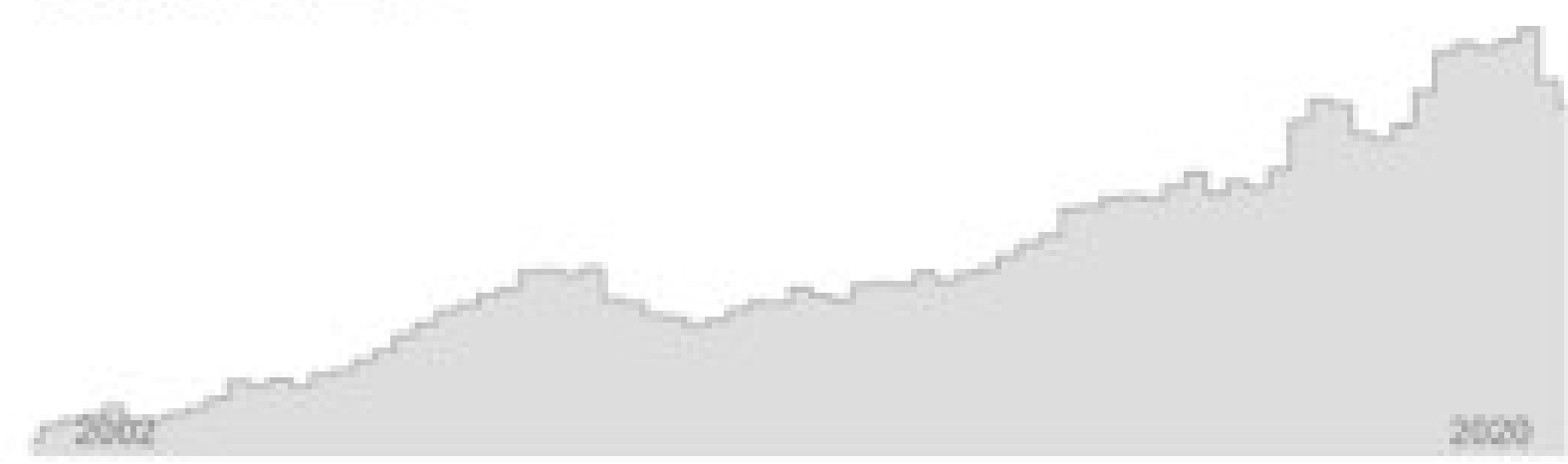
EMPLOYMENT



4,633

Regional employment / 1,639,802 in the nation

WAGES



\$31,626

Avg Wages per Worker / \$26,899 in the nation

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2020

Funding provided by
Walmart  **org**

Entertainment Businesses



Legend

Business Employment

- 1 - 5
- 6 - 10
- > 10

Data Source: ESRI/BA, 2019

Funding provided by



Entertainment: Top Occupations



Occupation	Employment	Avg. Ann. Wages	Annual Demand
Writers and Authors	26	\$80,600	3
Musicians and Singers	16	\$60,800	2
Tour Guides and Escorts	11	\$32,500	2
Producers and Directors	6	\$77,400	1
Curators	6	\$47,800	1

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2020

Funding provided by
Walmart  **org**

Entertainment* Industry



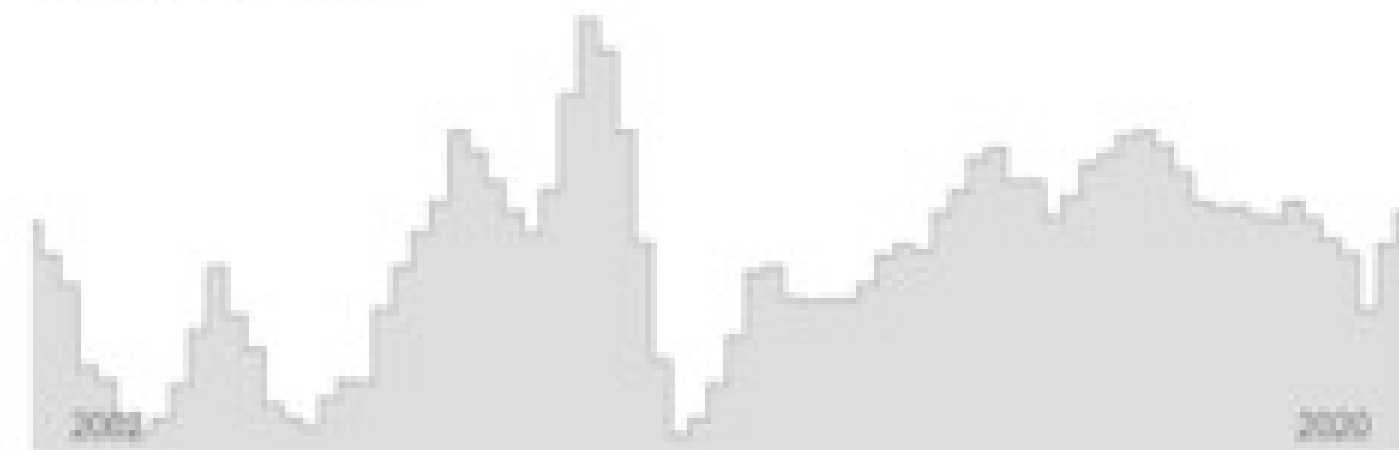
EMPLOYMENT



213

Regional employment / 984,649 in the nation

WAGES



\$28,527

Avg Wages per Worker / \$62,845 in the nation

Data Source: JobsEQ, 2020

* Includes Arts

Funding provided by
Walmart  **org**