



What We've Learned From Covid-19

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Purpose of Paper

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) provided funding to the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) to investigate communities' economic decision-making regarding disaster response, recovery, and resilience, including similarities and differences with respect to pandemics. The 18-month research and evaluation project examines best and promising practices. The aim of the project as a whole is to build economic development organizations' resilience capacity for pandemics and other disasters in the future.

IEDC has collected data in real time over the period of February 2021 to February 2022, interviewing eight communities as they have implemented recovery and relief programs in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. This on-the-ground research has helped IEDC understand

- 1) how communities can best respond to and adapt to pandemics as conditions and impacts change
- 2) how communities can incorporate preparedness and mitigation for a pandemic that could recur seasonally or occur due to a different disease
- 3) how the pandemic is different and similar to other kinds of disasters and shifts the paradigm for how we consider disaster mitigation, recovery, and resilience

A second aim of this project has been to update *Leadership in Times of Crisis: A Toolkit for Recovery and Resiliency* (the Toolkit) with learnings from this research project, as well as insights and case studies from IEDC's 15 years of technical assistance projects in response to disasters. An additional chapter in the Toolkit will utilize the findings of our research and provide recommendations for adapting recovery and resilience strategies to include responding to and mitigating the impacts of pandemics.

This paper presents the findings of our research interviews with the eight communities and integrates IEDC's knowledge from past experiences. We evaluate the responses of eight communities and draw conclusions about their experience during the pandemic, then provide an analysis of the findings from those communities. Finally, we compare our findings about the Covid-19 pandemic to other disasters and evaluate the different approaches to response and recovery. At the end can be found a collection of profiles of each of the communities that participated in this project.



Methodology

IEDC conducted a series of three informational interviews over the course of one year with organizations representing eight communities outlined below to better explore these ideas.

- Albemarle Commission, North Carolina
- Bent County Community Foundation, Colorado
- Develop Indy, Indianapolis, Indiana
- Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission, Louisiana
- City of Martinsburg, West Virginia
- Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation, Texas
- Downtown Stockton Alliance, CA
- Tri-County Economic Development District

The communities applied to participate in this study, which was advertised through IEDC's marketing channels. IEDC based the selection of communities on a variety of factors including geography, demographics, and pandemic impacts. The chosen communities were matched with an IEDC member volunteer to provide technical assistance. Additionally, communities received resilience recommendations that can be integrated into their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS).

Three interviews were held with each community, in February 2021, August 2021, and February 2022. IEDC staff members completed the interviews, which asked 40–45 questions during each session. In the first interview, a set of five introductory questions were asked, which were excluded from further interviews.

Data was collected by IEDC staff via a spreadsheet, so longitudinal and cross-sectional analysis could be completed. The collected data was supplemented by national and local data sourced from federal sources, including sources such as the Center for Disease Control, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and The National Economic Resilience Data Explorer.

In addition to the research conducted with communities, IEDC also completed a review of the 15 years of technical assistance offered through the Economic Recovery Volunteer Program, which began in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and has grown to reach nationwide, via more than 335 projects through 42 EDA awards. Additionally, this grant has also facilitated a revision of the 2015 publication *Leadership in Times of Crisis: A Toolkit for Economic Recovery and Resiliency* (henceforth referred to as the Toolkit.)

Summary of Findings of Eight Communities

A cross-sectional analysis comparing the eight communities across one another and a longitudinal analysis analyzing the individual communities over the course of the year will follow, but first here are some fundamental best and promising practices observed from our research that EDOs can implement for recovery and preparedness.

1. Collaboration via Networks

The pandemic revealed the need to build networks among public, private, non-profit, and institutional partners. Many communities had established these relationships in advance, but the pandemic highlighted the need to expand these networks. Potential new partners would include public health authorities and organizations with extensive reach into communities of color, where the pandemic affected the population the most acutely. Forming an economic recovery team is an established best practice, covered in the Toolkit.

An economic recovery team reviews the community's emergency response plan to evaluate how the business community and local economy might be impacted by decisions laid out in the plan. In the process of reviewing and rewriting plans, EDOs should recognize that the effectiveness of a region's response to a major disruption is enhanced if the public, private, educational, and non-profit sectors are all aware of each other's roles and responsibilities as they pertain to recovery.¹ In light of the pandemic, EDOs may have forged new relationships with health departments and other entities involved in designing a pandemic response. These include organizations that may have been active in the community for years but have not been realized as partners in resilience such as churches and non-profits. Most of the organizations interviewed in the study indicated that workforce development became a larger issue during the pandemic. These connections to workforce boards and educational institutions will be ongoing partners as recovery progresses. Institutions that mobilized to assist during Covid-19 and other past disasters should continue to be engaged as planning partners going forward. Expanding the number of organizations involved in planning will help to diversify the viewpoints represented, and when disaster strikes, will ensure service to all segments of the population.

This has been the case in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. Learning from the experience of recovering from several hurricanes, the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) has developed strong partnerships. Throughout the pandemic, JEDCO has worked closely with training providers and the local workforce investment board to provide training and make it easier to place people into jobs. Additionally, the public school system, which is the largest in Louisiana, has partnered with JEDCO to educate students about the types of jobs available within the parish.

2. Funding and Financing with a Goal of Equity

The Covid-19 pandemic brought the issue of unequal access to capital to the forefront. The pandemic catalyzed the need for immediate financing at a scale not seen since the Great Recession. Many businesses could not open for protracted periods of time and faced high failure rates, especially those owned by people of color. Providing bridge financing is a pivotal role for an EDO in a post-disaster environment. EDOs that

¹ [Economic Resilience](#), Content, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies, U.S. Economic Development Administration



have funds available are often able to deploy them sooner than financial institutions or the federal government. Depending on the type of funding and their role in dispensing it, EDOs can alter restrictions to make funds more easily available – for example, accepting alternative forms of credit for revolving loan funds. This is often crucial to make funds available to underserved populations that do not have formal relationships with banking institutions.

This was the case in Stockton, California. Downtown Stockton Alliance manages the Downtown Stockton Enterprise Loan Fund (DSELF), a non-profit, multi-bank community development corporation that provides small business loans. At the beginning of the pandemic, DSA decided to defer repayment of active small business loans in order to remove that stressor during a difficult and uncertain time. Additionally, after further comparison with other non-profit lenders and speaking with local business owners who couldn't apply for a DSELF loan due to the requirements, DSA permanently updated the guidelines to make the loans more accessible. Small business owners had reported that the qualifications were difficult to meet, and as a result, DSA was having trouble lending out the money in the program. DSA simplified the background and financial information needed to apply for the loan by decreasing both the number of months of financial statements and the collateral required. While this was a necessary change regardless of the pandemic, the pandemic provided the impetus for it.

Outside of disaster situations, grants traditionally have not been a common financing avenue for private businesses. However, in response to Covid-19, many local governments used the flexibility of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funding to provide \$5,000 to \$10,000 grants to help small businesses weather the pandemic's impact. Grants are most effective when targeted to specific populations of businesses or owners, specific neighborhoods, or highly impacted industries.

The Covid-19 pandemic was especially difficult for food and beverage businesses. Develop Indy in Indianapolis, Indiana, created the Help Grants Program to provide rent relief to businesses in this sector. This program covered any unpaid rent from April to December; businesses were required to stay open to receive funding. In addition to retaining businesses, the program helped stabilize the city's tax base because it maintained revenue from the local food and beverage tax. Develop Indy also targeted grants toward businesses that prioritized safety: The Ready to Restart Program reimbursed businesses for any expenditures they made for personal protective equipment.

3. Accessing Up-to-Date Information

Qualitative and quantitative data allow communities to show the amount of damage and are useful when applying for grants and federal resources. This information also helps communities understand how their economies, populations, and industries change. With conditions shifting rapidly as the Covid-19 pandemic evolved, decision-makers were challenged to understand how their communities were being impacted. Trends emerged throughout the pandemic that resulted in more useful data for local policymakers, including the creation of new public information infrastructures, new access to public data and the pivot of existing sources to pandemic-related data needs. Exploring data at a national level, including consumer trends, migration patterns, demand for goods and services, and household income changes can indicate national trends. These resources can also be used to drill down into local areas to understand how a community is impacted. A best practice is to compare this information to intelligence gathered from businesses and other stakeholders in the community via surveying, focus groups, and other feedback systems.



Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) noted that they expanded their information resources and began pushing this information out to businesses. This has been key for their manufacturing sector, which is now focused on reshoring and exporting.

4. Science-based Communication Leadership

EDOs often speak on behalf of the business community while also serving as a conduit from the public sector to the business community, especially in the case of disaster. During the pandemic, providing science-based communication to businesses to combat rumors and misinformation became an important role for EDOs. In speaking to businesses, EDOs often served as trusted sources of facts, spreading the message that adherence to preventive measures would lessen the pandemic's impacts, severity, and length. Alternatively, through marketing campaigns and other public outreach, often in tandem with health departments, EDOs shared expectations with customers about engaging with businesses – for example, highlighting the importance of wearing masks or showcasing restaurants' new takeout options. Seven of the eight organizations profiled indicated that they had created a webpage of Covid-19 information and resources.

In Northeast Washington, the Tri-County Economic Development District (TEDD) was a key partner in health messaging. The local health department asked for TEDD's help in the early stages of the pandemic after recognizing that its social media pages had very few followers compared to TEDD's. In response, TEDD's marketing team shared all health and safety information from the health department to keep the community updated on regulations, Covid-19, and other information. In addition to health-related communications, TEDD's marketing team worked to share the positive news coming out of Northeast Washington. Calling this the Good News Campaign, they included positive stories of small businesses and promoted pandemic-safe outdoor recreation opportunities in the region. Especially at the very beginning of the pandemic, this allowed TEDD to promote the region and its offerings responsibly and safely.

5. Technical Assistance to Access and Understand Federal Resources

In the wake of any disaster, EDOs often work with businesses to apply for federal assistance or refer them to other organizations, such as the local Small Business Development Center. The federal government response to the pandemic was robust, and many EDOs found themselves in the role of coaching businesses through the process of applying for assistance, especially as new programs were initiated at the state and federal levels. Recognizing this emerging role, the pandemic-focused recommendation is technical assistance to access and understand national resources.

One program that many businesses found challenging was the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program, which disbursed loans via financial institutions to maintain employment. Smaller businesses, which were less likely to have relationships with banks or to have the capacity to apply, seemed to be at a disadvantage in securing funds. Providing small businesses – especially those owned by women or people of color – with technical assistance is one way to ensure access to federal resources during a crisis. Technical assistance can help business owners obtain financing, develop business plans, identify and expand markets, and practice sound management in terms of accounting, record-keeping, and taxes. For business owners from disadvantaged populations, technical assistance is critical to bridge gaps in business knowledge and financial capacity. Seven of the eight organizations profiled indicated that they had initiated a small business assistance program such as providing assistance or loans.



Access to capital was one of the most common issues about which businesses approached the Bent County Development Foundation (BCDF). Many businesses found themselves with reduced income but the same expenses. The BCDF indicated there was also low availability of capital locally. Beyond access to capital, many businesses struggled to understand and comply with changing local, state, and federal rules and regulations for obtaining funding.

6. Reconfiguring Goals in Light of Changing Circumstances

The Covid-19 pandemic has prompted community leaders to revisit strategic planning with a different understanding of the needs of their community. Strategic plans and economic and community goals must adapt to new realities in any post-disaster environment. New issues will have emerged based on the massive changes in a post-pandemic society. Communities will need to examine previous policies and practices around housing, land use, infrastructure, workforce, and targeted industries. Six out of the eight organizations involved in the study indicated that they had initiated a strategic planning process to respond to long-term recovery needs from impacts of Covid-19.

In North Carolina, the Albemarle Commission initiated a strategic planning process as its primary long-term response to the pandemic, then focused on workforce training and upskilling. It focused on its CEDS process and community engagement, but also helped economic development organizations and municipalities in the region update their strategic plans to focus on long-term recovery from the pandemic.

7. Redesigning for a Changed Society

Covid-19 laid bare the challenge of inadequate broadband access when millions of workers and students shifted from offices and schools to working from home. In addition, as manufacturing, supply chain, and consumption trends shift, new systems will be needed to meet manufacturing and shipping requirements. As of 2021, roughly three-quarters of Americans reported having a broadband internet connection at home.² Expanding access to fast, reliable internet can revitalize economies that were lagging pre-pandemic, providing education opportunities, increased wages, and greater connection. Economic developers can be leaders in this initiative by convening stakeholders, gathering data, engaging in strategic planning, helping evaluate solutions, and helping to secure financing.³ The Covid-19 pandemic interrupted global supply chains, leading to shortages, lack of product, and ultimately higher prices for the consumer in the early days of the pandemic. Due to these challenges, economic developers expect domestic manufacturing, and potentially exporting, to increase.

Port Arthur, Texas, is using the influx of federal funds resulting from the pandemic to address infrastructure needs. The City of Port Arthur, the Port of Port Arthur, and Lamar State College received CARES Act Recovery Assistance grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The City of Port Arthur received a grant of \$3 million to support the design and construction of data cabling and fiber optic infrastructure downtown, as well as general economic resiliency. The Port of Port Arthur Navigation District received a \$3 million grant to construct a new cargo handling, staging, and transport area that will increase the port's

² [Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet](#), Pew Research Center, April 7, 2021

³ Getting Connected: How Economic Developers are Expanding Broadband Access, IEDC, 2021.



ability to handle exports. Lamar State College Port Arthur received a \$4.3 million grant to design and construct a commercial driver education and examination center. These improvements will help Port Arthur adapt to a changing economy post-pandemic.

8. Ensuring Equitable Redevelopment of Downtown and Neighborhood Commercial Corridors

The Covid-19 pandemic heavily impacted downtowns and neighborhood commercial corridors. Urban downtowns are heavily skewed toward office uses – in the 30 largest U.S. metropolitan areas, offices make up 71 percent of real estate.⁴ With office workers pivoting to remote work, downtowns saw a ripple effect as businesses and restaurants serving this population lost revenue and scaled back jobs. Downtown hotels also suffered huge losses as tourism halted, with more than a 50 percent revenue decline in 2020.⁵

As a result of the pandemic's effect on downtown businesses and hotels, the tax base suffered. Decline in downtown areas results in lower revenue for the community as a result of decreased taxes, including sales, commercial property, tourism and hotel taxes. This loss of revenue can create fiscal shortfalls for many communities, making it difficult to support efforts that bolster the business sector. For example, contributions to business improvement districts or hotel taxes that support convention and visitors' bureaus may decline.

The restaurant and retail businesses that closed in downtown areas and along neighborhood commercial corridors leave behind vacancies and unemployed workers. Nationally, the leisure and hospitality sector, which encompasses restaurants and hotels, lost 1.5 million jobs, or 9 percent of its workforce.⁶ The National Restaurant Association 90,000 restaurants have closed.⁷

Downtowns and commercial districts have the opportunity to rebuild in a way that increases diversification of businesses and populations, thereby increasing resilience, and rebuilding the tax base. This can take several forms, such as EDOs assisting small businesses into moving into the downtowns or commercial areas via incubator programs and access to capital. Additionally, some communities are using this opportunity to expand beyond the traditional downtown dynamic of office and service jobs into new industries and institutions. For example, universities opening up new campuses or residences in aging commercial buildings. Second-tier office spaces can also be converted into affordable or workforce housing that meets a market need while also creating a more vibrant district.

During the pandemic, Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation continued working on downtown revitalization to help improve economic opportunity in a low to moderate income community which is 35 percent Hispanic and 38 percent Black. One of the projects that was completed was the renovation of a 4500-square foot building housing space for coworking, office space for smaller businesses, and a culinary school. Their work downtown corresponds with their focus on small businesses and entrepreneurship. These businesses can also access space in the newly retrofitted downtown building. Additionally, to support

⁴ [To recover from Covid-19, downtowns must adapt.](#) Brookings, April 15, 2021.

⁵ [Covid-19 Devastating Hotel Industry](#), American Hotel and Lodging Association, April 22, 2020.

⁶ [The Employment Situation – March 2022](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

⁷ [National Statistics](#), National Restaurant Association, 2021.



downtown revitalization, PAEDC is working with partners to increase the supply of affordable one- and two-bedroom apartments downtown geared towards workers.

9. Capturing Opportunities and Executing Pivots

Because a disaster will impact some industries more than others, a diversified economic base helps to distribute risk more evenly. The Covid-19 pandemic was no exception; as the economy changed, EDOs shifted strategies to help firms adapt their business models and support emerging industries. Economic diversification is a multifaceted strategy that aims to attract and grow new industries and companies. Key strategies to do so include developing regional clusters, supporting entrepreneurship and small business creation, strengthening the local workforce, and increasing export activity. Regional cluster growth must be aligned with national cluster growth or complement it. The pandemic changed many sectors. In March of 2022, employment in transportation and warehousing had grown by 584,000 jobs since February 2020.⁸ Economic developers must follow these trends closely to understand where opportunities lie for their community. For example, many EDOs are taking advantage of the rise in e-commerce signaled by increases in transportation and warehousing. Decreases in jobs can signal the adoption of new technology, such as telehealth, which increased during the pandemic.⁹

EDOs can build economic diversification into their day-to-day work. In Louisiana, the participating organization JEDCO continued throughout the pandemic to find innovative solutions to practicing economic development fundamentals. Business retention and expansion activity continued through virtual visits. Business attraction strategies continued with a shift towards reshoring strategies. As more workers looked to start their own businesses during the pandemic, entrepreneurship and innovation continued to be an important focus. Furthermore, it worked closely with workforce partners to support existing and emerging industries.

⁸ [The Employment Situation – March 2022](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

⁹ [Trends in Use of Telehealth Among Health Centers During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 19, 2021.



Cross-sectional Analysis of the Eight Communities

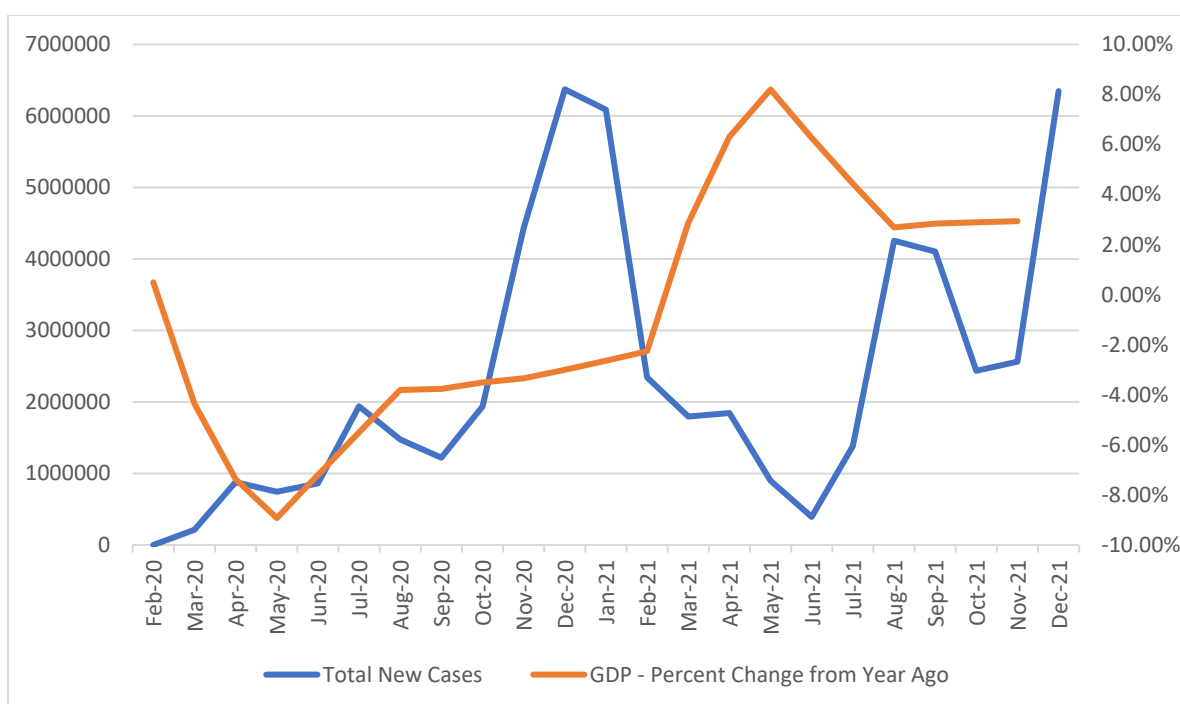
This section will introduce key comparative trends in recovery across the eight communities that participated in the study, comparing similarities and differences across them. The comparative data includes levels of Covid-19 case count and unemployment, as well as self-reported measures such as degree of impact, industry sector impact and recovery need. The longitudinal analysis includes discussion on the onset and escalation or de-escalation of impacts, the role of stakeholders, and strategies for recovery over time.

National Recovery Trends

A brief overview of national recovery trends provides a benchmark for analyzing the experiences of the eight communities. These trends also help to interpret some of the dynamics of pandemic recovery patterns.

To help understand underlying economic conditions during the pandemic disaster and recovery period, the graphs below show national Covid-19 health and economic indicators for two years, beginning at the onset of the pandemic. Data in the next section will focus on disaster and recovery indicators for the eight communities for one year, from February 2021 to January 2022.

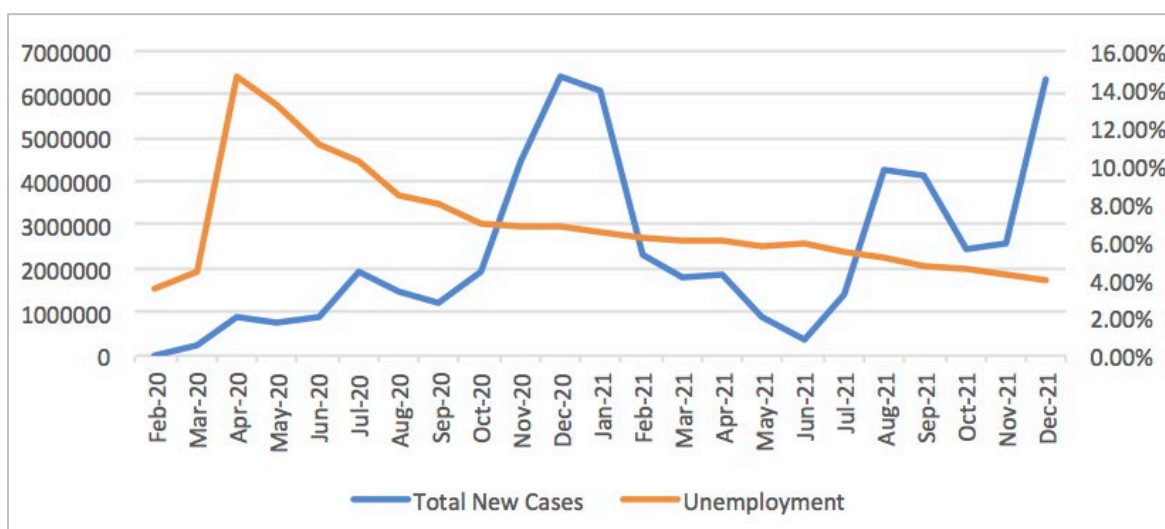
Monthly New Covid-19 Cases and Gross Domestic Product



Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Federal Reserve Economic Data](#), Federal Reserve of St. Louis, 2022



Monthly New Covid-19 Cases and Unemployment



Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Federal Reserve Economic Data](#), Federal Reserve of St. Louis, 2022

As seen above, nationally, unemployment increased, and gross domestic product (GDP) decreased during the first three months of the pandemic (considered the “short-term” recovery period). From February 2020 to May 2020, GDP fell about 10 percent and unemployment rose about 15 percent. GDP returned to pre-pandemic levels roughly by February 2021. However, unemployment remained a few points above pre-pandemic levels for the entirety of the study period (February 2020 to December 2021).

Meanwhile, new cases of Covid-19 fluctuated during the two-year period. Cases began to grow in February 2020, peaked in December 2020 with the surge in the Delta variant, then decreased. Cases began to rise again starting in June 2021 with a steep increase by November 2021, reflecting the onset of the Omicron variant.

From this national data, a few observations can be made about the relationship between the indicators for the disaster (pandemic) and the indicators for the economic recovery:

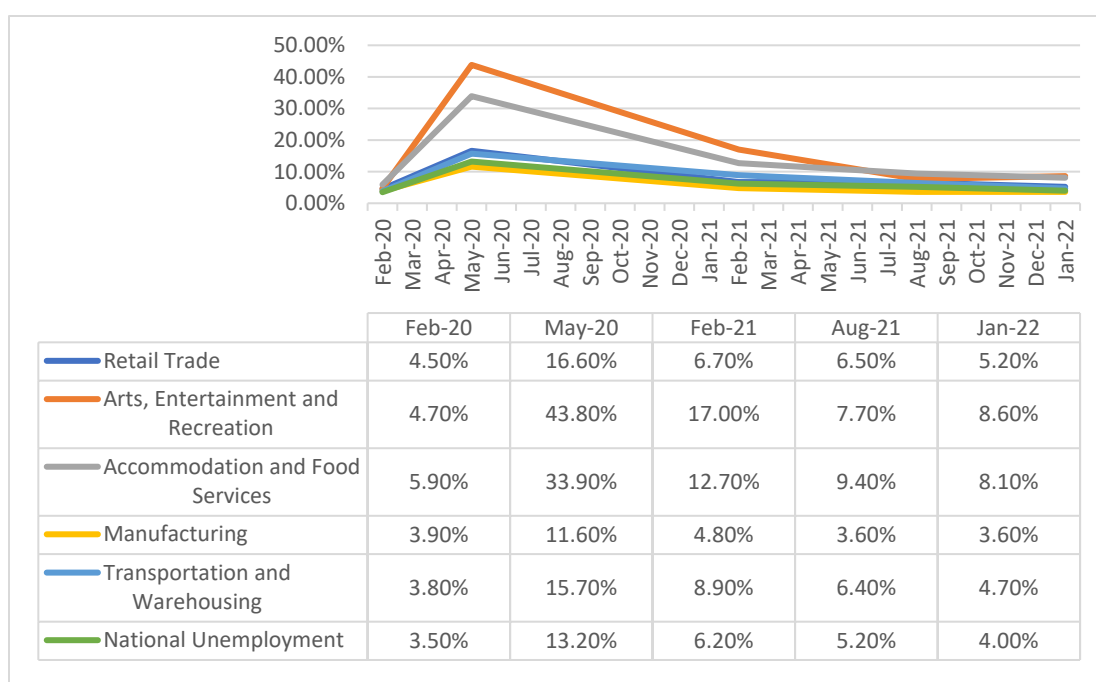
1. The short-term effects of the disaster (months 0-3) were that GDP and unemployment worsened, even when the Covid-19 case count was low. After that, the economy made a slow climb back over the medium term, taking a year for unemployment to return to near its pre-pandemic level. ***In the sense that the first three months were associated with a sharp negative economic impact, Covid-19 behaved like other disasters.***
2. After months 0-3, the pattern of medium-term and long-term recovery is less clear. For a brief period, GDP and case counts have an inverse relationship, as might be expected (in which GDP rises when cases fall and falls when cases rise – see May through July 2021) but a general trend is not clear. ***Overall, in the medium term and long term, Covid-19 does not follow a clear recovery trajectory as measured by health or economic indicators.***
3. The longer the pandemic continues, the economy seems to recover despite varying levels of cases. This may be partially attributable to the federal government response, as many businesses

were able to receive emergency financing. Even if the public health disaster persists, *the economy seems impervious and remains on a path of recovery.*

The pandemic also had more significant impacts on some industries than others, as shown in the figure below of unemployment by industry. Among those that experienced higher unemployment in the short term were arts, entertainment and recreation and accommodations and food services. These industries, in many cases, require face-to-face interaction, which was not possible in the height of the pandemic. As will be discussed later, many of the communities in the study reported negative impacts in these industries that affected their local economies.

The graphic below is accompanied by a table highlighting five key dates. The first date is February 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. This data point establishes a baseline for employment in each industry. The data shown for May 20th show the impact on each industry at the height of the pandemic. The following dates correspond with the time periods that research interviews were held with participating communities.

Unemployment by Industry



Source: [Industry at a Glance](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2022 – January 2022

Economic Recovery in Communities

The eight communities that were the subject of this study represent different parts of the country and have varying demographics, identifying social and economic indicators, defining characteristics and mixes of industry. All six EDA regions were covered by the eight communities. The tables below display these key descriptive statistics and characteristics of each case study.



Description of Communities

Community	Type of Organization	Area of Service	Description of Area	Population
Develop Indy	Chamber of Commerce/Local EDO	Marion County, Indianapolis, Indiana	Urban	977,203
Tri-County EDD	Regional Economic Development District	Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens Counties, Washington	Rural	65,610
Bent County Community Foundation	Public-Private Partnership	County and Town of Las Animas, Colorado	Rural	5,650
Downtown Stockton Alliance	Property-Based Improvement District	Stockton, California	Urban	320,804
Albemarle Commission	Regional Economic Development District	10 counties in Northeast North Carolina	Rural	172,955
City of Martinsburg	Local government	Martinsburg, West Virginia	Mix of Urban, Suburban, & Rural	18,777
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)	Local economic development organization	Jefferson Parish, Louisiana	Mix of Urban, Suburban, & Rural	440,781
Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC)	Local economic development organization	Port Arthur, Texas	Mix of Urban, Suburban, & Rural	56,039

Source: [Census Bureau, 2020 Census Data and American Community Survey](#)

It should be noted that the communities themselves chose the answers in “Type of Organization” and “Description of Area”. Thus the terms “rural” and “urban” do not follow a strict delineation related to population or another barometer. As can be seen from above, there is a large range of community size from the very sparsely populated Bent County region (5,650) to Marion County, Indianapolis (977,203).



Demographic Characteristics of Communities

Community	Median Age	% White	% Hispanic	% Black	% Asian	% Other
Develop Indy	34.3	63.50%	10.90%	29.10%	3.80%	3.50%
Tri-County EDD	48.1	87.80%	3.90%	0.40%	0.70%	11.00%
Bent County Community Foundation	40.2	85.50%	32.20%	7.30%	1.50%	5.70%
Downtown Stockton Alliance	33	44.80%	42.70%	11.20%	21.50%	13.10%
Albemarle Commission	43.8	73.00%	4.90%	22.70%	0.70%	3.60%
City of Martinsburg	36.9	79.90%	4.80%	13.90%	1.30%	3.20%
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)	39.4	64.90%	14.90%	28.30%	4.30%	2.50%
Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC)	34.5	50.00%	34.50%	38.20%	7.30%	2.30%

Source: [Census Bureau](#), American Community Survey and Population Estimates Program

Demographic characteristics are provided due to Covid-19 having stronger effects among older populations and among non-white populations. The median ages of the communities range from a low of 33 in Stockton, California to a high of 48.1 in the Tri-County, WA region. All of the communities were predominantly white, except for Stockton, CA, with 44.8 percent of the population identifying as white. Stockton also had the largest percentage of people identifying as Hispanic. (Note that Census data which is used in the chart does not separate race and Hispanic origin, leading to percentages greater than 100 percent.) Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation also had a very diverse population, with 34.5 percent identifying as Hispanic, and 38.2 percent identifying as Black.



Economic Indicators for Communities

Community	% Population Uninsured	Poverty Rates	% of population with no HS degree	Median Household Income
Develop Indy	10.50%	17.80%	13.30%	\$48,316
Tri-County EDD	6.80%	14.30%	9.60%	\$50,375
Bent County Community Foundation	8.80%	29.50%	16.10%	\$30,900
Downtown Stockton Alliance	17.90%	17.90%	21.80%	\$54,614
Albemarle Commission	11.70%	13.50%	9.30%	\$53,908
City of Martinsburg	9.00%	29.50%	14.70%	\$42,835
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)	11.40%	15.50%	13.80%	\$54,032
Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC)	29.40%	27.20%	25.70%	\$36,557

Source: [Census Bureau](#), 2015–2019 American Community Survey

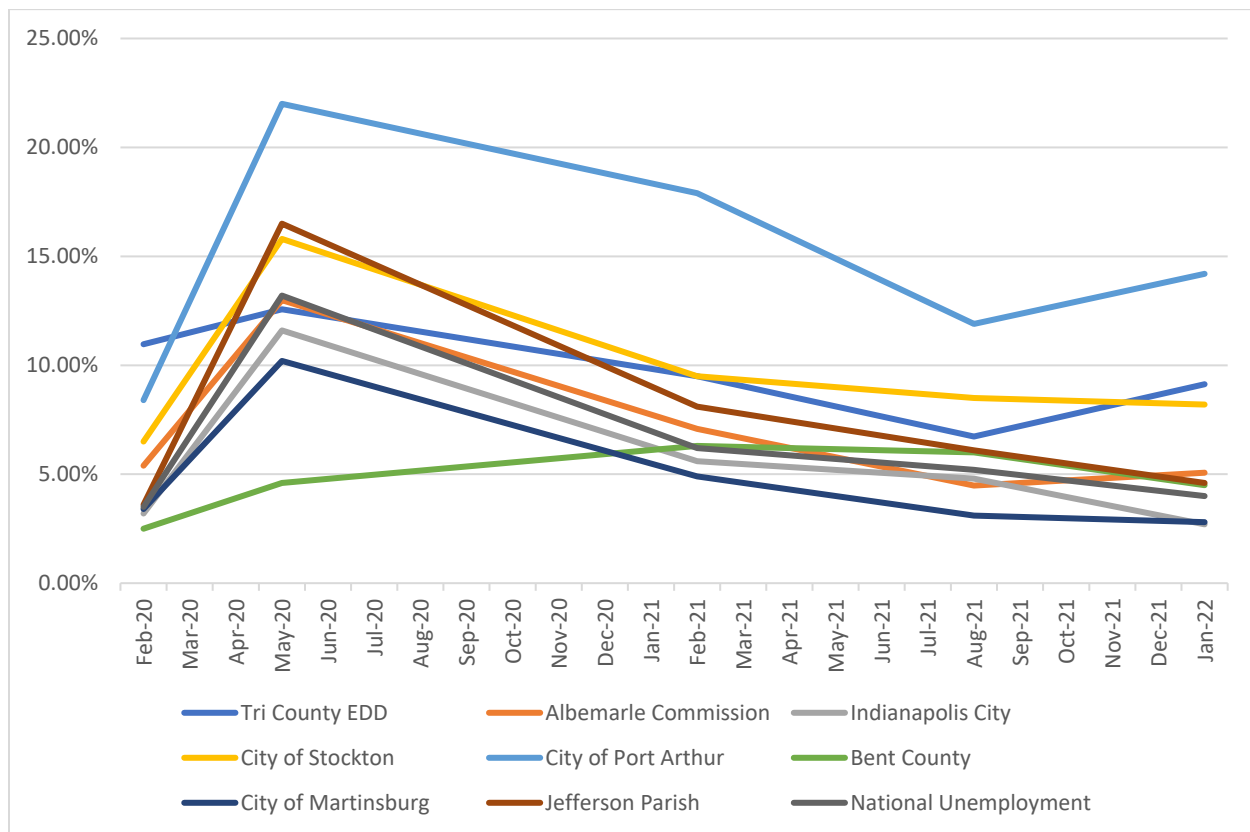
In terms of economic indicators, the communities had a wide range. In some communities, the population of uninsured people and poverty rates are similar, such as in Port Arthur, Stockton, and the Albemarle region.

Unemployment

The figure below displays unemployment trends from February 2020 to December 2021 for each of the eight communities (because GDP is not available at the regional level, we use county unemployment as a barometer of economic recovery). All of the communities experienced a spike in unemployment rates for the short-term recovery period (0–3 months after onset of the pandemic) from February to May 2020. The impact was least extreme in Bent County, Colorado, a rural area. The area with the most extreme impact was Port Arthur, Texas, which also has the highest Hispanic and Black population.



Unemployment Rate, February 2020-January 2022



Source: [Federal Reserve Economic Data](#), Federal Reserve of St. Louis, 2022

County Economic Impact Index

The Argonne National Laboratory developed the County Economic Impact Index (CEII) to identify regions whose local economies may be more adversely affected during medium-to long-term disruptions with near real-time data.¹⁰ The CEII scores in the graphic below estimate the change in overall county-level economic activity during the Covid-19 pandemic relative to January 2020.

Information on the Argonne National Laboratory page explains that economic activity in the CEII is measured by the total value added of all industries within the county, also referred to as the county's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and that CEII data also includes annualized monthly estimates of county-level value added for more than 100 industries.¹¹ Counties with economic activities dominated by industries experiencing rising

¹⁰ [County Economic Impact Index](#), Argonne National Laboratory.

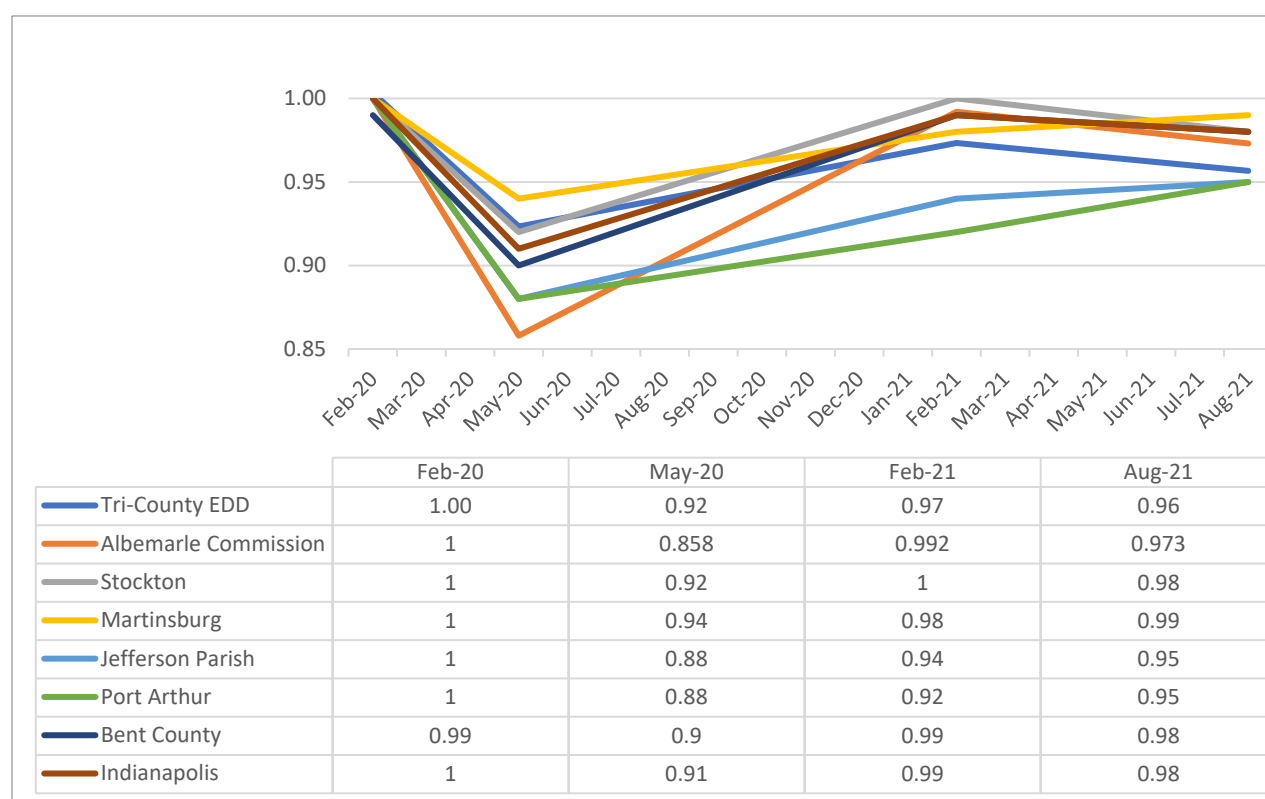
¹¹ [County Economic Impact Index](#), Argonne National Laboratory.

unemployment can expect larger direct impacts to their local economies, particularly if the industries account for a large portion of the economic output of that county.

The CEII scores below show similar short-term impact to the economy, though the communities rank slightly differently compared to the indicator of unemployment only. By this index, Port Arthur, Albemarle Commission and Jefferson Parish experienced some of the greatest impacts around May 2020. Some counties continued to experience significant economic impact through the last update of the index in August 2021, including Port Arthur, Jefferson Parish, and Tri-County EDD.

In the chart below, a cell value of 1 indicates that a county's economy is in the same position as it was in January 2020. A score below 1 indicates that it has declined; a score greater than 1 indicates that it has improved. Note that data is pulled at the county level. For regional EDOs, county data is averaged. There is some correlation between unemployment – one barometer of economic health – and the main industries identified by the respondents as prominent in their communities.

County Economic Impact Index¹² February 2020–August 2021



Source: *National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE)*, Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

Top Industries Per Community

The graph below shows the top industries by employment for each of the communities that participated in the study. The chart highlights the communities' largest sectors in terms of employment¹³. Retail trade made up about 25 - 20 percent in each community. Accommodation and food services were represented in the top five in Port Arthur, Jefferson Parish, Martinsburg, and Albemarle. Retail and accommodation and food service were noted as two sectors that were most in need of assistance due to Covid-19. For Indianapolis, Stockton, Martinsburg, and Jefferson Parish health care comprised a share of at 30 percent or over of the economy. Manufacturing was present as a major industry in Indianapolis, and Port Arthur. Construction was present in Albemarle, Tri-County EDD, Jefferson Parish, and Port Arthur. Health care, manufacturing, and construction were cited as industries facing workforce shortages. More information about each of the leading industries is included in detail in the profiles.

Top Five Industries by Employment By Community

	Develop Indy	Downtown Stockton Alliance	Tri- County EDD	Albemarle Commission	Bent County Community Foundation	City of Martinsburg	Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)	Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC)
1	Health Care & Social Assistance	Health Care & Social Assistance	Government & Government Enterprises	Government & Government Enterprises	Farm Employment	Health Care & Social Assistance	Health Care & Social Assistance	Manufacturing
2	Administrative Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	Retail Trade	Retail Trade	Retail Trade	Retail Trade	Retail Trade	Retail Trade	Retail Trade
3	Retail Trade	Educational Services	Farm Employment	Accommodation & Food Services	Health Care and Social Assistance	Accommodation & Food Services	Accommodation & Food Services	Construction
4	Manufacturing	Transportation & Warehousing	Other Services	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	Transportation and Warehousing	Public Administration	Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	Health Care & Social Assistance



5	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	Public Administration	Construction	Construction	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	Educational Services	Construction	Accommodation & Food Services
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Covid-19 Impact on Industry and Needs

The communities reported a wide range of industries that were impacted by the pandemic. Many of the sectors in need of assistance were characterized by professions related to supply-chain management or a front-line workforce. The figure below shows the sectors most in need of assistance in each community.

Top Five Industries in Need of Assistance By Community

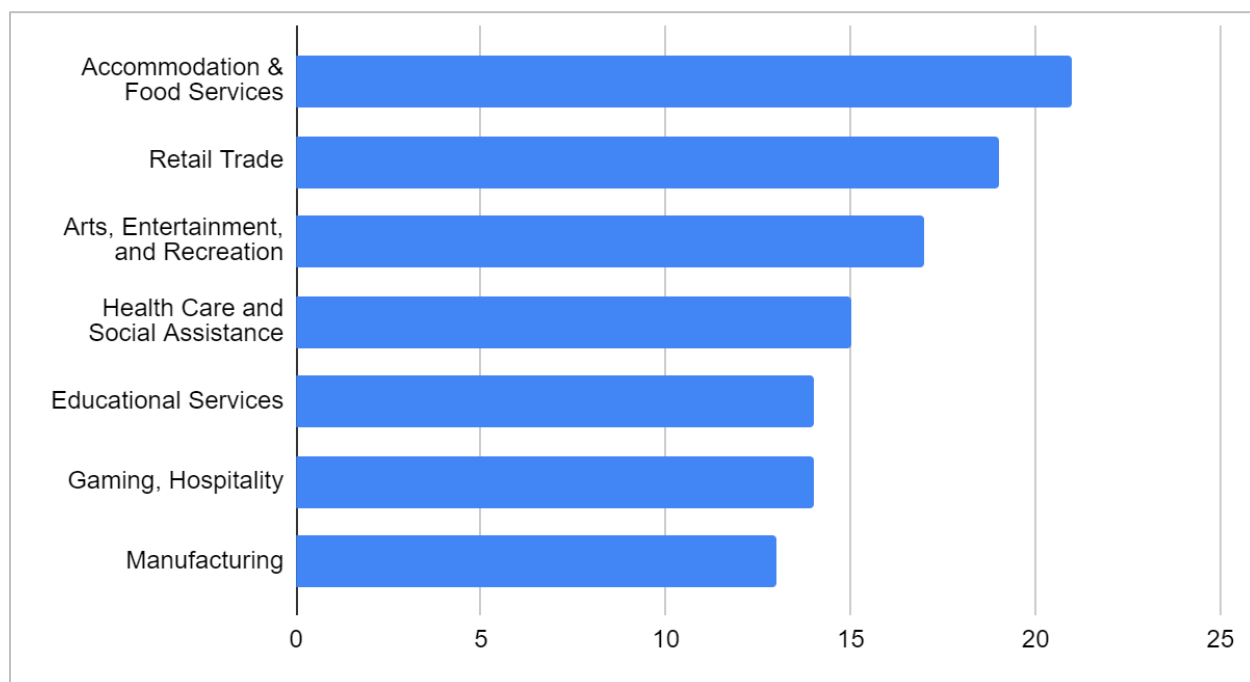
	Develop Indy	Downtown Stockton Alliance	Tri-County EDD	Albemarle Commission	Bent County Community Foundation	City of Martinsburg	Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)	Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC)
1	Accommodation & Food Services	Accommodation & Food Services	Accommodation & Food Services	Public Administration	Accommodation & Food Services	Accommodation & Food Services	Accommodation & Food Services	Accommodation & Food Services
2	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Accommodation & Food Services	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Health Care and Social Assistance
3	Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	Health Care and Social Assistance	Educational Services	Retail Trade	Health Care and Social Assistance	Health Care and Social Assistance	Health Care and Social Assistance	Educational Services
4	Retail Trade	Educational Services	Retail Trade	Wholesale Trade	Retail Trade	Educational Services	Educational Services	Retail Trade
5	Manufacturing	Retail Trade	Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	Retail Trade	Retail Trade	Manufacturing

The top industry in need of assistance for most of the communities was accommodation and food service, followed by arts, entertainment, and recreation, then healthcare and social assistance.¹⁴ It is not surprising that these industries were the most impacted because they rely on face-to-face interactions. Many of these

¹⁴ Top Five Industries per Community Chart – This chart highlights the top industries mentioned per community in no particular order. There were not enough data points to confidently convert these to percentages or rank them per community.

local economies have high employment in industries that would be severely impacted by Covid-19. Retail trade is a major source of employment for every community and not surprisingly, was a top five industry mentioned by all communities. Health care and social assistance has an important economic role in multiple communities and is an industry whose workforce and capacity levels have been threatened by Covid-19. Covid-19 had major effects on large employment industries across the country like retail trade, food services, manufacturing, and health care, and these communities reinforce the economic trends that have occurred these past two years.

Sectors in Need of Assistance, Entire Study Period

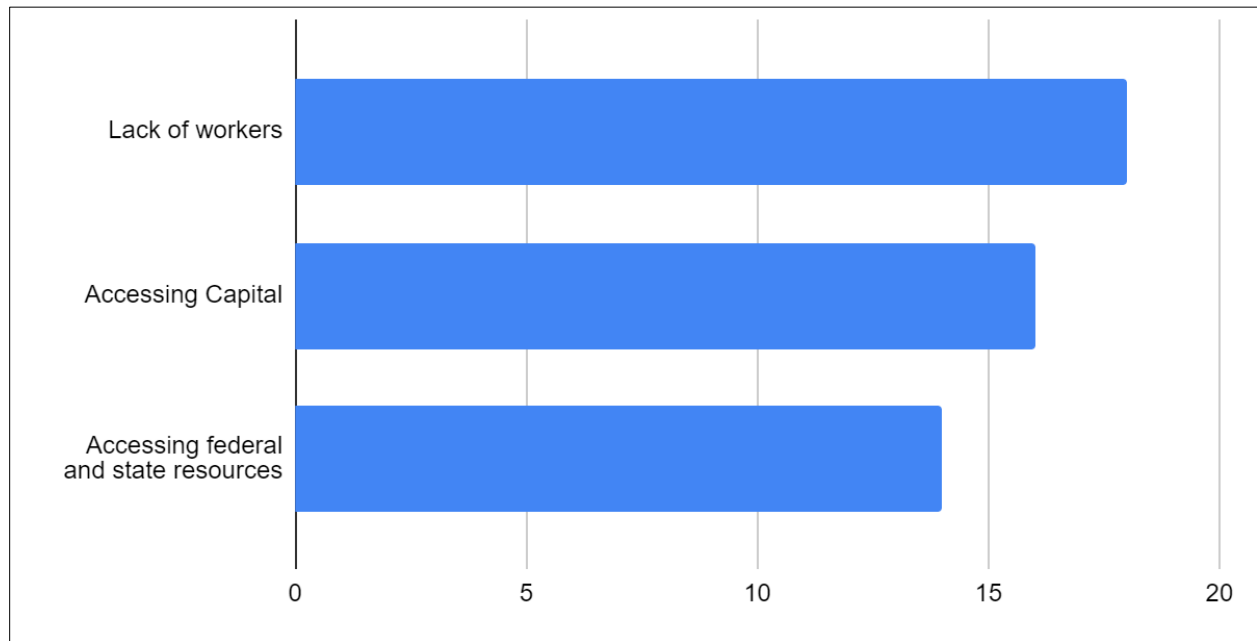


The graph above tracks how many times a community mentioned an industry needed assistance. The industry could have been mentioned by each of the eight organizations in each of the three interviews for a total of 24 mentions. Therefore, accommodation and food service was the industry that the study group as a whole responded with most. All the industries listed above were included in more than 50 percent of respondents' answers. Two industries that fell just below the 50 percent rate for inclusion in responses were construction and transportation and warehousing. Communities included these industries in responses most often during the third interview, suggesting the Omicron surge and other economic shocks in January impacted these industries heavily.

Businesses top needs and concerns raised over the course of the study period are shown in the graph below. The majority of communities mentioned a shortage of workers, with some indicating that workers were working mandatory 12-hour shifts. Most EDOs reported that businesses requested assistance with access to capital and federal and state resources, especially in the early part of the study period. Other communities indicated that specific training was needed to help workers become more employable in career paths with possibilities for better earnings and pandemic-related safety outcomes.



Businesses' Top Needs and Concerns, Entire Study Period



Measures of Impact

The statistics above on unemployment showed that all the communities had improved by the second year of the pandemic (starting in February 2021). Yet as the table below indicates, while five of the communities felt the worst of the impacts were behind them, three – Tri-County EDD, Bent County and Port Arthur – reported they were currently experiencing the worst of the economic impacts.

There is no geographic, size, or other similarities delineating amongst organizations that had a positive or negative outlook at different points in the research interviews, but certain themes emerge:

Downtown Impacts

In February of 2021 the City of Martinsburg and the Downtown Stockton Alliance indicated that they were experiencing the worst of the impacts. Both organizations have a focus on downtown revitalization, which had stalled as health regulations affected the presence of workers in the downtown and the business hours of shops and restaurants. Additionally, Martinsburg pointed out that their efforts in events-based placemaking was a nonstarter due to the pandemic.

Labor Force Impacts

In August of 2021 Bent County Community Foundation and Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission indicated that they were experiencing the worst effects. In this case, the organizations highlighted the strain the pandemic had caused in the labor force. In Bent County, impact of sickness on the labor force was noted, as well as the lack of healthcare workers. In Jefferson Parish, the manufacturing sector was deeply in need of workers due to ageing out and a lack of replacements.

Housing Impacts

For all three communities who indicated that they were experiencing the worst impacts in January 2022 – Bent County, Tri-County EDD, and Port Arthur – the uniting issue was housing. Specifically, lack of affordable housing.

Where do you think you currently are in terms of Covid-19 economic impact?			
Community	February 2021	August 2021	January 2022
Develop Indy	The worst of the impacts are behind us	The worst of the impacts are behind us	The worst of the impacts are behind us.
Tri-County EDD	We expect the impacts to worsen	We expect the impacts to worsen	We are currently experiencing the worst of the impacts.
Bent County Community Foundation	The worst of the impacts are behind us	We are currently experiencing the worst of the impacts	We are currently experiencing the worst of the impacts.
Downtown Stockton Alliance	We are currently experiencing the worst of the impacts	The worst of the impacts are behind us	The worst of the impacts are behind us.
Albemarle Commission	The worst of the impacts are behind us	The worst of the impacts are behind us	The worst of the impacts are behind us.
City of Martinsburg	We are currently experiencing the worst of the impacts	We expect the impacts to worsen	The worst of the impacts are behind us.
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)	The worst of the impacts are behind us	We are currently experiencing the worst of the impacts	The worst of the impacts are behind us.
Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC)	The worst of the impacts are behind us		We are currently experiencing the worst of the impacts

The table below allows some similar conclusions about regional variance to be drawn. Some communities are pessimistic about their economies, saying they expect to maintain the level of impact into the foreseeable future. Two of those communities are Port Arthur and Bent County, which indicated they were experiencing the worst of the impacts.



As shown below, the most common answer was “the level of impact moving forward is unknown,” with nine responses across the eight communities and three time periods. Eight communities expected to maintain the impact level moving forward and six expected it to be better. Overall, this disaster was evaluated as one that had an uncertain and protracted recovery.

How do you anticipate your current level of economic impact to shift in the short-term?			
Community	February, 2021	August, 2021	January, 2022
Develop Indy	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future	We expect our situation to better in the short-term	The level of impact moving forward is unknown.
Tri-County EDD	The level of impact moving forward is unknown	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future.
Bent County Community Foundation	The level of impact moving forward is unknown	The level of impact moving forward is unknown	The level of impact moving forward is unknown.
Downtown Stockton Alliance	We expect our situation to better in the short-term	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future.
Albemarle Commission	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future	We expect our situation to better in the short-term	The level of impact moving forward is unknown.
City of Martinsburg	The level of impact moving forward is unknown	The level of impact moving forward is unknown	We expect our situation to better in the short-term.
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)	We expect our situation to better in the short-term	The level of impact moving forward is unknown	We expect our situation to better in the short-term.

Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC)	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future	We expect to maintain this level of impact to our economy for the foreseeable future.
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EDO Capacity and Impact

The table below shows the variation in EDOs' staff size, as well as reported capacity. One of the salient trends over the course of the three interviews is that the capacities of most of the organizations did not change. Three reported being adequately staffed and performing at capacity at the beginning and end of the study year, while three reported they were understaffed and operating over capacity during all the time periods.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which best describes the capacity of your staff?					
Community	Type of Organization	Staff Size	February, 2021	August, 2021	January, 2022
Develop Indy	Chamber of Commerce/Local EDO	21 or more	Organization understaffed, and operating over capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity
Tri-County EDD	Regional Economic Development District	6-10	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization understaffed, operating over capacity
Bent County Community Foundation	Public-Private Partnership	1-5	Organization understaffed, and operating over capacity	Organization understaffed, and operating over capacity	Organization understaffed, and operating over capacity
Downtown Stockton Alliance	Property-Based Improvement District	21 or more	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity



Albemarle Commission	Regional Economic Development District	21 or more	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity
City of Martinsburg	Local government	1-5	Organization understaffed, operating over capacity	Organization understaffed, operating over capacity	Organization understaffed, operating over capacity
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)	Local economic development organization	16-20	Organization understaffed, and operating over capacity	Organization understaffed, and operating over capacity	Organization understaffed, and operating over capacity
Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC)	Local economic development organization	6-10	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity	Organization is adequately staffed and performing at capacity

Two organizations indicated their workload and staff capacity had changed. For TEDD, the time of the first interview was a busy point, even without the impact of Covid-19; they had recently gone through the process of writing a CEDS and recovery and resiliency plans, which had increased their workload. Additionally, their staff had fluctuated over the past two years, and they were in the process of hiring. Develop Indy indicated in interviews that their workload had increased quite a bit due to Covid-19 recovery programs, and that some staff had recently departed. In subsequent interviews, the organization had replaced those staff members.

This community-level data illustrates several common recovery patterns across the studied communities:

1. Unemployment was at its highest in the short-term period after the pandemic began, peaking nationally around May, irrespective of the level of Covid-19 impact in the community. This is likely caused by multiple complex factors, including fear, changing public health guidance, and supply-chain challenges, among others. ***COVID-19 revealed the ways in which a pandemic can damage local economies even when the disaster hasn't yet arrived.***
2. Although the pandemic was national, different regions of the country were hit differently in terms of timing and degree of impact. The reported attitudes about impact reflect these differences. ***There is significant variance in impact by geographic region.***
3. The pandemic also had more significant impacts on some industries than others due to supply chain effects, workforce shortages by industry and other factors. ***There is variation in impact based on the existing industries and level of diversification in communities.***



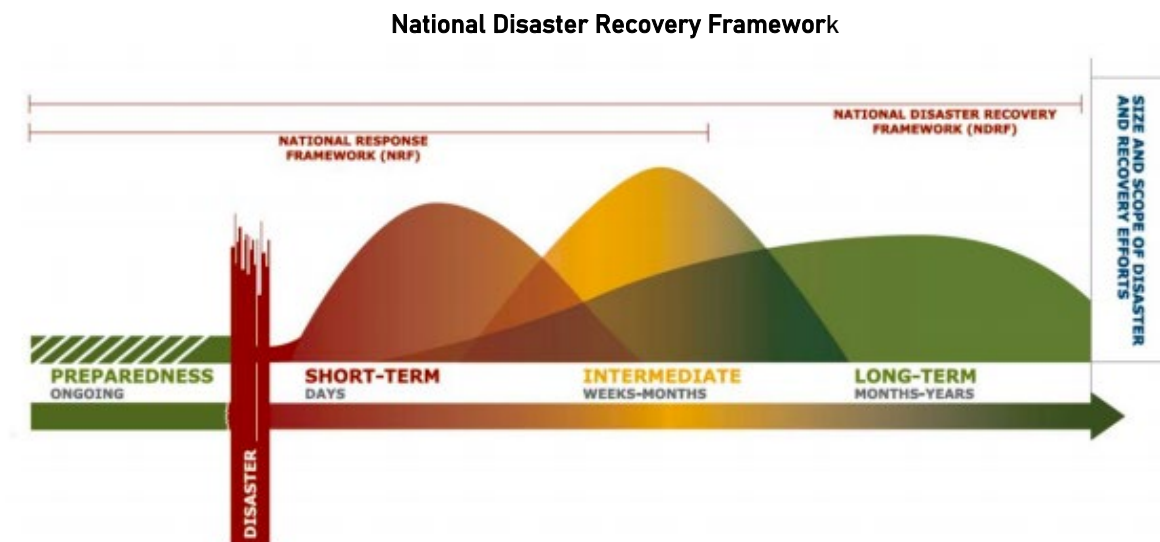
4. Several communities reported that the effect of the pandemic moving forward was unknown. *The Covid-19 disaster caused communities to experience uncertainty about future economic outcomes.*
5. If an EDO's baseline capacity is strong, it is likely to remain strong; however, if an EDO's baseline capacity is low, it is likely to be challenged during a time of disaster. If anything, some communities mentioned public administration as one of the industries more negatively affected. It is important that an EDO build a strong capacity under steady-state or "blue sky" conditions. ***An EDO cannot be expected to create or recover capacity immediately after a disaster.***



How Covid-19 Recovery Is Different

Models of recovery from disaster tend to assume that communities are impacted by a single disaster event. Because Covid-19 has been an ongoing disaster, typical models for disaster recovery may not apply. Response and recovery models tend to be linear, or on a continuum of time (e.g., short-term, medium-term, long-term) while pandemics have behaved cyclically or in waves. The Covid-19 pandemic has not had a linear impact due to new variants and periodic resurgence of the virus. Therefore, typical timelines for response and recovery are less applicable.

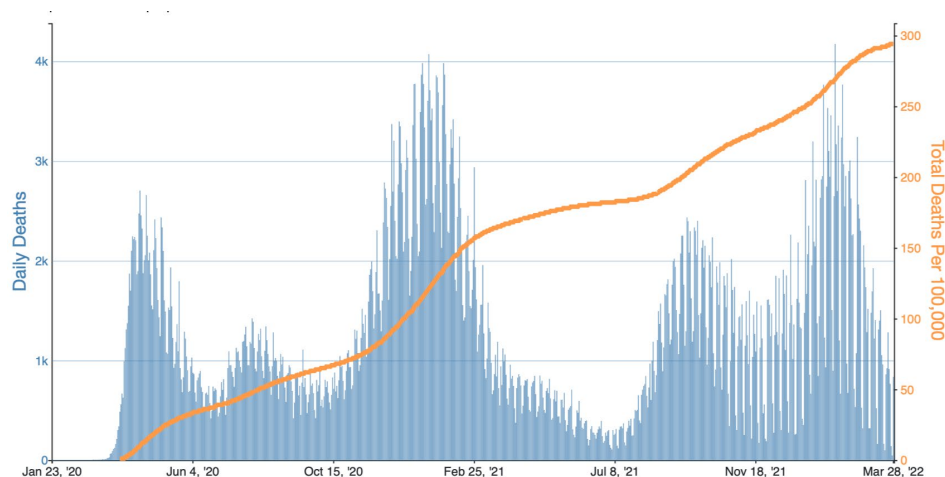
For example, the graph below, illustrating the National Response and Disaster Recovery Framework, shows a disaster event, including a linear timeline for short-term and immediate response, and a longer-term period for recovery.



Source: [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#), FEMA, 2016

Contrast the linear model above with the graphic below, which shows the number of deaths due to Covid-19 over time. There are multiple peaks, beginning with one in February of 2020 and another, larger peak indicating a surge in infections and deaths in January of 2021. In September 2021, another peak indicates the arrival of the Delta variant, and a fourth surge in February of 2022 reflects infections and deaths from the Omicron variant. The two images display timelines that do not correlate. Even if each peak in infection and morbidity was treated as a separate disaster, the timeline for communities' recovery would be cut short by another surge in the virus.

Daily Trends in Number of Deaths and Cumulative Incidence Rate of Covid-19 Deaths per 100,000



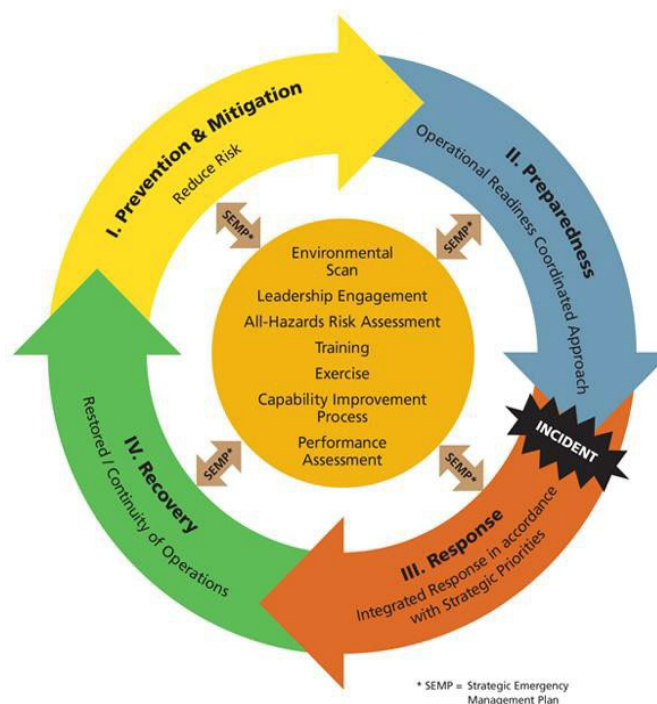
Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), Center for Disease Control, 2022

The prolonged nature of pandemics also challenges the notion of the cycle of disaster, developed in 1979 by the National Governors Association. This model, shown below, describes a four-phase process— the Strategic Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) — to help emergency managers prepare for and respond to disasters. These phases include: 1) mitigation; 2) preparedness; 3) response; and 4) recovery.¹⁵

¹⁵ Comprehensive Emergency Management: A Governor's Guide, National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research, 1979



Strategic Emergency Management Plan



Source: [Emergency Management Training Guide](#), Public Safety Canada, 2010

In the case of Covid-19, the incident, marked in the SEMP graphic in black, has been drawn out over a nearly two-year period. Though there have been spikes of more intensive infection resulting in larger numbers of fatalities, the timelines associated with recovery and response as listed in the National Disaster Recovery Framework have not been applicable to the ongoing nature of the pandemic. Like a skipping record, from March 2020 to March 2022, communities and their businesses became stuck between response and recovery.

Reports of frustrations from businesses show the toll that changing regulations brought on in the early months of the pandemic – for example, restaurants retrofitting their service model, only to shut down again in anticipation of another wave.¹⁶ Accommodation and food services was the most commonly mentioned sector when communities were asked which businesses needed assistance. What's more, many local resources used for typical recovery strategies, such as grants and short-term loans to businesses, were exhausted throughout the drawn-out recovery phase. This was brought up by several communities, including Stockton and Martinsburg.

¹⁶ [‘I Thought I Was All Done With That’: COVID Surge Forces Restaurants to Shut Down](#), Eater Chicago, December 2021

Stressors and Shocks

Another model of community resilience categorizes threats as stressors or shocks. The Covid-19 pandemic upends this model as well. Stressors are the slow-moving, chronic conditions that weaken the social and economic fabric of a community, such as high unemployment, endemic violence, or an overtaxed public infrastructure system.¹⁷ Shocks are sudden, sharp events such as earthquakes, floods, or hurricanes.¹⁸ The Covid-19 pandemic has been a combination of both: sudden in the nature of shutdowns, but chronic in the problems it has caused and exacerbated. In fact, the problems caused by Covid-19 often already existed as stressors that the pandemic brought to the surface, accelerating their affects, and pushing communities further behind.

Resilience is related to how well a community can address stressors, plan for shocks, and carry out those plans when a shock occurs. As part of background research for this project, IEDC took stock of the technical assistance projects it has conducted with local economic development organizations (EDOs) impacted by disasters over the past 15 years, starting with work after Hurricane Katrina. The majority of these projects were focused on strategic planning, conducted with involvement from other stakeholder groups including businesses, municipal leaders, emergency management professionals, non-profits, educational institutions, workforce investment boards and others. These projects show that EDOs recognize the importance of an approach to resilience that focuses on addressing stressors. This approach results in each organization taking on the role that suits them best, while establishing communication networks and shared goals that strengthen resilience.

Continuing this trend toward building resilience, during the Covid-19 pandemic economic developers have increased their role in community-wide efforts to address underlying stressors that have surfaced while also expanding programs that directly serve businesses to help them better weather the shocks. One of these stressors, which demands a collaborative approach, is workforce. Each of the communities mentioned that a top concern throughout the pandemic was a lack of workers. Workforce development involves multiple partners, from educational institutions to training providers to workforce investment boards.

Workforce issues are multifaceted and often reflect stressors in a community, so addressing them builds economic resilience. For example, one community we interviewed indicated that the ongoing opioid epidemic had decreased the pool of potential workers. In this instance, a public and mental health issue is now influencing businesses' ability to hire. As the community attempts to recover from Covid-19, the stressor of widespread addiction has weakened its economic resilience. Addressing this issue will require widening the circle of collaboration even more, to include public health and law enforcement in planning and mitigation efforts.

In addition to workforce-related issues, the organizations in our study have reported several other examples of stressors that the Covid-19 pandemic have elevated to crises. Participating organizations are engaging in efforts to build workforce housing, advocate for broadband expansion, and address homeless populations, in addition to their role as advocates and champions of their communities' businesses. These initiatives are

¹⁷ [What is Urban Resilience?](#) 100 Resilient Cities, 2019

¹⁸ [What is Urban Resilience?](#) 100 Resilient Cities, 2019



explained more in detail in the community profiles that follow. Paradoxically, the Covid-19 pandemic may ultimately strengthen communities' resilience, due to the action that is being taken on community stressors that were exacerbated or accelerated. It will be important for these collaborative efforts to continue well beyond the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and it will take time and effort to ensure that they continue.



Community Profiles

Develop Indy

Background

Develop Indy is the economic development organization for the City of Indianapolis and Marion County and is housed within the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce. Develop Indy focuses on business attraction, retention, and expansion to support the people, communities, and companies that make up their economic landscape. Develop Indy also supports economic development initiatives in the nine-county region surrounding Indianapolis and is a CDFI.

The mission of Develop Indy is to guide businesses of all sizes in their growth, so they can make lasting economic impacts on the community; Develop Indy is the first stop when navigating the Indy business community. The Indy's Chamber's mission is to empower business to ensure all have the opportunity to succeed in the Indianapolis region.

Demographics

Indianapolis is the state capital and the most populous city in the State of Indiana. Indianapolis and Marion County have a consolidated population of 977,203.¹⁹ The racial breakdown of Indianapolis and Marion County's population is 55.3 percent Non-Hispanic White, 27.6 percent Non-Hispanic Black or African American, 10.4 percent Hispanic or Latino, 3.3 percent Non-Hispanic Asian, and 2.9 percent two or more races. All other categories fall below 1 percent.²⁰

In December 2021, NERDE reported a labor force participation rate of 66.02 percent for Indianapolis and Marion County. According to NERDE and Chmura Analytics,²¹ Marion County and Indianapolis' median household income was \$47,873 and has a per capita income of \$28,566. The City of Indianapolis and Marion County have a poverty rate of 17.8 percent.²²

¹⁹ 2020 Decennial Census, US Census Bureau

²⁰ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\), Argonne National Laboratory](#), 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

²¹ 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.

²² [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\), Argonne National Laboratory](#), 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

Major Industries

The top five industries in terms of total employment are health care and social assistance, administrative and support and waste management and remediation services, retail trade, manufacturing, professional, scientific, and technical services. The top five industries when it comes to GDP are nondurable goods manufacturing, real estate and rental and leasing, health care and social assistance, finance and insurance, and professional, scientific, and technical services.²³

Compared to the national average, Indianapolis has a higher concentration of jobs in transportation and warehousing, administrative and support and waste management and remediation services, and health care and social assistance. The sectors with the highest average wage per worker are management of companies and enterprises (\$109,358), utilities (\$106,971), and manufacturing (\$103,739).²⁴

Impacts

Before Covid, the Indianapolis region had a growing and prosperous economy in multiple industries. During all three interviews Develop Indy identified the manufacturing, retail trade, accommodation and food services, gaming, and hospitality as the industries most in need of additional assistance. Covid-19 measures severely impacted the tourism and entertainment industry, and businesses in the food and beverage and hospitality industries did not fully start reopening until late 2021.

The unemployment rate for Indianapolis and Marion County in February 2020, right before the pandemic, was 3.2 percent. By May 2020, the unemployment rate had reached 11.6 percent. During the first round of interviews in February 2021, Indianapolis and Marion County had an unemployment rate of 5.6 percent. In August 2021, the city and county had an unemployment rate of 4.8 percent. As of January 2022, the unemployment rate for Indianapolis and Marion County was 2.7 percent.

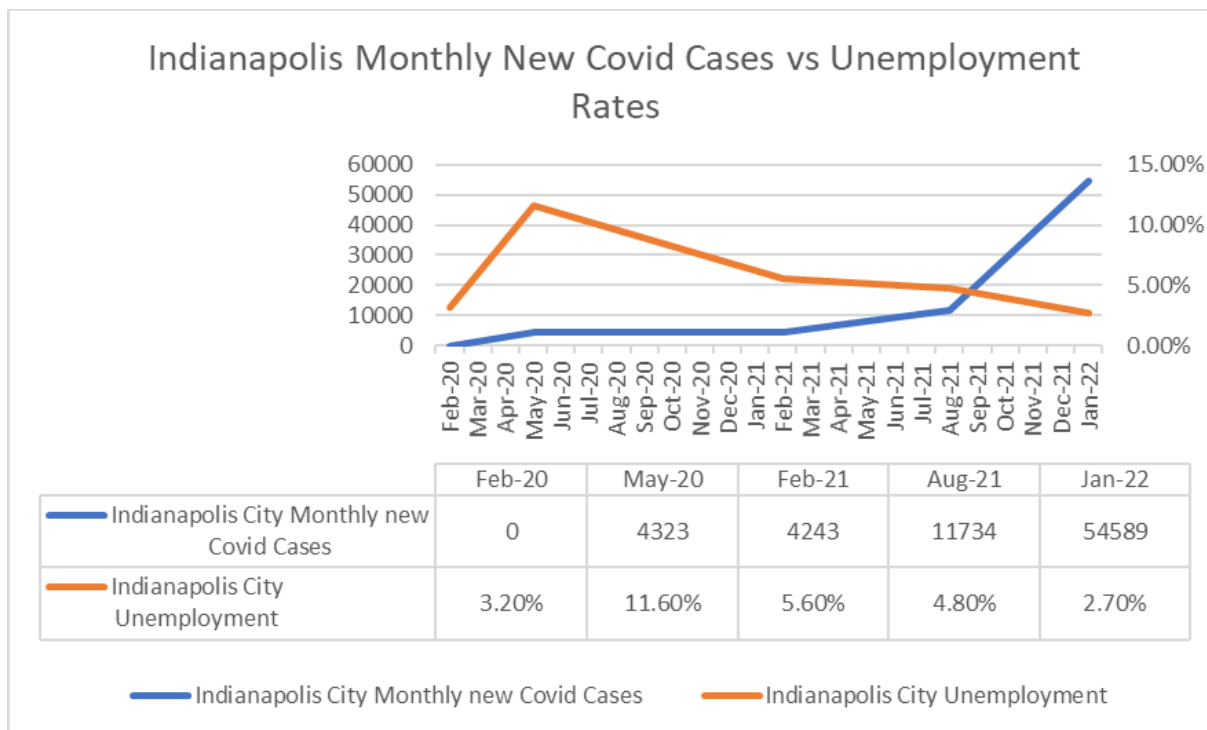
Throughout the pandemic, an increase in Covid-19 cases in Indianapolis did not correlate with an increase in the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate continued to steadily decrease after it hit its peak in May 2020 while new monthly Covid-19 cases continued to increase throughout the entire study period with a sharp peak in January 2022.²⁵

²³ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\), Argonne National Laboratory – 2015-2019](#)
American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

²⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.

²⁵ County data is for Marion County – CEII and Covid Cases at county level





Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

Industry Impact

Covid-19's impact on the Indianapolis downtown area has made downtown revitalization a top priority for the city. The pandemic forced businesses and organizations to work from home, leaving their downtown office spaces vacant. This harmed the businesses located downtown who relied on office workers as a key part of their customer base. The downtown area has seen an increase in both homelessness camps and crime due to pandemic. Moving forward, downtown vacancy rates and business closures will be an important metric for determining the total impact Covid had. Indianapolis had a flourishing business and conference tourism economy, and the pandemic completely stopped business tourism. In relation to this, tracking direct flights in Indianapolis will be an important metric for Develop Indy to track.

Workforce Impact

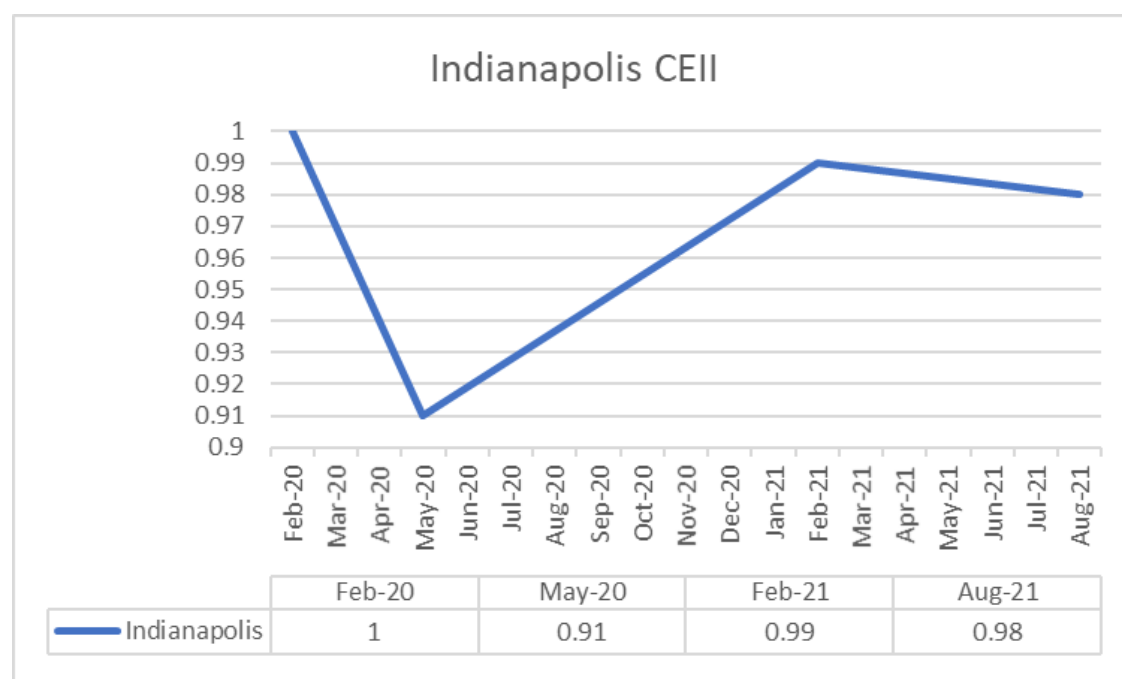
With such a quick recovery to employment, finding workers has consistently been an issue for businesses approaching Develop Indy. Throughout the whole interview process this was brought up as the main topic businesses were approaching them about. This lack of workers was especially felt in the manufacturing industry, a legacy industry for Indianapolis. After laying off employees in the early pandemic, this industry struggled and continues to struggle to pay the right wages to attract talent. A similar vulnerability also occurred in the food, beverage, and hospitality industry with a slow recovery starting in 2022.



In addition to workforce shortage, Develop Indy was frequently approached about how to access capital and how to access and comply with federal and state assistance programs. More recently there has been a focus on building a more resilient supply chain with businesses requesting assistance to adapt their supply chain to more US-based buyers and suppliers.

County Economic Impact Index

As can be seen in the County Economic Impact Index (CEII) for Indianapolis, Covid-19 had a negative impact on the regional economy in the first half of 2020, causing the CEII to 0.91 in May 2020.²⁶ The CEII quickly recovered to 0.99 in February 2021 and has since dropped to 0.98 in August 2021.



Source: [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

Response

As an initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic Develop Indy operated as an information provider and connector for businesses. They started a rapid re-employment portal that connected workers that had been laid off with available opportunities and offered technical assistance to businesses needing to pivot.

Develop Indy and the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce were proactive with their business support during the pandemic, creating their own business loans in addition to the Federal PPP loans. They raised \$6 million

for their Rapid Response Loan program. This was modeled off of Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) loans, and they received over 1,500 requests for this program. They ended up making 238 loans through this program and over 50 percent of the loans went to minority businesses.

Develop Indy also set up their Help Grants Program, which provided rent relief to businesses in the food and beverage industry. This helped stabilize the city's tax base because of their food and beverage tax. This program covered any unpaid rent from April to September 2021 and then covered rent for October, November, and December. Businesses were required to stay open to receive this funding. They also had a Ready to Restart Program, which reimbursed businesses for any expenditures they made for PPE.

To relieve the worker shortage, Develop Indy's business retention unit met with business owners to identify overlaps in worker needs and started a rapid re-employment initiative as well as a matchmaking database for employers and job seekers.

In March and April of 2021 Indianapolis hosted the NCAA's March Madness tournament. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the whole tournament was held in one location, which provided an excellent opportunity for the city to reopen and test new uses of spaces in their downtown area. The tournament utilized several venues that had not been used as stadiums in many years and the city received more than 170,000 visitors for this tournament.

In addition to these short-term relief strategies, Develop Indy has been involved with other stakeholders on how to pivot their downtown strategies and direct reinvestment.



Tri-County Economic Development District

Background

The Tri-County Economic Development District (TEDD) is the regional entity that supports economic development activity in three counties of Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens in rural Northeast Washington State. Established in 1969, TEDD is the federally designated Economic Development District for the three-county service area.

TEDD focuses on supporting and growing local businesses with the goal of developing a stable and diverse economy that is rich in family-wage jobs, thus enhancing the quality of life for every resident in Northeast Washington. Through collaboration with local businesses, communities, and other organizations in their three-county region, TEDD maintains local and regional plans, and provides business development, expansion, and recruitment services.

In addition to business retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts, TEDD runs the Rural Opportunities Loan Fund (ROLF), a program that provides debt financing for start-up and existing businesses to ten counties in eastern Washington. They are also responsible for transportation planning for the Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties region.

Demographic Information

Together, the three counties that TEDD covers has one of the lowest population densities in the state, with a total population of 65,610. The racial makeup of the three-county region's population is 85.4 percent Non-Hispanic white, 5.5 percent Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4.0 percent two or more races, and 3.9 percent Latino or Hispanic. All other racial categories fall below one percent.²⁷

NERDE's most recent labor force participation rate for TEDD is from November 2021 and was reported at 46.0 percent²⁸. According to Chmura Analytics,²⁹ the median household income was \$50,375, with a per capita income of \$27,010.

Major Industries

The top five industries when it comes to total employment are government and government enterprises, retail trade, farm employment, other services (except government and government enterprises), and construction.

²⁷ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\), Argonne National Laboratory](#), 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

²⁸ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\), Argonne National Laboratory](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

²⁹ 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.



In terms of GDP, the top five industries are government and government enterprises, real estate, rental and leasing, utilities, durable goods manufacturing, and retail trade.³⁰

Compared to the national average, Tri-County has higher concentrations in the industries of agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, public administration, and utilities. The industries with the highest wages per worker in Tri-County are the utilities (\$80,386), mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (\$78,028), and management of companies and enterprises (\$68,294).³¹

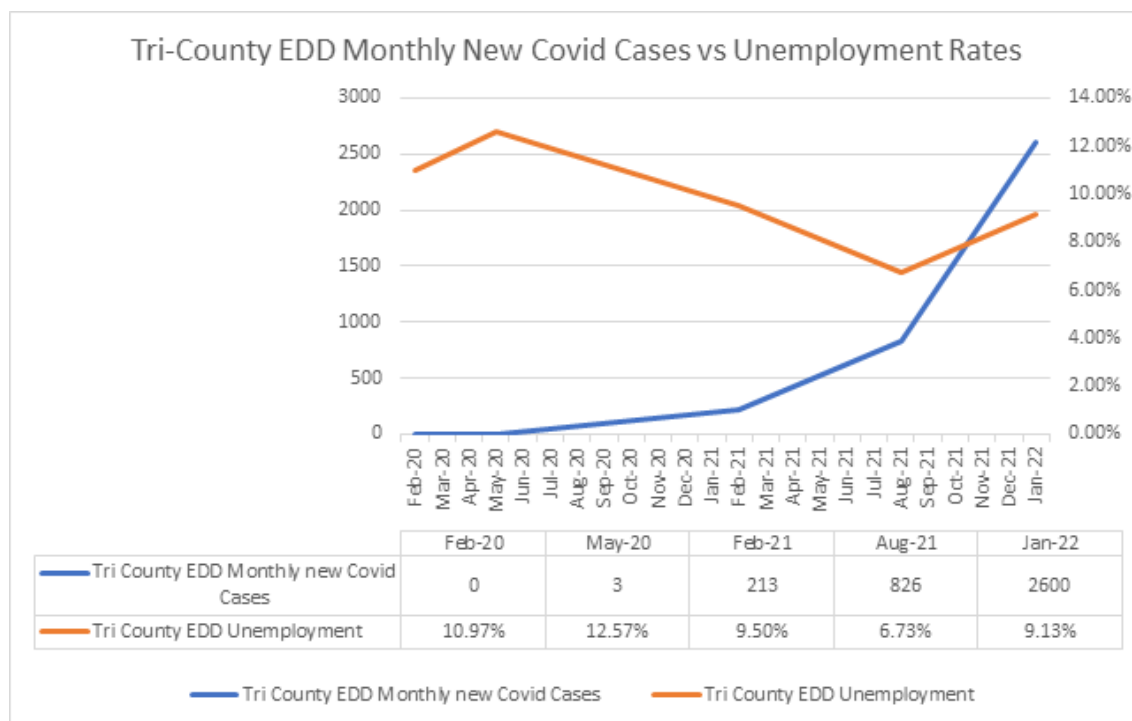
Impacts

The unemployment rate for the Tri-County region in February 2020, right before the pandemic, was 10.97 percent. By May 2020, the unemployment rate had reached 12.5 percent. During the first round of interviews in February 2021, the Tri-County region had an unemployment rate of 9.50 percent. In August 2021, the region had an unemployment rate of 6.73 percent, significantly lower than its pre-pandemic levels. This does seem to be unusual, but as shown above in the section National Recovery Trends, after an increase in unemployment in April and May of 2020, numbers continued to decline even as new waves of infection continued. In the region represented by TEDD, there was a much lower density of service jobs compared to other regions in the state. Because of this, TEDD did not see as drastic an increase in the unemployment rate as more urban areas did. Furthermore, to begin with, the unemployment rate in the region was higher than elsewhere in the state, and as the economy came back after the first wave of the pandemic, demand for jobs increased, as they did elsewhere.

As of January 2022, the unemployment for the Tri-County region was 9.13 percent. As noted by the CEII graph below, as well as the qualitative data discussed throughout this profile, the lowering unemployment rate did not translate into an economy functioning at pre-pandemic levels.

³⁰ National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE), Argonne National Laboratory, 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

³¹ Demographic Data pulled from 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.



Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

For the majority of the pandemic, an increase in Covid-19 cases in the region did not correlate with an increase in the unemployment rate. In fact, while unemployment continued to decrease from its peak in May 2020, Covid-19 cases steadily increased. The low numbers of Covid-19 cases early in the timeline are likely due to the rural nature of the population in this area. Though case numbers were low in May 2020, the economy in NE Washington still felt the effects of national trends. The only time the two variables increased at the same time was when Covid-19 cases dramatically increased in August of 2021. At this time, the unemployment rate increased for the first time since the spring of 2020. This shows that the local economy was recovering as the pandemic was spreading.

Industry Impacts

During all three interviews, Tri-County stated that manufacturing, retail trade, and accommodation and food services all needed particular assistance due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to these three sectors, TEDD reported that the utilities needed more assistance during the second interview, and in the third interview educational services, healthcare and social assistance, arts, entertainment, and recreation, and gaming and hospitality were also cited.

Interview Insights

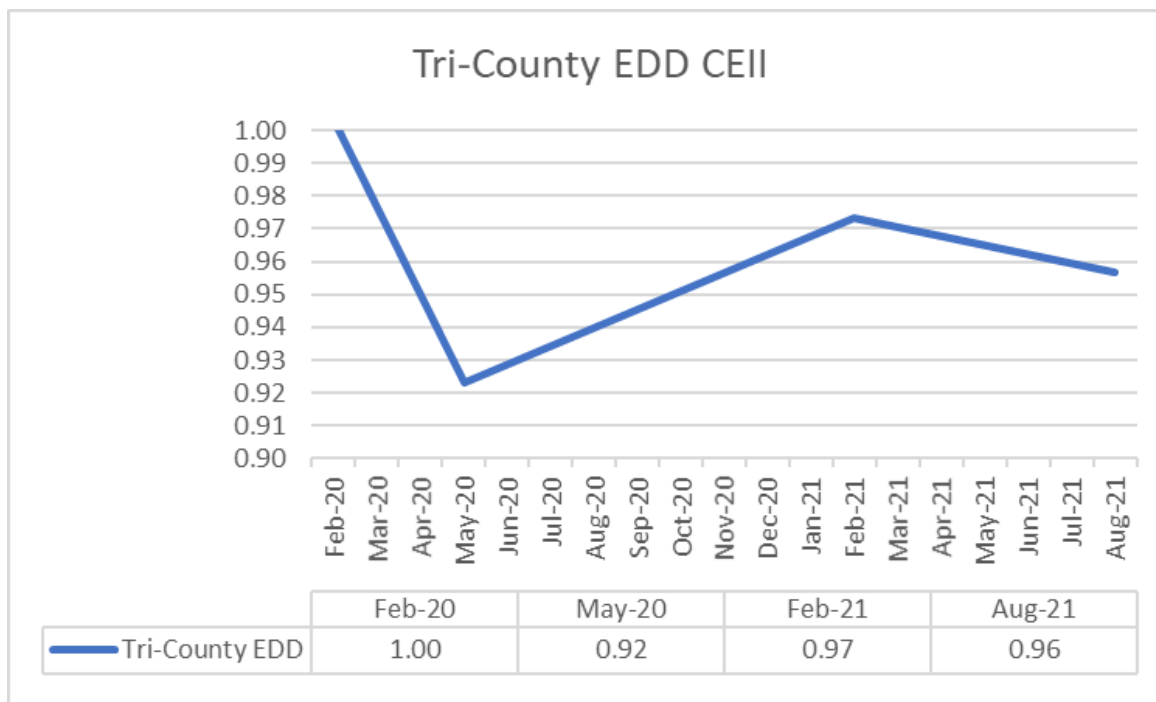
Throughout the three-interview series, accessing capital was one of the main issues TEDD identified that local businesses were asking the EDO for assistance on. In addition to access to capital, during the first interview in February 2021, TEDD stated that accessing federal and state resources, changes and compliance with regulations and pivoting business strategies were the main issues that their local businesses were asking for their assistance on. In both the second and third interview, Tri-County noted that accessing capital and lack of workers were the main issues that their businesses were asking the EDO for. Other issues mentioned included adapting supply chains during the second interview, and pivoting business strategies in the third.

During the first interview, in February of 2021, TEDD indicated that funding gaps and limited access to capital, as well as the availability of affordable housing were both *moderately high* impacts, the second highest level of impact on the scale from *low* to *extremely high*. Throughout all three interviews, TEDD indicated that availability of affordable housing was a moderately high impact. By the final interview, funding gaps and limited access to capital was of low impact to the community.

County Economic Impact Index

According to the County Economic Impact Index (CEII), in the Tri-County region, the current level of impact from the Covid-19 pandemic lessened over the course of the study period. Capacity of healthcare providers, downtown revitalization, business closures, increased unemployment, and communication with community business stakeholders and residents were all identified as *high* by TEDD in the first interview. By interview three in January of 2022, TEDD identified communication with community business stakeholders and residents, availability of affordable housing, and capacity of healthcare providers as *moderately high*. By the third interview, TEDD didn't identify any sectors as having high impact, and the other sectors were identified as *low* or *moderate*.





Source: [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

As noted in the County Economic Impact Index (CEII) graph for the Tri-County Region, Covid-19 had a major negative impact on the regional economy causing the CEII to fall as the pandemic began to 0.92 in May of 2020. The economy improved from May 2020 till February 2021, when the CEII was at 0.97, when the recovery stalled, and the impacts began to worsen.

Response

When the pandemic began in March of 2020, most of the businesses in the community TEDD serves didn't have a Facebook page, much less a website that could be used for e-commerce during the stay-at-home period at the beginning of the pandemic. This gap was compounded by the fact that broadband services are lacking in the rural region of NE Washington, making it even more difficult for small businesses and customers to utilize online platforms. For restaurants, there were difficulties pivoting to takeout, sharing their menu, or even just alerting the public of their hours virtually.

TEDD assisted local businesses in a major way by helping them adapt to the ever-changing pandemic regulations in order to stay open. Utilizing a grant, TEDD developed a 'virtual toolbox' housed on their website to answer the most asked questions from local businesses. Continuously populated over the course of the pandemic, the toolkit included a series about selling online, services that businesses could utilize to sell their products on their own website, printable health and closure signs, funding opportunities, and reopening strategies. Tools were provided in various formats; videos, worksheets, business tools, and blogs were all utilized in the toolkit to help businesses survive and thrive.

On the communication front, the local health department had asked for TEDD's help in the early stages of the pandemic after recognizing that their social media pages had very few followers compared to TEDD's. In



response, TEDD's marketing team pushed out all of the health and safety information that the health department was sharing to keep the community up to date on regulations, Covid-19, and other information. In addition to health-related communications, TEDD's marketing team worked to share positive news coming out of Northeast Washington State. They called this the Good News Campaign and included positive stories about small businesses and promoted the socially distanced outdoor recreation available in the region. Especially at the very beginning of the pandemic, this allowed TEDD to promote their region and its offerings responsibly and safely.

As a part of TEDD's small business and entrepreneurial support offerings, the organization manages a loan fund for a ten-county region in Northeast Washington providing debt financing for start-up and existing businesses. The fund is called the Rural Opportunities Loan Fund (ROLF), and finances business expansion, retention and start-up projects for borrowers who do not qualify for traditional loans. In March of 2020, TEDD began to defer loan payments, and allowed all late fees and penalties to be waived for a several month period at the beginning of the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, the loan fund would be performing above average if they lent out \$750,000 to small businesses in the region. In 2021, they loaned out \$2.7 million, indicating the need that this gap financing filled. The majority were low interest loans [capitalized by a grant from EDA](#) that allowed TEDD to loan the money out at a lower interest rate, around 2 percent. This significant increase in loans emphasizes the need small businesses had for capital as was noted in the impacts section above as a consistent concern over the entire study period for Tri-County.

While TEDD was not focused on workforce development prior to the pandemic, lack of workers has become a major concern for many of the businesses they served during the pandemic, and it continues to be an issue. The lack of workers has caused TEDD to work more closely with the local workforce improvement board, WorkSource, to help better align business needs with workforce development.

TEDD also took the opportunity of the pandemic to rewrite their economic recovery plan and update their resiliency plans to include measures regarding pandemic preparedness. Utilizing a grant, TEDD brought on a full-time staff member to develop the strategies and work with the entire community to determine what the region's recovery and resiliency plans should look like to then begin implementing these plans. In conjunction, as the federally designated Economic Development District (EDD), TEDD made the necessary updates to the [region's CEDS](#) as well as the region's transportation plan.

Bent County Community Foundation (BCDF)

Background

Bent County is a predominantly rural county located in southeastern Colorado. The Bent County Community Foundation (BCDF) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization working to make Bent County a better place to work and live. The foundation is a partnership between Bent County, the City of Las Animas, Las Animas Municipal Utilities, and private business owners. The Bent County Community Foundation was founded in 1989 to “promote the general economic activity of our local community; and to improve the standard of living for its existing and future residents.”

The BCDF is a resource for business retention, expansion, and recruitment in Bent County. The BCDF has access to resources for industry and infrastructure development as it relates to job development from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade, and the federal Economic Development Agency. The BCDF may also assist businesses in obtaining financing and business development assistance from the Small Business Administration and the Colorado Enterprise Zone programs.

The Bent County Development Foundation is also a partner in two regional economic development initiatives, Southeast Colorado Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction (SEBREA) and the Southeast Colorado Enterprise Development, Inc. (SECED). Within the 6-county area of Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, and Prowess the SEBREA program connects businesses, large and small, with the tools and resources needed to thrive in today's changing business environment. Working with regional organizations and government agencies, this collaborative partnership helps attract, sustain, and grow business in the six-county area. Southeast Colorado Enterprise Development, Inc. (SECED) provides incentives and develops promotional activities to market and advertise the advantages of locating a business in the Southeast Colorado area. SECED employs multiple programs to create a positive identity, encourage retention and expansion of existing businesses, promote redevelopment, and attract new businesses.

Demographics

Bent County has a population of 5,650,³² with the county seat, Las Animas, the only incorporated municipality in the county with a population of 2,269. The population's racial breakdown is 63.4 percent Non-Hispanic White, 32.1 percent Hispanic or Latino, 3.7 percent Non-Hispanic Black or African American, all other racial categories are below 1 percent.³³

³² 2020 Decennial Census, US Census Bureau

³³ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.



NERDE reports that labor force participation for the month of December 2021 was 43.1 percent.³⁴ According to NERDE and Chmura Analytics,³⁵ the median household income was \$30,900, with a per capita income of \$13,930. The current poverty rate in Bent County is 29.5 percent.

Major Industries

Bent County's economy is based largely in agriculture and its major correctional facility. County and city government, health care, schools, services for tourists and residents, and a variety of cottage industries make up the balance of Bent County's economic profile.

The top five industries by total employment are farm employment, retail trade, health care and social assistance, transportation and warehousing, and professional, scientific, and technical services. The top five industries when it comes to GDP are agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, utilities, retail trade, health care and social assistance, and transportation and warehousing.³⁶

Compared to the national average, Bent County has a higher concentration of jobs in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, utilities, administrative and support, and waste management and remediation services. The sectors with the highest average wage per worker are transportation and warehousing (\$63,849), finance and insurance (\$62,430), and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (\$54,026).³⁷

Impacts

As shown in the graph below, the unemployment rate in February 2020, right before the pandemic, was 2.5 percent. By May 2020, the unemployment rate had reached 4.6 percent. During the first round of interviews in February 2021, Bent County had an unemployment rate of 6.3 percent. In August 2021, the county had an unemployment rate of 6.0 percent. As of January 2022, the unemployment rate of Bent County was 4.5 percent.

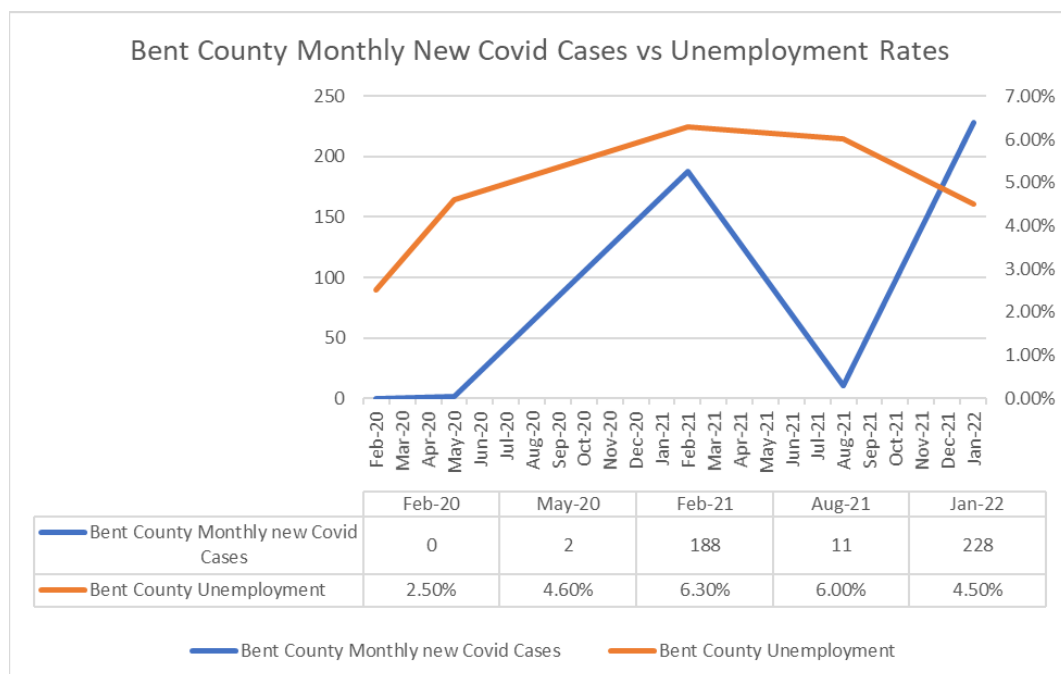
³⁴ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

³⁵ 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.

³⁶ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

³⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.





Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

Throughout the pandemic, there seems to be some correlation between an increase in Covid-19 cases in Bent County and an increase in the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate peaked in February 2021 at 6.3 percent before slowly falling to 4.5 percent in January 2022. The rate of Covid-19 cases in Bent County experienced two peaks: the lower peak in February 2021 - coinciding with the highest level of unemployment - and the highest peak in January 2022.

Bent County's local economy has been depressed for roughly two decades, making the negative economic impacts of Covid less severe than other areas. They have typically relied on large employers in neighboring communities to provide employment. In the mid-2000s, a hospital left the area and took roughly 700 jobs with it.³⁸ A loss of 700 jobs will severely depress a local economy of Bent's size. When the hospital left, Bent County lost 70 percent of their business community. The current largest employer is a private prison, which is under threat from current public policy. The private prison accounts for about 24 percent of the property tax base.

Industry Impacts

During the first interview, in February 2021, the Bent County Development Foundation indicated that many industry sectors in their community needed additional assistance because of the Covid-19 pandemic. While arts, entertainment, and recreation, personal services, retail, and agriculture were identified as sectors which

³⁸ [Southeast Colorado Residents Cheered Fort Lyon Prison Transition, Now They're Not So Sure](#), The Gazette, January 2021

needed the most assistance, other sectors such as transportation and education were already rebounding in early 2021. During the last review, conducted in late January 2022 the sectors most affected had shifted to construction, accommodation, and food services. Due to the nature of the pandemic as well as the biggest employer in Bent County, health care and social assistance was consistently identified as a sector in need throughout our data collection process. Trends in outdoor tourism did not impact Bent County, as the location in the Southeast part of the state puts it at far remove from the tourist-centric economy in the mountains.

Access to capital was one of the most common issues businesses approached the Bent County Development Foundation about. Many businesses found themselves with a gap in funding and reduced budgets. The BCDF indicated there was also low availability of capital locally. Beyond access to capital, many businesses struggled to understand and comply with the changing local, state, and federal rules and regulations for dispersed funding and grants.

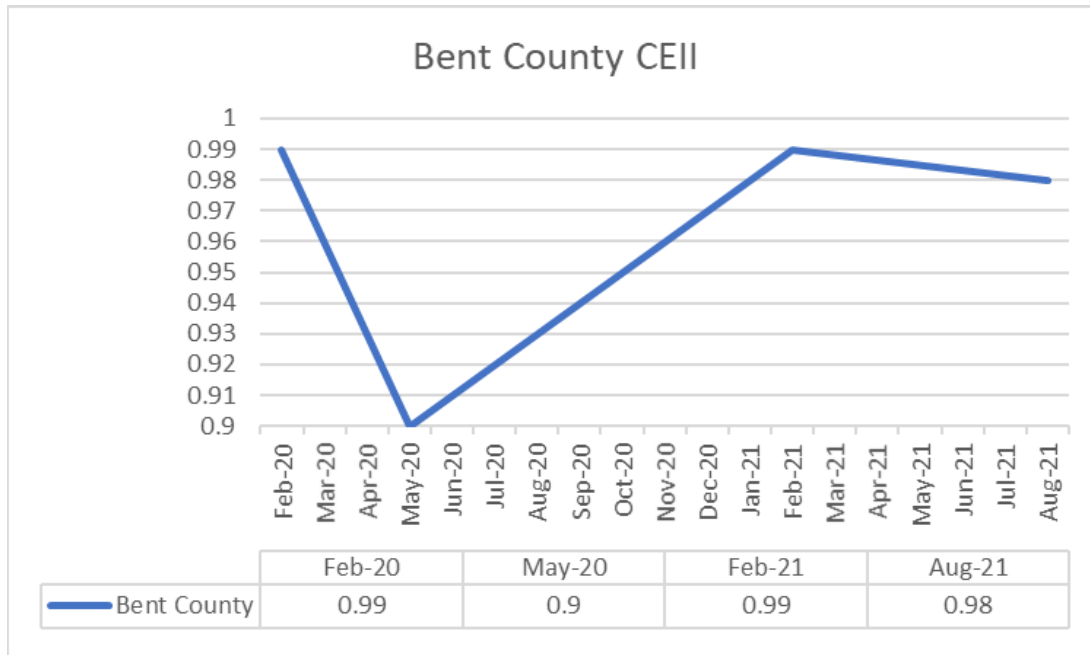
Workforce Impacts

While access to capital was a common request made of the Bent County Development Foundation throughout all three interviews, starting in the summer of 2021 lack of workers became another main issue business would ask for assistance with. While Bent County was better prepared for the Delta and Omicron waves of Covid-19, the BCDF indicated that they were still hard hit with employees being out longer than during the initial Covid-19 wave and with less federal assistance available.

Affordable housing has also become a more pressing issue since the Covid-19 pandemic. While the pandemic drove up the prices of construction, a growing marijuana industry has led to inflation for both residential and commercial properties. Current residents, who most often need mortgages to buy a house, are put at an additional disadvantage with cash offers from those outside of the community, especially as housing prices are higher than their appraised value.

County Economic Impact Index (CEII)

As can be seen in the County Economic Impact Index (CEII) for Bent County, Covid-19 had a major negative impact on the regional economy in the first half of 2020, causing the CEII to drop to 0.9 in May 2020. Since then, the CEII has climbed back up to 0.99 in February 2021, before falling to 0.98 in August 2021.



Source: [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

Response

In reaction to Covid-19, the BCDF has become more proactive and more involved with their local businesses. During the first wave they acted as a clearinghouse for business related information from the county, region, state, and country. They distributed local mini grants that could be used for any purpose by businesses funded by their Economic Development District (EDD). The BCDF also ran a state-funded small business relief fund, referred clients to banks for the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loan program and to the local Small Business Development Center.

To assist employers faced with a lack of employees, the BCDF has partnered with employers to organize job fairs and other recruitment events. However, they foresee a lack of workforce as a challenge that will not be easily overcome and think it will play a role in their economic outlook for a long time to come.

As a result of COVID-19 and the housing shortage that followed, the Bent County Development Foundation has become more involved in housing development in their region. In cooperation with the EDD and the Southeast Colorado Enterprise Development team, the BCDF was able to leverage federal funding for pre-development funding and was able to attract a private developer, High Prairie Homes, to build 127 units of workforce housing in the six counties. This project will provide opportunities for both home ownership and rentals to the local workforce.

Downtown Stockton Alliance

Background

The Downtown Stockton Alliance (DSA) is a public-private partnership representing almost 1,000 property owners and businesses located in the 123-square block downtown of Stockton, California. Incorporated in 1996, DSA is funded by a Property Based Improvement District (PBID) and a Business Improvement District (BID), which allows both property owners and business owners in the area to play a role in supporting the organization.

DSA works to make Downtown Stockton a “cleaner, safer, more attractive, vibrant and desirable place to work, do business, and play.” With the mission of promoting local businesses, providing access to housing, and bringing arts and entertainment to downtown Stockton, DSA focuses on five core functions for the downtown district: maintenance, safety, public policies, economic development, and marketing.

DSA oversees the maintenance and safety of downtown Stockton; manages art, cultural and other special events downtown; supports public and private partnerships and encourages investment in the district. To do this, DSA is guided by a management plan that runs the downtown’s maintenance program, while focusing on business recruitment and retention, and marketing efforts to develop increased retail and housing downtown.

Demographic Information

The City of Stockton has a population of 320,804,³⁹ and within one mile of Downtown Stockton the population is 22,380, with 8,048 households. The City of Stockton was identified as the most racially and ethnically diverse big city in the United States in January of 2020. The city’s racial population breakdown is 44.8 percent Non-Hispanic white, 42.7 percent Hispanic or Latino, 21.5 percent Non-Hispanic Asian, 11.8 percent two or more races, and 11.2 percent Non-Hispanic Black or African American.⁴⁰

Chmura Analytics reports a 59.6 percent labor force participation rate for the City of Stockton. The median household income in the City of Stockton was \$54,614, with a per capita income of \$24,214. Stockton’s poverty rate is reported at 17.9 percent.⁴¹

Major Industries

The largest sector by total employment in the City of Stockton is healthcare and social assistance, employing 23,643 workers. The next four largest industries within Stockton include retail trade employing 12,022 workers, educational services employing 10,945, transportation and warehousing employing 10,128, public

³⁹ 2020 Decennial Census, US Census Bureau.

⁴⁰ 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, StatsAmerica.

⁴¹ 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.



administration employing 9,144, and administrative and support and waste management and remediation services employing 8,444 workers.⁴²

Compared to the national average, the City of Stockton has higher concentrations of utilities; transportation and warehousing; and public administration. The industries with the highest wages per worker in Stockton are utilities (\$123,379), management of companies and enterprises (\$107,222), and finance and insurance (\$80,377).⁴³

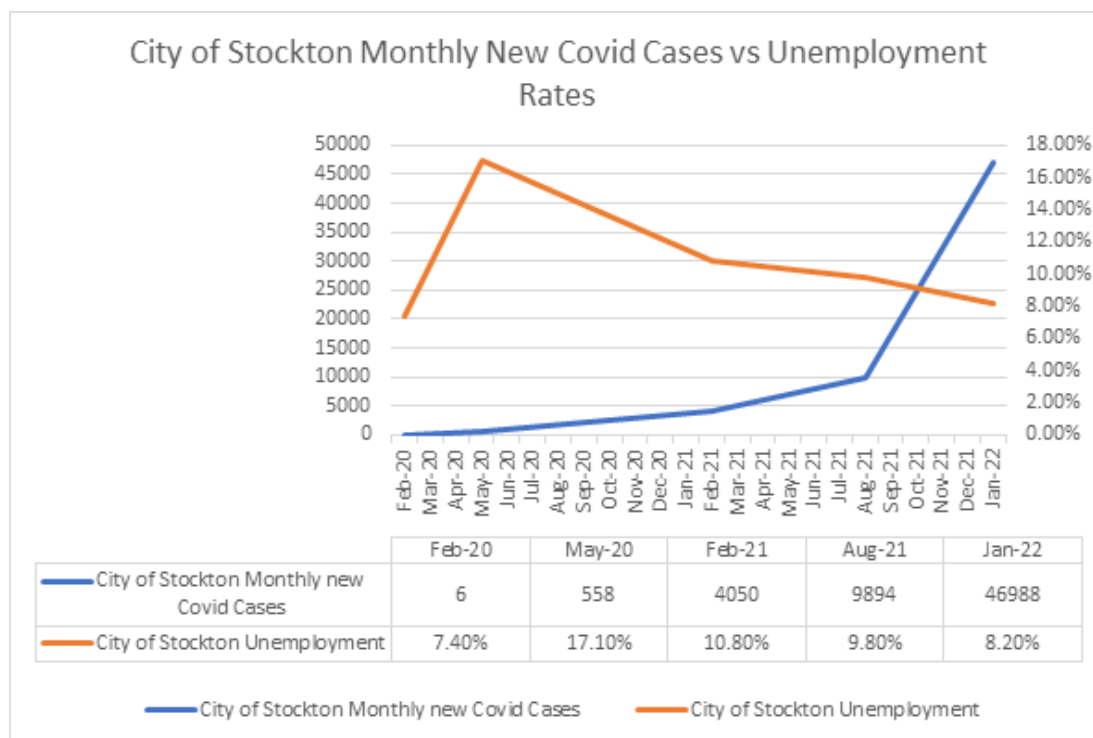
Impacts

As shown in the chart below, the unemployment rate for the City of Stockton in February 2020, right before the pandemic, was 7.4 percent.⁴⁴ By May 2020, the unemployment rate had reached its peak at 17.1 percent. During the first round of interviews in February 2021, the City of Stockton had an unemployment rate of 10.8 percent. In August 2021, the city had an unemployment rate of 9.8 percent, still over two percentage points higher than its pre-pandemic levels. As of January 2022, the unemployment rate was 8.2 percent.

⁴² Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.

⁴³ Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.

⁴⁴ Covid Cases are for San Joaquin County.



Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

Throughout the pandemic, an increase in Covid cases in San Joaquin County did not correlate with an increase in the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate continued to steadily decrease after it hit its peak in May 2020 while new monthly Covid cases continued to increase throughout the entire study period. This follows the trend shown above in the section National Recovery Trends, where unemployment peaked in April/May 2020 and decreased even as further waves of infection occurred. As noted by the CEII graph below, as well as in the qualitative data discussed throughout this profile, the lowering unemployment rate did not translate into an economy functioning at pre-pandemic levels.

Industry Impacts

Through all three interviews, DSA stated that arts, entertainment, and recreation, as well as educational services needed the most assistance in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, retail trade, and accommodation and food services were both mentioned in multiple interviews with DSA as sectors with high needs of assistance due to the pandemic.

DSA indicated that access to capital was one of the main issues the businesses in downtown Stockton were asking them about in each of the three interviews. In addition, accessing federal and state resources, and lack of workers were both mentioned twice as high-level concerns local businesses were having. Over the course of the study period, lack of workers, access to capital, and accessing federal and state resources were the

top three responses for all nine communities. How to adapt to the supply chain, and pivoting business strategies were two other issues businesses asked DSA for assistance on.

During interview one, DSA indicated that PPE procurement and downtown revitalization were *extremely high*, the highest level of impact on the scale from *low* to *extremely high*. By interview three, both of these impacts have lessened, to *moderate* and *moderately high* respectively. DSA indicated that at the beginning of the pandemic, the high need of PPE was for masks and outfitting businesses with plexiglass barriers, hand sanitizers and face shields. By the third interview, PPE procurement was still a *moderate* impact but the equipment itself had changed to Covid-19 tests and higher quality masks (such as the KN95) that have a better likelihood of stopping the spread of more contagious Covid-19 variants.

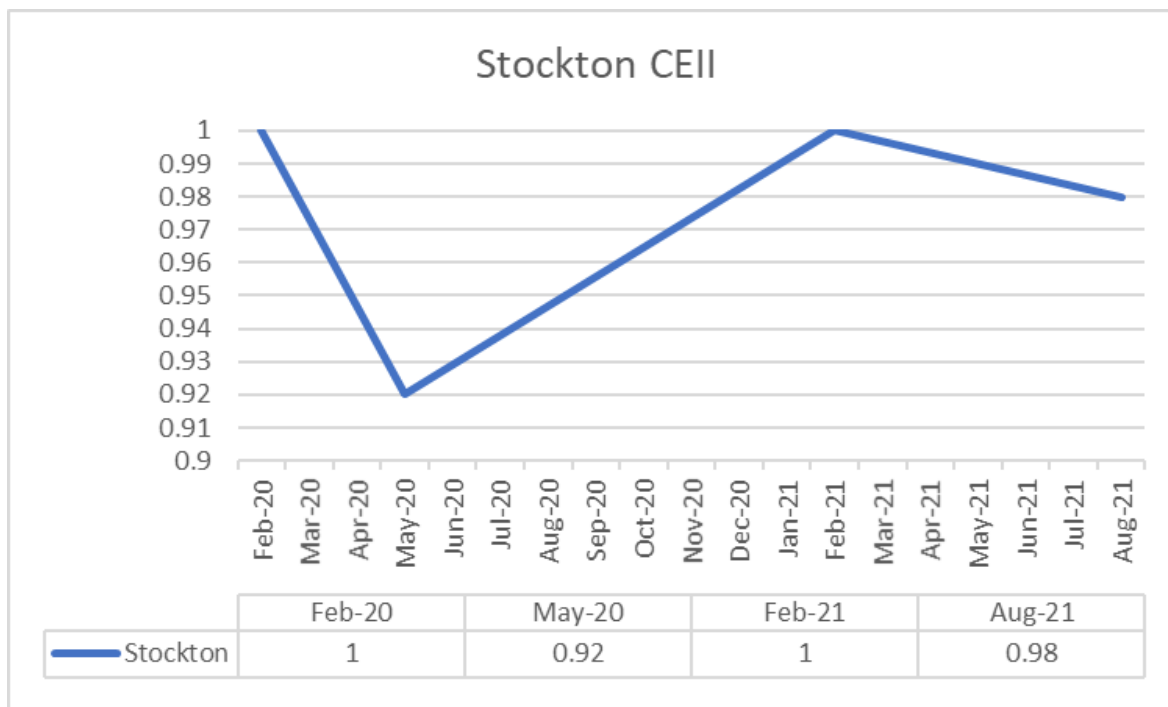
Workforce Impacts

Another change to the level of impact was the availability of affordable housing which went from a *low* level of impact during the first interview, to *high* level at the third interview. One reason affordable housing became more of a concern for DSA is that as remote work expanded, workers and their families left the high cost of living region of the Bay area, and (many) moved to Stockton and the surrounding area. The increase of demand in housing has increased the price of the housing stock in Stockton, and in many cases made it more difficult for the long-standing residents of the region to buy homes.

County Economic Impact Index

As noted in the County Economic Impact Index (CEII) graph for San Joaquin County, Covid-19 had a major negative impact on the regional economy causing the CEII to fall as the pandemic began to 0.92 in May of 2020. The economy significantly improved according to this metric from May 2020 till February 2021 when the CEII went back to 1. At this point, the economy declined slightly again and went down to 0.98 in August of 2021.





Source: [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

Response

Similar to many EDO's during the Covid-19 pandemic, DSA acted as a convener of information. At the very beginning of the pandemic, DSA created a Covid-19 resource page on their website which included information on new grants, programs, and the latest Covid-19 guidance and regulations. They also sent out newsletters to the businesses and property owners to keep them up to date directly and participated in weekly calls with regional stakeholders in the city and county to share resources and connect. DSA worked directly with the local businesses in the district, connecting them with people, necessary information and organizations as needed. This included local resources from the City of Stockton and San Joaquin Small Business Development Center to statewide and federal resources from the state of California and funding from the federal government.

Throughout the pandemic, and the numerous changes in regulations and guidance, DSA worked to advance community health and safety, while promoting the local businesses doing their best to keep them open. Championed by VisitStockton, the city's visitor's bureau, DSA was one of several regional partners that supported the Stockton Health Pledge. The pledge was aimed at businesses to publicly pledge to follow all Covid-19 regulations and was created based on data that showed customer confidence in health and safety practices can assist businesses during economic recovery. For the businesses that took the pledge, they received additional marketing promotion, were included on the website, and received additional resources.

DSA manages the Downtown Stockton Enterprise Loan Fund (DSELF), a non-profit, multi-bank community development corporation that provides small business loans created to fill the gap that traditional banking leaves in downtown Stockton. At the beginning of the pandemic, DSA decided to implement a deferral to all of



the active loans the small businesses had out. This allowed businesses — such as bar and restaurant owners— who were making very little profit at the beginning of the pandemic, to not have to worry about paying back their loans at that time. Due to the deferral and the lack of increasing interest, one business owner was able to pay off their entire loan during the deferral period. As a sign that the impacts of the pandemic were coming to an end, DSA lifted the deferral in August 2021.

After further comparison to other non-profit lenders and speaking with local business owners who couldn't apply for a DSELF loan due to the requirements, DSA permanently updated the loan requirements to make it more accessible to the small businesses the program was created to assist. Based on the feedback of some small business owners, the qualifications made it so that the very people who the loan was meant for, couldn't qualify. Thus, DSA was having trouble lending out the money in the program. To combat this, background and financial information needed to apply for the grant were made more accessible. This was accomplished by decreasing both the number of months of financial statements and the necessary collateral needed to apply for the loan. While this was a necessary change regardless of the pandemic, the pandemic provided the impetus needed for the changes to be made.

To assist restaurants in downtown Stockton, DSA used CARES funding provided by the city to fund thirteen outdoor patio enclosures to help business at the hardest hit downtown restaurants. Enclosures came with outdoor propane heaters and hands-free sanitation stations to restaurants that applied and allowed the restaurants to stay open when indoor dining was not permitted.

While not a typical economic development function, DSA worked with the city of Stockton and through a Community Development Block Grant purchased a portable bathroom and shower unit that became available for the homeless starting in the beginning of 2021. After many public bathrooms were closed because of Covid-19, DSA saw a need for individual hygiene facilities for the un-sheltered that resided in the downtown area of Stockton. The goal of the facility is to lower human waste on the streets—keeping Stockton clean and safe. Additionally, inside the facilities contain resources that may help the unsheltered individuals eventually rise out of homelessness and may help the city collect information to the Homeless Management System. Homeless residents resided in downtown Stockton prior to the pandemic, and Covid-19 only exacerbated the occurrence.



Albemarle Commission Regional Economy

Background

The Albemarle Commission is a regional economic development and planning organization that oversees the development initiatives of a 10-county region in northeast North Carolina. The Albemarle Commission was founded in 1969 and is sanctioned as the lead regional organization for the Albemarle region. It is an EDA designated Economic Development District.

The commission has been pivotal in the development and enhancement in regional infrastructure, industrial recruiting for business development, workforce development, supporting a strong tourist industry, community revitalization and investment, and health and human services. As a regional council, their mission is to support their member governments and communities and improve their ability to enhance the region's quality of life. The Albemarle Commission serves the following counties and towns:

- Camden County
- Chowan County
 - o Town of Edenton
- Currituck County
- Dare County
 - o Town of Duck
 - o Town of Southern Shores
 - o Town of Kill Devil Hills
 - o Town of Kitty Hawk
 - o Town of Manteo
 - o Town of Nags Head
- Gates County
 - o Town of Gatesville
- Hyde County
- Pasquotank County
 - o City of Elizabeth City
- Perquimans County
 - o Town of Hertford
 - o Town of Winfall
- Tyrrell County
 - o Town of Columbia
- Washington County
 - o Town of Creswell
 - o Town of Roper
 - o Town of Plymouth



Demographic Information

The Albemarle Commission serves a population of 172,955. This area has not experienced significant population growth or decline, with an annual average growth of 0.2 percent. The population's racial breakdown is 69.8 percent Non-Hispanic White, 22.5 percent Non-Hispanic Black or African American, 4.9 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 1.6 percent two or more races. All other racial categories are under 1 percent of the population.⁴⁵

The region represented by the Albemarle Commission has a labor force participation rate of 55.3 percent. According to Chmura Analytics,⁴⁶ the median household income for the region was \$53,908, with a per capita income of \$28,092. The region's poverty level is currently at 15.7 percent.

Major Industries

NERDE data is utilized to examine the top industries in the EDD, looking at the top five in terms of employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The top five industries for the region when it comes to total employment are government and government enterprises, retail trade, accommodation and food services, real estate and rental and leasing, and construction. The top five industries by GDP are real estate and rental and leasing, government and government enterprises, durable goods manufacturing, retail trade, and accommodation and food services.⁴⁷

Compared to the national average, the Albemarle region has higher concentrations of real estate and rental and leasing, agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and public administration. The industries with the highest wages per worker in the Albemarle region are utilities (\$79,462), finance and insurance (\$61,162), and professional, scientific, and technical services (\$57,753).⁴⁸

Impacts

As shown in the graph below, the unemployment rate for the Albemarle region in February 2020, right before the pandemic, was 5.39 percent. By May 2020, the unemployment rate had reached 12.99 percent. During the first round of interviews in February 2021, the Albemarle Region had an unemployment rate of 7.08 percent. In August 2021, the region had an unemployment rate of 4.48 percent. As of January 2022, the unemployment rate for the Albemarle region was 5.07 percent.

⁴⁵ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

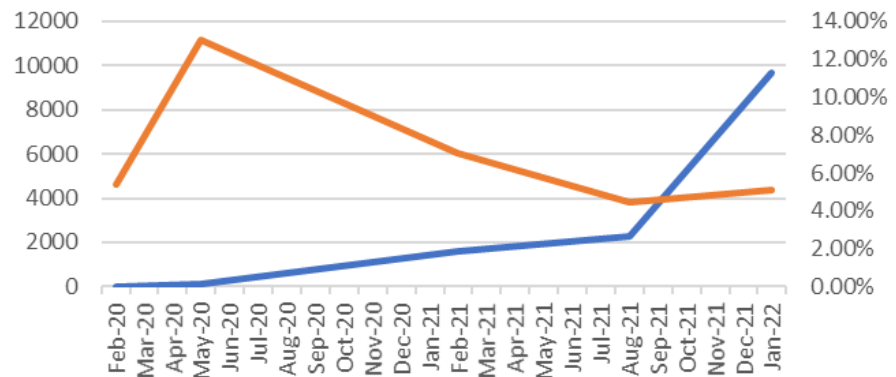
⁴⁶ Demographic Data pulled from 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.

⁴⁷ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

⁴⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.



Albemarle Commission Monthly New Covid Cases vs Unemployment Rates



	Feb-20	May-20	Feb-21	Aug-21	Jan-22
Albemarle Commission Monthly new Covid Cases	0	128	1571	2279	9663
Albemarle Commission Unemployment	5.39%	12.99%	7.08%	4.48%	5.07%

Albemarle Commission Monthly new Covid Cases Albemarle Commission Unemployment

Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

The relationship between Covid-19 cases and unemployment shown above is intriguing, because the highest unemployment rates are not correlated with the highest number of new monthly Covid-19 cases. Unemployment rates skyrocketed at the beginning of Covid-19, mostly due to lockdowns and regulations that heavily impacted certain industries, in particular those that rely on in-person attendance and interacting with others. As restrictions were lifted, unemployment rates dropped but Covid-19 cases increased. Unemployment increased by over seven percent from February 2020 to May 2020, but only 128 new cases were reported in May 2020. New monthly Covid-19 cases for the region increased but unemployment rates dropped, reaching 4.48 percent in August 2021. The impacts of the Omicron variant are apparent, with a huge jump in new cases for the month of January 2022 and a slight increase in unemployment for the month. This suggests that the Covid-19 wave of January 2022 had more economic impact on the region than other variant waves that occurred in the past two years.

Industry Impacts

Throughout the region, industries such as tourism, agriculture, and retail, have experienced setbacks due to the pandemic. The impact that Covid-19 has had on the tourism and hospitality industry is apparent. Tourism overlaps and impacts many other industries in the region. While fewer tourists are coming to the region, they have stayed for longer periods of time. However, the Albemarle Commission reports that it is harder to find places offering tourist activities.

The agriculture and fisheries industries were also reliant on the tourism and hospitality industry for customers. Several of these businesses shifted their customer base, including transitioning to ecommerce. However, as the pandemic continued and tourism and hospitality industries reopened, the demand for products increased. A similar shift was seen by the retailers who depend on tourists to spend money. As more tourists came to the region and stayed longer, spending expanded at local retailers.

Workforce Impacts

Workforce remained a constant demand for several industries. Several family-owned businesses tried to limit their expenses during uncertain times by relying on family members for their workforce, which led to a decline in the number of workers being hired. As the hospitality businesses proceed further along in their pandemic recovery, they have turned to hiring and report finding employees. But other industries that have available jobs have discovered that the workforce do not have the skills needed or cannot pass the required hiring screenings.

In the long term, the organization believes it will be increasingly difficult to return to pre-pandemic economic levels without reliable and adequate broadband across the region. Despite a number of people relocating to this coastal region, the ability to leverage its natural assets to actively attract remote workers was hampered due to broadband limitations. It also limited the availability of telehealth at the beginning of the pandemic.

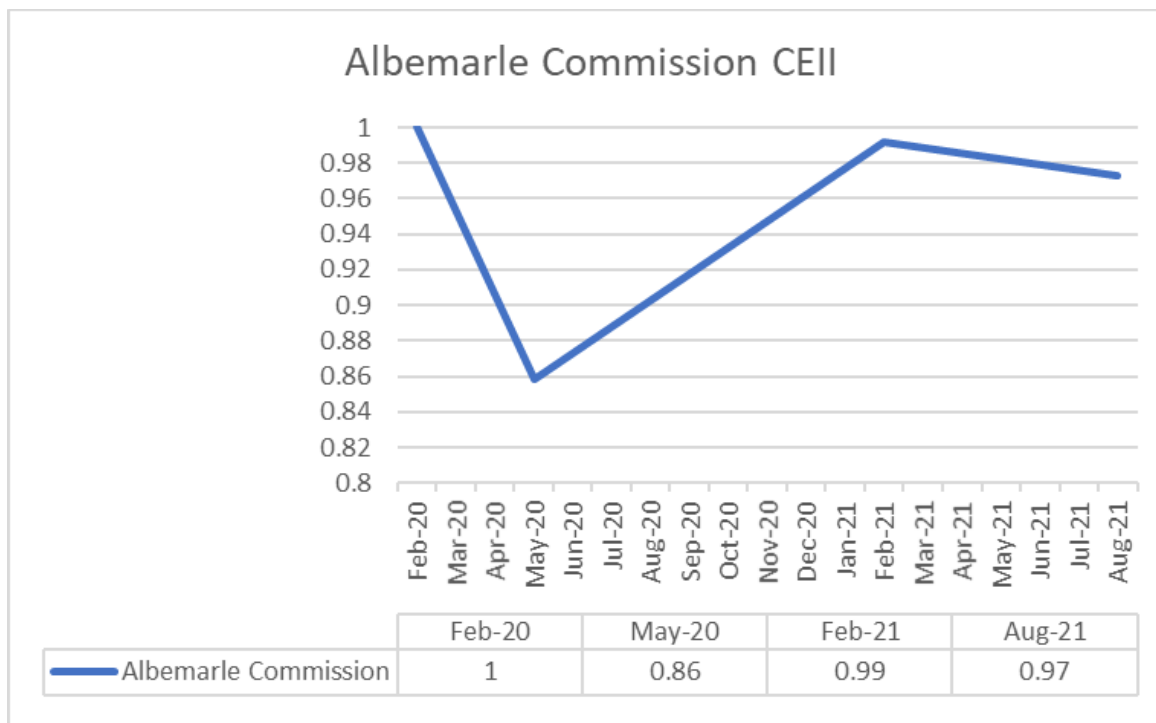
The Albemarle Commission noted that Covid-19 has greatly impacted their affordable housing stock and regional labor market, and that these two issues go hand-in-hand. The region is experiencing great imbalances in the labor market, with many of available low-wage jobs remaining vacant. Yet, job opportunities are not available where the land or housing is affordable and open jobs are not paying enough to offset the driving difference from affordable housing.

Representatives from the Albemarle Commission noted that, with such a small population for a 10-county region, these small shifts in the labor market are relatively significant.

County Economic Impact Index

The Albemarle region's CEII graph demonstrates the economic impacts of Covid-19 on the regional economy and tracks their economic recovery. Since the CEII is measured at the county level, to reach a regional index, we averaged the indexes of the 10 member counties. The initial impacts of Covid-19 were severe, with a large drop in the index from February 2020 to May 2020. In May 2020, county indexes varied, showing different levels of impact for each county, with a regional high index of 0.91 and a regional low index of 0.7. The region's recovery has been relatively successful, with the index almost returning to pre-pandemic conditions in February 2021. But new variants, like Delta in the summer of 2021, have delayed the recovery process and created new economic concerns, lowering the index for August 2021.





Source: [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

Response

In the beginning of the pandemic, the Albemarle Commission often labeled itself as a connector. They were focused on connecting businesses, towns, and counties with information about available opportunities. A majority of the communities within the region are small towns and counties with limited capacity to apply for grant funding. As part of their recovery outreach, the staff assisted the small communities whenever possible and connected them to other capacity building opportunities. They spent time to make sure leaders understood what resources were available and assisted with their applications. As the pandemic continued, their role in these response efforts expanded. The Albemarle Commission gained the trust of the community leaders during the pandemic and earned the reputation of providing resources and support.

The pandemic caused overlapping impacts in industries. Some industry sectors were affected immediately while other sectors experienced a delay in their business dynamics. Several of the industries within the region experienced shifts in their supply chains and logistics due to the pandemic. To help mitigate these effects, the Albemarle Commission made connections with similar sectors across the state and nation to learn about best practices and how we can apply those locally.

The Albemarle Commission has also worked to address the worker shortage. Many of the available workers were not interested in or lacked the skills to fill the jobs available in the region leading the organization to focus efforts on connecting workers to and companies to resources. One of their strategies was hold events to try to recruit and engage workers and match them with companies. Throughout each month, the workforce division conducts multiple job connection and training programs. Furthermore, they worked with their employers to provide new perspectives on their hiring needs.



Their workforce division also is working with the community college to develop training programs to match demands in the region. For example, property owners have funds available for urgent repairs, yet the construction industry struggles to find workers to meet the demands. In response, the workforce division is helping develop a training program for construction workers.

Additionally, the Albemarle Commission has been partnering more with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), a state economic development organization. They are collaborating on an economic gardening program and helping to implement the program. When EDPNC goes on business retention and expansion visits in the region, the Albemarle Commission is working along with the state organization staff. When the Albemarle Commission learns of small businesses wanting to export, they are partnering with the EDPNC to connect the business with resources to achieve their goal.

The ten-county region is often at risk of natural disasters. Representatives from the Albemarle Commission explained that pandemic induced lockdown is similar to a hurricane where workers cannot work. Considering resilience in the future, they recognize the biggest hurdle is planning with implementation in mind.

For long-term recovery strategies, the Albemarle Commission initiated a strategic planning process as its primary response. Not only did they focus on improving their own CEDS process and changing the platform through which to share it, they assisted economic development organizations and municipalities within their region to update or re-do their own strategic plans to focus on long-term recovery from the pandemic. For example, many of the towns in the region are pivoting their focus toward revitalizing their downtowns in anticipation of a planned interstate bypass in the region.



City of Martinsburg

Background

The City of Martinsburg is located in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle region and is the county seat for Berkeley County. Martinsburg is a small urban town within a rural region and state. Martinsburg has a long and historic past, with the city being founded in 1788. Martinsburg's economic development department is contained within the city's government and works on revitalizing the community with assets and amenities that appeal to a broad audience, with a focus on "attracting those seeking to prosper alongside us." Martinsburg is looking to grow as a city but also as a weekend destination, with a competitive location only a few hours' drive away from multiple major cities. After stalled economic progress, Martinsburg's economy is beginning to show signs of revival, with new investments in the educational and medical industries, the reappearance of Fortune 100 manufacturing in the region, and the rehabilitation of many historic properties.

Demographics

The population of the City of Martinsburg is 18,777,⁴⁹ making it the largest city in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. The population's gender breakdown is 45.6 percent male and 54.4 percent female. The population's racial breakdown is 79.9 percent Non-Hispanic White, 13.9 percent Non-Hispanic Black or African American, 4.8 percent Hispanic or Latino, 3.1 percent two or more races, and 1.3 percent Non-Hispanic Asian.⁵⁰

For the City of Martinsburg, median household income was \$42,835 and per capita income was \$24,970. Martinsburg's poverty rate is reported at 29.5 percent.⁵¹

Major Industries

Martinsburg's largest industry sector is healthcare and social assistance, employing 2,643 workers. The next largest sector in Martinsburg is retail trade. Retail trade employs 1,824 workers in Martinsburg. The third largest sector for Martinsburg is the accommodation and food service industry, employing 1,628 workers. Public administration (942 workers) and educational services (920 workers) are the fourth and fifth largest industry sectors.⁵²

Compared to the national average, the City of Martinsburg has a higher concentration of jobs in utilities, accommodation and food services, and public administration. The industries with the highest average wages

⁴⁹ 2020 Decennial Census, US Census Bureau.

⁵⁰ 2015-2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, StatsAmerica.

⁵¹ 2015-2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.

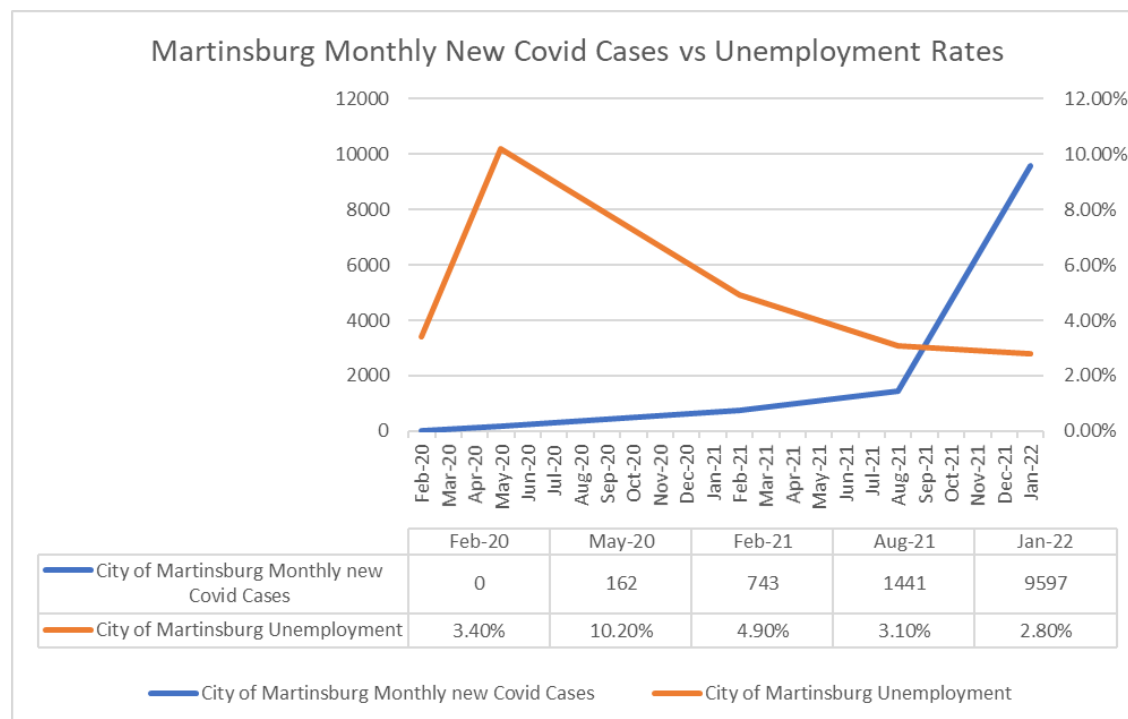
⁵² Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.



per worker are utilities (\$73,585), finance and insurance (\$72,824), and professional, scientific, and technical Services (\$62,258).⁵³

Impacts

As shown in the graph below, the unemployment rate for Berkeley County in February 2020, right before the pandemic, was 3.4 percent. By May 2020, the unemployment rate had reached 10.2 percent. During the first round of interviews in February 2021, Berkeley County had an unemployment rate of 4.9 percent. In August 2021, the county had an unemployment rate of 3.1 percent. As of January 2022, the unemployment rate for Berkeley County was 2.8 percent.



Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

Throughout the pandemic, an increase in Covid-19 cases in Berkeley County did not correlate with an increase in the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate spiked during the first wave, when Covid-19 rates were relatively low in Berkeley County. Berkeley County had higher Covid-19 case numbers during the second and third wave, but at that point there was no more political appetite to enforce Covid-19 regulations which led to little impact on business operations. The unemployment rate continued to steadily decrease after it hit its peak in May 2020 while new monthly Covid cases continued to increase throughout the entire study period with a sharp peak in December 2021.

⁵³ Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.

Industry Impact

In February 2021, the City of Martinsburg indicated that many of their sectors needed additional assistance because of the Covid-19 pandemic. While sectors across the board were impacted, businesses in the tourism sector were particularly hard hit with a drop in visitors to Martinsburg and the surrounding areas. By the second interview, businesses in the tourism sector (retail trade, arts, entertainment and recreation, accommodation and food services) were identified as the sectors with the highest need, alongside health care. Hospital and long-term care facilities were at capacity. By January of 2022, the sectors which needed the most assistance were sectors with persistent workforce issues, which included healthcare, tourism, as well as transportation and utilities.

Workforce Impacts

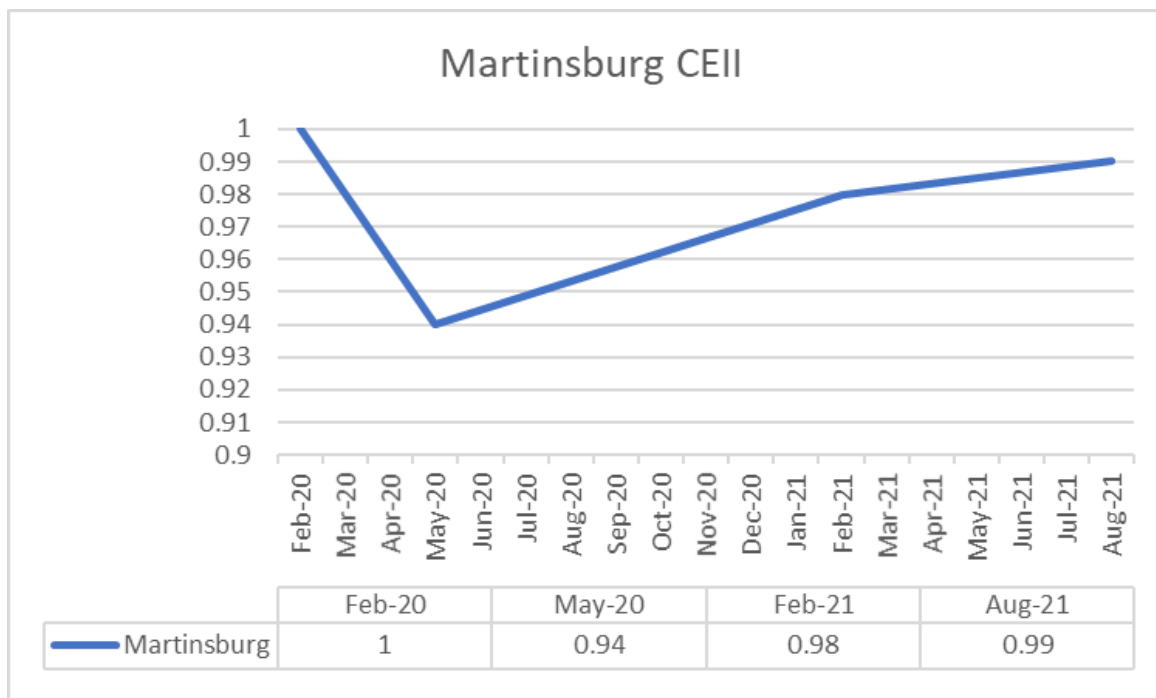
During the first interview, the City of Martinsburg indicated concern about unemployment, job loss, tax revenue, trips forgone, organizational losses, closed businesses, foreclosures and vacant properties, loss of employers, loss of tax base and revenue. By the second interview, in August 2021, the City of Martinsburg indicated that a lack of workers was the most pressing issue they faced. As of January 2022, this had not changed. A national increase in wages made it hard for local businesses to pay for talent and compete with the bigger metro areas around them. Additionally, with an absence of existing pipelines for service workers, there are no short-term solutions to this problem.

As the economic development department of a city, much of their effort is focused on their downtown. The pandemic severely impacted their work in downtown revitalization. In the early days of the pandemic the city of Martinsburg discontinued much of their work on downtown revitalization and placemaking since both of these focused on physically gathering in the city's downtown. The pandemic also forced the city to end downtown physical gatherings which they use for business promotion. However, downtown Martinsburg only had two businesses that closed in the first wave of the pandemic. Yet, by the summer of 2021 more businesses had temporarily or permanently closed as a result of Covid-19. This was mostly driven by a decline in foot traffic and worker shortage.

County Economic Impact Index (CEII)

As can be seen in the County Economic Impact Index (CEII) for Berkeley County, Covid-19 had a major negative impact on the regional economy in the first half of 2020, causing the CEII to fall to 0.94 in May 2020. Since then, the CEII has slowly climbed up to 0.99 in August 2021.





Source: [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

Response

In the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, the City of Martinsburg's economic development department served as a connector. They provided information and passed along messaging, connected businesses to state and federal resources, and worked to reduce rules and regulations that were a strain on local businesses. Because of Martinsburg's position as a part of city government, they were limited in what types of actions they could undertake. The city's messaging focused on existing business channels to send out updates and newsletters, as well as promoting existing programming such as technical assistance. Broadband limitations also affected the city's ability to conduct outreach, as they did not want to overload internet capacity and prevent other important emails from being received and read.

Because of a slowdown in their downtown, the City of Martinsburg was able to focus on several other initiatives that would have a long-term positive impact on the community. These initiatives include a facade improvement project, which were in higher demand from businesses that were suddenly faced with lower foot traffic. The Covid-19 pandemic also allowed the city to catch up on land use policy and zoning.

To address workforce issues, the City of Martinsburg has made some attempts to work with specific sectors and employers to alleviate workforce shortages. They added more mechanisms for outreach and matchmaking between job seekers and employers and used fiscal tools and grants to assist in hiring. They also conducted conversations with employers in specific sectors to understand the workforce shortage. In many cases the hurdle here was a lack of workforce with the proper training or certifications.



The Covid-19 pandemic also played a role in the most [recent CEDS update](#). Because of Covid-19 the most recent CEDS included significantly more detail on mitigation measures, for pandemic-related situations as well as other situations.



Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission

Background

The Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) is a public-private partnership that is committed to helping businesses thrive in Jefferson Parish. JEDCO supports the Parish through a wide range of services including loan programs, business attraction, retention and expansion, workforce development, and entrepreneurship. The Forward Jefferson Corporation is a 501(c)(2) non-profit organization that works in collaboration with JEDCO on proactively influencing the economy. JEDCO supports small business financing through SBA 504 loans, a revolving loan fund, and a special loan program specifically designed for the needs of the commercial finishing industry. Jefferson Parish is located in southeast Louisiana, with their county seat located at the City of Gretna.

Demographic Information

Jefferson Parish supports a population of 440,781 individuals.⁵⁴ The racial breakdown of Jefferson Parish's population is 52.7 percent Non-Hispanic White, 26.4 percent Non-Hispanic Black or African American, 14.5 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 1.7 percent two or more races. The remaining categories are all under 1 percent.⁵⁵

NERDE reported a labor force participation rate of 59.5 percent in December 2021 for Jefferson Parish. According to NERDE and Chmura Analytics,⁵⁶ Jefferson Parish median household income was \$54,032 and their current per capita income is \$30,374. 14.6 percent of Jefferson Parish's population live below the poverty line.

Major Industries

The top five industries in terms of total employment are health care and social assistance, retail trade, accommodation and food services, administrative and support and waste management and remediation services, and construction. In terms of GDP, the top five industries in Jefferson Parish are real estate and rental and leasing, health care and social assistance, finance and insurance, retail trade, and wholesale trade.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ 2020 Decennial Census, US Census Bureau.

⁵⁵ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

⁵⁶ 2015–2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.

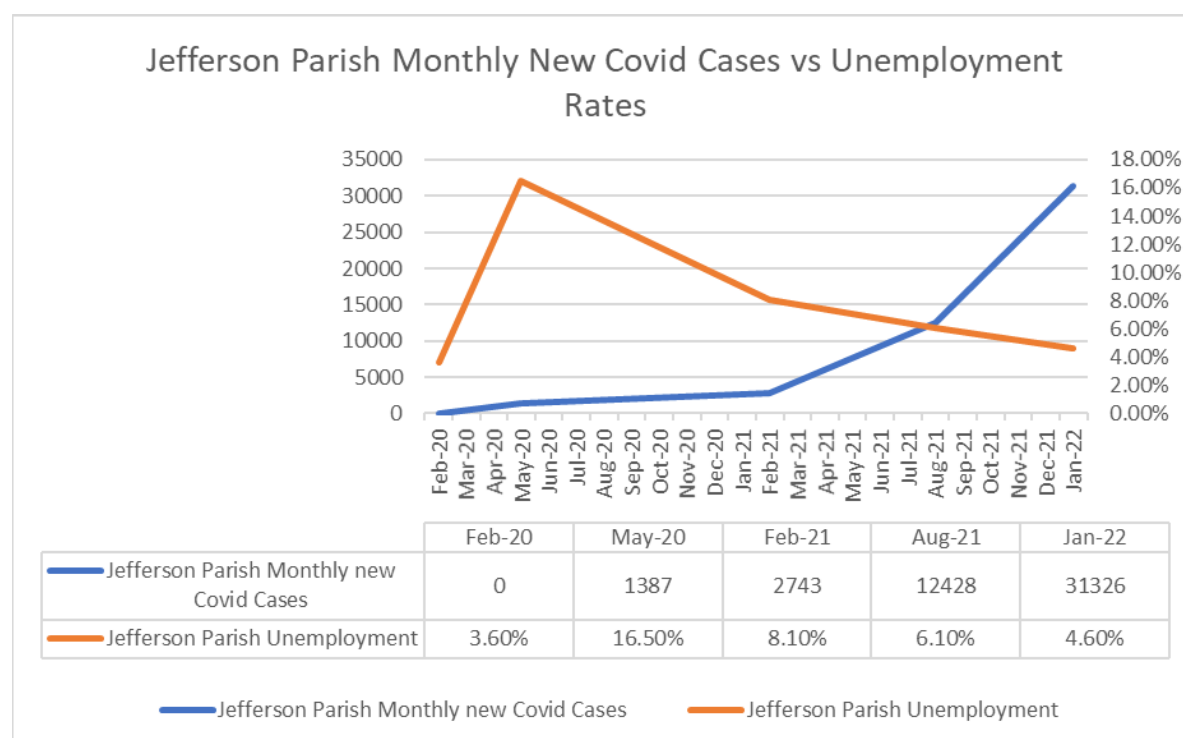
⁵⁷ [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, Bureau of Economic Analysis.



Compared to the national average, Jefferson Parish has higher concentrations of retail trade, arts, entertainment, and recreation, and wholesale trade. The industries with the highest wages per worker in Jefferson Parish are arts, entertainment, and recreation (\$137,076), utilities (\$91,152), and management of companies and enterprises (\$83,780).⁵⁸

Impacts

As shown in the graph below, the unemployment rate for Jefferson Parish in February 2020, right before the pandemic, was 3.6 percent. By May 2020, the unemployment rate had reached 16.5 percent. During the first round of interviews in February 2021, Jefferson Parish had an unemployment rate of 8.1 percent. In August 2021, the parish had an unemployment rate of 6.1 percent. As of January 2022, the unemployment rate for Jefferson Parish was 4.6 percent.



Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

The relationship between unemployment and Covid-19 cases show an initial large increase in unemployment, with a mostly steady recovery even with rising cases. In May 2020, Jefferson parish had over 1,300 new cases and an unemployment rate of 16.5 percent. This huge increase in unemployment rate for Jefferson Parish can be attributed to both the early waves of Covid-19 and the lockdowns and restrictions that came with the wave.

⁵⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.

Even though new monthly Covid-19 cases increased with every data point, the unemployment rate steadily decreased. This trend is similar to other communities and is aligned with national employment trends.

In Jefferson Parish the decrease in unemployment is correlated with the availability of vaccines allowed for hospitality workers to return to employment and new retailers opening, along with high demand from shoppers which created new employment opportunities. Not shown in this graph is the increase in unemployment from December 2021 to January 2022, which can be attributed to the Omicron Variant and the huge jump in Covid-19 cases. Overall, Jefferson Parish's unemployment has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels, with January's unemployment rate being only one percent greater than the unemployment rate in February 2020.

Industry Impacts

While all industry sectors in Jefferson Parish were impacted by the pandemic, four industries—healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and logistics—were mentioned as at-risk sectors during all three conversations. As the community moved further into the pandemic their responses shifted from being reactive to a more stabilized approach they are recognizing as the new normal.

The manufacturing industry was one of the least impacted. In some cases, impacted workers from other industries were able to shift into roles at manufacturers. Workforce for manufacturing was an issue observed in conversations at the beginning of the study period, and that continued to improve throughout the year. Similar to the national level, the logistics industry in the area was impacted by interruptions in the supply chains. As a result, JEDCO has observed increased demand for warehousing and companies considering reshoring projects.

The healthcare industry has a large presence in Jefferson Parish. The larger institutions experienced shifts and flows that had previously not been experienced. As rural hospitals in the region closed, their patients were sent to some of the hospitals within the parish. Jefferson Parish Human Services experienced higher demands for mental health needs. A transition to offering telehealth was experienced with training offered to smaller clinicians.

Jefferson Parish had some less stringent restrictions as compared to neighboring parishes, which attracted shoppers from the region. According to the Jefferson Parish Chamber of Commerce, at the end of 2020, sales tax revenue was higher than 2019 and there was high demand for commercial and residential building permits. While retailers reduced their hours, there was a limited number of stores that closed during the two years of the pandemic. Additionally, new national chains came into the market and other chains expanded within the Parish.

JEDCO was approached by businesses throughout the pandemic about accessing federal and state resources, a lack of workers and how to adapt business supply chains. Accessing capital was a primary request during late 2020 into early 2021, however it was not a frequent request for the remainder of 2021. Overall, assistance with workforce was the primary request for assistance from businesses.

Over the year of interviews, Jefferson Parish experienced a declining level of impacts from the pandemic in several areas. During the first interview, local tax/fiscal issues and increased unemployment impacts were extremely high and by the third interview was considered low impact. Similarly, in initial interviews,



communication with community businesses, stakeholders, and residents as well as PPE procurement were listed as moderately high impacts but were considered low impacts during the third interview. Business closures had moderate impacts and there were low impacts of displaced residents during all three interviews. Already an issue prior to the pandemic, the availability of affordable housing continued to be a challenge throughout the pandemic.

Worker Impacts

Jefferson Parish is home to Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, two convention centers and over 8,000 hotel rooms. As the pandemic canceled and limited large conventions and events as well as decreased the number of flyers through the airport, the hospitality industry and its workers faced several challenges. While there were hopes that the hospitality workforce would pivot and train for the healthcare industry, it had not been realized by early 2022. The United Way developed a Hospitality Cares Response Fund, which raised \$42 million to provide 4,000 workers with a \$500 check prior to federal assistance becoming available to minimize the initial impacts of the pandemic.

When businesses started to reopen, many were unable to find workers due to a number of reasons including the limited availability of childcare and the rise of entrepreneurship. Industries were constantly pivoting from in person to virtual throughout the pandemic to address COVID quarantines and lack of staff. A large call center within the parish has transitioned to almost completely remote work.

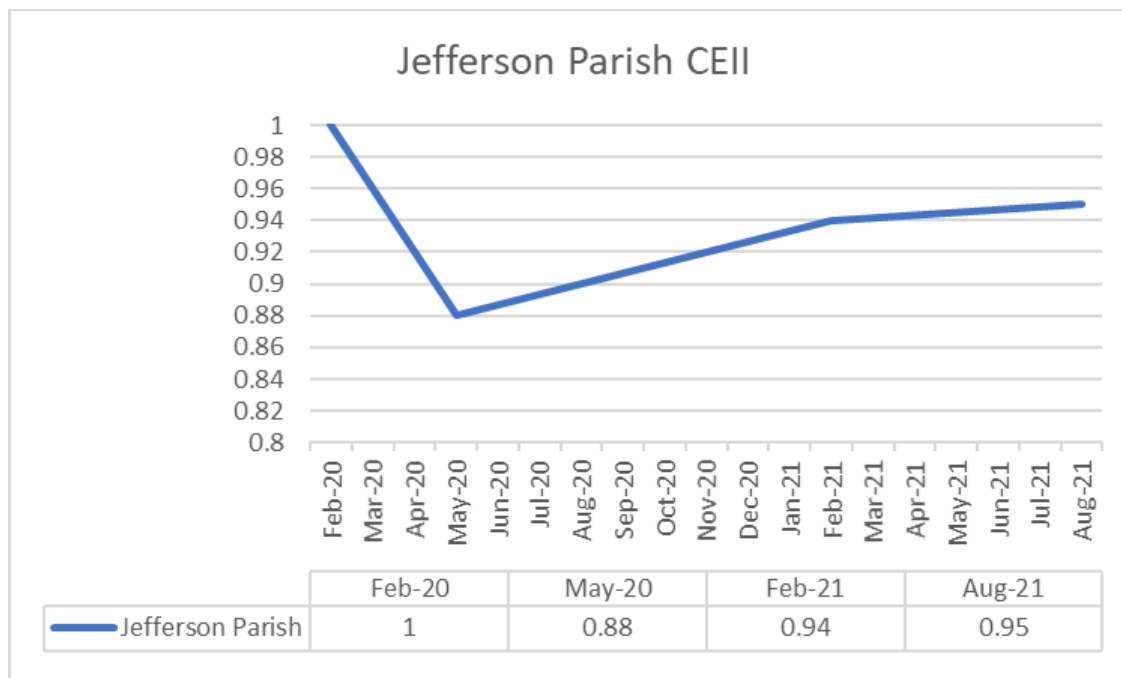
Like many other communities across the country, Covid-19 has had a great impact on Jefferson Parish's local labor market and affordable housing stock. The housing market saw an increase in the number of buyers and the house sizes purchased. Entry-level housing prices increased significantly having an impact on workforce housing. A hotel chain started purchasing houses in the Parish to rent out as vacation properties.

As Covid has progressed, the lack of skilled workers in the region has become more apparent. The Parish has a strong manufacturing business community, but as the population ages and leaves the workforce, manufacturers are struggling to find adequate replacement workers. This issue of lack of replacement workers for the aging population has been exacerbated by Covid-19. Furthermore, systemic issues in the region are making it difficult to address the affordable housing stock concerns that Covid-19 has highlighted.

County Economic Impact Index

The County Economic Impact Index (CEII) graph demonstrates the impacts of Covid-19 on Jefferson Parish's economy and tracks their economic recovery. Covid-19 brought along unprecedented economic impacts and the CEII graph shows that JEDCO's local economy has been heavily impacted by the pandemic. Their index dropped from 1 to 0.88 by May 2020, indicating that the initial Covid-19 wave had the largest economic impact. Fortunately, Jefferson Parish has been recovering, however not as fast as other participating communities. The summer 2021 variants do not seem to have as large of an impact as they did in other communities, with JEDCO's index increasing slightly from February 2021 to August 2021.





Source: [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

Additionally, Jefferson Parish experienced a layered disaster impact during the study period. In addition to the Covid-19 pandemic, Jefferson Parish received disaster declarations for hurricanes Ida, Zeta, Delta, and Laura during the pandemic. Hurricane Ida made landfall in a neighboring Parish twice as a Category 4 storm and caused significant impacts to the Parish. Jefferson Parish was able to adapt its hurricane response while safely responding to the Covid-19 virus.

Response

JEDCO responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by continuing to focus on their core mission, while adding new initiatives specifically focused on the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, JEDCO developed a webpage that was updated continuously. They were viewed as a leader in their community to deliver information that was needed by businesses and community leaders. As the pandemic continued into 2022, there was less information specific to Covid-19 and questions arose as to whether a separate webpage was still necessary. As the pandemic continued through its second year, JEDCO became more targeted in its efforts, including a focus on workforce housing, the Seafood Enterprise Assistance (SEA), childcare, and workforce development among other efforts.

During the pandemic, there was an increased emphasis on developing a qualified workforce. JEDCO has worked closely with training providers and the workforce investment board to provide training and make it easier to place people into jobs. The public school system, which is the largest in Louisiana, has partnered with JEDCO to speak about the types of jobs available within the Parish. Students have the ability to earn an associate degree while in high school. JEDCO is also working with partners locally and regionally with displaced workers on rebooting careers, training opportunities, and providing workforce resources and matching.



Jefferson Parish is home to many small businesses within the fishing industry. A loan fund specifically for the fishing industry was developed to provide financial assistance to businesses along the coastal areas of the community. The Seafood Enterprise Assistance (SEA) Fund is able to provide small businesses with a repayment process that meets the seasonality needs of the industry. JEDCO held a launch event on November 9, 2021 and had two successful applications as of early February 2022.

For long-term recovery strategies, JEDCO updated its Jefferson EDGE strategic plan. Focused on 2021- 2025, the new plan focuses on resiliency, competitiveness, and social equity. Due to its location, resilience is constantly at the forefront of its focus. The plan includes goals for talent and workforce, innovation and industry and quality of place and real estate. Special talent focuses are on the attraction and retention of remote workers and retraining and upskilling the existing workforce.

Part of this plan is adding a new diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) position to their staff. Through their recovery response, the importance of an emphasis on DEI initiatives became clear. They are also focused on hiring more women in higher paying career paths, as well as adult education and soft skills training for those new to the workforce.

JEDCO continued throughout the pandemic to find innovative solutions to practicing economic development fundamentals for their community. Business retention and expansion visits continued through virtual visits. Based on the client's preference, the virtual BRE visit is on its way to becoming an option moving forward. Their business attraction strategies continued with a shift towards reshoring strategies. As more workers looked to start their own business during the pandemic, entrepreneurship and innovation continued to be an important focus. Additionally, their small business lending assisted businesses throughout the state of Louisiana.

As an organization, JEDCO has continued with long term projects. In response to ongoing concerns about housing, JEDCO is working with Habitat for Humanity to build a neighborhood of 240 workforce focused housing units. Other real estate projects include Churchill Park—a business park that has been a long-term focus of the organization, which released a master plan right before the pandemic began—and the Avondale Shipyard. These projects also incorporate training, in partnership with local organizations. With activity in their long-term projects, they are also experiencing significant interest in reshoring and a tremendous increase in warehouse, transportation, and cold storage.

As an organization, JEDCO updated their staff to be mobile. Their systems are all cloud based and databases can be accessed wherever the staff is located. This setup allows the organization to be able to respond to disasters or shocks from wherever they need to be within the Parish, state, or country.

Through their experience with several past disasters, JEDCO and several partners all commented on the importance of partnerships within the community, the region, the state and even with the federal government for economic resilience. It was key to their recovery for the pandemic and Hurricane Ida.

Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation

Background

Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation (PAEDC) is a 4a sales tax corporation, a quasi-governmental organization in which the staff are employees of the city, yet they report to a board of directors. As a 4a sales tax corporation, the PAEDC is primarily focused on industrial development and infrastructure improvements that lead to the attraction or development of new or expanding businesses. The City of Port Arthur is located in southeast Texas in Jefferson County.

Floyd Batiste led the PAEDC for 17 years. In July 2021, Mr. Batiste announced his decision to resign along with the organization's longtime attorney and a board executive. A new CEO started in the role in March 2022.

Demographic Information

Port Arthur supports a population of 56,039.⁵⁹ The racial breakdown of Port Arthur's population is 50.0 percent Non-Hispanic White, 38.2 percent Non-Hispanic Black, 34.5 percent Latino or Hispanic, 7.3 percent Non-Hispanic Asian, and 1.6 percent two or more races. All other racial categories are below 1 percent.⁶⁰

According to Chmura Analytics⁶¹, the City of Port Arthur had a labor force participation rate of 53.2 percent. The median household income for the city was \$36,557, with a per capita income of \$19,563. The percentage of the population living under the poverty line is 27.2 percent.

Major Industries

Manufacturing is the largest industry sector in Port Arthur, employing around 3,800 workers. Retail trade and construction are the next two largest industries in the area. Retail trade employs close to 3,000 workers in the city, and construction employs over 2,100 employees. Health care and social assistance is the fourth largest industry, employing over 1,900 workers. Finally, accommodation and food services is the fifth largest industry, with around 1,900 workers⁶². One of the largest oil refineries in the United States is located in Port Arthur. As of 2019, 11,661 workers commuted into, 13,313 workers commuted out and 2,896 workers lived and worked within the City of Port Arthur.

Compared to the national average, the City of Port Arthur has higher concentrations of manufacturing, construction, and utilities. The industries with the highest wages per worker in Port Arthur are manufacturing

⁵⁹ 2020 Decennial Census.

⁶⁰ 2015-2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, StatsAmerica.

⁶¹ 2015-2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, Chmura Analytics.

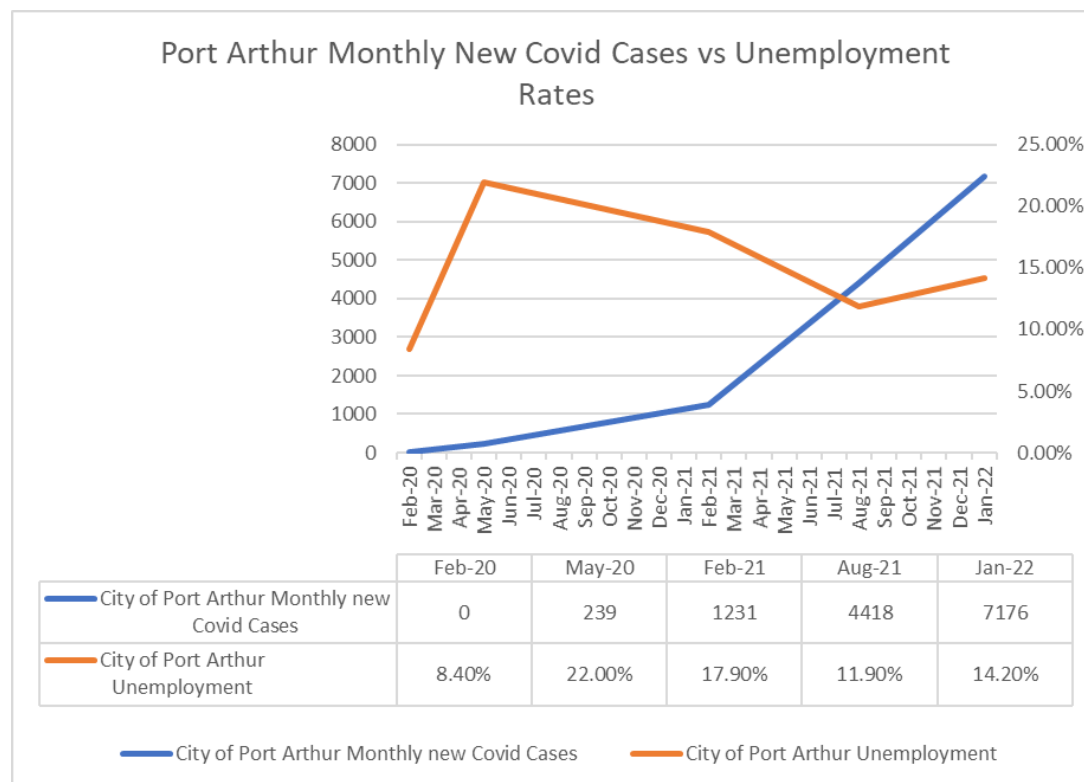
⁶² Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.



(\$109,483), management of companies and enterprises (\$99,664), and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (\$84,049).⁶³

Impacts

As shown in the graph below, the unemployment rate for the City of Port Arthur in February 2020, right before the pandemic, was 8.4 percent. By May 2020, the unemployment rate had reached 22.0 percent. During the first round of interviews in February 2021, the City of Port Arthur had an unemployment rate of 17.9 percent. In August 2021, the city had an unemployment rate of 11.9 percent. As of January 2022, the unemployment rate for Port Arthur was 14.2 percent.



Source: [Covid Data Tracker](#), 2022, Center for Disease Control and [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022

Covid-19 cases for Port Arthur are for all of Jefferson County, since Covid-19 data is not available at the city level. The City of Port Arthur struggled with a high unemployment rate before Covid-19, but the pandemic and accompanying regulations have exacerbated this concern. Unemployment for Port Arthur jumped to 22 percent in May 2020, though there were only 239 new cases for the month of May. Similar to the rest of the country and participating communities, as new Covid-19 cases increased, unemployment rates decreased. While the unemployment rate for Port Arthur has decreased, it continued to be very high throughout the

⁶³ Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Chmura Analytics.

pandemic, indicating a slower recovery for Port Arthur. The Omicron variant contributed to the unemployment rate jump from August 2021 to January 2022, with close to 3,000 more cases in January 2022 than August 2021. Covid-19 has intensified the unemployment concerns of Port Arthur, and their trends seem to match the rest of the communities, with increasing cases but decreasing unemployment rates throughout 2021.

Industry Impacts

Industries in the City of Port Arthur are interconnected. As the oil industry and other companies put projects on hold or closed them, residents were faced with job losses, therefore spending less money. Additionally, there were fewer visitors to the community. At the beginning of discussions, the retail and hospitality industries were the most impacted. Restaurants and a hotel that were in the planning stages had been placed on hold or canceled. As the pandemic continued, the PAEDC shared in the third interview that all of the sectors had expressed needs, however they had remained steady in the last six months.

Prior to the pandemic, Motiva, the operator of North America's largest oil refinery in Port Arthur, was planning to move their employees and contractors who do not need to be on site at the refinery into buildings in downtown Port Arthur. Their relocation was to be part of a larger revitalization of downtown Port Arthur. When the pandemic began, the move into downtown was placed on hold. This hold has impacted workforce numbers and dampened the prospects of downtown businesses to service these employees.

The healthcare industry has been impacted by an increased demand, yet limited availability of healthcare workers. Additionally, a nearby community's hospital had closed prior to the pandemic increasing the patient load at the hospital in Port Arthur and straining healthcare industry workers.

The oil industry experienced ups and downs in employment throughout the pandemic. At times, oil workers, contractors and visitors to oil operations declined precipitously. This had a ripple effect on the hospitality, food and beverage and retail industry. Prior to the pandemic, an Olive Garden and a seafood restaurant were scheduled to open in Port Arthur, as was a new hotel. All three of these potential businesses backed out due to the unknown status of future workers and visitors. However, in January 2022, an expansion to a natural gas terminal was announced, which is estimated to bring 7,000 temporary construction and 200 permanent jobs over the next two years.

PAEDC received regular requests from businesses asking about accessing federal and state resources and efforts to address the lack of workers. As an oil community, businesses and stakeholders were focused on what was going to happen with the refineries. In the beginning of the study, accessing capital was a primary request. By the end of the study, PAEDC was not receiving requests. The hiring of a manager to work with and create programs for small businesses addressed the frequency of the requests.

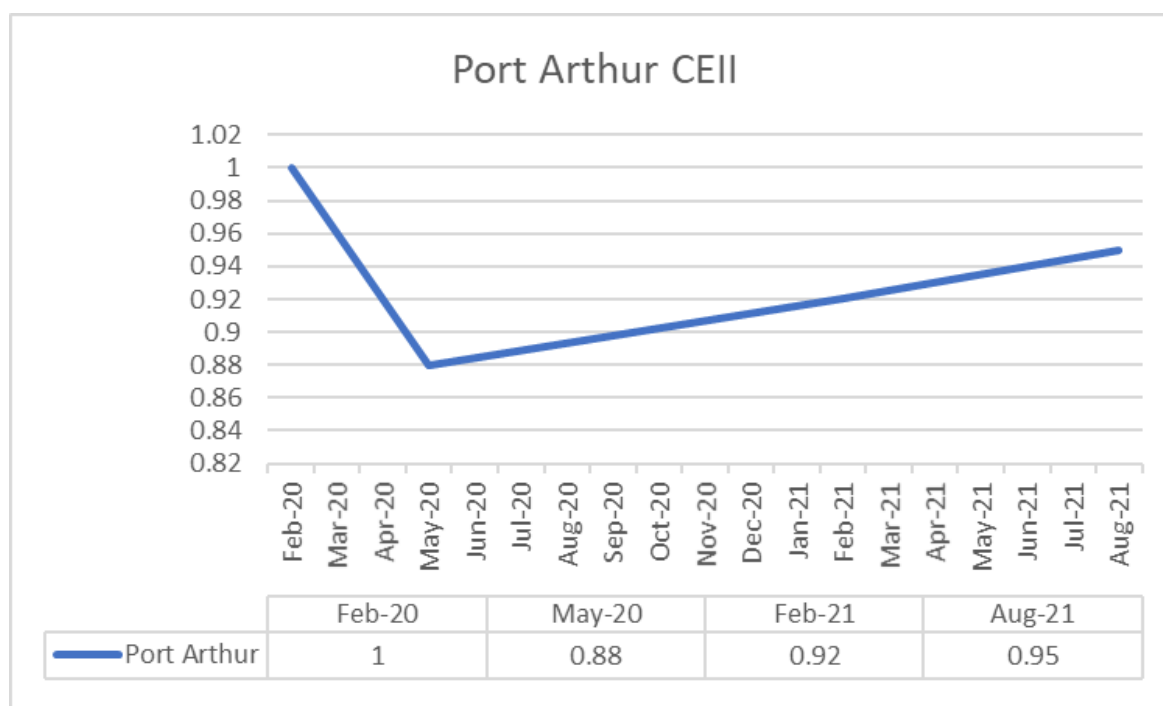
Worker Impacts

Located in a region that is prone to hurricanes, the City of Port Arthur is accustomed to workers relocating outside of the community and the inventory disappearing off shelves during the preparedness and response stages of a disaster. While in some ways the pandemic has been similar to a hurricane, the workers are now not returning due to illness or fear of it, and the store shelves are missing inventory due to national and international supply chains and production.

The City of Port Arthur experienced declining impacts in their unemployment, access to capital and funding gaps, business closures and the capacity of healthcare providers. Their downtown revitalization continued to experience moderately high impacts from the pandemic due to paused private sector investments. Overall, they maintained low impacts to displaced residents and local tax/fiscal issues. As the Omicron variant increased, the impacts on procuring PPE jumped from low to moderately high with the limited availability of masks. Interestingly, the impact of communication with community businesses, stakeholders, and residents as well as the availability of affordable housing increased over the year.

County Economic Impact Index

The County Economic Impact Index (CEII) graph demonstrates the impacts of Covid-19 on Port Arthur's economy and tracks their economic recovery. Since CEII only measures impact for counties, data is for the entire Jefferson County economy, not just Port Arthur. The CEII for the local economy is very similar to the rest of the participating communities, with a quick decline during the Spring of 2020 and a slow but steady recovery. Port Arthur is fortunate that the local economy's index did not decrease during the summer of 2021 when new Covid-19 variants were spreading. This indicates that even when cases have been rising, the impact has not been severe enough to negatively impact the CEII.



Source: [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#), Argonne National Laboratory, 2022

Response

Throughout the pandemic, PAEDC has been focused on long term recovery strategies instead of short-term responses. After the initial impact, there was a belief that the worst of the pandemic was behind them, and a

forward-looking approach to address the long-term needs including small business support, downtown revitalization, and workforce training. This progressive attitude remains a constant in the three discussions with the staff at PAEDC.

During the pandemic, PAEDC continued working on the planned downtown revitalization. One of the projects that was completed was the renovation of a 4500-square foot building. The new building houses space for coworking, office space for smaller businesses, and a culinary school. Their work downtown corresponds with their focus on small businesses and entrepreneurship. A new manager was hired to coordinate with small businesses in the city to provide information on how to access available resources, such as microloans for businesses and the Small Business Development Center at Lamar State College. These businesses can also access space in the newly retrofitted downtown building. Additionally, to support downtown revitalization, PAEDC is working with partners to increase the supply of one- and two-bedroom apartments downtown geared towards workers.

Additionally, the City of Port Arthur, in partnership with PAEDC, published a guidebook at the beginning of the pandemic with safe operations recommendations for businesses. Many of the city services went online including appointments to meet with the permitting office. Whereas the city used to have a weekly in-person review session with developers, during the pandemic it shifted to Zoom. The city and developers have abandoned the idea of bringing the meeting back in person and accepted the digital meetings as the new normal.

Port Arthur is a veteran to disasters, such as hurricanes, plant explosions, and in recent years, freezes. As a resilient community, they have learned the importance of communication and speaking with a unified voice to share information from all levels of government with their citizens. When recovering from other disasters, there is usually a focus on hardening infrastructure around the city. For the pandemic, they focused on hardening their human capital. The partners within Port Arthur worked collaboratively to increase access to workforce training.

A key example of this is the culinary school located in PAEDC's retrofitted downtown building. The school is operated by Lamar State College and serves the workforce training needs of the restaurant industry. The culinary school opened in August 2021 with full classes and additional students interested in the program. With only one semester of classes, the culinary school has won awards at the state level.

PAEDC has supported the refinery industry by paying for workers to earn their commercial driver's license. They found that the more potential workers they are able to put through the training to earn their license the more they are able to put into jobs. During the pandemic, workers who had lost their jobs or experienced a shortage of their work hours were interested in participating in the classes.

Federal funds also support workforce development and align with regional industries. The City of Port Arthur, the Port of Port Arthur, and Lamar State College were the recipients of CARES Act Recovery Assistance grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The City of Port Arthur received a grant of \$3 million to support the design and construction of data cabling and fiber optic infrastructure and economic resiliency in downtown. The Port of Port Arthur Navigation District received a \$3 million grant to construct a new cargo handling, staging, and transport area to support the port's ability to handle exports. Lamar State College Port Arthur campus received a \$4.3 million grant to design and construct a commercial driver education and examination center.

