



501(c)(3) nonprofit · Serving St. Francis, Lee, Phillips, Monroe, and surrounding Delta counties

OUR MISSION

Engage East Arkansas brings together community, workforce, and economic development to drive investment into the East Arkansas region and make it a place people can stay.

WHO WE ARE

Engage East Arkansas (EEA) was formed as a dedicated home for housing, workforce, and economic development work across the eastern Arkansas Delta. The need in our service area is documented, not asserted. In St. Francis County, our home county, the poverty rate is 30.6 percent, median household income is \$42,574 — roughly a third below the Arkansas figure and about half the national one — and only 14.2 percent of adults hold a bachelor's degree. The county lost 5.6 percent of its population between 2020 and 2025, led by working-age adults who rarely return.

EEA is led by Executive Director Dexter J. Freeman II, MBA, IOM, who has managed grant portfolios up to \$1.2 million, built a regional youth employment strategy that placed 140 young people into paid work and returned more than \$400,000 to local communities, and ran operations for a chamber of commerce with a \$4.7 million combined budget.

We work inside an established regional network that includes our board of directors which is made up of experienced economic development, public policy and community engagement, construction and general contracting, and licensed trades professionals. Also within this network are key strategic partners which include East Arkansas Enterprise Community, MIC, Phoenix Youth and Family Services, South Arkansas Health Council, and the Arkansas Human Development Corporation.

OUR PRIORITIES

Housing & Community Development

Expand the supply of safe, affordable housing and rebuild the community assets that make housing investment viable.

Workforce Development

Move residents, particularly young adults, into paid work through training tied to demonstrated regional employer demand.

Economic & Infrastructure Development

Fund the drainage, sites, and public infrastructure that has to be in place before private investment and job growth follow.

PORTFOLIO IN ACTION

Current role

U.S. Forest Service
Urban & Community Forestry, 2024–2026

Urban & Community Forestry — Pathways to the Future

Partner to the Arkansas Human Development Corporation on a \$1,563,070 U.S. Forest Service award introducing youth ages 16 to 18 in Lee, Monroe, Phillips, and St. Francis Counties to careers in urban and community forestry. EEA supports program oversight, planning, and community outreach across the service area. Across two cohorts the program has engaged 240 young people in more than 50,000 hours of paid work, returning over \$625,000 in wages to local communities and improving 137 acres of parks and public space.

Funding requests where EEA holds a defined role

Delta Regional Authority
Community Infrastructure Fund, 2026

Madison Stormwater and Flood Control, Phase 1

Lead project partner to East Arkansas Enterprise Community on a \$1,158,000 flood control project in Madison (pop. 759): a \$1,000,000 DRA request against \$158,000 in committed non-federal cost share, including \$40,000 in cash from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. EEA carries day-to-day management of scope, schedule, budget, procurement administration, and DRA reporting.

Arkansas Community Assistance
Grant Program, 2026 cycle

East Arkansas Youth Career Pathways

Partner to Arkansas Human Development Corporation on a \$388,770 request serving 50 young people ages 16 to 24 each year and 100 across 24 months. A dedicated \$22,000 partner capacity line covers employer convening, cohort logistics across sites and counties, participant data collection feeding AHDC's report to AEDC, and outreach connecting the program to regional housing and economic development work.

Applications EEA developed for regional partners

HEART YR 1-2026
FARM sub-initiative

Spring into Wellness Expansion

An \$850,000 Year 1 request for Phoenix Youth and Family Services as lead applicant with South Arkansas Health Council, building nutrition education, a community health market, and regional farm production capacity from the Crossett anchor site.

PACT YR 1-2026

Rural Community Health Network for Southeast Arkansas

A \$423,311 Year 1 budget for Phoenix Youth and Family Services and South Arkansas Health Council, establishing permanent telehealth access points and a credentialed community health worker corps across Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Desha, and Drew Counties.

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING PIPELINE

EEA's community development work is anchored in a pipeline of housing projects in Crittenden and St. Francis Counties, at stages ranging from municipally approved and raising capital to raw land held and awaiting site work. Together these represent more than \$26 million in identified project cost, plus additional acreage under control.

Anchor project

Workforce Housing at West Memphis
Crittenden County

PLANS APPROVED · IN PREDEVELOPMENT

A \$25,000,000, 150-unit apartment community on a 4.9-acre site, approved by the City of West Memphis in February 2026. Unit offerings include one-, two-, and three-bedroom floor plans, with 20 percent of units reserved for households earning up to 80 percent of area median income. The community is designed to serve young professionals, growing families, ASU Mid-South faculty and students, and residents seeking high-quality rental housing within West Memphis. Developer: 3P Companies & Affiliates. General contractor: Pearson General Contractors. **Current raise target: \$500,000.**

Forrest City pipeline

Drexel Street Development
Forrest City

LAND HELD · IN PREDEVELOPMENT

Four units across two duplex buildings, roughly 4,000 square feet total, in wood-frame slab-on-grade construction on land owned free and clear. Construction pricing is being rebid against a rental-grade specification, and the capital structure pairs conventional debt with a subsidy layer sized to local rents — the standard approach for new rental construction in a county where HUD's three-bedroom Fair Market Rent is \$1,161.

Cross Street Development
Forrest City

DEMOLITION COMPLETE

Site demolition is finished. Prospective plans call for a four-unit duplex with an adjacent duplex or triplex. Ownership structure and cost structure are being determined.

Forrest City Bypass Residential Subdivision
Forrest City

LAND HELD

5 acres of vacant land, owned and adjacent to the Highway 1 Bypass, primed for residential subdivision development. Planned specifications, developer, and raise target are to be determined.

Forrest City Ridge Property
Forrest City

LAND HELD

3.4 acres of vacant land, owned and primed for development. The site requires leveling and infrastructure investment before vertical construction can begin — precisely the precondition work described in our third priority area.