

Public Service Perspective

COVID's Legacy:

How Hybrid Work Models Benefit “Remote Ready” Rural Communities

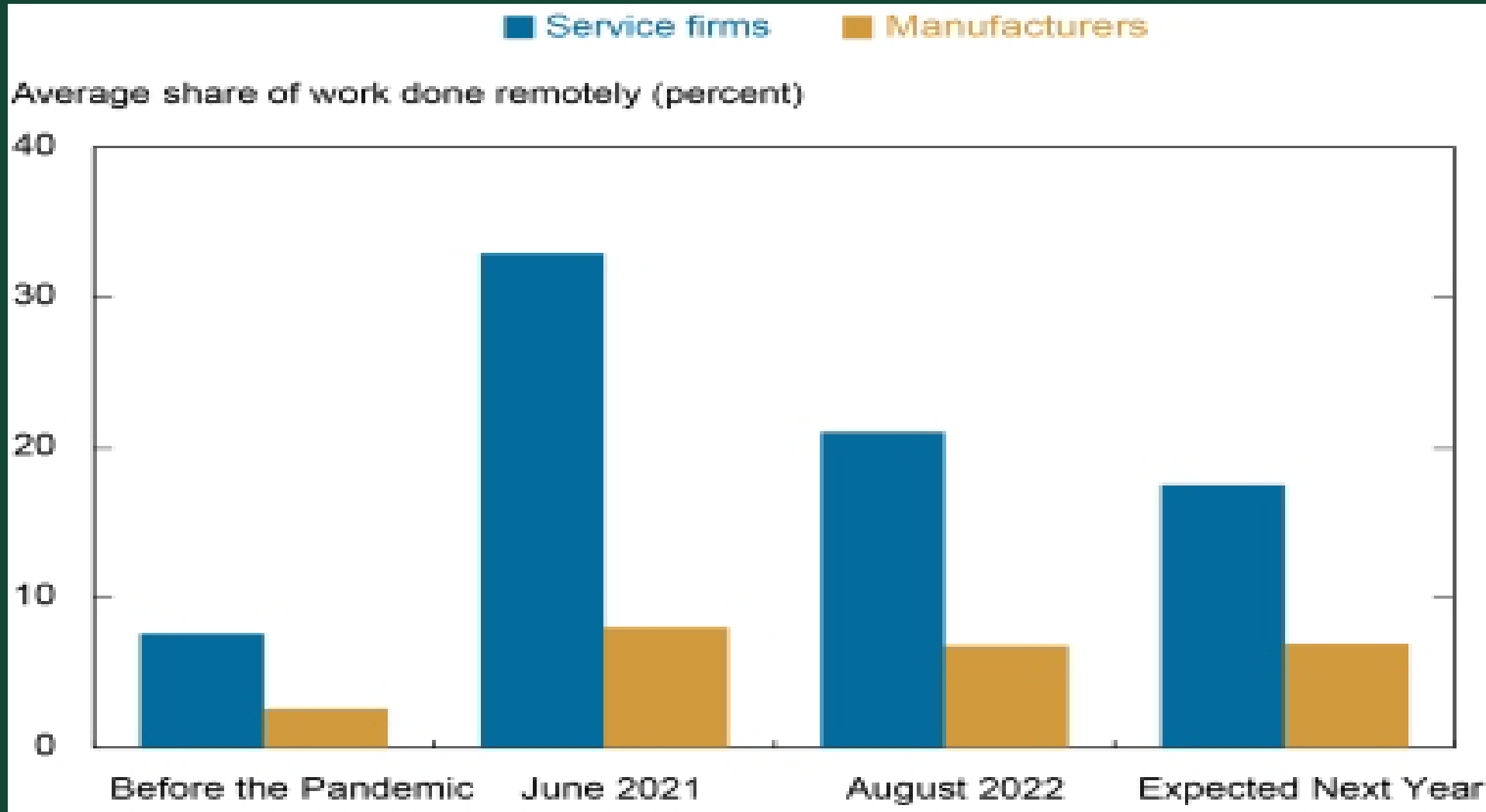
Brent Lane, Executive in Residence for Economic Strategies
Center for Economic Development and Community Resilience

Hybrid (Remote) Work – Bug to Feature

Hybrid working, necessitated by COVID pandemic, can be capitalized upon as a rural economic development opportunity

Lessening job/residence proximity constraints benefits both rural employees and employers

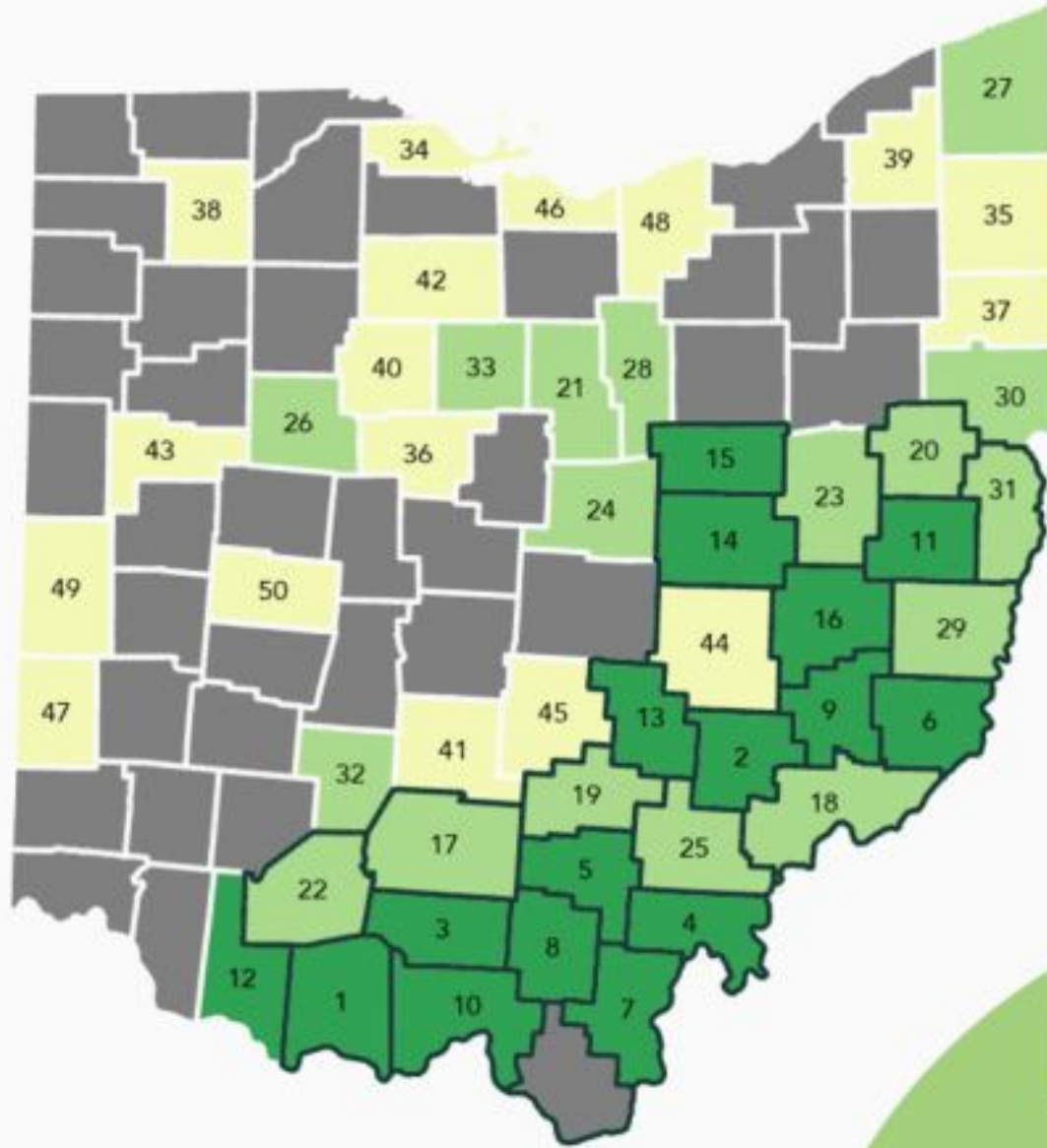
Hybrid Work's Persistence



Pre-COVID: US Jobs More Mobile Than People

- Commuting times and costs increasing
- Workforce participation declining
- Geographic “Skills gaps” expanding
- Unemployment and open jobs increasing
- Upward mobility impaired

An inefficient market for both labor and capital.



AN OVERLOOKED LABOR POOL: OHIO SOUTHEAST REGION HOME TO HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF "SUPER COMMUTERS"

In August, 2022, Stacker ranked Ohio counties based on the proportion of workers who commuted 90 minutes or more one-way to work. This map ranks the top 50 Ohio counties for "Super Commuters".



Hybrid Work and Economic Development

HW **reduces market inefficiencies** by enhancing employment access by employees and employers

Employees: Optimize job and residence choices

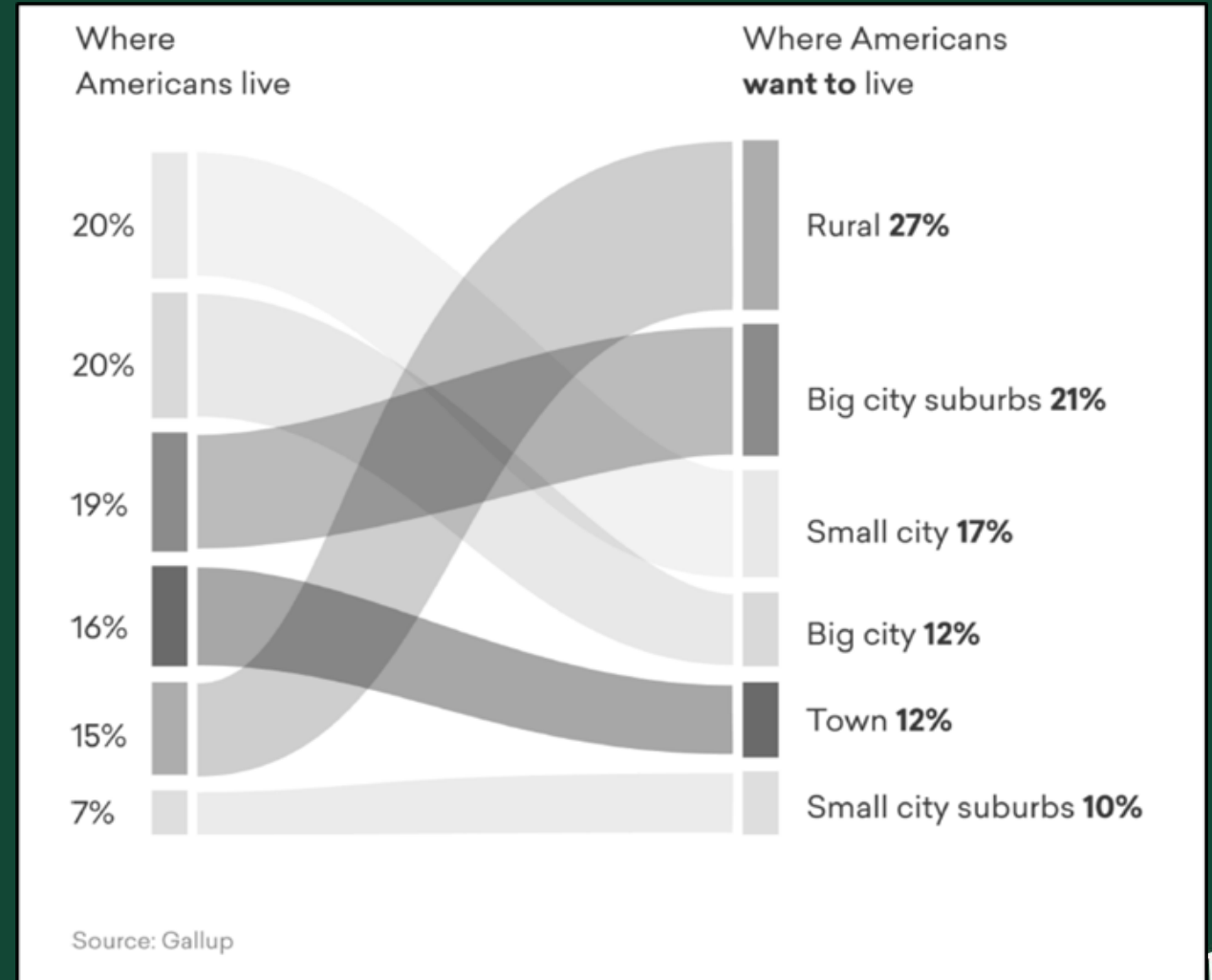
Employers: Optimize personnel pool and location factors

Bridges people- and place-based ED strategies

HW Enables Rural Relocation & Retention

2018-2021 Gallup Polls:

“If Americans did sort themselves according to their desires, **there would be an exodus** from the big cities and, to a lesser degree, from small cities and town, accompanying a **movement to rural areas.**”



HW Beneficiaries

1. Digital Nomads/Gadflies

tulsa
remote



2. Potential residents optimizing home locations
3. Current residents optimizing occupation/job
4. Businesses optimizing personnel candidates

HW's Numerous SE Ohio Benefits

1. **Imports income** and reduces **commuting retail leakage**
2. **Saves commuting** costs, time, and negative impacts
3. Increases **workforce participation** accessibility
4. **Retains** graduates and **early career residents**
5. Enhances **upward mobility** opportunities for residents
6. **Diversifies** economy in both **employment and employers**
7. Grows and **revitalizes communities'** populations

SE Ohio HW Strategy Portfolio Options

CONTINUE: Support HW by current residents

CONVERT: Help out-commuters become hybrid workers

UPSKILL: HW training/job placement for current residents

RETAIN: HW job placement for graduates/likely out-migrants

REPATRIATE: Solicit return of former residents via HW

(RE)CONNECT: Attract HW with SE Ohio connections

INCENT: Bribe HW workers with no SE Ohio connection

Rural “Remote Ready” Scorecard

1. Internet Access

2. Attainable Housing

3. Childcare

4. Cost of Living

5. Remote Workspaces

6. Outdoor Recreation

7. Professional Education

8. Remote Work Training

9. Travel Access

10. Financial Incentives

SE Ohio “Remote Ready” Status

POSITIVE

1. Attainable Housing
2. Cost of Living
3. Outdoor Recreation
4. Professional Education

NEUTRAL

1. Internet Access
2. Remote Workspaces
3. Childcare
4. Travel Access

NEGATIVE

1. Remote Work Training
2. Financial Incentives

Conclusions

1. HW is a **sustained but evolving** trend
2. HW enables **thwarted rural location preferences**
3. HW benefits **current & prospective** residents
4. **“Incented”** HW economic **impacts are small**
5. Supporting **resident HW over relocation attraction** better addresses SE Ohio priorities
6. **SE Ohio “remote readiness” must be proactive**

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ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR REMOTE WORK IN ATHENS COUNTY

**Mollie Fitzgerald, Director
Athens County Economic
Development Council**



EXPLORING REMOTE WORK FOR ATHENS COUNTY

- **Remote work necessitated by COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Trends in remote work (ASCEND West Virginia)**
- **Economic and community development benefits**
- **Level of preparedness for remote work**
- **Athens' attractiveness/priorities for remote workers**

WHAT WE FOUND

What won't work:

- Focusing on non-local talent attraction
- Offering large financial incentives

What could work:

- Using remote work opportunities to increase local labor force
- Supporting infrastructure and build-out of remote work “hubs”

DIRECT AND INDUCED ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Economic Impacts of Adding 100 Athens Remote Workers					
Annual Household Income Level	Direct Impacts		Induced Impacts		
	Employment	Income	Employment	Labor Income	Output
<\$30k	15	\$616,000	4	\$138,105	\$496,293
\$30-49k	24	\$976,000	6	\$273,519	\$786,334
\$50-74k	28	\$1,974,000	10	\$397,138	\$1,444,789
\$75-100k	18	\$1,611,000	8	\$326,262	\$1,150,137
\$100-150k	10	\$1,339,000	6	\$258,591	\$907,939
\$150k+	4	\$570,000	3	\$110,080	\$386,501
TOTAL	100	\$7,086,000	37	\$1,503,694	\$5,171,992

*This assumes an income level distribution consistent with the distribution of current Athens remote workers

ALIGNING STRATEGY WITH EXISTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

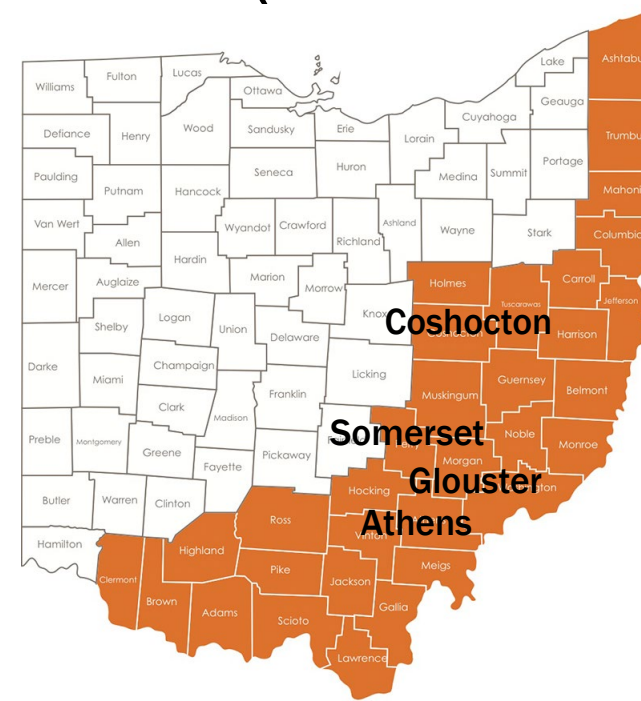
Deploying a remote work strategy that aligns with our public policies at the local level will leverage what we are already doing to:

- Enhance upward socioeconomic mobility for underemployed/unemployed
- Recruit and retain employees by expanding the work shed
- Retain talent from Ohio University
- Reduce out-commuting and associated retail leakage
- Capitalize on Athens' "stickiness" factor

*It also doesn't become cost prohibitive

MOVING FORWARD...

- Focus on regional remote work network and “hub” approach
- Infrastructure and buildout of remote work hubs (Athens Armory, KOP, etc.)
- Offer transferrable memberships
- Ohio BUILDS proposal



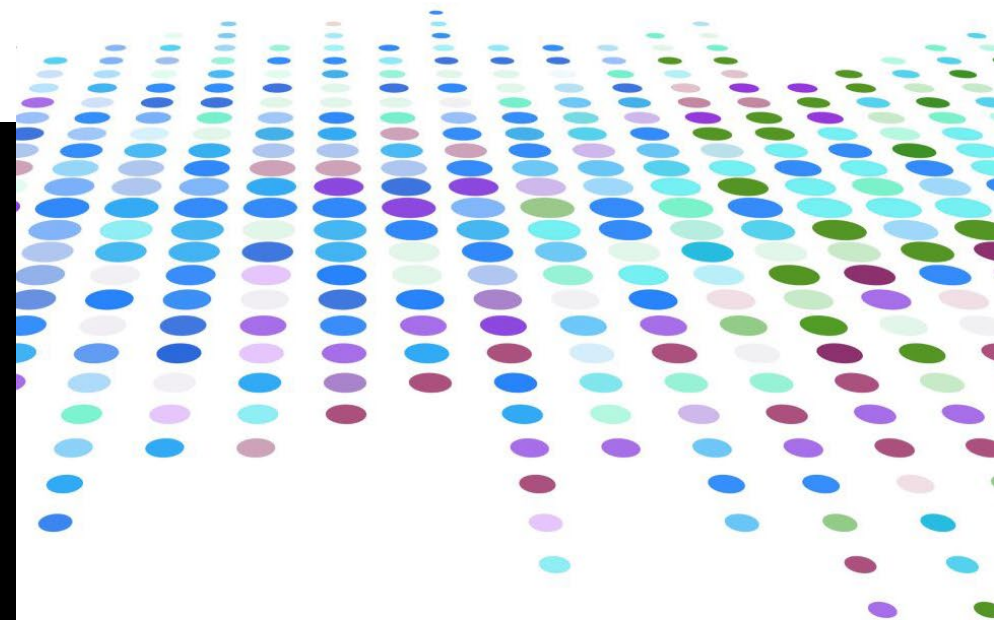
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Remote Work in Appalachian Ohio



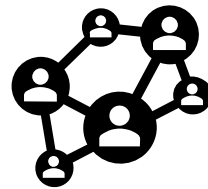
Buckeye Hills Regional Council: Who We Are

- Area Agency on Aging
- District 18 Liaison for the Ohio Public Works Commission
- Economic Development District
- Local Development District
- Regional Transportation Planning Organization
- Southeast Ohio Aging & Disability Resource Center
- Representing: Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington Counties



Addressing Remote Work in Appalachian Ohio

- Strive to create thriving communities to live, work, play for current and potential residents.



Addressing Remote Work in Appalachian Ohio

- Broadband expansion and deployment
- Infrastructure support
- Asset utilization
- Workforce support
- Economic diversification

Addressing Remote Work in Appalachian Ohio

- Grant and loan application support
- Funding Sources:
 - JobsOhio Vibrant Communities program
 - Ohio BUILDS

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