

The Educational Needs Index Project Urban and Rural Policy Forums and Roundtables with Local Officials

<http://www.educationalneedsindex.com>

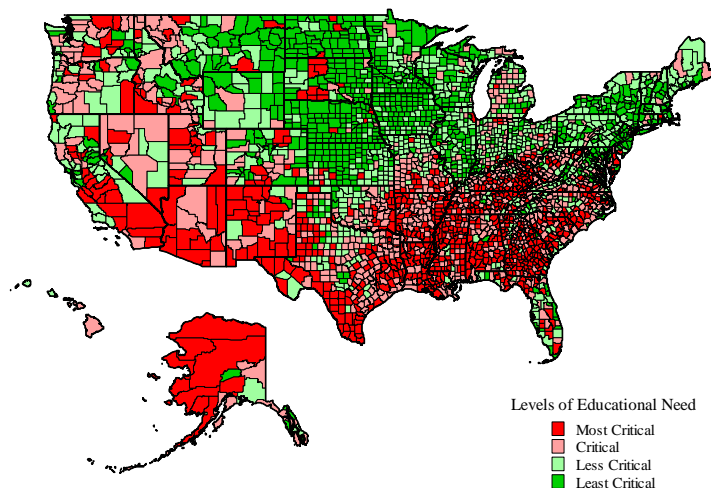
The Educational Needs Index (ENI), a county-by-county study of educational, economic and population pressures that affect education policy, offers an innovative approach to better understanding the existing data and public policy challenges that face all states and their respective counties. Recognizing that education conditions are affected by many factors, the ENI offers a method of evaluating a region's educational conditions while looking at influences such as economic and population pressures. In addition, this project gives education and economic policy-makers a way to compare their county's educational attainment, labor and earnings statistics, and population growth rates to counties with similar conditions and challenges.

Key Questions Asked of Each State

Three Individual Factors: What is the current level of educational degree attainment of the state and its respective counties? What is the current economic health of each of the state's counties? Are there counties that are growing and have shifting demographics that skew toward youth, young adults or at-risk minority groups?

Overall Analysis: What counties can be identified to be undereducated, facing economic challenges, and facing robust population growth and shifting demographics in categories of youth, young adults or at-risk minority groups?

Educational Needs Index for U.S. Counties



Urban and Rural Policy Forums and Roundtables

Throughout 2006, ENI researchers are meeting with education leaders, economic officials, and other public figures from the following urban areas and their respective counties: **Las Vegas, El Paso, Memphis, Chicago, Providence, and Miami**. In addition, the following rural regions of the country are also being included in the study: **Central Washington State, Central California, NW New Mexico, SE Arkansas/W Mississippi, SE Kentucky/NE Tennessee, and South Central Virginia**. Focus groups, public forums, and individual meetings are being employed to explore how the county's demographic trends are affecting planning and public policy. Sample questioning includes:

- What do these conditions mean to the residents of the area? How are these conditions affecting everyday lives and planning for the future?
- How are economic pressures affecting education and training needs? What challenges exist for the emerging workforce versus the current workforce?
- What are the barriers that are preventing public officials from meeting these educational challenges?
- What accomplishments or best practices in this region might inform similar efforts in other urban and/or rural areas?