

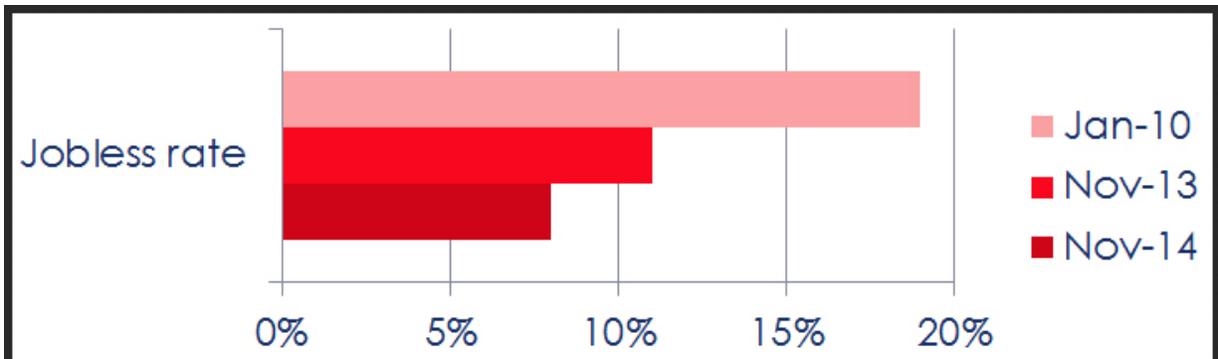
## DECEMBER 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

### Good news is right under your nose: Did you know?

Good news can often go overlooked. The Rockford Area Economic Development Council knows there is a positive story to tell in the Rockford Region. Each month, you can see the momentum build.

**For people who believe in our region's future, good news should be top of mind and at the tip of your tongue.**

The numbers are strong:



1. The **unemployment rate was down to 8.1 percent** in the Rockford metro area in November, 3 percentage points lower than a year ago and 11 points lower than five years ago.

2. **Projects announced in 2014 equal almost \$300 million to be invested** in the Rockford Region.

3. This year, **2,500 jobs were created or retained** through businesses locating, staying or expanding in our region.

**The results are visible:**

1. **Things are "taking off" at the airport:** AAR will hire 500 people to staff a 24/7, \$40 million MRO jet facility at Chicago Rockford International Airport -- right next to Rock Valley College's \$5 million facility for its aviation maintenance program, with a capacity for 150 students.

2. You likely drive by this major construction: **Two Meijer grocery stores will employ 500 people** next year in Rockford and Machesney Park.

3. Local businesses are growing globally: **Exports, valued at \$2.53 billion, increased a record 32 percent** in 2013, according to data released in September 2014. Our growth rate is higher than most regions in the country; U.S. exports only rose 2 percent. As a result, the RAEDC hosted a record 250+ attendees at its 2014 Go Global Conference.

4. In October, **Rockford was named a Ford Next Generation Learning Community**, one of just 17 in the nation, in recognition of RPS 205's high school redesign and focus on career readiness. The RAEDC supported this initiative through its Emerging Opportunities Fund's contribution to Alignment Rockford, totaling \$410,000 over three years.

5. This fall, **Practice Velocity breathed new life into empty mall space** in Machesney Park for its growing medical software business. This move not only created a vibrant office, it also expanded the region's IT workforce.



Read even more here: [Success Stories in 2014](#)

We post good news regularly. A recent sampling:

[All lanes of the tollway open: Good for drivers, good for development](#)

[RVC to take TechWorks training program to next level](#)

[High schoolers to compete for NIU scholarships on televised quiz bowl](#)

Awards: [RAEDC](#), [Concentric](#), [Larson & Darby Group](#)

Watch for my President's Newsletter each month to see the collective impact of our efforts.

The RAEDC often works behind the scenes due to the confidential nature of business projects. Plus, big deals take time: The average time from start to completion on the more than 20 announced project wins in 2014 was 665 days, with several projects requiring more than three years.

We are committed to persistence and continuity in our work: We market the Rockford Region to the world, influencing companies to locate or expand here. We support and promote growth within targeted industries through regional public-private collaboration. We assist prospective and existing companies by connecting them to resources for workforce development, available buildings, supply chain partners, incentives and more.

Together, we will continue the momentum in 2015 for an even stronger, more sustainable economy. **Together, we will Connect, Act and Thrive!**



*Michael Nicholas*

[Michael Nicholas](#)

President,  
Rockford Area Economic  
Development Council



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**Finally, save the date!**



**Reserve your spot today for our January 15 event, "Canada and the Midwest: International Trade Opportunities."**

[Email Teri Johnson](#); the event, featuring Consul General of Canada Roy Norton, is free! From 5 to 7 p.m., you can:

- Learn about the growing importance of the U.S.-Canada relationship, particularly as it pertains to the Rockford Region based on mutual aerospace, oil/gas and other advanced manufacturing industries.
- Explore how your company can benefit from relationships among the RAEDC, Canadian Consul General and the National Defense Industry Association (NDIA).



#### **ABOUT THE RAEDC**

The primary role of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council (RAEDC) is to collaboratively enhance wealth creation in the Rockford Region by helping employers retain and create quality jobs. The RAEDC works closely with many partners to learn what existing and new employers need to grow, and to serve as a one-stop resource for clients. The RAEDC seeks to improve the competitiveness of the region by taking what it learns from the region's employers, and engaging the community in the daily work of economic development.