IV. CONCLUSION

The study findings suggest that the seven-county region in southern middle Tennessee has an abundant labor force that may easily adapt to business needs. To summarize the findings:

- 176,090 residents over 18, of which 111,333 are in the labor force, live in the seven-county region, for a labor force participation rate of 63.23 percent.

- 47,253 residents are readily available for work for new businesses or existing businesses expanding in the region. Of these workers,

  o about 18,055 are underemployed and willing to change jobs for a better one,

  o about 18,523 are unemployed and looking for job, and

  o 10,675 are discouraged or other marginally attached workers and willing to work.

- Nearly one-third of the region's labor force has an educational attainment of associate degree and above.

- In addition, one-fifth of the labor force has some college-level education.

- According to our estimates, nearly three-fifths of the underemployed have at least one skilled trade.

- Nearly 4,000 available workers, representing about 10 percent of the total available workforce in the region, have more than one skilled trade,.

From a workforce development perspective, the study findings also suggest the regional stakeholders should address the following issue:

- There is evidence of structural change in the region's economy over the years, and the spell of unemployment for some workers is getting longer, suggesting that these workers need comprehensive retooling of their skills and education to fit in the competitive labor market.

Finally, although they are not included in this study's available labor force estimates, some workers are willing to change jobs for a new one even if the new job pays equal to or less than their current wage rate. These workers may be counted as available labor force. However, since these workers are not currently looking for a job, we did not count them as available labor force. Therefore, our estimates of available labor force for the region fall closer to the lower bound.