

While the U.S. economy is on the recovery, many are still struggling with unemployment and underemployment. Oklahoma offers plenty of opportunity for job seekers, with its low unemployment rate of only 5.5 percent; however, not all places provide the same economic opportunities and cost of living. To help, NerdWallet crunched the numbers to find the best places for job seekers in Oklahoma. We found the best places for job seekers in the state by asking the following questions: Is the county growing? We assessed growth in the working-age population, ages 16 and older, from 2009-11 to ensure that the county was attracting workers and exhibiting a trend of upward population growth. Can you afford to live in the county comfortably? We measured a county's median household income to see if workers made a good living. We also analyzed the monthly homeowner costs, including mortgage payments, to see if the county had a reasonable cost of living. Are most people employed? We looked at the unemployment rate.

The Best Places in Oklahoma for Job Seekers

1. Beckham County Beckham County is located in west-central Oklahoma, bordering Texas. Its county seat is Sayre while the largest city in Beckham County is Elk City. The state saw a working-age population growth of 10.9 percent between 2009 and 2011 while its unemployment rate was a low 2.8 percent in October 2013. Large employers in Beckham County include Superior Fabrication, Great Plains Regional Medical Center and Great Plains National Bank. While agriculture has been a large industry in Beckham County, recently, the county has seen an oil boom. Bronco Oilfield Services is headquartered in Elk City, and Canyon Oilfield Services has locations in both Elk City and Sayre. Western Technology Center has a location in Sayre, and it provides adult education courses as well as business and industry services.

2. Woodward County Woodward County is located in northern Oklahoma, and its county seat, Woodward, is located west of Boiling Springs State Park, known for its natural boiling spring. Woodward County's households earned a median income of \$51,087 in 2011 while its unemployment rate was only 2.8 percent in October 2013. Major employers in the county include Woodward Regional Hospital,

Roberts Ranch of Oklahoma and Northwest Center for Behavioral Health. High Plains Technology Center is located in Woodward and provides Adult Training and Development programs to help residents gain employment skills. Additionally, Northwestern Oklahoma University has a campus in Woodward. Students can find assistance with their job search at Career Services.

3. McClain County McClain County is located in central Oklahoma and is a part of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. Its county seat is Purcell, the “Heart of Oklahoma”, while the largest cities in the county include Newcastle and Blanchard, which are a part of the Tri-Cities region in northern McClain and Grady Counties. McClain County saw a working-age population growth of 5.8 percent between 2009 and 2011, and the county’s households earned a median income of \$56,128 in 2011. Large employers in Newcastle include the Chickasaw Nation, Walmart and Troy Wesnidge while major employers in the county include Newcastle Casino, Purcell Municipal Hospital and B&H Construction. Mid-America Technology Center is located in Wayne, in McClain County. The center offers Adult Training & Development programs that provide over 13,000 hours of business and industry instruction to 15,000 people a year.

4. Canadian County Canadian County is located west of Oklahoma City, in central Oklahoma. While Yukon is the largest city in the county, the county seat is El Reno, located 25 miles west of Oklahoma City. The county saw a working-age population growth of 7.7 percent between 2009 and 2011, and its households earned a median income of \$62,355 in 2011. The county’s major industries include agribusiness, manufacturing and oil and gas. Large employers in Mustang, another populous city in the county, include Tate Publishing and Accurate Drilling, while major employers in Canadian County include Xerox, Spanish Cove and Nomac Drilling. El Reno is home to Canadian Valley Technology Center, whose Business Development Services help local businesses get the training and resources they need to grow. Redlands Community College, also located in El Reno, has a Workforce & Economic Development division to provide businesses with training resources and job seekers with educational opportunities.

5. Custer County Custer County is located in eastern Oklahoma, northeast of Beckham County. The county seat is Arapaho while

the largest city in the county is Weatherford. The county saw a working-age population increase of 4.4 percent between 2009 and 2011. In October 2013, its unemployment rate was only 3.3 percent. Large employers in Custer County include Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Elk Supply Company and INTEGRIS Health. Weatherford is also home to a Kodak manufacturing plant. Southwestern Oklahoma State University is located in Weatherford and provides local businesses with data and analysis, business strategies and entrepreneurial programs and forums. 6. Garfield County Located in north-central Oklahoma, Garfield County is home to Enid, one of the largest cities in Oklahoma. Enid is situated approximately 80 miles north of Oklahoma City and is known as the “Wheat Capital of Oklahoma”. The county’s households earned a median income of \$41,688 in 2011 while its unemployment rate was 3.5 percent in October 2013.

Enid’s major employers include AdvancePierre Foods, Bass Baptist Health Center and CSC. Northern Oklahoma College has a campus in Enid, which provides students with career services such as career assessment tools and access to job boards. Enid is also home to Autry

Technology Center, which provides small-business assistance, career-training programs and other industry services. County Logan County is a part of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, in central Oklahoma. Its county seat and largest city is Guthrie, which was home to a

population of 10,623 in 2012. Logan County saw a working-age population growth of 8.5 percent from 2009 to 2011, and the county’s households earned a median income of \$50,249 in 2011. Major employers in Logan County include Logan Regional Medical Center, Autoquip Corporation and Langston University. Guthrie Job Corps, one of the largest employers in the county, is a job-training and educational program that helps locals develop business skills. Langston University, located in Langston, is the only historically black college in Oklahoma. The college provides its students with job fairs, developmental seminars and other career help at the

Office of Assessment and Career Services. 8. Bryan County Bryan County, located in southeastern Oklahoma, borders Texas. The county is a part of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area; the county seat, Durant, is located approximately 90 miles north of downtown Dallas. The

county saw a working-age population increase of 5.5 percent from 2009 to 2011. Additionally, Bryan County's unemployment rate in October 2013 was only 4.5 percent. First United Bank, one of the largest banks in the Southwest, and the Choctaw Nation are headquartered in Durant. Durant is also home to Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Their Career Management Center offers students and alums one-on-one career assistance, resume and interviewing aid and job search assistance.

9. Wagoner County Located in eastern Oklahoma, Wagoner County is a part of the Tulsa metropolitan area. Its county seat is Wagoner, and the county contains parts of Tulsa and Broken Arrow. Between 2009 and 2011, Wagoner County saw a working-age population growth of 5.8 percent, and its households earned a median income of \$56,819 in 2011. The largest employers in the county include Blue Bell Creameries, Exterran and Wagoner Community Hospital. Oklahoma State University has an extension in Wagoner County in Coweta. It provides community development services to help the area's economy.

10. Stephens County Stephens County is situated in southern Oklahoma, on the Red River plains. Its county seat is Duncan, which is located centrally in the county. Stephens County saw a working-age population growth of 4.0 percent from 2009 to 2011. Additionally, the county's unemployment rate in October 2013 was only 4.6 percent. Major employers in Duncan include Halliburton, Duncan Regional Hospital and Family Dollar Stores. The Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation has a Duncan Center for Business Development, which incubates small businesses by offering a network of resources from local entities such as Cameron University and Red River Technology Center. The Red River Technology Center is a local center that offers adult-training programs, job certifications and business and industry assistance.