



Strategic Update

The 2015 BREG (Blueprint for Regional Economic Growth) plan was spurred by the understanding that the ten counties in the greater Wichita region are not only economically interconnected, but stand to benefit from an intentional and collaborative approach to regional economic development.

In 2018, the Greater Wichita Partnership and its partners engaged Market Street Services to facilitate an eight-month process that assessed where the greater Wichita region is now in terms of its competitive position, evaluate the state of cluster development and BREG implementation, and update the regional plan’s cluster framework and corresponding strategic recommendations. The new plan, titled the Regional Growth Plan, will help regional partners achieve heightened

economic growth and prosperity through increasingly refined and targeted economic development activities.

The 2018 Regional Growth Plan process benefits from funding support from key partners across the ten-county greater Wichita region including: Butler County, City of El Dorado, City of Wichita, Greater Hutch, Greater Wichita Partnership, Harvey County Economic Development, and Sedgwick County. The Regional Growth Plan process is occurring at an opportune time for greater Wichita. Importantly, it is complemented by Project Wichita, a strategic visioning initiative whose development is concurrent with the creation of the Regional Growth Plan.

The following comprised the stages of the strategic process:

PHASE 1 CLUSTER ASSESSMENT

This phase examined recent changes in economic and workforce composition in the region. The analysis leveraged quantitative and qualitative research including over 20 individual and group interviews with key community leaders and economic development practitioners to gain their feedback and subject matter expertise. Over 50 face-to-face touchpoints with key leaders were ultimately leveraged .

PHASE 2 ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

This report built on the Cluster Assessment by evaluating the implementation of the BREG initiative in the context of local and regional economic development entities, partnerships, communications, and collaboration. Analysis included perspectives on the activities related to cross-cutting initiatives recommended in the 2015 BREG process.

PHASE 3 REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

Leveraging the findings of the Cluster and Organizational Assessments, the Regional Growth Plan reflects a reimagining and refocusing of the 2015 BREG plan to establish the greater Wichita region’s strategic economic priorities for the coming five years.

PHASE 4 IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

While the Regional Growth Plan represents what the greater Wichita region will pursue in the next five years to develop its regional economy, the Implementation Guidelines detail how public and private partners across the ten-county region can advance efficient and effective implementation.

KEY CLUSTER ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

An examination of key attributes and an assessment of how South Central Kansas has fared over the past decade provided insights on the region's dynamics and economic opportunities.

- South Central Kansas' tight labor market continues to be a challenge. Population growth in South Central Kansas has been slow over the past decade, stifled by domestic outmigration of residents. Likewise, the labor force in South Central Kansas has also been shrinking in recent years. Between 2011 and 2016, the labor force fell by 2.1 percent for a net loss of 8,380 available workers.
- Fueled by a downturn in aviation, the economic downturn that began in late 2007 hit South Central Kansas especially hard. In 2017, South Central Kansas had roughly 14,000 fewer jobs than it did in 2007; only six out of 20 business sectors have surpassed their 2007 employment level.
- Given the area's slow population growth, South Central Kansas will need to capitalize on the skills and strength of its existing workforce and training institutions in the near-term. The region's high concentration of manufacturing operations is evident in its most concentrated sector: production occupations. Many of South Central Kansas's most concentrated occupations have transferable skills that can be applied to a variety of manufacturing operations.
- South Central Kansas's employment losses over the past decade have affected the overall occupational composition of the workforce. The majority of the occupations that have been growing are lower paying and lower skilled positions. At the same time, when adjusted for inflation, wages have remained relatively stagnant over the past ten years.
- Despite flat growth in wages, there have been improvements in resident well-being across a variety of other indicators. Regional poverty rates are low and have fallen over the past five years, while the region's per capita income has grown on par with national trends.

2018 TARGET SECTOR FRAMEWORK



REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

The groundwork laid by the 2015 BREG initiative and the key learnings from its implementation activities formed the basis of the 2018 Regional Growth Plan. Feedback from hundreds of regional stakeholders and existing and new quantitative analysis have informed updated strategies and implementation dynamics to continue the greater Wichita region's positive momentum and trajectory from the 2015 process.

The 2018 Regional Growth Plan is comprised by high-level priority **STRATEGIC PILLARS** that are each comprised of **KEY INITIATIVES** broken into Multi-Sector and Sector-Specific sections. Strategic Pillars include:

Strategic Pillar I: Talent Pipeline

Strategic Pillar II: Existing Business Efforts

Strategic Pillar III: High-Impact Marketing and Attraction

Strategic Pillar IV: Targeted Innovation

Strategic Pillar V: Catalytic Infrastructure

Tactical strategies in the Regional Growth Plan incorporate under a single framework what were separate "Cluster Plans" and "Cross-Cutting Initiatives" in the 2015 BREG process. **The new structure will help reduce the redundancy and potential for confusion and disconnection that were reported as issues by implementers of 2015 BREG.** Success in developing priority targets and building clusters will thus be contingent on effectively addressing challenges and opportunities in the Strategic Pillars and Key Initiatives, either from a multi-sector or sector-specific perspective.

Top 10 Key Initiatives encompass tactical priorities that will further hone regional efforts and investments. These initiatives were identified as the most impactful, highest priority activities for the region to pursue through implementation. They are the "biggest rocks" that will cause the widest ripples across the South Central Kansas economy and move the needle on the full breadth of Regional Growth Plan initiatives.

Though the Regional Growth Plan is in and of itself holistic in focus, it must also be seen in the broader context of Project Wichita, the potentially transformational strategic initiative spanning the full breadth of the region's competitive challenges and opportunities. **It must be also stressed that this Regional Growth Plan is designed as a collaborative effort among partners across the ten counties of the greater Wichita region.** It is not the plan of any one organization but will require coordinated and collaborative implementation from organizations spanning the private, public, institutional, and non-profit sectors.

Although no organization can single-handedly advance all its initiatives, it is critical that an organization "owns" the strategy's implementation from the perspective of administrating, coordinating, tracking, and measuring its activities. A range of public, private, non-profit, and philanthropic partners will be called upon to support implementation by dedicating time, personnel, resources, and other forms of support.

The Implementation Guidelines report describes how partners in the greater Wichita region can coordinate and structure the activation and sustainable advancement of the Regional Growth Plan. It provides a framework through which the community can build effective partnerships across organizations and between professional staff and volunteers. **Regional economic development will become more collaborative and coordinated across the full breadth of the ten-county greater Wichita region.** The results will be improved growth of high-value targeted business sectors and strong wealth-creation for workers and their families.

The following graphic demonstrates the evolution from the 2015 BREG process to the 2018 Regional Growth Plan resulting in a targeted focus on the region's highest priority strategic opportunities:

