

2019

RURAL PROSPERITY LISTENING TOUR

OFFICE OF RURAL PROSPERITY



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**OFFICE OF RURAL
PROSPERITY**

Kansas Department of Commerce
1000 SW Jackson Street
Topeka, KS 66612



LETTER FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

Kansans are proud people, but we do not boast or strut. We put our energy to the task at hand and don't finish until the job is done. Since 1861—and even before—Kansans have fed America, raised strong youth, and built caring and interconnected communities. The Kansas spirit has carried us to many past successes and will carry us to many more in the future.

Over the past year, we have made significant strides to rebuild our state. We have funded schools and balanced the state's budget while maintaining our promise of fiscal responsibility. We also announced the creation of the Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP), a rural initiative to turn long overdue focus on our small towns and their surrounding communities.

Soon after taking office, the Lt. Governor took to the road as part of a Listening Tour that featured conversations with many Kansans across the state. As he listened, one thing was clear: rural Kansans consistently felt the folks in the statehouse did not listen to them. They felt they did not have a seat at the table.

From those conversations came the blueprint for the ORP. The ORP is an effort to streamline rural policy, create an inventory of existing resources and initiatives, and aid in rural improvement efforts. The ORP will focus on connecting the people of Kansas to other communities and state agencies.

As we work to rebuild programs and services badly damaged over the past decade, rural communities will not be left behind. We know that when rural Kansas succeeds, the state as a whole succeeds. When the citizens of Kansas elected us, they tasked us with rebuilding the state in a way that works for the people. We have accepted this duty, and we will not cease in our efforts to bring a high quality of life to every Kansas community.

Sincerely,

Governor Laura Kelly

Lt. Governor Lynn Rogers

TOUR OVERVIEW

THE TOUR INCLUDED:

- 44 towns
- 23 counties
- 16 manufacturers
- 12 farms and agricultural facilities
- 9 hospitals/healthcare facilities
- More than 130 meetings and events

The Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP) visit consisted of listening sessions and a tour of each host community and the surrounding region. Twelve sites were selected, with two rural communities from six regions of the state: northeast, north-central, northwest, southeast, south-central, and southwest.

Tours of the surrounding region allowed small businesses, farmers, school officials, hospital administrators, mayors, childcare providers, and other local leaders to share their communities' successes and challenges. Whether it was a re-opened grocery store or a start-up, an innovative housing solution or an early childhood program, a longtime staple of a community's success or simply a place to get coffee where people can get together, every community had something to share.

After a full day of travel, Lt. Governor Rogers invited area residents to participate in facilitated community meetings or "listening sessions" in the host city. Participants were divided into randomly-selected small groups and asked three questions:

1. **What does prosperity look like to you?**
2. **What has your community done well?**
3. **What roadblocks/barriers stand in your way?**

During these discussions, all opinions were noted by facilitators, and participants were encouraged to explain their opinions regarding specific concerns. At the end of the facilitated discussion, each group reported their responses to the whole group. This report contains the most commonly cited answers at each individual location and across the state.

The Office of Rural Prosperity would like to thank all the local co-hosts, businesses, elected officials, economic development staff, hospitals, schools, state agency staff, and private residents for taking time to show their communities', explain their challenges, and participate in the tour and listening sessions. Additionally, ORP would like to thank Dr. Steve Cann, Dr. Bob Beatty, and Hunter Bentley for their help in compiling this report.

RURAL PROSPERITY
LISTENING TOUR
STATE-WIDE RESULTS

01

**How do
you define
prosperity?**

Job Opportunities
Strong Public Schools
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Access to Quality, Affordable Housing
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Livable Wages
Youth & Family Retention
Recreational & Entertainment Activities
Quality Roads & Bridges
Population Growth & Stability
Economic Diversity
Access to Quality, Affordable Broadband
Access to Food & Groceries
Successful Main Street

RURAL PROSPERITY
LISTENING TOUR
STATE-WIDE RESULTS

02

**What
has your
community
done well to
prosper?**

Unique Businesses & Tourism
Quality Education
Higher Educational Opportunities
Community Events
Community Centers
Working Together
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Community Foundations & Organizations
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Job Opportunities
Community Investment
Walking Trails & Parks
Strong & Involved Leaders
Successful Main Street
Youth & Family Retention

RURAL PROSPERITY
LISTENING TOUR
STATE-WIDE RESULTS

03

**What
barriers or
roadblocks
stand in
the way
of future
prosperity?**

Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing
Workforce Development
Insufficient Funding & Resources
Quality Roads & Bridges
State Rules & Regulations
Limited Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid
Expansion
Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband
Rural Stigma & Mindset
Low Wages
Declining & Aging Population
Limited Job Opportunities
Taxes in General
Negative Attitudes
Access to Quality & Affordable Child Care
Property Taxes

NORTHWEST

REGION



CO-HOSTS

Colby

Travis Rickford
*LiveWell Northwest Kansas -
Executive Director*

Phillipsburg

Morris Engle
*Phillips County
Community Foundation -
Executive Director*

Nick Poels
*Phillips County
Economic Development -
Executive Director*

THANKS TO THESE PARTICIPATING GROUPS

Colby: SureFire Ag Systems, Rawlins County Health Center, McCarty Family Farms, Brewster Grocery, Prairie Museum of Art and History, Colby Community College, Cheyenne County Development Corporation, K-State Northwest Research-Extension Center, Citizens Health, City of Colby, Horlacher Jewelers, The Movement Connection, Jamboree Foods

Phillipsburg: Dane G Hansen Museum, Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge, Midwest Family Health, The Shepherd's Mill, Majestic Community Theatre, Phillipsburg Childcare Center, Prairie Horizon Agri-Energy, Phillips County Health Systems, Phillips County Hospital and Medical Clinic, Phillips County Retirement Center

COLBY

NORTHWEST REGION



THE TOUR



Two agricultural producers



One hospital



Six local businesses



Two community events/tours

COLBY | REXFORD | BREWSTER | ATWOOD

Participants in the Colby listening session identified that quality educational opportunities, unique businesses/tourism, and an overall sense of community pride and civic engagement has allowed their community to prosper, but identified the need for greater workforce development, job opportunities, and access to more funding/resources as barriers. Meetings with community leaders in the surrounding towns of Atwood and Brewster highlighted the varying degree access to a grocery store can impact a community, and possible solutions. In Atwood, a partnership between K-State Research & Extension and the local grocer provides fresh produce on a recurring basis, and in Brewster residents formed a co-op board to manage a local grocery store.

Thomas County Courthouse, Colby, KS.

COLBY

LISTENING SESSION RESULTS

01

How do you define prosperity?

Community Pride & Civic Engagement
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Livable Wages
Strong Public Schools
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Quality & Affordable Housing
Economic Diversity
Job Opportunities
Youth & Family Retention
Recreation & Entertainment Activities

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Working Together
Community Foundation & Organizations
Strong Public Schools
Unique Businesses & Tourism
Arts Community
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Walking Trails & Parks
Higher Educational Opportunities
Community Investment

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Insufficient Funding & Resources	Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing
Workforce Development	Limited Youth & Family Retention
Access to Quality & Affordable Child Care	Lack of Leadership
State Rules & Regulations	Lack of Mental Health & Rehab Facilities
Limited Job Opportunities	Rural Stigma & Mindset
Declining & Aging Population	Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband
Limited Access to Food & Groceries	Limited Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion
Roads & Bridges	

T H O M A S C O U N T Y S T A T I S T I C S

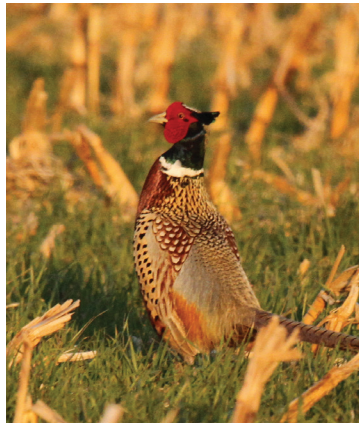
JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	3,937	4,044	107	2.7%
GOVERNMENT	748	745	-3	-0.4%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	3,189	3,299	110	3.4%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 7,711	49
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 4,230	44
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 2.6%	T-27
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$52,465	33
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 6.3%	33
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 95.2%	5
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 26.5%	20

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



PHILLIPSBURG

NORTHWEST REGION



THE TOUR



One hospital



Three local businesses



Six community events/tours

PHILLIPSBURG | LOGAN | KIRWIN | AGRA

Phillips County Listening Session attendees highlighted unique tourism – like the Hansen Museum, Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge, Agra Lake, and Majestic Theatre – as something local communities have done well to prosper; along with higher education opportunities and quality hospitals and clinics. Workforce development and access to healthcare topped the list of things residents identified as barriers to prosperity. Even though Phillips County Health System is one of the best critical access hospitals in the nation, the county tax-payer supported hospital has difficulty recruiting providers and has had to reduce the number of services provided in recent years. Community volunteers, local businesses, and nonprofits recognized the need for quality, affordable childcare in Phillipsburg and came together to create the Phillipsburg Child Care Center, which opened this year, to meet that need.

P.C. Robby Virus, Flickr. Majestic Theater in Phillipsburg, KS.

PHILLIPSBURG
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Job Opportunities
Access to Quality, Affordable Housing
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Recreation & Entertainment Activities
Population Growth & Stability
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Strong Public Schools
Youth & Family Retention
Economic Diversity
Community Pride & Civic Engagement

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Unique Business & Tourism
Higher Educational Opportunities
Access to Hospitals, Health Clinics & Emergency Response
Community Foundations & Organizations
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Community Events
Job Creation & Opportunities
Economic Development
Strong Public Schools
Working Together

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Workforce Development	Taxes
State Rules & Regulations	Job Opportunities
Limited Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion	Lack of Leadership
Rural Stigma & Mindset	Quality Roads & Bridges
Negative Attitudes	Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband
Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing	Declining & Aging Population
Insufficient Funding & Resources	Education Funding
	Limited Youth & Family Retention

PHILLIPS COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	2,450	2,461	11	0.4%
GOVERNMENT	907	910	3	0.3%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	1,544	1,550	6	0.4%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 5,317	67
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 2,800	64
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 2.5%	T-21
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$46,806	71
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 6.2%	27
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 93.2%	22
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 21.5%	48

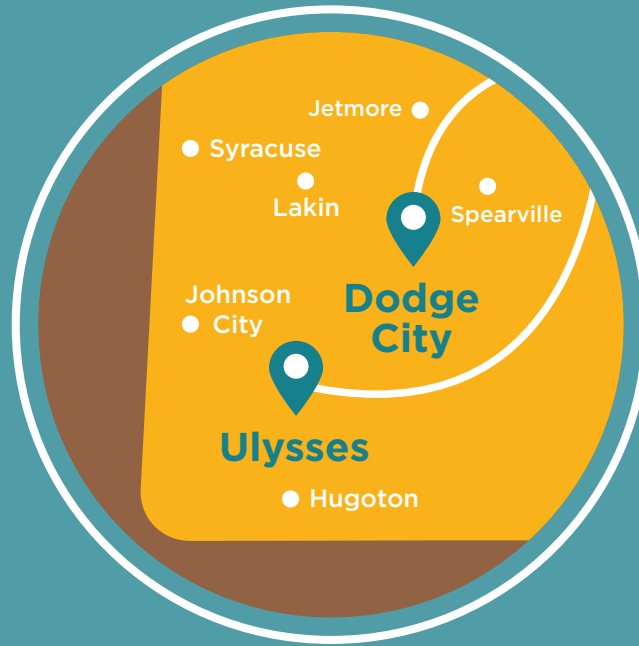
* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



SOUTHWEST REGION



CO-HOSTS

Ulysses

Steve Morris
*Former Kansas Senate
President*

Catherine Moyer
*Pioneer Communications -
CEO*

Dodge City

Joann Knight
*Dodge City/Ford County
Development Corporation -
Executive Director*

Jan Scoggins
City Commissioner

THANKS TO THESE PARTICIPATING GROUPS

Ulysses: BDC Builders Development Corp., City of Ulysses, Kansas Farm Bureau Financial Services, Seaboard Energy, Five Rivers Cattle-Grant County Feeders, Skyland Grain, LLC, Kearny County Community Development, Kearny County Hospital, Stevens County Economic Development, Lane-Scott Electric Cooperative, Inc. Stanton County Chamber of Commerce, Davis Motors, Inc., Pioneer Communications, La Estrella Restaurant, First National Bank, Syracuse Sand Dunes Park

Dodge City: Landmark National Bank, City of Spearville, Schaffer Furniture, City of Greensburg, Hodgeman County Public Schools, Dodge City Ford County Development Corporation, Dodge City Community College, City of Dodge City, Dodge City Commission, Hodgeman County Economic Development, Hodgeman County Commission, Judy's in Jetmore

ULYSSES

SOUTHWEST REGION



THE TOUR



Two agricultural producers



One hospital



One local business



Five community events/tours

ULYSSES | LAKIN | SYRACUSE JOHNSON CITY | HUGOTON

Ulysses residents listed its economic diversity and access to quality educational opportunities and high quality of life as its top three markers of the prosperity of a community. Residents believed that their community did a good job of having unique businesses and tourism, as well as working well together and having community pride and engagement. The community thought that a lack of funding and resources as well as taxes and rules and regulations were hindering the local community's ability to achieve greater prosperity.

Grant County Home Products Dinner, 2019.

U L Y S S E S
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Community Pride & Civic Engagement
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Population Growth & Stability
Economic Diversity
Strong Public Schools
Youth & Family Retention
Job Opportunities
Access to Quality, Affordable Housing
Recreation & Entertainment Activities
Livable Wages

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Working Together
Unique Businesses & Tourism
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Safe, Affordable Housing
Community Investment
Community Events
Job Creation & Opportunities
Economic Development
Quality Strong Public Schools
Youth & Family Retention

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

State Rules & Regulations
Insufficient Funding & Resources
Taxes in General
Workforce Development
Negative Attitudes
Job Opportunities
Insufficient Roads & Bridges
Declining & Aging Population
Access to Quality & Affordable Child Care
Lack of Quality Educational Opportunities
Politics & Partisanship
Lack of Higher Educational Opportunities
Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion
Rural Stigma & Mindset
Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing

GRANT COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	2,994	2,919	-75	-2.5%
GOVERNMENT	662	587	-75	-11.3%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	2,332	2,332	0	0.0%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 7,336	51
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 3,340	56
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 2.8%	T-40
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$57,474	14
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 3.7%	7
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 72.8%	101
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 16.2%	96

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



DODGE CITY

SOUTHWEST REGION



THE TOUR



Three roundtables
(Community Leaders, Agriculture, Higher Education and Workforce)



One local business



One community event

DODGE CITY | JETMORE | SPEARVILLE

Unlike most rural communities, Dodge City has seen a 2% increase in population since 2010. Residents anecdotally credit the increase to the community retaining their existing population while attracting -- and making a concerted effort to welcome -- new and diverse community members. In the Listening Session, individuals pointed to the community's ability to work together, and offer unique businesses and tourism, like Boot Hill, as part of their current success. Attendees identified challenges that result from the lack of a 4 year university as well as quality roads - specifically the lack of four-lane highways - and bridges as a barrier to prosperity. Another barrier cited in both the Listening Session and in meetings with community members, was access to a trained and available workforce.

Iron Cowboy Statue outside Dodge City, KS.

DODGE CITY
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Job Opportunities
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Strong Public Schools
Livable Wages
Youth & Family Retention
Access to Quality, Affordable Broadband
Higher Educational Opportunities
Population Growth & Stability
Access to Quality & Affordable Housing
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Working Together
Unique Businesses & Tourism
Job Opportunities
Strong Public Schools
Higher Educational Opportunities
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Access to Quality & Affordable Housing
Youth & Family Retention
Economic Development
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Roads & Bridges
Rural Stigma & Mindset
Insufficient Funding & Resources
Lack of Higher Educational Opportunities
Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband
Limited Access to Food & Groceries
Limited Job Opportunities
Access to Quality & Affordable Child Care
Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion
Property Taxes
Low Wages
Lack of Medical Professionals
Lack of Leadership
Sales Tax
State Rules & Regulations

FORD COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	17,576	17,052	-524	-3.0%
GOVERNMENT	2,780	2,671	-109	-3.9%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	14,796	14,381	-415	-2.8%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 33,888	15
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 17,186	14
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 2.6%	T-27
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$49,890	50
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 12.4%	92
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 70.8%	103
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 18.3%	82

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



NORTHCENTRAL REGION



CO-HOSTS

Lindsborg

Holly Lofton
*Lindsborg Convention and
Visitors Bureau - Director*

Kasi Morales
*McPherson Industrial
Development Company -
Executive Director*

Concordia

Luke Mahin
*Republic County Economic
Development - Director*

Susie Haver
*Cloud County Tourism -
Director*

THANKS TO THESE PARTICIPATING GROUPS

Lindsborg: Small World Gallery, The Bank of Tescott, City of Lindsborg, The Good Merchant, The Ivory Thimble, McPherson County Community Foundation, City of McPherson, The Bennington State Bank, City of Inman, Peoples Bank and Trust, Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery, Red Barn Studio Museum, Bethany College, Viega, LLC, Ferguson Production, North American Speciality Products, Morigde Manufacturing, Battenfeld-Cincinnati, Hutchinson Community College, Johns Manville, Piper's Fine Foods, Marquette Farmers State Bank, Drom Sott Inn, McPherson Industrial Development Company: MIDC, Lindsborg Convention and Visitors Bureau

Concordia: Cloud County Community College, Republic County Schools, North Central Regional Planning Commission, Britt's Fountain & Gifts, Concordia Public Schools, Moody Hue Studio, Concordia Technologies LLC, Gerard Tank & Steel, Seifert's Jewelry Store, Clyde Ideal Market, Republic County Hospital, Republic County Economic Development, Cloud County Tourism, City of Clyde, The National Orphan Train Complex, C & C High Tunnel Farms, The Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District, Jamestown Marsh Wildlife Area, Cloud County Health Center, City of Concordia, NCK Free Fair, Astra Bank, Buffalo Apartments, Belleville Chamber & Main Street

CONCORDIA

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

THE TOUR



Two
manufacturers



One
agricultural
producer



Two
roundtables
*(Community
Leaders, K-12
Education and
Healthcare)*



Five local
businesses



Seven
community
events/tours

CONCORDIA | COURTLAND SCANDIA | BELLEVILLE | CLYDE

For those who participated in the Concordia listening session, good wages and job opportunities defined what it meant to be a prosperous community and maintain a high quality of life, community pride, and civic engagement. During the tour, before the listening session, it was clear that part of having a high quality of life to this region includes incorporating local produce into the food system. In one local community, it also included saving and converting the local high school into moderate-income housing. The nursing program at Cloud County Community College has helped address local shortages in healthcare workers, but residents expressed there is still more that could be done. Some of the strengths identified by the community included having a unique business and tourism industry and a strong arts community. Good higher education opportunities and community pride and engagement were also identified strengths. Barriers included retaining young workers and lack of access to quality, affordable broadband.

Wind turbine outside Concordia, KS.

CONCORDIA
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Job Opportunities
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Quality Roads & Bridges
Livable Wages
Strong Public Schools
Youth & Family Retention
Access to Quality, Affordable Broadband
Economic Diversity
Strong Arts Community

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Unique Businesses & Tourism
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Higher Educational Opportunities
Strong Arts Community
Strong & Involved Leaders
Job Opportunities
Planning
Community Events
Community Foundations & Organizations
Quality Roads & Bridges

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Workforce Development
Insufficient Roads & Bridges
Rural Stigma & Mindset
Insufficient Funding & Resources
Lack of Nearby Higher Education Opportunities
Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband
Lack of Access to Food & Groceries
Limited Job Opportunities
Access to Quality & Affordable Child Care
Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion
Property Taxes
Low Wages
Lack of Medical Professionals
Lack of Leadership
Sales Tax

CLOUD COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	3,133	3,118	-15	-0.5%
GOVERNMENT	773	793	20	2.6%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	2,361	2,325	-36	-1.5%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 8,729	44
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 3,784	50
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 3.5%	T-76
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$44,199	84
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 6.1%	26
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 91.3%	52
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 21.2%	51

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



LINDSBORG

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

THE TOUR



One
manufacturer



Three
roundtables
(Mainstreet
Renovations and
Redevelopment,
Infrastructure, Rural
Manufacturers)



Two local
businesses



One
community
event

LINDSBORG | MARQUETTE | MCPHERSON

At the Lindsborg listening session in McPherson County, attendees identified job opportunities and access to quality educational opportunities as their top two definitions of a prosperous community. Local residents thought their community worked well together and had high levels of local pride and engagement, but thought that negative perceptions of rural Kansas and a lack of access to broadband high-speed internet was holding them back. Lindsborg has demonstrated even with these obstacles that value and community pride that can be achieved when a community highlights its strong local ties and cultural identity. It is also important to showcase Bethany College and the many cultural events and institutions related to Lindsborg's Swedish heritage.

Dala horse in downtown Lindsborg, KS.

L I N D S B O R G
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Job Opportunities
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Strong Public Schools
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Youth & Family Retention
Access to Quality & Affordable Housing
Access to Food & Groceries
Access to Quality, Affordable Broadband
Population Growth & Stability

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Working Together
Strong Public Schools
Job Opportunities
Successful Main Street
Positivity
Unique Businesses & Tourism
Higher Educational Opportunities
Strong Arts Community
Strong & Involved Leaders

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Rural Stigma & Mindset	Insufficient Funding & Resources
Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband	State Rules & Regulations
Insufficient Roads & Bridges	Taxes in General
Access to Quality & Affordable Child Care	Limited Youth & Family Retention
Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion	Limited Job Opportunities
Workforce Development	Low Wages
Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing	Lack of Medical Professionals
	Lack of Rental Housing

MCPHERSON COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	14,489	14,838	349	2.4%
GOVERNMENT	2,021	2,049	28	1.4%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	12,469	12,789	320	2.6%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 28,537	21
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 16,312	19
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 2.6%	T-27
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$59,946	15
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 4.6%	13
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 91.4%	51
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 28.6%	14

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



SOUTHCENTRAL REGION



CO-HOSTS

Nickerson

Aubrey Abbott Patterson
*Hutchinson Community
Foundation - President & CEO*

Winfield

Kerri Falletti
*Cowley First- Cowley County
Economic Development
Partnership - Economic &
Community Development
Director*

Sarah Werner
*Winfield Area Chamber of
Commerce - CEO*

THANKS TO THESE PARTICIPATING GROUPS

Winfield: Southern Kansas Cotton Growers Co-Op Inc, Arkansas City Area Chamber of Commerce, Creekstone Farms, Turner's Farm Kitchen, Timber Creek Floral and Gifts, Grit & Glitter, Get Branded, South Central Kansas Medical Center, Cowley College, Kansas Pride Burden, SKT | The Southern Kansas Telephone Company, Inc., Winfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Cowley First-Cowley County Economic Development Partnership, Magnolia Ranch, City of Burden, City of Winfield

Nickerson: City of Nickerson, Stafford County Economic Development, Siemens Gamesa, Simple Abundance Farm, Kuhn Krause, Heartland Credit Union, Stage 9, R-B Drive In, Hedrick's Exotic Animal Farm, Pizza Connection, Nickerson KS, City of Hutchinson, Hutchinson Community Foundation, Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce, New Beginnings

NICKERSON

SOUTHCENTRAL REGION

THE TOUR



Two
manufacturers



One
agricultural
producer



Two
roundtables
(*Water
Sustainability,
Economic
Development*)



One local
business



Nine
community
events/tours

NICKERSON | ST. JOHN | STAFFORD SOUTH HUTCHINSON | HUTCHINSON

In Nickerson, participants in the listening session defined prosperity as access to quality educational opportunities followed by job opportunities, community pride and engagement, and good wages. The community identified lack of funding, resources, and access to mental health services and drug and alcohol addiction treatment as their biggest obstacles to increased prosperity. They also felt negative attitudes about rural Kansas were additional challenges. Attendees listed their community foundations, local walking trails and parks, and quality education and higher educational opportunities as some of their biggest strengths.

Housing development in Hutchinson, KS.

NICKERSON
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Strong Public Schools
Job Opportunities
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Access to Quality & Affordable Housing
Livable Wages
Youth & Family Retention
Quality Roads & Bridges
Safety

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Community Foundations & Organizations
Walking Trails & Parks
Community Centers
Higher Educational Opportunities
Strong Public Schools
Unique Businesses & Tourism
Access to Groceries & Food
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Recreation & Entertainment Activities
Strong Chamber

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Lack of Mental Health & Rehab Facilities
Rural Stigma & Mindset
Insufficient Roads & Bridges
Insufficient Funding & Resources
Property Taxes
Negative Attitudes
Lack of Quality Educational Opportunities
Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing
Workforce Development
Substance Abuse
Lack of Quality, Accessible Broadband
Sales Tax
Low Wages
Flooding & Weather
State Rules & Regulations

RENO COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	26,647	26,525	-122	-0.5%
GOVERNMENT	5,157	5,118	-39	-0.8%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	21,490	21,407	-83	-0.4%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 62,342	9
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 29,916	10
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 3.6%	T-84
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$47, 897	65
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 8.9%	69
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 87.7%	86
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 20.0%	65

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



WINFIELD

SOUTHCENTRAL REGION



THE TOUR



Two agricultural producers



Two hospitals



Four local businesses



Four community events/tours

WINFIELD | ARKANSAS CITY | BURDEN

Participants at the Winfield listening session defined prosperity as jobs with good wages and access to quality educational opportunities. Lack of access to affordable housing, healthcare, and low wages were identified as some of the biggest obstacles for the community. Winfield was proud of its higher education opportunities, community centers, local events with Southwestern College, and large tourism draws like the Walnut Valley Festival. Hospitals such as William Newton in Winfield and the South Central Kansas Medical Center in Arkansas City, would both be able to increase wages if their respective uncompensated care burden could be reduced as a result of Medicaid Expansion.

The band Split Lip Rayfield playing on Stage 7 at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, September, 2006.

WINFIELD
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Livable Wages
Strong Public Schools
Access to Quality & Affordable Housing
Job Opportunities
Youth & Family Retention
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Recreation & Entertainment Activities
Successful Main Street
High Quality of Life & Happiness

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Community Centers
Higher Educational Opportunities
Community Events
Community Foundations & Organizations
Access to Hospitals, Health Clinics & Emergency Response
Strong Public Schools
Walking Trails & Parks
Access to Groceries & Food
Social Services & Support
Unique Businesses & Tourism

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing
Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion
Low Wages
Insufficient Funding & Resources
Job Opportunities
State Rules & Regulations
Lack of Quality Educational Opportunities
Substance Abuse
Talent Retention
Workforce Development
Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband Infrastructure (Broadband)
Property Taxes
Negative Attitudes
Access to Quality & Affordable Child Care

COWLEY COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	14,201	14,172	-29	-0.2%
GOVERNMENT	3,309	3,355	46	1.4%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	10,892	10,817	-75	-0.7%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 35,218	13
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 16,735	17
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 3.4%	75
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$46,624	73
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 11.1%	82
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 90.0%	70
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 20.3%	63

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment



NORTHEAST REGION



CO-HOSTS

Atchison

Becky Berger
City Manager of Atchison

Justin Pregont
*Assistant City Manager
of Atchison*

Sabetha

Norm Schmitt

THANKS TO THESE PARTICIPATING GROUPS

Atchison: Benedictine College, Atchison Hospital, Integrity Rebar, City of Atchison, Marie Antoinette's Gluten Free Bake Shoppe, Atchison Bread Company, Fox Theatre Atchison, Spring Venture Group, MGP Ingredients, Muddy River Guitars, Berger Company, Amelia Earhart Memorial Airport

Sabetha: CJ Foods, J-Six Farms, Nemaha Valley Community Hospital & Seneca Family Practice, City of Sabetha, City of Seneca, Sweet Rosie's, KSi Conveyors, Buzz Cafe & Oxen House, Extru-Tech, Inc., Sabetha Community Hospital, Sabetha Health & Wellness Center

ATCHISON

NORTHEAST REGION



THE TOUR



One manufacturer



One hospital



One roundtable
(Community Leaders)



Five local businesses



Two community events/tours

ATCHISON | TROY | WATHENA

Atchison has a strong sense of community pride and civic engagement. Public/private partnerships have allowed the city to cultivate a distinctive downtown, unique business climate and a thriving tourism industry. During the listening session residents and community leaders identified barriers to prosperity similar to other rural communities – access to quality, affordable housing, workforce development, and infrastructure. However, unique to Atchison’s location to the Missouri border they also had concerns about the states rules and regulations, such as the state’s liquor laws.

The Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge, Atchison, KS.

ATCHISON
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Job Opportunities
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Access to Quality & Affordable Housing
Population Growth & Stability
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Youth & Family Retention
Livable Wages
Quality Roads & Bridges
Successful Main Street

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Community Centers
Higher Educational Opportunities
Access to Hospitals, Health Clinics & Emergency Response
Unique Businesses & Tourism
Strong Public Schools
Working Together
Walking Trails & Parks
Successful Main Street
Access to Groceries & Food
Friendliness

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Insufficient Roads & Bridges	Property Taxes
Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing	Lack of Mental Health & Rehab Facilities
Workforce Development	Education Funding
Insufficient Funding & Resources	Sales Tax
Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion	Kansas Liquor Laws
Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband	Low Wages
Rural Stigma & Mindset	Taxes in General
	Negative Attitudes

ATCHISON COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	5,545	5,618	73	1.3%
GOVERNMENT	941	932	-9	-1.0%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	4,604	4,686	82	1.8%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 16,193	31
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 6,985	34
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 4.6%	100
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$46,640	72
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 13.5%	100
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 92.4%	36
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 20.7%	57

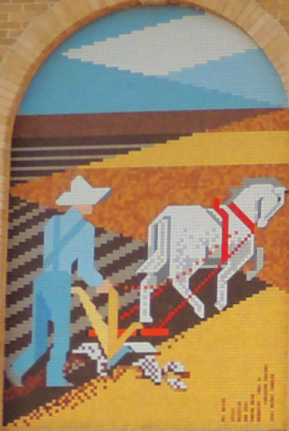
* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment



SABETHA

NORTHEAST REGION



THE TOUR



Three
manufacturers



One
agricultural
producer



Two
hospitals



One
community
event

SABETHA | SENECA | BERN

Attendees at the listening session in Sabetha are proud of the private sector job growth their local area has achieved in recent years. Other strengths included their community foundation, the ability to retain youth and young families, and access to quality healthcare. Community members pointed to the newly completed Sabetha Health and Wellness Center, which was built on the grounds of Sabetha Hospital, as an example of all three. With the growth in jobs and other improvements, the community identified access to quality, affordable housing as their primary barriers to continued prosperity.

P.C. Richard Bauer, Flickr. Bank façade in Sabetha, KS.

S A B E T H A
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Job Opportunities
Access to Food & Groceries
Access to Hospitals, Health Clinics & Emergency Response
Strong Public Schools
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Recreation & Entertainment Activities
Livable Wages
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Responsible Elder Care
Access to Access to Quality, Affordable Housing

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Community Foundations & Organizations
Access to Hospitals, Health Clinics & Emergency Response
Job Creation & Opportunities
Youth & Family Retention
Generosity
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Community Centers
Strong Public Schools
Religious Base
Industrial Parks & Manufacturers

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing
Insufficient Funding & Resources
Negative Attitudes
Insufficient Roads & Bridges
Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion
Territorial or Community Loyalty
Limited Access to Food & Groceries
Rural Stigma & Mindset
Low Wages
State Rules & Regulations
Workforce Development
Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband
Taxes in General
Lack of Rental Housing
Flooding & Weather

NEMAH A COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	5,200	5,122	-78	-1.5%
GOVERNMENT	637	647	10	1.6%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	4,563	4,475	-88	-1.9%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 10,155	38
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 5,499	38
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 2.3%	T-12
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$53,368	29
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 7.4%	46
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 92.5%	34
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 23.7%	35

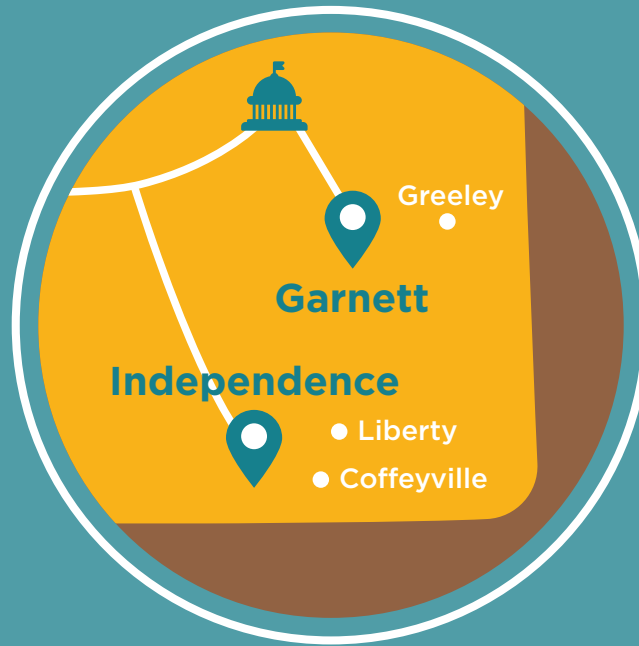
* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



SOUTHEAST REGION



CO-HOSTS

Garnett

Kris Hix
*Garnett Area Chamber
of Commerce*

Susan Wettstein
*Director of Community
Development City of Garnett*

Independence

Trisha Purdon
*Montgomery County Action
Council - Executive Director*

Jim Correll
*Director of Fab Lab ICC at
Independence Community
College in the Center For
Innovation and Entrepreneurship*

THANKS TO THESE PARTICIPATING GROUPS

Garnett: City of Garnett, East Kansas Agri-Energy, AuBurn Pharmacy, Hurricane Services Inc, Monroe 816, Associated Energy Systems, Hawkins Inc, Caldwell Glen Farms, Graham School for Livestock Men and Women, Anderson County Economic Development, Garnett Chamber of Commerce, Burnt Offerings BBQ, Kirk House Bed and Breakfast, Santa Fe Depot and Prairie Spirit Trail, Yoder's Country Store, Denise's County Cafe

Independence: Springer Family Foods, MJD Products, City of Coffeyville, City of Independence, Midwest Real Estate, FAB Creative Services, J Engravings, Coffeyville Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Columbus, City of Caney, American Homes Realty, Independence Community College, Montgomery County Action Council, Jack's Place, Riley Early Learning Center, Ane Mae's Coffee and Sandwich Shop, Four County Mental Health, Textron Aviation

INDEPENDENCE

SOUTHEAST REGION



THE TOUR



Two
manufacturers



One
agricultural
producer



Three
roundtables
(Behavioral
Health and
Substance Abuse,
Infrastructure,
Housing)



Four community
events/tours

INDEPENDENCE | COFFEYVILLE | LIBERTY

When asked “What has your community done well to prosper?” Listening Session attendees pointed to the community’s unique business and tourism climate, community events, and a strong community foundation. When asked to identify barriers to their community’s prosperity access to quality, affordable housing, a trained workforce and “rural stigma” topped the list. Community leaders and business owners frequently discussed access to healthcare as one of their top concerns as well. This follows the closure of its local hospital, Kansas Mercy.

Statue in Independence, KS.

INDEPENDENCE
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Strong Public Schools
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Access to Quality, Affordable Housing
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Unique Businesses & Tourism
Job Opportunities
Recreation & Entertainment Activities
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Youth & Family Retention
Quality Roads & Bridges

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Unique Businesses & Tourism
Community Events
Community Foundations & Organizations
Successful Main Street
Working Together
Community Centers
Strong Public Schools
Access to Groceries & Food
Recreation & Entertainment Activities
Job Opportunities

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing	Low Wages
Workforce Development	Taxes in General
Rural Stigma & Mindset	State Rules & Regulations
Substance Abuse	Lack of Mental Health & Rehab Facilities
Declining & Aging Population	Poverty
Insufficient Roads & Bridges	Politics & Partisanship
Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion	Insufficient Funding & Resources
	Negativity & Attitudes

MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	14,261	14,457	196	1.4%
GOVERNMENT	2,584	2,615	31	1.2%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	11,676	11,843	167	1.4%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 32,120	19
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 14,834	20
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 4.3%	T-97
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$43,977	85
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 12.6%	93
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 89.2%	75
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 18.7%	78

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



GARNETT

SOUTHEAST REGION

THE TOUR



One
agricultural
producer



Two
roundtables
(Agriculture,
Industry Leaders)



Three local
businesses



Five community
events/tours

GARNETT | GREELEY

The need for infrastructure, affordable housing, and good-paying jobs topped the list of barriers to prosperity during the Garnett Listening Session, while community events, good community centers, and quality educational opportunities (both K-12 and posted-secondary) were among the community's strengths. The Neosho County Community College Rural Tech Center has leveraged available state resources by partnering with the local school district USD 365. Access to quality, affordable broadband was identified as one of the largest barriers to prosperity, followed closely by access to affordable housing and wages.

Prairie Spirit Trail, Garnett, KS.

GARNETT
**LISTENING SESSION
RESULTS**

01

How do you define prosperity?

Job Opportunities
Strong Public Schools
High Quality of Life & Happiness
Accessible & Affordable Healthcare
Access to Food & Groceries
Community Pride & Civic Engagement
Livable Wages
Responsible Elder Care
Access to Quality, Affordable Housing
Recreation & Entertainment Activities

02

What has your community done well to prosper?

Community Events
Community Centers
Strong Public Schools
Walking Trails & Parks
Unique Businesses & Tourism
Higher Educational Opportunities
Community Investment
Working Together
Access to Hospitals, Health Clinics & Emergency Response
Community Pride & Civic Engagement

03

What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

Lack of Quality, Affordable Broadband	Negative Attitudes
Insufficient Roads & Bridges	Insufficient Childcare Options
Lack of Quality, Affordable Housing	Limited Access to Food & Groceries
Low Wages	Lack of Leadership
Insufficient Funding & Resources	Declining & Aging Population
State Rules & Regulation	Access to Healthcare/Lack of Medicaid Expansion
Job Opportunities	Politics & Partisanship
Workforce Development	

ANDERSON COUNTY STATISTICS

JOB BY INDUSTRY	2017	2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	2,068	2,060	-8	-0.4%
GOVERNMENT	578	558	-20	-3.5%
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	1,489	1,502	13	0.9%

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS	KS RANK
POPULATION (2018): 7,878	48
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2018): 4,133	46
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2018): 3.5%	T-76
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017): \$40,986	100
POVERTY RATE (2017)*: 8.9%	69
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE (2017)**: 90.8%	61
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE (2017)**: 18.6%	79

* Percent of households with income below the poverty line

** Percent of population over 25 years old with this level of educational attainment

"T" stands for "Tied"



LISTENING TOUR
**RECOMMENDATIONS
& NEXT STEPS**

RECOMMENDATIONS
& NEXT STEPS
STRUCTURE

The Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP) will focus on having on-going direct conversations with Kansans about the needs in their communities and turning that feedback into tangible action within state government.

Led by Lt. Governor Rogers, with a small team housed within the Department of Commerce, ORP will lead the state's charge for rural policy creation.

Rather than developing a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach, ORP will partner with rural communities to develop policies, resources, and programs that empower them to achieve their individually unique version of prosperity. It will also highlight successful communities & projects as a roadmap for those who want to do something similar or are just starting the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

INTERAGENCY WORK GROUPS

INTERAGENCY WORK GROUPS

The fifth most frequently cited barrier to prosperity was burdensome state rules or regulations caused by bureaucracy that resulted from the lack of coordination between agencies. In early 2019, Lt. Governor Rogers formed the Office of Rural Prosperity Sub-Cabinet, which met to discuss rural issues within individual agencies. As an extension of the ORP Sub-Cabinet, three Interagency Work Groups will be created to develop a long-term vision for the state in the areas of:

- **Housing**
- **Childcare**
- **Workforce Recruitment, Retention & Education**

The initiative will bring together subject matter experts within existing state and federal agencies to analyze “The 3 R’s” of the Office of Rural Prosperity – Research, Resources, and Recommendations.

RESEARCH

- Summarize Kansas’ progress/action to date – “Where are we now & how did we get here?”
- Identify the scope of issues, potential causes, and barriers to change – “What does the data say?”
- Engage other states and state leaders – “What programs have they created?” and “What are their successes and failures?”
- Seek input from stakeholder groups and subject matter experts both within the state and across the country – “What should we be doing better?”

RESOURCES

- Summarize state resources that are currently available and find ways to maximize the State’s return on investment of those funds
- Catalog alternative funding available through the federal government, non-profits, and research institutions to identify possible ways to leverage state or local funds to access those sources
- Identify what technical assistance would be required to harness additional funds (grant writers, compliance, etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Propose internal/administrative changes, and make recommendations to the necessary external parties
- Develop a long-term strategic vision for progress within their respective subject group



ORP HOUSING WORKING GROUP

During the 2019 ORP Listening Tour rural communities overwhelmingly identified access to affordable housing as a barrier to their communities' prosperity. The working group will focus on:

- Replicating successful public/private partnerships models across the state
 - Expanding moderate income housing
 - Removing barriers and encouraging re-development of older/historic property
 - Coordinating state funds/investments to maximize impact
-



ORP CHILDCARE WORKING GROUP

Quality, affordable childcare is a need across the state of Kansas – but particularly in rural communities where there are unique challenges to the delivery of childcare services. The working group will focus on:

- Encouraging partnerships for a cooperative model for childcare services
 - Identifying state and federal resources and tools local communities can use to create their own solution to childcare needs
 - Simplifying processes and procedures for child care licensing that maximize efficiencies, while ensuring the safety and welfare of Kansas children
-



ORP WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

Participants overwhelmingly identified some iteration of “good paying jobs” as one of the things that defines a prosperous community. Moreover, several communities also identified having access to high paying jobs as a barrier to their prosperity. The working group will:

- Work with the Governor’s Education Council to identify new training opportunities within the state’s K-12 education system.
- Engage local leaders and economic developers to identify obstacles to recruitment and retention in rural areas.
- Develop partnerships with community colleges to encourage more associate degrees and certificate programs that meet the needs of rural communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS
& NEXT STEPS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In the fall of 2019, ORP created the Community Development Division within the Kansas Department of Commerce. The new division realigns existing resources, enhances technical assistance provided to communities, and expands on successful programs to better focus on the needs of rural communities. It includes:

- The Community Development Block Grant Program (CBDG)
- The Community Service Tax Credit Program (CSP)
- The Kansas Main Street Program
- The Office of Broadband Development

RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

POLICY PRIORITIES

SHARING SUCCESSES & SUPPORTING LOCAL LEADERS

Rural communities across the state have been particularly innovative in developing solutions for challenges within their communities and, while every community is unique, there are shared learning opportunities and “best practices” with other communities.

In 2020, the Office of Rural Prosperity will launch a series of tools that catalog available resources and highlight successful programs and initiatives across the state to support local leaders.

RURAL HEALTHCARE

One of the most immediate actions that can be done to address the healthcare needs of rural communities across the state is for the Kansas Legislature to expand Medicaid. Roughly 30% of Kansas’ rural hospitals are considered financially vulnerable, while over 85% of hospitals across the state have a negative operating margin (The Chartis Group, 2019). The economic impact of a rural community hospital closure is greater than a cursory glance would expect. For example, on average, a rural community hospital accounts for 20% of the local economy and one physician generates 26 jobs (National Rural Health Association, 2019). By the end of 2019, the lack of Medicaid Expansion will have cost Kansas over \$3 billion dollars (Kansas Hospital Association, 2019).

INFRASTRUCTURE

In a digital economy, access to the information superhighway is just as critical for connecting communities as highways, roads, and bridges. A blend of legislative and administrative actions should address unserved and underserved areas in the state by:

1. Creating a comprehensive broadband plan with stakeholders, state agencies, and federal partners.
2. Modernizing the state’s right-of-way policy through the Kansas Department of Transportation.
3. Investing in a long-term, sustainable, grant program to expand access across the state.

PROPERTY TAXES

Even though the population of Kansas is growing, out-migration and urbanization has shrunk rural communities causing them to decline in size but increase in age. In fact, changing demographics have multiple impacts on a community. For example, as their workforce shrinks, so does their economy and as their community ages, so does their leadership. One of the most frequently discussed issues was the ability of a community to provide essential services with a declining tax base. To continue providing essential services, some communities have spread the increasing cost across the existing tax base with mixed results.

Kansas’ tax structure is similar to a three-legged stool comprising sales tax, property tax, and income tax. Changes to the income tax structure over the last ten years resulted in increases in sales tax and property tax rates that uniquely hurt rural communities. Although change has to be incremental and responsible, the Legislature should take the first steps towards reducing Kansans’ property tax burden by reinstating the Local *Ad Valorem* Tax Reduction Fund.

