



*Serving Employers and Job Seekers in
Butler, Cowley, Harper, Kingman, Sedgwick & Sumner Counties*

Written Testimony to Kansas Legislature
House of Representatives Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
2/5/19
Submitted by Keith Lawing, CEO, Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas Inc.

Thank you Chairman Tarwater, ranking member Frownfelter and members of the Committee for the opportunity to share some of the activities of the Workforce Alliance to help address the growing need for skilled workers in our region and across the State of Kansas. I regret I am not able to deliver this testimony in person and appreciate the Committee accepting the written version.

The Workforce Alliance is one of five Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in the state of Kansas that are primarily funded through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These funds are used to help low skilled adults, out of school youth and dislocated workers overcome barriers to employment through targeted employment and training programs. The LWDBs, in partnership with the Kansas Department of Commerce, operate the 23 Workforce Centers in Kansas. (See attached map.)

The Workforce Alliance LWDB is led by a group of business leaders and includes representatives from community based agencies, organized labor and education/training institutions. Recognizing that workforce development is a significant issue with a large number of stakeholders, the long standing operating philosophy of the Workforce Alliance is to leverage resources and align services to best meet the needs of employers, job seekers and students. This strategic approach includes aligning state and local policies targeting workforce development such as the Excel in Career and Technical Education, expanded employment services to individuals with criminal backgrounds and Registered Apprenticeship.

Over the past several years the Workforce Alliance has augmented the annual allocation from WIOA through federally funded grants, local dollars from the United Way of the Plains, City of Wichita, Sedgwick County, philanthropic organizations and direct support from business and industry. The combined resources allow the Workforce Alliance to have substantial community impact far above the annual federal funds from WIOA.

The main "customer" of the Workforce Alliance is business and industry. Without a strong relationship to area employers the LWDB would not be able to design services to effectively assist job seekers and students. Other key customers are economic development organizations. More and more businesses seeking to expand or relocate and asking about the availability of skilled workers. The Workforce Alliance provides current labor market information to our economic development

partners, and frequently will accompany them on visits to a growing business or company considering moving to Kansas.

Through these relationships with employers and partnerships with area economic development agencies, it is very clear that workforce development is one of the most important public policy issues facing our region and the State of Kansas. There are a number of activities and projects underway and either led by the Workforce Alliance or where we are part of a strong collaborative. These are examples of the ability of the Workforce Alliance to leverage resources and align services and include the following:

- Supporting the Advanced Manufacturing Talent Task Force of the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce.
- Promoting and expanding the use of Registered Apprenticeship as a hiring and training tool to employers.
- Leading a Youth Employment Project by collaborating with local partners such as the YMCA, City of Wichita, USD 259, Butler Community College and over 150 employers like Spirit AeroSystems, Textron Aviation and High Touch Technology that placed 687 youth in a first job or valuable work experience/internship opportunity in 2018.
- Working with the Department of Children and Families to place youth with disabilities in part time jobs with area employers.
- Helping to create the technology industry group FlagshipKansas.Tech to focus on the employment and skill need to technology companies in Kansas.
- A very successful partnership with the Kansas Department of Corrections, Wichita Work Release and Sedgwick County to provide employment services for persons with criminal backgrounds.
- Implementing “Imagine Academy” at the Wichita Workforce Center allowing job seekers to earn certifications for Microsoft products (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) at no out of pocket expense.
- Managing a grant from the United States Department of Labor, the Kansas Advanced Manufacturing Project (KAMP) that to date has trained and placed 426 job seekers with six companies in South Central Kansas.
- Partnering with Spirit AeroSystems, the Kansas Department of Commerce and Hutchinson Community College to implement a Workforce AID project.
- Participating on the Veterans Advocacy Board to address the issue of homeless and employment needs for Veterans in the community.
- Hosting a multiple employer job fair for the Construction Industry at the Wichita Workforce Center on February 23.

The Workforce Alliance actively seeks opportunities to create partnerships to help align federal, state and local resources to serve both employers and job seekers in South Central Kansas. This practice will continue as the Legislature, Governor Kelly, Board of Regents and the Kansas Department of Education consider and adopt policies to support the ongoing development of a skilled workforce in the State.

I am more than happy to provide any additional information for the Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee.

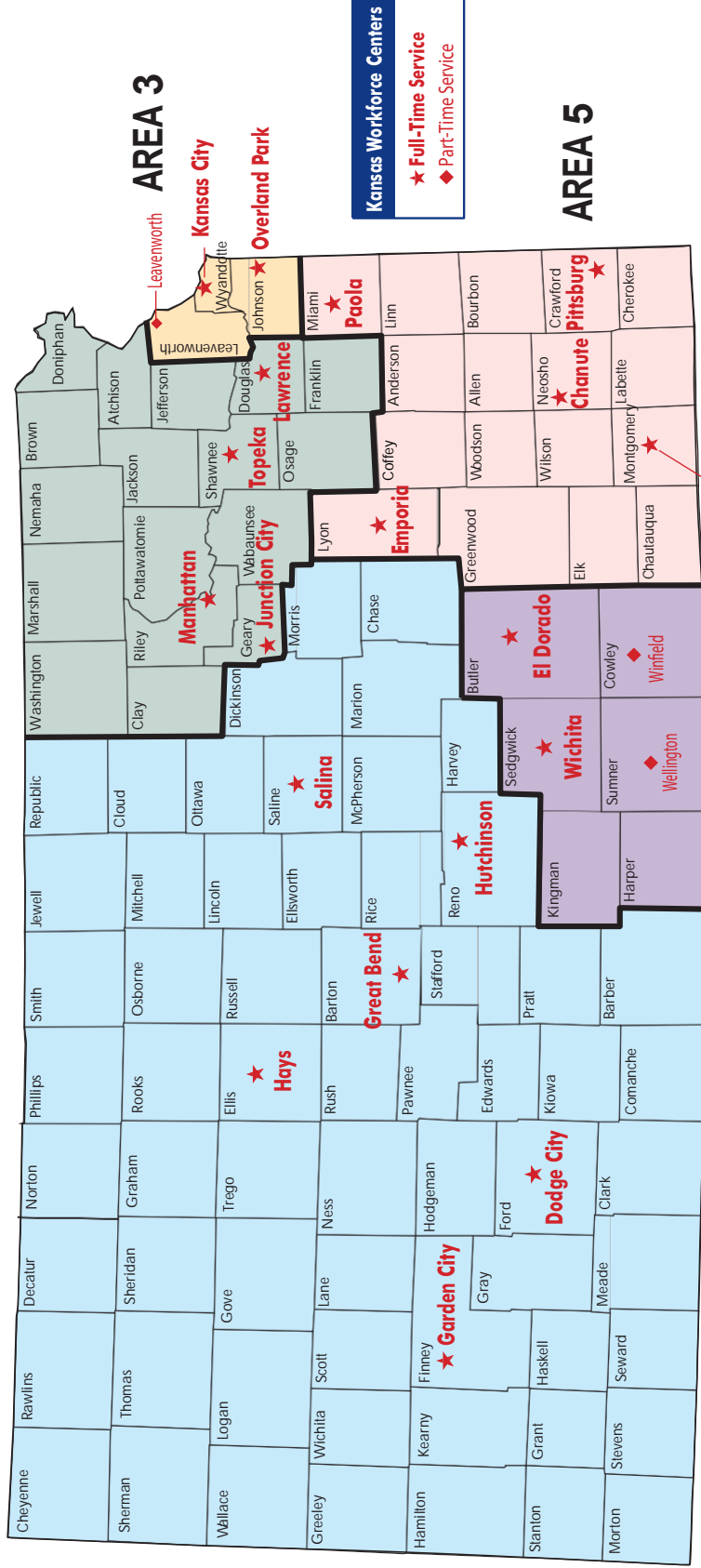
Thank you Chairman Tarwater and Committee members.



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