

# ELEVATE

BEYOND TODAY



**GREAT BEND**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## *Funding Bold Initiatives with the Great Bend Chamber*

# PROSPECTUS

## 2025-2029



### ← WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

Established in 1921 by a determined group of local business owners and civic leaders, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce has remained steadfast in its mission as "Boosters for a Greater Great Bend." Nestled along the historic Santa Fe Trail, the city thrived during the 1980s oil and gas boom, positioning itself as a central hub within the wheat belt, where agriculture flourished alongside the burgeoning oil and gas sectors. Enhanced by its strategic location intersecting four major US highways, the Chamber has fostered a robust community and garnered a strong reputation through decades of active support for local businesses and successful events and programs. From supporting vital sectors like agriculture, oil, and gas to orchestrating and supporting impactful events like the very first NHRA Nationals at the historic SRCA drag strip and the 31 Show (construction of 2 exposition buildings), the Chamber's contributions have solidified its position as a cornerstone of Great Bend's success.

### 📍 WHERE WE ARE

Looking at the present landscape, it's clear that our organization stands at a pivotal juncture. The once predominant reliance on oil has dissipated, echoing the nationwide shift to diversify and support more economic drivers such as technology, healthcare, education, and sustainable energy sources. Currently, our community grapples with a dwindling population, signaling a need for strategic interventions to invigorate growth. Recent years have witnessed a remarkable convergence of efforts between key players such as the city, chamber, and economic development. The new standalone Chamber of Commerce provides an opportune moment for us to recalibrate our focus. The Chamber has made strides in expanding its resources and programs, as exemplified by the Chamber Blue of Kansas initiative. Our mission continues to focus on uniting businesses around shared interests and engaging business owners and their staff, which are crucial tactics for bolstering employee retention.

### ↑ WHERE WE ARE GOING

We have a unique opportunity to refocus our efforts and drive Great Bend's economic growth. Maintaining robust relationships within our local network, including Great Bend's city officials, Barton County administration and Commission, Great Bend Economic Development Inc., the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and both education and healthcare partners, remains a vital aspect of our strategic direction. Equally important is our collaboration with state and federal delegations, amplifying our voice for Great Bend and Barton County. With a strong commitment to enhancing engagement among young professionals and fostering innovative partnerships that retain both people and businesses, we are dedicated to leveraging the unique spirit of Great Bend to realize our shared vision for the future.

# 5 CORE INITIATIVES

GBCC Strategy 2025-2029

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Workforce  
Development

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Business & People  
Retention

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Membership  
Development &  
Support

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Business &  
Community  
Marketing

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Business  
Advocacy

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Our proposed 5-year plan to move forward with our Revisioning Initiative will include the 5 focus areas listed above as determined by our Board of Directors.



# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Foster a collaborative approach with our community partners to address the challenges in the workforce market, particularly the shortage of qualified applicants that businesses face in their recruitment efforts.

## STRATEGIES

- Explore collaborative opportunities with the City, County, GBED, and other community partners on Workforce Development issues.
- Retain and re-home high school and college students by partnering with local high schools, colleges, universities, and KANSASWORKS through job placement assistance and organizing of networking events.
- Partner with Barton Community College and local transportation providers to offer affordable, flexible transit options that enhance students' access to community resources and job opportunities.
- Promote and market existing strategies and incentives to encourage job-seekers to reside in Barton County.
- Produce a series of videos that showcase the Great Bend business community and its employers and offer customized videos for hiring businesses to promote specific job openings.

## KEY METRICS

- Increase the population of Barton County by 1% (245) over five years.
- Increase in the number of people who participate in workforce development programs.
- Increase in the number of businesses that partner with the Chamber on workforce initiatives.
- Increase the number of employed people in the workforce by 1% (120).



# BUSINESS & PEOPLE RETENTION

The Chamber will work to support and retain the current business base and our residents through the following strategies:

## STRATEGIES

- Explore collaborative opportunities with the city, county, GBED, and other community partners on Business and People Retention
- Expand the FUEL Barton County program, formerly the Barton County Young Professional Group, and/or build a separate program that would give more staffing and resources to work more closely with employers needing to engage their employees.
- Work with existing businesses to identify and advocate for infrastructure needs (transportation, communications, broadband, utilities, etc.)
- Promote the importance of businesses sourcing goods and services locally which supports the local economy, reduces cost, and reduces environmental impact.
- Identify, prioritize, and support business-friendly quality-of-life initiatives that support workforce and business retention.
- Educate local businesses on the importance of targeting and involving people of all cultures and support and promote bilingual initiatives.
- Identify, promote, and advocate for incentives that provide existing businesses with financial or other incentives to stay in the community and assist in their ability to thrive.
- Identify and communicate succession planning initiatives that support existing local businesses.

## KEY METRICS

- Increase the population of Barton County by 1% (245) over five years.
- Increase the number of employed people in the workforce by 1% (120).
- Grow and retain the number of businesses in Great Bend.



# MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT

Strengthen the Great Bend Chamber's impact by expanding and enhancing membership support services, ensuring businesses gain deeper engagement and greater success through their chamber affiliation.

## STRATEGIES

- Conduct workshops on a variety of business functions, including human resources, succession planning, communications skills, effective marketing strategies and techniques, technical skills, financial literacy, and other areas identified by the needs of Chamber members.
- Develop user-friendly approaches to help small businesses maximize their member benefits, including redesigning the chamber website with a focus on mobile accessibility for busy members, making news submission forms easily accessible, offering staff support for marketing needs, and providing personalized guidance and assistance.
- Create a comprehensive virtual resource library, accessible to members at any time that includes a variety of resources and templates for small business needs.
- Establish a mentor-mentee program in partnership with FUEL Barton County.
- Restructure the membership dues model to focus on member choice and value, creating a more inclusive, responsive, and member-centric organization.

## KEY METRICS

- Membership retention - maintain 96% retention performance.
- Membership growth - grow current membership (560) year over year.
- Membership engagement - events attendance, program involvement, website traffic.



# BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY MARKETING

Establish a comprehensive and dynamic marketing strategy that effectively promotes local businesses and the broader community, positioning the Chamber of Commerce as a central catalyst for economic growth and community development.

## STRATEGIES

- Explore collaborative opportunities with GBED and CVB to market the businesses and community while clarifying each organization's role in promoting the community.
- Collaborate with employers to welcome new and prospective hires relocating to the area by organizing community tours and offering comprehensive relocation and recruitment information, while engaging local businesses, and mobilizing volunteers to create a warm and welcoming community.
- Evaluate the need to mobilize the business community by creating a comprehensive resource guide for Chamber members and the business community to easily promote the Great Bend area and its amenities on their website, facilitating engagement with existing and potential customers.
- Explore opportunities with other community organizations to create a centralized bilingual community calendar managed and distributed by one entity.

## KEY METRICS

- Number of businesses that adopt a “GB” marketing reference on their website.
- Number of plays on Chamber promotional marketing videos.
- Number of Chamber survey responses.
- Number of people who sign up for the community calendar.



# BUSINESS ADVOCACY

Represent the interests of Chamber members and the business community as a whole to elected officials and policymakers.

## STRATEGIES

- Partner with the Kansas Leadership Center, Kansas Chamber, Kansas Farm Bureau, League of Women Voters, and other organizations to cultivate and educate business leaders to create an interest in and willingness to run for elective office.
- Advocate for financial incentives for new, expanding, or existing businesses to make our region more competitive.
- Promote, educate, and raise awareness of business-related legislative and policy priorities through various programs and communications platforms.
- Create a business affairs committee to develop a policy agenda that represents the interests of the members of the Great Bend Chamber, building a strong and unified voice when advocating for legislative and policy priorities.
- Build rapport and strategic relationships with locally elected officials through semi-annual one-on-one meetings, to advocate for the Chamber's legislative and policy priorities.
- Host state and federal delegations in Great Bend and conduct annual trips to the state and national capitals, allowing the Chamber to showcase the community and advocate for the Chamber's legislative and policy priorities.
- Advocate for quality-of-life, housing, and childcare initiatives with Chamber community partners.

## KEY METRICS

- Increase the number of local business leaders who run for elective office.
- Increase the number of Chamber members who attend roundtables or other legislative events.
- Increase the number of high-priority Chamber legislative initiatives that are achieved.



# BUDGET SUMMARY

Total Private Investment Needed:  
\$1 million over five years

CORE INITIATIVES	ONE YEAR	FIVE YEAR
Workforce Development	\$55,000	\$275,000
Business/People Retention	\$45,000	\$225,000
Membership Development & Support	\$40,000	\$200,000
Business/Community Marketing	\$35,000	\$175,000
Business Advocacy	\$25,000	\$125,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>

## OVERSIGHT OF INVESTMENTS

The funds needed to implement these five areas will be sought from those with a vested interest in the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce - businesses, public entities, community leaders, and stakeholders. The GBCC Board of Directors' executive committee provides oversight of invested funds and implementation.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Performance-based measurements will be developed to track progress in implementing these initiatives and demonstrate tangible returns to its investors to determine achievement during the five-year investment cycle. Leaders and staff will be held accountable for the success of the plan.

# 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair: Robert E. Bauer	Vice-Chair: Scott Dewerff
2nd Vice-Chair: Jessica Milsap	Past Chair: Shelly Peacock
Treasurer: Barry Bowers	Joe Andrasek
Wally Eldridge	Jeremy Elliott
Chuck Fellhoelter	Mike Johnson
Shawn Powelson	Sarah Panning
Mike Ruddle	Flor Sanchez
Cammie Vaupel	Nikki Seybert
Jim Vopat	Kenda Werth

## EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS

Sara Arnberger, Great Bend Economic Development	Tory Marie Blew, Kansas State Legislator
Lindsey Bogner, Ambassador Club	Christina Hayes, Convention & Visitors Bureau
Dr. Marcus Garstecki, Barton Community College	Kaitlin Sill, FUEL Barton County
Khris Thexton, USD 428	Donna Zimmerman, County Commission

Megan Barfield  
PRESIDENT / CEO



## MISSION

The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce will promote and improve the business climate in the Great Bend area through its services and partnerships that encourage growth and assist existing members in reaching their business goals while welcoming and connecting with area businesses.

# GREAT BEND

## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



[GreatBend.org](http://GreatBend.org)



620-792-2401



[gbcc@greatbend.org](mailto:gbcc@greatbend.org)

## Project of Work

The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce constantly works to be the voice of local business and the visionary advocacy organization for Great Bend and our economic area. We strive to create a business climate that enhances growth and expansion opportunities for existing businesses, while simultaneously attracting new business. We promise to always provide membership opportunities and benefits that offer businesses and members the best value and impact for their investment.

Our focus areas are:

- Advocacy for Business
- Community Marketing and Promotion
- Investment in Our Future
- Chamber Services