ARDMORE
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

2025 Economic Vision Plan

ARDMORE OKLAHOMA

ARDMORE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
ARDMORE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY,
ARDMORE TOURISM AUTHORITY

VisionFirst Advisors
STRATEGY | ACTION | RESULTS

Contents

Introduction »

In October 2023, Michelin announced its intention to close its tire manufacturing facility in Ardmore, Oklahoma, resulting in the eventual loss of approximately 1,400 jobs by the end of 2025. While tire production will be phased out, Michelin committed to maintaining its rubber-mixing operations at the Ardmore site, preserving around 200 full-time positions.

This facility has been a cornerstone of Ardmore's economy for more than 50 years. At its peak, it contributed an estimated $77 million annually in payroll and played a critical role in supporting local government revenues and the broader regional economy. The impact of this transition will be felt not only in Ardmore and Carter County, but across the surrounding region that relied on the plant as a key employment anchor and economic driver.

This plan is designed to ensure the continued economic vitality of Ardmore and the surrounding region, turning a moment of disruption into one of opportunity and reinvention.

Recognizing the urgency of this moment, the Ardmore Development Authority ("ADA"), Ardmore Chamber of Commerce and Ardmore Tourism Authority, working in partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, formed a steering committee and engaged VisionFirst Advisors to guide the development of a forward-looking strategic plan. This plan is designed to ensure the continued economic vitality of Ardmore and the surrounding region, turning a moment of disruption into one of opportunity and reinvention.

The strategy outlined here is grounded in a comprehensive, holistic approach to economic development. While replacing the scale and scope of Michelin's presence is a key objective, the vision extends well beyond attracting a single large employer. The plan embraces every viable path for the community to generate quality jobs, increase household income, attract private investment, grow the tax base and ultimately strengthen the fabric of the community.

Utilizing traditional economic development tactics such as business recruitment and expansion, this plan also prioritizes non-traditional levers of growth - nurturing entrepreneurship, targeting tourism as a source of revenue and visibility, catalyzing downtown revitalization and promoting infill development. Complementing the growth strategies will be a commitment to transparency, collaboration and consistent communication with both internal stakeholders and external partners to share progress, celebrate wins and build momentum.

Ultimately, this strategy aims to harness Ardmore's assets, accelerate innovation and position the community to compete and win in a rapidly evolving economic landscape. It is a roadmap for transformation, resilience and long-term prosperity.

What sets Ardmore apart is not just its location, infrastructure, or legacy of industrial strength, but its people. The region's passion, talent and collaborative spirit are needed to carry out this plan's approaches with both thoroughness and thoughtfulness. It is a strategy rooted in commitment to the residents of today, with the hope of building opportunities for the generations of tomorrow.

Project Approach »

VisionFirst's approach incorporated a collection of local and regional data, a review of existing documentation and stakeholder feedback to offer recommendations to strategically align the efforts for the Development Authority, the Chamber and the Tourism Authority. While each phase was unique, the combined results provide the foundation for the recommendations.

01

Compiled and analyzed economic data for the city, county, and the laborshed, along with the state and the nation to best position the community for economic vitality and growth.

02

Engaged leaders and staff, county and municipal officials as well as stakeholders about the community's priorities, values, strengths and challenges.

03

Assessed and evaluated organizational programs, practices and demographic data to identify opportunities to increase success.

04

Synthesized key findings, themes along with best practices to develop the goals that meet economic development objectives.

05

Developed tactics and metrics for implementation. The recommendations align resources to serve residents while increasing economic development competitiveness.
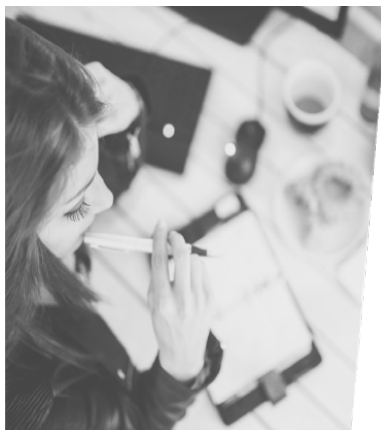
The First Impression | The Data »

VisionFirst Advisors conducted a detailed data analysis of Ardmore, Carter County and the regional laborshed using a variety of perspectives. The data offers a baseline of information to educate, inform and better position the community.

DATA-AT-A-GLANCE

Understanding community data is the foundation of any successful economic development approach. The data tells who the community is and who it isn't, about its strengths and the challenges that need to be overcome. If the economic development team – and equally as important, its partners – do not understand the data, then perceptions become reality, and success is difficult to achieve. Aside from local perceptions and uses of this data, often the first application is site selectors' and business decision-makers' evaluation of a location's alignment with the needs of their project.

Figure 1: Site Selection Process

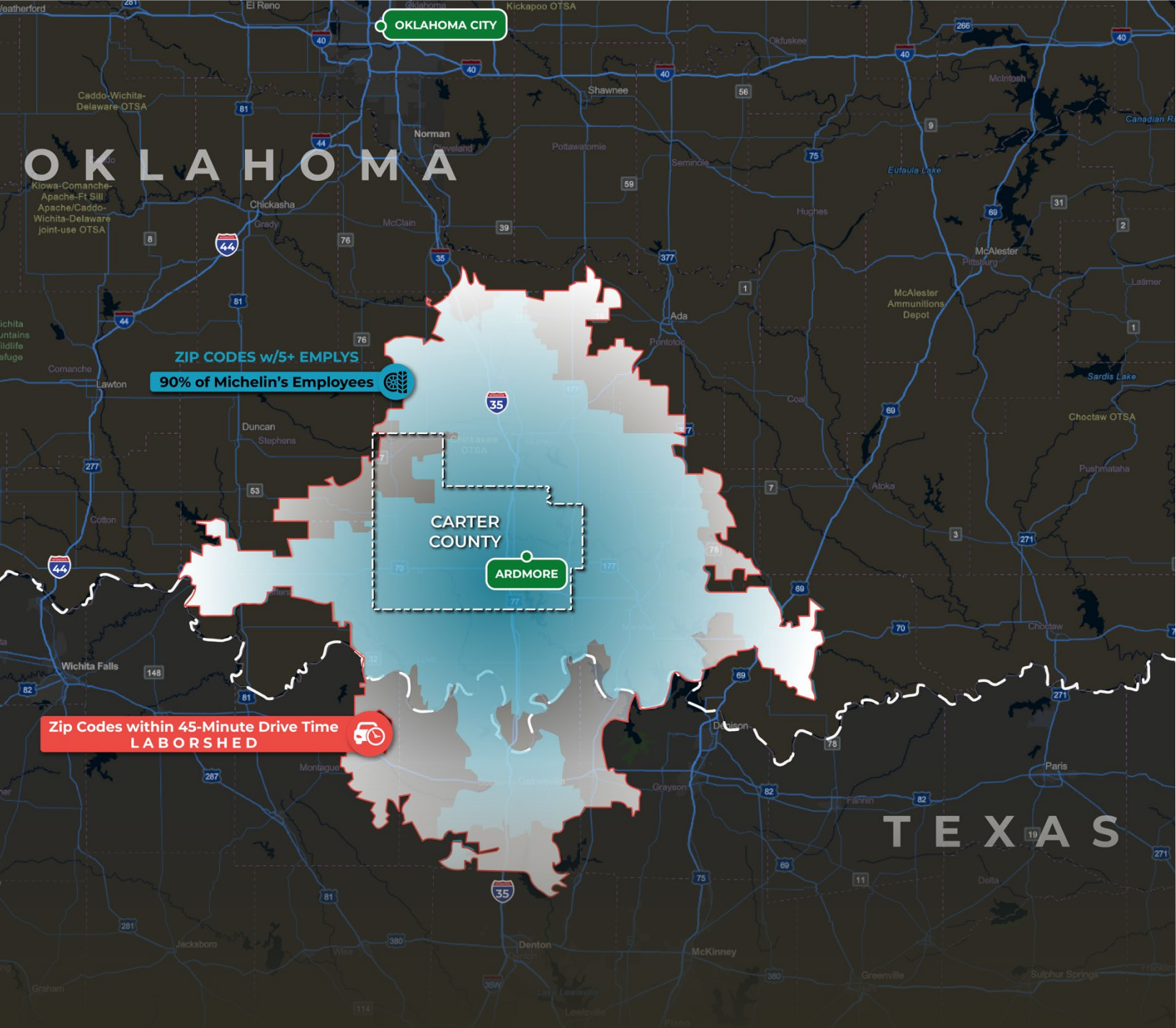|					
STEP 01	STEP 02	STEP 03	STEP 04	STEP 05	STEP 06
NEEDS ASSESSMENT	REGION FILTERING	PROPERTY ANALYSIS	TOURS/ DUE DILIGENCE	NEGOTIATIONS/ PROPERTY PURCHASE	INCENTIVES COMPLIANCE
TO UNDERSTAND NEEDS & OBJECTIVES OF CLIENT	TO IDENTIFY CANDIDATE REGIONS	TO COMPARE & EVALUATE EACH POTENTIAL COMMUNITY	TO EXAMINE & REVIEW FINALIST LOCATIONS	TO SECURE ECONOMIC INCENTIVES & PROPERTY	TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE OF INCENTIVES

Economic development projects begin with the consideration of states and defined geographic regions (i.e., metros, electric utility service territories). Rarely does a prospect, company or site selector have a specific community in mind. However, communities improve their visibility through increased internal and external messaging, while also maintaining a strong online presence. Accurate and up-to-date data and statistical information enable decision-makers to conduct a cost-benefit analysis, offering an idea of the project's likelihood for success in the region.

Because site selectors, location advisors and business decision-makers often review high-level data prior to a visit, it is vital to understand and analyze data from an online data viewpoint to:

- Highlight favorable data in the region that indicates a bottom-line advantage to a company.
- Recognize less favorable data that could cause a potential threat to a company, while explaining how the community and region are addressing issues.
- Recognize flawed data and provide alternative yet reliable aggregated data.
- Understand how the data may conflict with the perception of residents and work with internal stakeholders to balance the narrative.

VisionFirst utilized Chmura's JobsEQ platform to conduct its analysis across multiple geographic regions along with the state and nation, including:

- Ardmore
- Carter County
- A 45-minute drive radius
- 90% of Michelin's labor draw

OKLAHOMA CITY

OKLAHOMA

ZIP CODES w/5+ EMPLYS
90% of Michelin's Employees

CARTER COUNTY

ARDMORE

Zip Codes within 45-Minute Drive Time
LABORSHED

TEXAS

THE LABORSHED IS HOME TO
NEARLY 200,000 RESIDENTS

PARTICIPATION RATE
57.7%
OK (60.9%) / USA (63.3%)

LABOR FORCE
90,000+
LABORSHED

PRIME-AGE (25-54)
PARTICIPATION RATE
77.9%
OK (79%) / USA (82.8%)

A LOWER COST OF LIVING IN THE REGION

85.4 ARDMORE CITY | 85.4 CARTER COUNTY

86.5 LABORSHED | 85.9 OKLAHOMA | 100 USA

AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES

$51,646 ARDMORE CITY | $50,655 CARTER COUNTY

$49, 689 LABORSHED | $55,995 OKLAHOMA | $72,405 USA

LABORSHED TALENT PIPELINE

4,140
POST-SECONDARY
AWARDS ANNUALLY
(2022-2023)

87.1%
H.S. GRAD
OR HIGHER

27.9%
ASSOC.
DEGREE OR
HIGHER

Figure 2: Economic Overview Comparison[1]

		Ardmore City, Oklahoma	Carter County, Oklahoma	45-Minute Drive Time (Zip Codes)	90 % Michelin Employee Draw (Zip Codes)	Oklahoma	USA
DEMOGRAPHICS							
	Current Population (ACS)	24,784	48,202	198,432	164,117	3,970,497	331,097,593
	2020 Population (ACS)	24,834	48,380	-	-	3,949,342	326,569,308
	2015 Population (ACS)	24,955	48,442	-	-	3,849,733	316,515,021
	*Annual Population Growth[4]	-	0.0%	-	-	0.5%	0.6%
	People per Square Mile	-	59.1	-	-	59.1	94.8
	Median Age[2]	37.3	38.4	39.6	38.9	36.9	38.5
LABOR FORCE							
Civilian Population – age 16 years and over	Current Labor Force Size	11,411	22,294	90,283	74,599	1,892,374	167,857,207
	Labor Force Participate Rate	59.6%	59.7%	57.7%	58.1%	60.9%	63.3%
	2020 Labor Force Size	11,215	22,285	-	-	1,874,598	164,759,496
	2020 Labor Participation Rate	58.0%	59.4%	-	-	60.9%	63.2%
Civilian Population – age 25-54	Current Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate	79.1%	79.3%	77.9%	78.1%	79.0%	82.8%
	2020 Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate	76.9%	78.2%	-	-	78.8%	82.4%
	Unemployment Rate Dec 2024 (Seasonally adjusted)	-	3.9%	-	-	3.2%	4.2%
	Veterans (Age 18-64)	561	1,404	5,404	4,355	133,217	8,636,019
	Veterans Labor Force Participation Rate	73.1%	75.4%	70.6%	71.9%	74.6%	77.1%
	Total Employment (2024Q3) – All Industries	19,979	25,260	97,921	84,513	1,846,974	166,047,787
	Four-Quarter Moving Average from 2024Q3 – All Industries	0.5%	0.4%	1.1%	0.8%	1.2%	1.4%
	Mean Commute Time (Min.)	16.4	19.9	22.2	21.4	22.3	26.7
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, Ages 25-64							
	Educational Attainment (H.S. Diploma or Higher)	84.7%	87.4%	89.9%	86.4%	89.0%	89.8%
	Educational Attainment (Assoc Degree or Higher)	30.0%	28.3%	45.0%	27.2%	36.2%	45.0%

[1] Source: JobsEQ: American Community Survey 2015-2019, unless noted otherwise

	Ardmore City, Oklahoma	Carter County, Oklahoma	45-Minute Drive Time (Zip Codes)	90 % Michelin Employee Draw (Zip Codes)	Oklahoma	USA
No High School Diploma	15.3%	12.6%	10.1%	13.6%	11.0%	10.1%
High School Graduate	33.0%	35.3%	25.1%	35.4%	30.3%	25.1%
Some College, No Degree	21.7%	23.9%	19.7%	23.8%	22.4%	19.7%
Associate degree	9.2%	9.0%	9.2%	7.9%	8.7%	9.2%
Bachelor's Degree	11.7%	11.5%	22.4%	13.4%	18.5%	22.4%
Postgraduate Degree	9.2%	7.8%	13.4%	6.0%	9.0%	13.4%
SOCIAL						
Total Housing Units	11,306	21,609	90,609	74,501	1,751,802	140,943,613
Median House Value (owner-occupied)[2]	$153,300	$144,400	$166,238	$157,218	$170,500	$281,900
2020 Total Housing Units	11,388	21,799	-	-	1,740,972	138,432,751
Annual Average Wage	$51,646	$50,655	$49,689	$49,929	$55,995	$72,405
Cost of Living Index	85.4	85.4	86.5	86.1	85.9	100.0
Poverty Level (of all people)	17.7%	15.3%	15.7%	16.7%	15.2%	12.5%
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	16.8%	14.2%	12.6%	13.4%	13.0%	11.5%
Disconnected Youth[3]	3.8%	3.2%	4.0%	4.0%	3.1%	2.5%
Children in Single Family Homes (% of all children)	39.4%	36.6%	36.4%	37.0%	34.6%	34.0%
UNION MEMBERSHIP						
Total	5.8%	6.1%	6.9%	6.8%	6.1%	10.0%
Union Membership (Private)	3.8%	3.8%	3.3%	3.4%	2.8%	6.0%
Union Membership (Mfg)	6.3%	6.3%	5.0%	5.1%	5.0%	7.7%

WHAT THE DATA TELLS US ||

The race for jobs and capital investment is exactly that — a competition. Every day, communities compete to attract new businesses, support the expansion of existing ones and influence the location of private capital investment.

To assess Ardmore's position in this landscape, VisionFirst conducted a comprehensive competitive data analysis. This analysis synthesizes key data points, including demographics, economic trends and performance rankings that impact the region.

This data was benchmarked against state and national figures across various categories such as:

- Labor force and educational attainment
- Industry size and growth trends
- Occupational patterns and laborshed dynamics
- Location quotients
- Social service metrics

The research included more than 25 metrics, strategically grouped into key categories to provide a comprehensive view of Ardmore's competitive advantages and opportunities for growth. Below is a snapshot of Figure 2 data.

Demographics

- **Population Growth:** Ardmore and Carter County populations have been stagnant since 2015, while Oklahoma and the USA saw slight annual growth (0.5% and 0.6%, respectively).
- **Median Age:** The median age is slightly younger in Oklahoma (36.9) compared to the USA (38.5). Ardmore has a median age of 37.3.
- **Population Density:** Carter County matches Oklahoma's average density (59.1 people/sq mile), much lower than the U.S. average (94.8).

Labor Force

- **Participation Rates:** Labor participation rates are slightly lower in Ardmore (59.6%) and Carter County (59.7%) compared to the U.S. average (63.3%). Prime-age labor force participation rates show similar trends.
- **Veterans:** Carter County has 1,404 veterans with a 75.4% labor force participation rate, close to the state average (74.6%).
- **Commute Times:** Ardmore residents have a shorter mean commute time (16.4 minutes) compared to Oklahoma (22.3 minutes) and the USA (26.7 minutes).

Educational Attainment

- **High School Diploma or Higher:** Ardmore (84.7%) lags Oklahoma (89%) and the USA (89.8%).
- **College Degrees:** The percentage of residents with associate degrees or higher is lower in Ardmore (30%) than the U.S. average (45%).

Social Indicators

- **Housing Costs:** Median house values are lower in Ardmore ($153,300) and Carter County ($144,400) compared to the USA ($281,900).
- **Poverty Rates:** Ardmore has a higher poverty rate (17.7%) than the U.S. average (12.5%) but is only slightly above the state average (15.2%).
- **SNAP:** 16.8% of Ardmore households receive SNAP benefits, compared to 13% in Oklahoma and 11.5% nationally.
- **Children in Single-Parent Homes:** Higher percentages are found in Ardmore (39.4%) and Carter County (36.6%) compared to national averages (34%).

Union Membership

- Union membership is generally lower in Oklahoma and Ardmore City than the U.S. average, with private sector rates significantly below national levels.
- Ardmore and Carter County face disadvantages, compared to state and national averages, particularly in:
  - Educational attainment, potentially limit access to high-paying jobs.
  - Labor participation, especially for prime-age workers and veterans.
  - Higher poverty rates and reliance on public assistance.

These factors collectively highlight the need for targeted investment in education, workforce development and economic diversification to bridge these gaps.

Discovery + Engagement | Themes & Takeaways »

In Your Words » After an initial review of the community's data, VisionFirst interviewed a host of stakeholders including business leaders, education officials, resource partners as well as local government leaders. In addition, a resident survey was deployed that garnered 550 responses.

STAKEHOLDER THEMES

As part of assessing the economic development needs and priorities of Ardmore and Carter County, VisionFirst Advisors, in collaboration with local staff, developed a strategic engagement plan. This plan included in-person stakeholder interviews, discussions with local government leaders and an online resident survey. The goal was to gather candid insights, feedback and ideas from the community to help shape priorities and guide future efforts effectively.

Engaging a diverse group of stakeholders fosters a shared sense of ownership, strengthens collaboration and builds a network of advocates committed to implementing strategic initiatives.

Irrespective of the method used, the engagement process aimed to uncover key perspectives by addressing questions such as:

- What do you value about Ardmore? What are the community's values?
- What are your thoughts on ways you see the community growing?
- What are three things that you would like to see improved over the next three to five years in the community through the creation of the strategic vision plan?
- What do you think that community does well?
- What stands out as the community's most significant achievement(s) in recent years?
- What are the greatest community achievements over the last three years?
- What opportunities do you see to grow, strengthen or diversify the community?
- How can we ensure that the plan is implemented and adapts to changing circumstances?
- What mechanisms should be in place to hold stakeholders accountable for implementing the goals of the strategic plan?

VisionFirst identified the strongest themes, insights and supporting details to use in the analysis and ideation of goals and tactics. Key findings from the meetings are presented in aggregate on the following pages and have been grouped by the main themes that resulted from the conversations.

The comments listed are a sample of the meeting feedback from stakeholders and do not reflect VisionFirst's opinion.

Michelin Closing & Future Industry Targets //

- Opportunity to repurpose Michelin's property for smaller employers or industries.
- Need clearly-defined target industries that add diversity and complement existing strengths.
- Target industries identified by stakeholders include rail-based heavy industry, steel, aerospace, logistics and cold storage.

Sites & Infrastructure //

- Limited available industrial and commercial properties restrict future growth.
- The Ardmore Industrial Airpark has untapped potential but faces infrastructure limitations.
- Power and utility constraints pose significant hurdles to industrial recruitment.
- The city has made major investments in sewer and infrastructure upgrades to address past flooding issues.

Community Vision & Leadership //

- ADA and other economic development entities are good conveners but need stronger implementation strategies.
- A focus on an actionable, transparent economic development plan is essential for future growth.
- Need for improved branding to highlight Ardmore's geographic advantages and quality of life.

Workforce & Education //

- Strong partnerships with education providers like Murray State College and Southern Tech for workforce development.
- Vocational training programs and workforce alignment initiatives are underway but underutilized.
- Need to retain young talent and improve local job opportunities for recent graduates.
- Challenges with the reputation and performance of local public school districts.

Community Development & Placemaking //
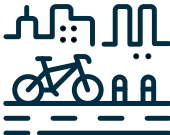
- Need for improved branding to highlight Ardmore's geographic advantages and quality of life.
- Critical shortage of affordable housing for middle-income and young professionals.
- Community resistance to new developments and high rental rates limit growth potential.
- Infill development efforts and expansions like The Preserve have helped but more is needed.
- Potential for developing micro-retail, small businesses and maker spaces downtown.

RESIDENT SURVEY

In addition to staff and stakeholder interviews, an online survey was conducted to expand outreach and gain deeper insights into the community's perspectives. The 14-question survey explored the county's strengths and challenges – including economic development efforts, emphasizing the importance of resident input in shaping the strategic plan.

Public engagement was a priority, and the survey was actively promoted through social media, local newspapers and direct distribution to residents. Over the course of three weeks, the survey garnered 550 responses. While this sample size may not be statistically representative, it offers valuable insights that complement other feedback sources, enriching the understanding of community needs and priorities.

Below is a snapshot of survey participants.

	550	Total Respondents
	83%	Own their Own Home
	51%	Lived in Ardmore for more than 25 Years – but 11% have lived there for 1 to 5 years
	34-44	Primary Age Category
	37%	Of respondents have a bachelor's degree
	77%	Are Employed
	QUALITY OF PLACE	Was the Top Issue throughout the Survey

OVERALL SURVEY THEMES ||

Economic Development & Job Opportunities

- Desire for a shared vision and cohesive development plan for Ardmore's future.
- High demand for diverse, high-paying job opportunities.
- Support for local businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Focus on attracting new industries and creating a clear economic growth plan.

Business & Industry Preferences

- Strong support for advanced manufacturing, service industries and technology sectors.
- Demand for more diverse retail, dining and entertainment options.
- Interest in tourism development and leveraging local culture and history.

Education & Workforce Development

- Calls for improved public education and school performance.
- Emphasis on job training programs aligned with industry needs.
- Need for additional childcare choices.

Housing & Infrastructure

- Critical need for affordable housing options for all income levels.
- Demand for infrastructure improvements, including roads, sidewalks and public transit.

Safety & Public Health

- High concern about crime rates, drug issues and homelessness.
- Desire for increased law enforcement presence and safety initiatives.
- Interest in revitalizing existing neighborhoods and downtown areas.

Community Development & Vibrancy

- Interest in creating vibrant public spaces and recreational activities.
- Concerns about litter, blighted areas and general town cleanliness.
- Desire for beautification projects and maintenance of public spaces.

Transportation & Connectivity

- Need for improved local transportation options, including bike lanes and pedestrian pathways.
- Interest in regional transportation solutions, including air travel options.
- Focus on better traffic management and road maintenance.

Competitive Benchmarking + Target Industry Analysis »

In today's economy, the pursuit of new jobs, talent and capital investment is an ongoing and holistic effort that requires regions to stand out as attractive, future-ready locations for business and industry.

To better understand Ardmore's standing in this competitive environment, a comprehensive analysis was conducted, including a target industry review. This assessment synthesizes a range of critical data—demographics, economic indicators, and performance benchmarks—that shape the region's opportunities and challenges.

INDUSTRY LANDSCAPE & AVAILABLE PRODUCTS

Ardmore and Carter County stand at a pivotal crossroads. While the wind down of Michelin's facility presents challenges, it also opens the door to new opportunities. The region is well-positioned for growth with prime industrial sites, a strategic location and outstanding higher educational institutions. By reimagining its rich manufacturing and distribution roots, Ardmore can harness technological advancements and its cost-competitive environment to drive job creation, increased payroll and attract significant capital investment. Now is the time to embrace innovation, build on existing strengths and shape a new landscape for the community.

To support the development of the assessment, VisionFirst performed a demographic and economic assessment that consisted of two main components:

COMPETITIVE BENCHMARKING & ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT	TARGET INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

- The **competitive benchmarking and economic assessment** utilized data and research to identify assets and barriers.
- The **target industry analysis** considered global trends and disruptions as an overlay to local and regional data and strengths for sector growth.

The key conclusions are presented on the following pages.

Forecasting (projections) is a technique that uses historical data as inputs to make informed estimates that are predictive in determining the direction of future trends. The forecasts are just that, forecasts. They do not account for the activities undertaken by ADA, community and region to influence the projections nor does it consider the impacts from the closing. VisionFirst utilizes data to provide insight as to how the community and region are seen by site selectors and offers the data as a benchmark for measuring the success of activities undertaken.

Unless otherwise noted, data is collected from Chmura's JobsEQ.

SITE REVIEW

Ardmore and Carter County have several strategic sites for industrial development. To assess the community's product potential, VisionFirst conducted an evaluation of three industrial sites. This assessment included both an in-person review and a desktop analysis from a site selector's perspective, focusing on critical factors such as infrastructure, accessibility, utilities and overall readiness for development.

By applying a site selector's lens, the location's potential was assessed to meet the needs of expanding businesses seeking strategic investments in the region.

The initial evaluation included:

- **Preliminary Research:** A review of site data, parcel sizes, utility capacity and transportation access.
- **In-Person Site Visits:** Each site was visited to assess physical conditions, surrounding infrastructure and potential development constraints.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Each site was evaluated against key criteria commonly prioritized by site selectors, such as workforce availability, transportation networks and environmental considerations.

This section outlines initial findings for each of the sites, providing strengths, challenges and high-level industry recommendations.

ARDMORE INDUSTRIAL AIRPARK

Overview

- Over 1,000 developable acres available for long-term lease
- Foreign Trade Zone #227
- 9,000-foot runway; 5,400-foot runway
- 7 miles east of I-35

Attributes & Opportunities

- Only independent airpark in North America with a federally manned FAA control tower
- Ameripointe Logistics Park is a public private partnership
- Watco rail connects to BNSF and unit train capacity
- Availability of additional spur to serve eastside of the park
- Foreign Trade Zone to allow international companies to mitigate tariff uncertainty
- Connection to Mexico City to Toronto for food manufacturing
- Rail expansion and cargo apron development
- Proximity to I-35

Challenges:

- Feels remote
- Limited water capacity/supply
- The existing loop track is being used to transport large wind turbine blades, as it is not configured for onloading a unit train. An existing road restricts the depth of the site and the feasibility of unit trains; however, if the road could be relocated, there is a possibility of upgrading.

Industry Targets

- MROs
- Unmanned Aviation Systems
- Heavy industrial rail users
- Increased defense opportunities through federal spending

WESTPORT INDUSTRIAL PARK

Overview

- Industrial strength roads
- Within 1 mile of I-35
- Industrial utilities available
- Foreign Trade Zone #227; working on the expansion of boundaries

Attributes & Opportunities

- Michelin offsite warehouse
- Due diligence and marketing for land behind the site

Challenges:

- Difficult to find willing co-tenants
- Current FTZ does not cover the entire park

Industry Targets

- Advanced manufacturing
- Transportation/logistics

NEW HORIZONS INDUSTRIAL PARK
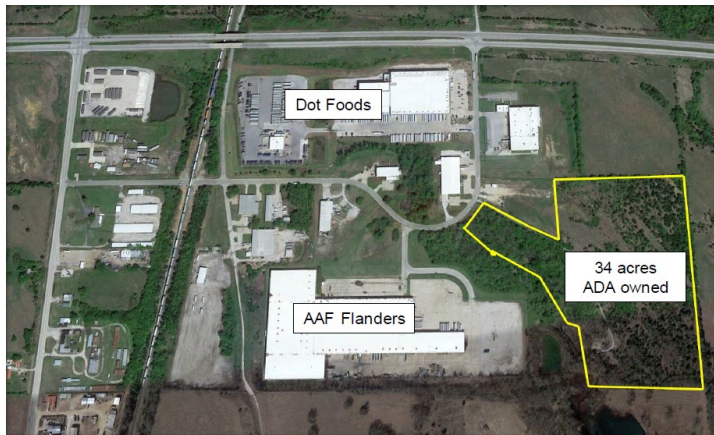
Overview

- 34 acres owned by ADA (pending sale)
- Industrial water and sewer adjacent to property
- Close proximity to I-35 on US Hwy 70

Attributes & Opportunities

- ADA owned site

Challenges

- Opportunity for expansion – however, not immediate

Industry Targets

- Advanced and light manufacturing
- Food & beverage
- Transportation/logistics
- Industrial Services

PRIORITIZING TARGET SECTORS

Oklahoma is home to a diverse and thriving manufacturing and distribution sectors, with several key industries driving its economic growth. The state's strategic location, skilled workforce and access to essential raw materials make it an attractive destination for a wide variety of operations. From aerospace and defense to food processing, oil and gas and industrial equipment production, Oklahoma's landscape is as varied as it is dynamic.

The state's manufacturing sector continues to evolve, benefiting from technological advancements, infrastructure development and strong business incentives. The distribution sector is a significant industry in southern Oklahoma, due to its strategic location, transportation infrastructure and proximity to major markets in neighboring states like Texas, Arkansas and Kansas. Southern Oklahoma's distribution sector benefits from the region's well-developed road and rail networks, making it an ideal hub for logistics, warehousing and supply chain operations.

Oklahoma, specifically the southern portion, remains an essential player in the U.S. manufacturing and distribution industry, with companies across multiple sectors contributing significantly to the state's overall economic success. Drawing on national, state and regional trends, VisionFirst Advisors evaluated the following target industry sectors:

Advanced Manufacturing

- Industrial Equipment and Machinery
- Transportation Equipment
- Building Materials and Construction Products
- Small Arms, Ordnance, and Ordnance Accessories (Firearms)

Aerospace & Defense

- Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO)
- Autonomous Flight Systems
- Advanced Air Mobility
- Sustainable Aviation

Agribusiness/Food Manufacturing

- Suppliers to the large consumptive markets of Oklahoma City and Dallas-Fort Worth

Distribution & Logistics

- Michelin Warehouse and Airpark offer ideal space for a distribution center serving OK and TX

Petrochemicals and Energy

- Sustainable fuels
- Data centers using behind the meter natural gas generation

CURRENT INDUSTRY CLUSTER OVERVIEW ||

Figure 3: INDUSTRY CLUSTERS (2024Q2-2034Q12)

A cluster is a geographic concentration of interrelated industries or occupations. There are 22 industry clusters defined by JobsEQ.

What is (LQ) location quotient?

Location quotient is a measurement of concentration in comparison to the nation. An LQ of 1.00 indicates a region has the same concentration of an industry (or occupation) as the nation. An LQ of 2.00 would mean the region has twice the expected employment compared to the nation and an LQ of 0.50 would mean the region has half the expected employment in comparison to the nation.

INDUSTRY CLUSTERS FOR ARDMORE, OKLAHOMA			
Industry Group	Average Annual Employment Forecast Rate (%) 2024Q2-2034Q2	Average Wages	LQ
Coal/Oil/Power	-0.68	$126,807	4.92
Metal & Product Mfg.	-1.62	$87,519	3.10
Chemical	0.10	$80,980	6.85
Machinery Mfg.	0.03	$80,973	0.56
Freight Tran.	0.09	$74,016	1.28
Financial Svc.	0.28	$69,140	0.82
Professional Svc.	0.33	$55,835	0.53
Health	0.86	$54,341	1.16
Utilities	0.07	$53,176	0.88
ARDMORE AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE ($51,646)			
Public Admin.	0.07	$51,486	0.98
Construction	0.43	$49,856	0.68
Auto/Auto-Related	0.27	$46,830	0.84
Retail	-0.29	$40,749	1.42
Agricultural	-0.26	$33,205	1.31
Consumer Svc.	0.27	$26,984	1.27

What the Data Tells Us ||

Figure 3 underscores where Ardmore's economy balances high-wage industries with stable, lower-paying sectors. While Coal/Oil/Power and Metal Manufacturing face declines, Health Services and Chemicals offer stability and growth opportunities. The forecasted growth rate for industry clusters represents the annual average percentage change in employment expected over the next 10 years. The higher the growth rate, the greater the anticipated expansion in that cluster. Clusters expected to see annual growth are highlighted in green.

Coal/Oil/Power

Despite a strong Location Quotient (LQ = 4.92) and high wages ($126,807), this cluster is forecasted to decline annually by -0.68%.

– Although the coal/oil/ power cluster have experienced a national decline in recent years, the actions taken by President Trump through various executive orders (EOs) and Presidential Memoranda could potentially reverse this trend. His policies, which align with his inaugural speech emphasizing support for oil, gas and nuclear energy, aim to end federal policies favoring clean energy sources like wind and solar. Specifically, the _Unleashing American Energy_ EO ("UAE EO") is designed to boost energy production and exploration on federal lands and waters, increase the extraction of non-fuel minerals and eliminate the electric vehicle (EV) mandate, measures that could lead to a resurgence in the fossil fuel industry.

– The UAE EOs focus on reducing regulations and opening federal lands for energy production could make it easier for energy companies to expand operations in Oklahoma, especially in areas like the Anadarko Basin, near Ardmore, a key oil and gas region.

Metal & Product Manufacturing

High LQ (3.10) and above-average wages ($87,519), but projected to shrink at -1.62% annually, likely reflecting challenges in the manufacturing sector with an increased adoption of automation, robotics and AI-driven manufacturing, which reduces the need for human labor. However, under the UAE EO, the order is expected to increase demand for metal products used in energy infrastructure projects, such as pipelines and drilling equipment.

– **Chemical Industry:** With a LQ of 6.85, this is one of Ardmore's most concentrated clusters. Growth is modest (0.10%), but average wages ($80,980) significantly exceed the average.

Health Services

A critical and growing cluster with a forecasted annual growth rate of 0.86% and an LQ of 1.16, contributing to workforce stability.

Comparative Insights

Ardmore's average annual wage ($51,646) varies widely across clusters. High-wage clusters such as Coal/Oil/Power, Chemical and Metal & Product Manufacturing are offset by lower-paying but stable industries like Consumer Services ($26,984) and Agriculture ($33,205).

Impact of Michelin Wind Down on Industry Clusters

The announced wind down of the Michelin plant will have significant implications for Ardmore's manufacturing clusters, particularly Metal & Product Manufacturing, which already faces a projected annual decline of -1.62%. The ripple effects may also impact related clusters such as Freight Transportation and Professional Services, as reduced manufacturing output could lower demand for supply chain and administrative support services.

Analyzing the Cluster Data ||

Industry clusters typically form and grow due to a region's competitive advantages, such as geographic location, infrastructure, access to skilled labor and robust education systems and programs. Clusters with a **location quotient (LQ) of 1.25 or higher** are considered to have a competitive advantage and are highlighted in green in Figure 3.

Industries are market-driven and respond to the overall growth of the economy. Looking at the data at a more granular level, VisionFirst conducted an industry overview at the cluster level using five key criteria:

1. Industries that employ more than 100 people.
2. Industries projected to grow over the next 10 years.
3. Industries in the region with a high location quotient (at least above 1.00, ideally 1.25 or higher).
4. Industries offering a higher-than-average annual wage of **$51,646.**
5. Relevant to the community and/or region's existing assets.

However, as noted in red, some industries included do not meet all the criteria or have seen some employment declines over the last five years. The three-color codes in Figure 4 represent tiers of targets which the ADA can use to enhance its lead generation efforts.

Tier 1 Targets	Tier 2 Targets	Tier 3 Targets

Figure 4: Target Industry Matrix

NAICS	Industry	Current			5-Year History	10-Year Forecast		Context
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Ann %	Empl Total Demand	Ann % Growth	
523	Securities, Commodity Contracts & Other Financial Investments & Related Activities	134	$102,430	0.77	8.4%	126	1.2%	• Sizable wages • Small firms could want to locate in region for proximity
621	Ambulatory Health Care Services	1,530	$60,966	1.08	1.2%	1,593	1.0%	• Market driven • Opportunity to leverage SONEC
541	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	733	$61,676	0.40	-5.0%	628	0.4%	• Strong wages • Although there was historic decline, new growth offers opportunities with Noble Research Institute
493	Warehousing & Storage	593	$50,993	2.06	-11.5%	754	0.4%	• Backbone of the community • Employment decline due to automation • Ensure BR&E efforts to continue facility investment and upskilling
484	Truck Transportation	627	$79,621	2.46	7.9%	623	-0.2%	• Size, wage & LQ are strong • Aligns with Warehousing & Distribution Sector
333	Machinery Manufacturing	296	$47,759	1.73	5.9%	269	-0.3%	• Sizable machine manufacturing companies in the state. • Opportunity for smaller regional facilities. • Lower wage so recruitment should be targeted to those that can offer higher wages consider transportation equipment manufacturing to tie into Airpark.
326	Plastics & Rubber Products Manufacturing	1,156	$89,297	10.48	-7.4%	1,153	-0.1%	• Potential tariffs are seeing companies expand domestically • Advancements such as automation are enhancing efficiency and quality • Decline could be limited by targeted recruitment • Opportunity to retrain highly-skilled Michelin employees
	Total – All Industries	25,260	$51,602	1.00	-0.1%	27,099	-0.1%	
324	Petroleum & Coal Products Manufacturing	409	$143,793	24.33	2.8%	330	-0.7%	• Challenges in sustainability and resident concern • Recruitment should focus on those with high wages and technological advancements
331	Primary Metal Manufacturing	448	$93,471	7.90	-1.2%	316	-1.9%	• Historically intertwined with mining industry • High wage and LQ • Seek to add to the aerospace sector and BR&E

| | | Current | | | 5-Year History | 10-Year Forecast | | Context |
NAICS	Industry	Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Ann %	Empl Total Demand	Ann % Growth	
213	Support Activities for Mining	541	$68,535	12.66	-2.4%	521	0.2%	• Oil and gas remains a substantial part of the state's economy • Fed trends may impact the sector and offer growth
211	Oil & Gas Extraction	533	$56,090	26.61	1.5%	393	-0.8%	• Backbone of the state's economy • Challenges in sustainability and resident concern • Efforts should focus on BR&E
112	Animal Production & Aquaculture	352	$13,598	3.52	-6.1%	361	-0.8%	• Incredibly low wage but opportunity to leverage industry strength for more high-paying niche industries in food and beverage manufacturing which offer higher wages • Utilize FTZs to lure international companies
111	Crop Production	171	$14,813	1.38	16.1%	191	-0.5%	• Incredibly low wage but opportunity to leverage industry strength for more high-paying niche industries in food and beverage manufacturing which offer higher wages • Utilize FTZs to lure international companies

While the industries below do not meet the qualifications based on the criteria outlined, there is an opportunity for recruitment based on industry trends, sites, workforce and existing industry.

| | | Current | | | 5-Year History | 10-Year Forecast | |
NAICS	Industry	Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Ann %	Empl Total Demand	Ann % Growth
312	Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	39	$77,261	0.75	12.9%	62	1.9%
311	Food Manufacturing	56	$58,648	0.21	4.3%	72	0.6%
336	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	54	$70,522	0.19	-6.1%	50	-0.2%

The Second Impression | What We Heard & Saw »

Developing an effective strategy necessitates a clear understanding of the community's economic development efforts from an outsider's perspective. The following information presents VisionFirst's initial impressions of the community, the existing economic development programs, the activities carried out and the level of stakeholder support.

MORE THAN MICHELIN	VISION VS. ACTION	A PLACE & A POSITION
The impact of the Michelin closure cannot be overstated. It has been part of the fabric of the community for more than 60 years and has employed thousands over generations. Losing nearly 1,400 jobs is devastating, but Ardmore is more than Michelin with a host of other manufacturers and a distribution facility. In addition, the community is fortunate to have strategic educational leaders developing a talent pipeline that can rival many metros with its programming.	The plan being developed is an economic vision plan. One that needs to align community leaders to an overarching vision for where the community should go. However, with the closure, leaders must act not to merely replace jobs but to develop a holistic economy that prioritizes placemaking, small business development along with K-12 education. The decisions and actions will not be easy, but they are necessary to propel the community forward.	Ardmore is most well-known for its location between Oklahoma City and Dallas – which is most definitely an important selling point for business. However, building efforts around downtown redevelopment and creating transformational community events have an opportunity to make a name for Ardmore beyond its positioning on a map. Developing a deeper sense of community pride will attract not only visitors but potentially new residents along with business.

SWOT Analysis + Leverage Points »

Based on stakeholder engagement and data analysis, VisionFirst identified the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This analysis relied on qualitative input as well as industry knowledge.

STRENGTHS

- Situated on I-35, providing easy access to major markets.
- Strong collaboration between Murray State College, Southern Tech and career programs.
- Philanthropy and support from local wealth are notable assets for community projects.
- Progress made in downtown redevelopment and growing the retail sector.
- Industrial Airpark opportunities.

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of middle-income housing and quality rental properties.
- Challenges with the reputation and performance of local schools.
- Skill gaps and difficulty attracting and retaining young professionals.
- Underutilized tourism assets.
- Lack of a clear sense of place of who Ardmore is and what it offers to residents, businesses and visitors.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Development of maker spaces, incentives for small businesses and downtown revitalization.
- Expand beyond large employers to diversify the base with mid-size projects.
- Incentivize infill development and new construction in target markets.
- Leverage higher education programs to develop a holistic economy.
- Improve storytelling and branding to promote Ardmore's lifestyle and geographic advantages.

THREATS

- Historical reliance on large employers like Michelin creates vulnerability.
- Power, water and utility constraints hinder industrial recruitment.
- Loss of talent to larger cities due to limited amenities and job opportunities.
- Opposition to new housing or industrial development could slow growth.
- Perceptions around K-12 school system districts and divides between public and private schools.

LEVERAGE POINTS ||

Far too often SWOT analyses are conducted for discovery purposes only. VisionFirst goes beyond the initial step of conducting the analysis and develops strategies to leverage or capitalize on opportunities and to minimize or mitigate weaknesses. These strategies, or "leverage points," highlight the most urgent and impactful actions the community should take to strengthen its position, fulfill its mission and enhance competitiveness for jobs and investment.

STRENGTH	LEVERAGE POINTS
Progress made in downtown redevelopment and growing the retail sector.	Utilize the momentum from the downtown redevelopment to revitalize the city with infill projects, signature tourism events and grants that make redevelopment as attractive as greenfield projects.
Industrial Airpark is an asset but lacks the ability for runway expansion.	Increase marketing of Airpark's assets especially given potential international tariffs using FTZ designations
WEAKNESSES	**LEVERAGE POINTS**
Lack of middle-income housing and quality rental properties.	Advocate for the community to develop fast track workforce housing to encourage new development.
Underutilized tourism assets.	Develop an aggressive tourism marketing plan that emphasizes outdoor recreation and includes the convention center along with local small businesses and restaurants.
Lack of a clear sense of place of who Ardmore is and what it offers to residents, businesses and visitors.	Initiate a branding initiative that explores who Ardmore is as a community and what it strives to be that speaks to current residents and businesses along with the types of businesses and residents the community wishes to attract.
OPPORTUNITIES	**LEVERAGE POINTS**
Expand beyond large employers to diversify the base with mid-size projects.	Business recruitment and retention (BR&E) efforts should seek the 100-250 job range which will help diversify the economy while leveraging the education pipeline the community has.
Leverage higher education programs to develop a holistic economy.	Murray State and Southern Tech each have impressive statistics on their programming. Those numbers should be the basis for new industrial recruitment while using information from BR&E visits to develop new or align current programs.
THREATS	**LEVERAGE POINTS**
Perceptions around K-12 school system districts and divides.	Foster programming to encourage intentional corporate investment in and around schools including infrastructure, reading programs and community initiatives.
Balance of outreach versus perceived need locally.	Increase proactive communications to internal audiences and sharing results/metrics on activities.

A Path Forward | Strategic Goals & Tactics »

The plan's goals and tactics are strategically designed to foster connectivity among stakeholders and guide the trajectory of economic development and community success. It builds upon previous plans and actions undertaken by the ADA, the Chamber and the ATA, serving as a road map to address both the opportunities and challenges of economic growth in the community.

ENSURING IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS

To develop the key recommendations, VisionFirst considered the current capacity of the staff, and the demands placed on each organization. Utilizing facts and trends drawn from the data as well as best practices, the six goals and one cross-cutting strategy are meant to demonstrate commitment to growing the community's business landscape while also improving overall quality of place. Each goal is supported by a corresponding suite of tactics and partners instrumental for success:

01 Focus Target Industry Marketing
02 Optimize Available Sites & Properties
03 Accelerate Downtown Development & Entrepreneurship
04 Intensify Tourism Initiatives
05 Enhance Stakeholder Communications
06 Advocate for K-12 Education Improvements

Cross Cutting: Improve Organizational Operations

Achieving these strategic goals requires strong coordination between the organizations as well as external partners. To support this, the tactics are further segmented by:

- **Implement:** ADA, Chamber or ATA to undertake, lead and implement.
- **Facilitate:** ADA, Chamber or ATA to work in conjunction with partners to develop and implement.
- **Advocate:** ADA, Chamber or ATA to advocate county, regional, utility and state stakeholders to undertake and/or implement.

Timeframes

For the plan, timeframes are defined as:

- Short-Term: 6-18 months
- Mid-Term: 18-36 months
- Long-Term: 36-60 months

FOCUS TARGET INDUSTRY MARKETING

Ardmore has a clear opportunity to lead with its wage strength, geographic advantages, and resilience in key sectors such as chemicals, energy, and health services. These industries not only offer strong location quotients and higher-than-average wages, but they also align with Ardmore's existing workforce competencies, infrastructure assets and long-standing industrial expertise.

The announced wind down of the Michelin manufacturing facility presents a significant challenge, with the pending loss of more than 1,000 jobs and millions in annual payroll. While replacing those jobs and that economic impact is a critical goal, this strategy goes further. It leverages the moment as a catalyst for purposeful diversification by targeting projects in the 100- to 250-job range, right-sized opportunities that are more attainable, more sustainable and more likely to raise the region's average wage over time.

Rather than relying on a single large employer to drive economic growth, Ardmore should position itself to attract a range of high-value operations across multiple sectors. This approach builds a more resilient economic base, reduces risk and creates opportunities for innovation and upward mobility within the workforce.

By crafting tailored messaging backed by hard data and aligning outreach efforts with real-time cluster performance, Ardmore can shift from a reactive posture to a proactive, competitive strategy—transforming industrial impact into economic advantage.

Key tactics include:

01 Develop Curated Executive Roundtables or Site Visits
02 Develop Industry-Specific Content & Marketing
03 Activate Industry Association & Education Partnerships
04 Launch Thought Leadership and Hosted Programming
05 Conduct Targeted Lead Generation & Direct Outreach
06 Utilize Existing Employers as Advocates

– **Partners:** Elected Officials (State & Local), City, Airport and County Officials, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Existing Industry, Utility & Rail Partners, Higher Education, Tribal Leaders, Oklahoma Business Roundtable, State Chamber of Oklahoma, Industry Associations, Local Economic Development Organizations in Surrounding Counties

Tactic: Develop Curated Executive Roundtables or Site Visits

Implement, Mid-Term

Organize exclusive roundtable discussions in Ardmore, inviting decision-makers from key companies. The roundtables should focus on themes like workforce development and infrastructure to highlight Ardmore's assets.

Offer tailored site visits for executives of target companies, showcasing Ardmore's strategic location and transportation infrastructure. Ardmore's proximity to major markets in Texas, Arkansas and Kansas, along with well-developed road and rail networks, positions it as an ideal hub for logistics and distribution operations.

Why: Ardmore must lead conversations with industries aligned to its competitive clusters, especially where high wages and high LQ suggest an edge, even if growth is flat or modest.

Use Data to Emphasize:

- **Chemicals:** LQ 6.85, avg. wage $80,980, projected modest growth (+0.10%). Ideal for roundtables focused on workforce or supply chain resilience.
- **Health Services:** Growing at +0.86% annually with workforce stability and a strong presence (LQ 1.16). Key sector for site tours with Mercy, Murray State's Southern Oklahoma Nursing Education Center (SONEC) and similar institutions.

Tactic: Develop Industry-Specific Content & Marketing

Implement, Short-Term

Create sector-specific digital pitch decks, one-pagers and webpages for each target industry showing workforce data, incentives, available sites and regional strengths. Launch a "Why Ardmore?" video series with testimonials from industry leaders and existing employers, tailored to each sector. Use LinkedIn and niche trade publications to promote success stories and available opportunities, targeting key decision-makers with sponsored content.

Why: Each high-value cluster demands its own narrative. Use this to build trust with companies and site selectors.

Use Data to Emphasize:

- **Metal Manufacturing:** Though projected to decline (-1.62%), LQ 3.10 and $87,519 wages highlight potential, especially under renewed energy infrastructure initiatives.
- **Coal/Oil/Power:** Despite forecasted decline (-0.68%), a *very high LQ of 4.92* and $126,807 average wage suggest Ardmore remains a key node in the energy sector. Messaging should tap into anticipated federal deregulation and Oklahoma's energy legacy.

Tactic: Activate Industry Association & Education Partnerships

Implement, Short-Term

Deepen partnerships with groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, MRO Americas or autonomous systems associations by co-sponsoring webinars or local events. Collaborate with universities, tech schools and regional training centers to showcase workforce pipelines specifically for companies in aerospace, advanced manufacturing and agribusiness. Attend approximately three to six site selection professional association conferences or Select Oklahoma sponsored events. For example, Site Selectors Guild, Consultant Connect, Area Development Magazine all offer excellent ways to meet with consultants. In addition, engage a business development consultant familiar with the armament industry to help make introductions at NSSF Shot Show.

Why: These sectors align with statewide assets, and Ardmore can position itself within regional supply chains.

Use Data to Emphasize:

- Partner with Oklahoma's Aerospace & Defense alliance to tap into the MRO and emerging autonomous flight systems markets highlighting assets and acreage at the airpark including 9,000-foot runway; 5,400-foot runway.
- Use Ardmore's distribution sector strength, location on I-35 and proximity to the Anadarko Basin to attract supply chain operators in energy and chemicals.

Tactic: Launch Thought Leadership & Hosted Programming

Implement, Mid-Term

- **Partners:** Elected Officials (State & Local), City, Airport and County Officials, ACES team at Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Existing Industry, Utility & Rail Partners, Higher Education, Tribal Leaders, Oklahoma Business Roundtable, Oklahoma Chamber, Oklahoma Manufacturing Association (OMA), Petroleum Alliance of Oklahoma, Local Economic Development Organizations in Surrounding Counties

Launch a Southern Oklahoma Industry Summit that convenes leaders from these sectors around innovation, supply chain trends or workforce strategies positioning Ardmore as both a thought leader and business partner. Collaborate with state partners and national site selectors to offer individualized virtual engagements, showcasing Ardmore's facilities, talent pipeline (specifically funds associated with retraining impacted Michelin employees) and infrastructure.

Events to Consider:

- Future of Energy Manufacturing Summit – exploring how local metal and chemical manufacturers can benefit from energy investment policy changes.
- Workforce of the Future Roundtable – inviting MRO, chemicals and agribusiness leaders to align on workforce training in partnership with area institutions.
- Regional FAM Tour – Host one day FAM for Dallas-Fort Worth consultants and developers.

Tactic: Conduct Targeted Lead Generation & Direct Outreach

Implement, Mid-Term

Build a data-driven lead list of 50 high-growth companies in target sectors expanding in the central U.S. corridor. Engage a third-party lead generation firm or use CRM tools (like Salesforce or HubSpot) to automate and track outreach campaigns with personalized messages. Immediately. market to all consultants the availability of Michelin workforce and warehouse space. In addition, identify supplier networks of 10 to 15 large employers in nearby metros (e.g., DFW aerospace or food manufacturing and distribution through Dot Foods) and market Ardmore as an ideal satellite or co-location opportunity.

Using the lists, conduct economic development "roadshows" in nearby metros like Dallas-Fort Worth, showcasing Ardmore's potential as a satellite location for companies seeking expansion opportunities. Go beyond industry events, target regional innovation hubs like Wichita, Tulsa, OKC, Dallas and Little Rock with pop-up Ardmore briefings or economic development "roadshows" tailored to specific sectors.

Why: Ardmore's location is a strength, its story needs to be told in Dallas-Fort Worth, Tulsa, Little Rock and OKC, where supply chain spillovers are ripe.

Data & Messaging Examples:

- Ardmore's average wage of $51,646 is competitive across the region, with plenty of room for employers to attract and retain talent, especially from clusters like agriculture ($33K) or consumer services ($27K).
- "Did you know Ardmore's Chemicals sector pays 57% more than the regional average wage and continues to grow? Here's why that matters to your expansion plans."
- "With more than 1,000 skilled manufacturing workers ready, Ardmore has talent ready to be retrained and re-employed in next-gen manufacturing and distribution roles."

Tactic: Utilize Existing Employers as Advocates

Implement, Mid-Term

Develop and formalize an industry ambassador program by working with key companies already in Ardmore to serve as advocates or references when recruiting prospects in related sectors.

Why: Companies currently operating in Ardmore, those in the chemicals, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing sectors can lend credibility to outreach efforts.

Action Steps:

- Equip these employers with talking points tied to wage advantages, training partnerships, and ease of doing business.
- Promote their success stories in outbound campaigns to sector peers.

OPTIMIZE AVAILABLE SITES & PROPERTIES

Even with a strong marketing and outreach plan, a community cannot attract projects without viable sites. Site identification, preparation and readiness are ongoing priorities for economic development organizations nationwide. Whether it's bringing new properties to market, conducting due diligence on existing sites, mitigating infrastructure challenges, or addressing all the above, product development underpins the success of nearly every community's efforts.

Given the community's focus on replacing Michelin jobs, the need for viable sites is even more pressing. Recognizing this, VisionFirst conducted a multi-faceted assessment of Ardmore's three main industrial parks. This evaluation mirrored a site selection process, identifying both perceived and actual risks associated with each property. However, in today's market, the concept of risk and product extends beyond physical sites. Workforce availability, talent development, permitting regulations and the speed of approvals all play a crucial role in site selection. Increasingly, this process is conducted digitally, with minimal interaction between economic developers and decision-makers. Instead, sites and communities are often evaluated anonymously through state and local websites, making online presence and data accuracy more critical than ever.

To address this shift, VisionFirst Advisors combined an in-person site audit with desktop research, revealing common themes across Ardmore's properties. At the end of the day, perception is reality, what appears online and in databases defines how prospective clients view a site. For Ardmore's properties to be truly competitive, ensuring certainty in data, marketing, positioning and site readiness is essential.

Key tactics include:

01 Leverage the airpark's strategic advantages.
02 Set clear expectations for Michelin co-tenant space.
03 Refine and market zoning & rail advantages.
04 Develop creative solutions for in-fence property.
05 Streamline infrastructure planning with utility & engineering partners.
06 Engage and collaborate with motivated landowners.
07 Enhance the sites landing page.
08 Create videos that tell the site's selling points.

Understanding the Industrial Site Selection Process

Industrial site selection follows a structured process, with specific criteria that must be met for a community to compete effectively. When a site selector or corporate decision-maker issues a Request for Information (RFI), the goal is often elimination rather than selection. Without a strong understanding of these parameters, a community risks being overlooked in favor of more "developed" options. The chart on the following page illustrates the key factors site selectors consider when evaluating potential locations.

Factor	Details
Ownership	Title, willingness to sell, expropriation rights
Price	Purchase, lease
Dimensions	Shape, configuration, usable area
Regulation	Zoning, restrictions, permitted use, coverage ratio, plot ratio, green area, noise restrictions, hours of operation, lighting
Geotechnical	Soil, bearing capacity, topography, water table, organic material
Environmental	Contamination, protected species, historical artifacts, sustainability features
Utility Services	Power, renewable energy, gas, water, wastewater, stormwater, telecom, roads, fire suppression, steam rail
Timing	Preconstruction, permits, approvals, entitlements, site preparation, environmental remediation, extensions/upgrades of utilities

Building off the information in Figure 5, consider how a location's cost is evaluated.

Figure 6: Location Cost

Utility	Labor	Construction & Site Development	Tax Burden	Logistics
20%	20%	20%	20%	20%

Cost is evaluated from the following conditions with each factor assigned a numerical value. The factors are as follows:

- **Utility:** Power, water, sewer
- **Labor:** Existing expertise, ease of attraction and turnover
- **Construction & Site Development:** Materials, personnel, mitigation, timeline
- **Tax Burden:** Total tax liability minus discounts such as incentives
- **Logistics:** Infrastructure, distribution, time

While each of Ardmore's top sites offers opportunity in multiple industry targets, enhancing both due diligence and marketing is critical in moving forward.

PRODUCT ASSESSMENT SNAPSHOT

VisionFirst created a product assessment snapshot to help staff and partners evaluate the community's competitive position across key industrial sites.

Figure 7: Product Snapshot

Assessment	Notes
Competitive Advantage	Having a BNSF rail certified site is a big advantage. Rail sites are increasingly difficult to find but also need to understand and address additional infrastructure needs to the site.
Competitive Advantage	The Airpark is the most promising location due to its certified site status and foreign trade zone designation. Land development on the west side of the Airpark provides opportunities for rail-dependent industries. While the unit train loop is not functional, it is unique and provides opportunities for companies.
Needs Improvement	Ardmore has many site options for client needs. These sites have access to rail, runways and Interstate 35. The challenge is many of the large sites still need infrastructure and can only be leased. This can be a competitive disadvantage compared to other sites.
Needs Improvement	There is a need for identifying addition large tracts of industrial property adjacent to the I-35 for visibility and access.
Needs Improvement	Lack of virtual online mapping options – KMZ/KML Google Earth files, interactive 360-degree photos or videos, etc.
Needs Improvement	Leased sites at the Admore Industrial Airpark with runway access can compete with other airport sites because of common requirements of leasing at market value versus ownership; however, some locations will "buy" down the cost of these leases through incentives based on jobs and capex.
Competitive Disadvantage	Lack of available industrial buildings (significant size). The Michelin manufacturing facility presents a challenge to lease to other users because of the continuing operation of the compounding facility.

OPTIMIZE SITE COMPETITIVENESS ||

Building off both the qualitative site considerations and the product snapshot, six tactics were identified to improve and leverage the existing infrastructure at each site while also boosting the community's overall portfolio of sites.

– **Partners:** Existing Industry, Utility Partners, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Works, BNSF, FAA, City & County Government

Tactic: Leverage the Airpark's Strategic Advantages

Implement, Short-Term

Highlight the region's laborshed alongside the Airpark's key assets, positioning it as the most promising location due to its certified site status and foreign trade zone designation. Prioritize the promotion of the land in the Airpark with runway and apron access for defense, aviation, aerospace and MRO facilities. Land development on the west side of the Airpark provides opportunities for rail-dependent industries. While the unit train loop is not functional, it is unique and provides opportunities for companies needing transload or staging activities (like the blades for wind turbines). Consider the development of microsite specifically for this property. *See the Madison County Economic Development Authority best practice later in this section.*

Tactic: Set Clear Expectations for Michelin Co-Tenant Space

Advocate, Short-Term

While winding down its facility, Michelin has been a committed partner to the community offering support and creative solutions to attract new industry and jobs. Although the co-tenant space offers additional capacity, marketing such a proposition presents unique challenges. To be able to co-market the property with the broker, it is critical to define clear parameters for potential usage, outlining what is feasible within the space including preferred industries, costs and timelines.

Tactic: Refine and Market Zoning & Rail Advantages

Implement, Mid-Term

Strengthen the marketing of the Airpark site by emphasizing completed due diligence, zoning benefits and rail access. Tailor messaging to international companies and rail-dependent tenants to showcase its strategic value specifically highlighting the inverted tariffs and exemption from inventory taxes. Couple that advantage by highlighting the ability to access state economic development incentives, such as Quality Jobs Program, Investment Tax Credits and workforce training grants. This can result in significant cost savings, especially for manufacturers importing high-tariff raw materials but producing lower-tariff finished goods.

Tactic: Develop Creative Solutions for In-Fence Property

Facilitate, Mid-Term

Explore long-term lease opportunities for FAA-controlled land within the fence, ensuring it is positioned effectively for key target industries such as aviation, distribution and manufacturing promoting last mile delivery, direct access opportunities for maintenance, repair and overhaul and reduced logistics for companies sourcing international goods or products.

Tactic: Streamline Infrastructure Planning with Utility & Engineering Partners

Facilitate, Mid-Term

Collaborate with utilities, engineering firms and local government officials to clarify infrastructure timelines and costs. Establishing transparent communication and aligning expectations early in the process can prevent delays and unexpected expenses. ADA should proactively address potential project risks by clearly outlining the steps needed to bring or upgrade infrastructure at sites. This includes identifying funding sources, setting realistic timelines for improvements and ensuring all stakeholders are aware of their roles in advancing site readiness.

Tactic: Engage and Collaborate with Motivated Landowners

Implement, Mid-Term

Identify and cultivate relationships with landowners and developers to unlock new development opportunities, with a strategic focus on properties near Interstate 35. Prioritize sites that enhance ADA control and expand the community's industrial offerings. The ADA must clearly articulate the return on investment to landowners, demonstrating both the personal and community benefits of attracting companies to their sites.

IMPROVE SITE MARKETING ||

In today's fast-paced world of technological advancement, maintaining a strong online presence and having ample marketing collateral are essential for promoting industrial products and assets within a community. These tools will not only enhance Ardmore's credibility but also improve its ability to compete for high-value projects.

Never has it been easier for communities to project an image to prospects and clients that best illustrates its assets, resources and vision for growth. The ADA can position and communicate its value proposition to each of its key audiences locally, statewide, nationally and globally. The means of this communication is through the creative use of technology, and a clear understanding and articulation of business benefits.

Improve the online presence and search engine optimization by presenting the product offerings utilizing tools such **as interactive maps, digital presentations, interactive drone footage**, overlay properties in Google Earth (KMZ files). These tools illustrate clearly defined competitive advantages, including key messaging and benefits of business growth for the region.

While drone videos and photography are an effective marketing tool, enhancing drone **site footage or photography by creating 360° interactive photos** for sites offers increased engagement to prospective clients. Kuula.co is an easy-to-use and budget friendly solution for creating 360° virtual tours and sharing them on the web.

Tactic: Enhance the Sites Landing Page

Implement, Short-Term

–   **Partners:** Existing Industry, Utility Partners, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Works, BNSF, FAA, City & County Government**,** Streets & GIS Departments, Utility Partners

Site selection research is increasingly conducted online, with decision-makers evaluating workforce demographics, incentives and available properties. While many economic development organizations use websites and databases to showcase sites, these tools can often be overwhelming, cumbersome and not optimized for mobile use, limiting their effectiveness in a fast-paced selection process. Ardmore is already a step ahead with a landing page that highlights the top properties and some of the benefits and due diligence. However, further enhancing the page can more effectively communicate the community's value and commitment to business success.

The topic of finding truly ready sites has become an industry wide conversation. Consider a recent article from Area Development magazine, "As companies consider whether and how to respond to the array of market and political stimuli, location portfolios will be part of the conversation. Location determines access to supply chains, customers/consumers, energy and labor...Manufacturing site selection projects that do go forward will face a shortage of available,

development-ready sites, particularly those with sufficient utilities. Power availability remains a critical timing and financial concern, which dovetails into the forecast for data center site selection."[2]

A stronger online presence should highlight not just parcel size but also key access points, infrastructure, workforce availability, utilities and multi-level geographic maps (regional, state and national). **By applying the checklist in Figure 8, ADA can build consistency, increase asset awareness and establish trust with site selectors. Once the checklist is complete, customized marketing materials should be developed for each site, ensuring Ardmore's advantages stand out.** Consider the layout and details on the AR-TX REDI website and the Hamilton County Development Authority as a best practices.

Building off the **current Ameripointe website consider expanding the content** to be similar to the Madison County Economic Development Authority as a best practice. Prior to the announcement by Amazon Web Services (AWS) to locate at the Madison County Mega Site, MCEDA developed a microsite that highlighted the site's geographic position, the suite of existing industry in the area as well as workforce and demographic data. The site has now evolved to featuring the progress and benefit of the project while still showcasing the community's advantages.

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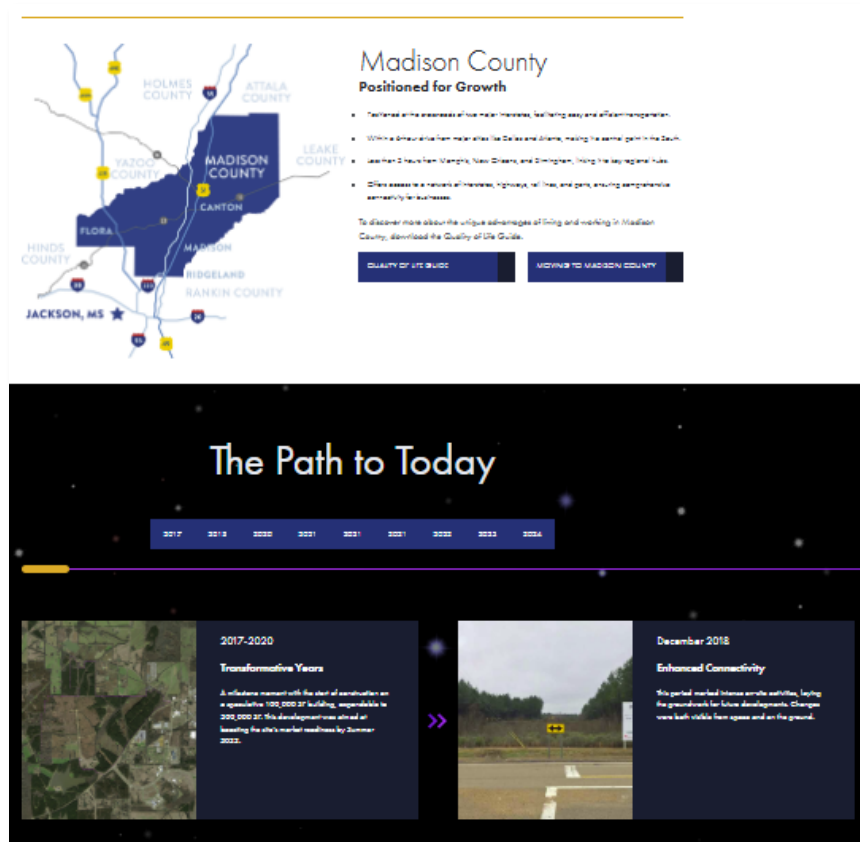
[2] Area Development Magazine - Power, Policy, and Site Selection in 2025

Figure 8: Priority Property Checklist

ONLINE REVIEW	PROPERTY
	PROPERTY LISTINGS
	State Website
	Utility Website
	SUPPORTING MATERIALS
	Recent Aerial Photography with property outlined
	Marketing Video
	Google Earth KML/KMZ files
	Executive Summary
	Conceptual Site Plan (master plan)
	Ownership or Letter of Commitment (if privately owned)
	Covenants
	Land use designation *(Foreign Trade Zone, Opportunity Zone, or New Market Tax Credits Eligible)*
	MAPPING
	Ownership/Tax Map
	Flood Map
	Topography Map
	Zoning Map - with surrounding areas up to one mile
	PROPERTY ASSET MAPPING
	Electric Provider
	Distance to 3-Phase
	Current Capacity
	Future Capacity
	Water Provider
	Distance to Main
	Diameter of Main
	Site Location Flow Rate
	Current Capacity
	Future Capacity
	Wastewater Treatment/Provider
	Distance to Main
	Diameter of Main
	Current Capacity
	Future Capacity
	Natural Gas Provider
	Distance to Main
	Diameter of Main
	Current Capacity
	Future Capacity
	Fiber-Optic Provider
	Telecommunications Provider
	FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
	Infrastructure development plans for utilities not on site
	Gannt Chart for site improvements

Tactic: Create Videos that Tell the Site's Selling Points

Implement, Mid-Term

– **Partners:** Existing Industry, Airpark Staff, Utility Partners, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Works

Video content marketing is when brands produce video content to raise their profile online. When done well, video can be a powerful way to share content and competitive advantages in a way that is easily accessible to a large audience. Videos should be no longer than two minutes and use a combination of videography and graphics to underscore key messages. Research suggests that visuals are far more effective in terms of communication. On average, people remember only 10 percent of text information. At the same time, studies suggest people remember more than 65 percent of the information that is displayed visually. Feature:

When highlighting a site utilizing video include:

- Messages about what the viewer will see
- Center the video around the story, not the sell
- Map demonstrating national, regional and community level location
- Include landmarks such as major cities, airports, ports, interstates
- Highlight at least five competitive advantages, even consider numbering them include:
  o Ownership
  o Size (acreage) and/or square footage (consider hectares and meters for foreign direct investment viewers)
  o Location including landmarks such as infrastructure – ports, airports, interstate and rail as well as major cities
  o Other manufacturing/distribution facilities located within a one-mile radius
  o Utility providers, line placements, size and capacity
  o Quality of place including neighborhoods (including price points), amenities
  o Educational providers including number and types of relative training programs

The ADA has already produced videos highlighting the community and the airpark. Build off these existing efforts, with additional promotion and utilization including:

- **30 Second Videos:** Shorter videos have more engagement on social media. However, given the changing algorithms, contract with a marketing firm for specific paid media campaigns for events and geotargeting efforts for key influencers.
- **Unique Identifiers:** Segment the existing video to showcase unique offerings only found in Ardmore or region. Events, neighborhoods and venues that employees and employers.
- **CEO/Leadership Testimonials:** Add to sites videos by leveraging existing industry leadership. Videos communicating the trust that existing industry has through one-on-one interviews. These videos are a great platform for businesses to promote their success.
- **Deal Flow Content:** Videos showcasing corporate project wins for attraction and/or relocation.

ACCELERATE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Downtown revitalization and small business growth are vital to the long-term economic success of Ardmore and the region. Encouragingly, recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows a 10.3% increase in business applications locally—683 new ventures—outpacing the state's overall 4.5% growth. This momentum underscores the entrepreneurial spirit taking root in the community and highlights the need for programmatic solutions that offer hands-on, hyper-local assistance.

Understanding that small businesses are the backbone of a community, Michelin has allocated $1 million to support entrepreneurship initiatives in the region as part of its wind down. This transformative investment can serve as a catalyst to accelerate downtown development, nurture startups and expand resources for innovators who are shaping the future economy.

Key tactics include:

01 Hire an entrepreneurship director
02 Create a 1 Million Cups Chapter
03 Partner for the Development & Operation of a Coworking Space
04 Advocate for Continued Downtown Redevelopment & Infill
05 Host Entrepreneur-Driven Events

Tactic: Hire an Entrepreneurship Director

Implement, Short-Term

– **Partners:** ADA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Government, Michelin

The Chamber should hire a director to lead entrepreneurship and small business activities. The Director of Small Business and Entrepreneurship would support clients/entrepreneurs who are seeking advice, counseling, and facilitate new business creation, expansion and employment opportunities. The position would be responsible for delivery of services and professional development programs, seminars events and courses. The director would develop programs that cater to and meet the needs of local, small business owners and entrepreneurs. This position would report to the President and CEO or most appropriate leadership position. Once hired, the Chamber executive director along with the entrepreneurship director should coordinate closely with Michelin to advance entrepreneurship ideas with the funding available. In addition, together, the group should engage the Center on Rural Innovation and the best practices from Ada, Oklahoma to build entrepreneurship programs and capacity.

Tactic: Create a 1 Million Cups Chapter

Implement, Mid-Term

– **Partners:** Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Government, Michelin

The Chamber and the Main Street Program should create a 1 Million Cups chapter. The national program is designed to engage, educate and connect local entrepreneurs. Founded by the Kauffman Foundation, 1 Million Cups (1MC) is based on the idea that entrepreneurs network and discover solutions over a million cups of coffee. The free, bi-weekly coffee gathering helps build startup communities at a grassroots level. At 1MC, everyone connects with each other: the entrepreneurs who present, the communities that offer support, and the organizers who dedicate their time to make the program happen. The Key Pillars of the program include:

- Presenters are invited to give presentations, not pitches.
- 1MC creates an environment for authentic connections, not networking.
- 1MC is run for the community, by the community.
- The Core Program
- Meetings are held weekly on Wednesday mornings.
- Each event features two presenters.
- Presenting businesses must be less than five years old, and desire to learn.
- Each presentation lasts twenty minutes, followed by a twenty-minute Q&A.
- After the Q&A, the community asks: "What can we do to help you?"
- Events are free always and open to the public, with free coffee.

Tactic: Partner for the Development & Operation of a Coworking Space

Facilitate, Long-term

– **Partners:** ADA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Government, Michelin

Coworking spaces provide small businesses, independent contractors and other workers a space to get work done, network and participate in their local business community. What was relatively an unknown concept 10 years ago, coworking spaces have transformed the way the modern worker interacts with the business world. At the end of 2024, the national coworking inventory reached 7,695 spaces at a national median price of $149. [3] With a growing number of entrepreneurs and remote workers, the Chamber and Main Street Authority should consider the development and operation of a coworking or maker space.

Best Practice: Knox Makers™ is a place for the Knoxville area's engineers, artists, hobbyists, innovators, educators and entrepreneurs to work and play. "We are a technology and art collective dedicated to the promotion of creativity enabled and informed by science. Our lectures, workshops, and outreach programs inspire and educate both members and the

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[3] Coworking Industry Report Q4 2024

general public. Our workshop provides members with both the space for large projects and the tools to complete them. We are a non-profit educational organization supported by member dues and staffed by volunteers."

Best Practice: A 24/7 professional Clubhouse for Chester County's (PA) thought leaders, align.Space is a unique shared space for members to work, meet, collaborate, network and socialize. Located in the historic F&M building in the heart of vibrant downtown West Chester, a community of about 18,000 people, members enjoy three floors of workspace and meeting rooms, as well as a roster of amenities. Marketed as a business club, it also provides members with a podcast studio/green room and strategic coaching.

Tactic: Advocate for Continued Downtown Redevelopment & Infill
Advocate, Mid-Term

– **Partners:** ADA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Government, Michelin

The ADA should continue its partnership with the Main Street Program and the Chamber of Commerce to advocate for the continued redevelopment of downtown by emphasizing its importance as a hub for entrepreneurship, small business growth and community engagement. Together, the organizations should highlight recent successes, promote available incentives and support policies that encourage investment in building improvements, infrastructure upgrades and infill development projects – specifically as it relates to small business development and housing. The groups should advocate for a permit-ready building design program to increase housing that expand housing choices including duplexes, townhomes and single family homes.

As part of the revitalization effort, the community should implement a comprehensive regional wayfinding initiative designed to enhance connectivity and promote the area's unique identity. This initiative should focus on the design and installation of a cohesive signage system that guides visitors from Ardmore to key destinations throughout the Arbuckle Mountains. Distinctive gateway features should be created at primary entry points to highlight Ardmore's role as the welcoming gateway to the broader region. Additionally, placemaking elements and interpretive signage should be incorporated to reinforce the destination's brand and share the rich, interconnected story of Ardmore and its ties to regional attractions. This effort offers an ideal opportunity to engage local artists, tradespeople, and historians, adding authenticity and a distinctive local flair to the overall design.

Best Practice: Fayetteville Permit Ready Building Design Program - The City of Fayetteville is developing a program for permit-ready architectural designs for residential construction in the Downtown and Walker Park neighborhoods. One of the program goals is to help residents save time and money in the permitting process. Another goal is to provide new housing for the growing community that is designed to be sensitive to existing neighborhoods and provides an opportunity to preserve existing homes. By using designs that are pre-reviewed by the City's Development Services Department, applicants can lower their overall costs and time to build a home since the permit-ready plans are provided by the city. There will be around 30 designs to

choose from, including a variety of single-family homes, townhomes, duplexes and "backyard cottages." The building types selected have been based on a market study, existing zoning requirements and feasibility of rolling out the project.

Best Practice: Use Micro-Grants for Beautification Countywide - For more than seven years the Hamilton County Development Authority (HCDA) has utilized its Commercial Beautification Micro-Grant Program aimed to improve the visual appearance of small businesses in Hamilton County. The micro-grant program provides matching funds to renovate and improve the visual impact of the properties in the county. This grant is available to all retail, commercial and industrial property owners. The board of the HCDA authorized a budget of $25,000 for the initial pilot program with eligible businesses able to receive up to $1,000 in matching funds – the effort has since been renewed. The funds can be used for beautification purposes for such things as exterior painting, new awnings, sign improvements, planting shrubs, flowers, trees, etc. The goal of the grants is to help stimulate redevelopment and increase property values while providing safe and attractive environments.

Tactic: Host Entrepreneur-Driven Events
Facilitate, Mid-Term

– **Partners:** ADA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Government, Michelin

A regular calendar of open events is an important component to facilitate the growth of entrepreneurship activities**.** Consider inviting organizations to facilitate the ideas below or look for volunteers/residents to take on a leadership role.

- Pecha Kucha: A Pecha Kucha night invites participants to share 20 images each for 20 seconds. This is great for allowing participants to know each other or for startup founders to prep their elevator pitch.
- Lunch-and-learn: For individuals who don't have a lot of time outside traditional working hours, take advantage of the lunch break to host an expert speaker, a book club, brainstorming session or member-led presentation about a topic.
- CreativeMornings: With a focus on the creative economy as a possible niche industry target, invite designers, copywriters or content creators to host a CreativeMorning. Over free breakfast, an expert in a creative field gives a short talk about what inspires them.

Best Practice: Support Low-Income Residents & Local Restaurants - Hope & Main, a Rhode Island Culinary Incubator, hosts Main Street Meals which provides meals prepared by local food businesses to food insecure neighbors. Each week the organization distributes hundreds of meals at the point of need. No ID or registration is required. This program supports lives and livelihoods and is an innovative way to provide emergency food assistance while supporting the local economy. The organization also hosts a BOGO event where residents can purchase a single-serving meal, and another is automatically donated to a neighbor that is unable to pay for their own at this time. The program would offer exponential opportunity during Ardmore's major tourism events.

INTENSIFY TOURISM INITIATIVES

According to the latest Outdoor Participation Trends Report, the nation's outdoor recreation participant base grew by 4.1% in 2023, reaching a record 175.8 million participants. This growth spanned demographics and activities, with new and more casual participants engaging in hiking, biking, camping, running and fishing. Young and first-time outdoor enthusiasts are driving increased diversity in the sector, with notable rises in participation among women, people of color and seniors.[4]

In Oklahoma, outdoor recreation generates $5.5 billion in economic impact, supporting nearly 48,000 jobs, representing 2.7% of the state's workforce. Leading outdoor industries include RVing, boating and fishing, equestrian activities, motorcycling and ATV riding, as well as hunting, shooting and trapping.[5]

The Ardmore region boasts a diverse array of outdoor recreation amenities, positioning it to take advantage of these state and national trends. Ardmore Regional Park features walking trails, sports facilities and family-friendly green spaces. Lake Murray State Park, Oklahoma's largest state park, offers an extensive trail system and a 5,728-acre lake for boating, fishing and camping. Just a short drive away, the Chickasaw National Recreation Area in Sulphur provides scenic hiking trails, mineral springs and swimming areas. Turner Falls Park in the Arbuckle Mountains showcases Oklahoma's tallest waterfall and rock formations, while the Arbuckle Mountains offer some of the oldest geological formations between the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains.

With its wealth of natural assets and recreational opportunities, Ardmore is well-positioned to capitalize on this growing sector and tourism overall. By enhancing visitor experiences, supporting local businesses and expanding tourism initiatives, the city can solidify itself as a premier outdoor destination.

Key tactics include:

01 Hire a Dedicated Tourism Director
02 Establish a Data-Driven Foundation for Industry Insights
03 Enhance Digital Tourism Infrastructure
04 Launch a Strategic Outdoor Tourism Promotion Initiative
05 Reignite the Arbuckle to Ardmore Marathon
06 Explore Youth Sports Events at the Convention Center

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[4] Outdoor Participation Trends Report
[5] Outdoor Recreation Roundtable

Tactic: Hire a Dedicated Tourism Director

Implement, Short-Term

– **Partners:** ATA, Chamber, Oklahoma Department of Tourism & Recreation

Establish a dedicated tourism director position to lead strategic initiatives, promote Ardmore as a premier destination and drive visitor engagement. This role will focus on expanding outdoor recreation tourism, coordinating marketing efforts, fostering partnerships and enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Tactic: Establish a Data-Driven Foundation for Industry Insights

Implement, Mid-Term

– **Partners:** ATA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Hotels, Restaurants, and Retailers, Parks and Recreation Department, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Oklahoma Department of Tourism & Recreation, Oklahoma Travel Industry Association, Oklahoma Restaurant Association, U.S. Travel Association

The ATA, in collaboration with key partners, should conduct a comprehensive resource analysis to establish a clear baseline understanding of Ardmore's tourism assets, events, facilities and the industry's economic impact. This analysis will provide valuable insights to guide strategic planning and investment in tourism development. As part of this effort, the ATA should engage local businesses, hospitality providers and regional tourism stakeholders through surveys and facilitated sessions. These engagements will help identify gaps, opportunities and trends in visitor behavior while gathering input on existing and potential promotional strategies. The data collected should inform future marketing efforts, infrastructure investments and policy decisions to strengthen Ardmore's tourism sector.

Additionally, the resource analysis should include historical data spanning the past five years to track industry trends and performance metrics. Focus on indicators such as:

- **Revenue Generation by Tax Category:** Understanding tourism's contribution to local tax revenues, including lodging, sales and hospitality taxes.
- **Spending Patterns:** Analyzing visitor spending habits across accommodations, dining, entertainment, retail and outdoor recreation.
- **Number of Establishments:** Assessing the growth and sustainability of businesses serving the tourism industry.
- **Employment Trends:** Measuring the tourism sector's role in local job creation and workforce development.
- **Occupancy Rates (By Month and Day of the Week):** Identifying peak and off-peak travel periods to inform marketing and event planning strategies.
- **Convention Center Usage, Income and Trends:** Evaluating the performance of the convention center, including booking trends, revenue generation and opportunities for increased utilization.

From there, create visitor profile segments - families, groups, businesses and leisure travelers. In addition, given the industries in the area, consider bleisure travel which describes business travelers extending their trips to include personal time and activities, effectively merging work and vacation. Industry experts suggest visitor information every tourism business should know or collect includes:

- Who is visiting?
- Why are they visiting?
- Where are they from?
- What did they do?

- How much did they spend?
- Where did they stay?
- How long did they stay?
- How often do they come?

By systematically gathering and analyzing this data, Ardmore can develop a data-driven approach to tourism growth, ensuring targeted investments that maximize economic impact and enhance visitor experiences.

Tactic: Enhance Digital Tourism Infrastructure

Implement, Mid-Term (for website), Long-Term (community infrastructure)

– **Partners:** ATA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Hotels, Restaurants, and Retailers, Parks and Recreation Department, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Oklahoma Department of Tourism & Recreation, Oklahoma State Parks & Wildlife Department, Chickasaw Nation Tourism, Outdoor Recreation Industry Associations

To enhance digital infrastructure, the community should develop a comprehensive destination website with trip planning tools that serve the entire region. A mobile app should be created to enrich the visitor experience across key destinations. Free public Wi-Fi should be implemented in high-traffic tourism areas to improve connectivity. Digital kiosks offering visitor information can be strategically placed throughout the region, while digital itinerary builders can help travelers plan experiences that span both Ardmore and the Arbuckle Mountains – highlight assets such as bed and breakfasts, outdoor outfitters and unique dining experiences. Virtual tours of attractions should be developed to engage visitors before they arrive. Additionally, QR codes at locations throughout Ardmore can link to information about attractions in the Arbuckle Mountains, creating a seamless and connected visitor experience.

- Redesign the destination website providing comprehensive information about both Ardmore and Arbuckle Mountains attractions
- Implement a content marketing strategy with authentic stories
- Develop a social media strategy focusing on visual platforms
- Create video content showcasing experiences throughout the region
- Implement SEO and digital advertising campaigns
- Create virtual tours of attractions throughout the region
- Develop blog content featuring itineraries and experiences spanning both areas

Tactic: Launch a Strategic Outdoor Tourism Promotion Initiative

Implement, Mid-Term

–   **Partners:** ATA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Hotels, Restaurants, and Retailers, Parks and Recreation Department, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Oklahoma Department of Tourism & Recreation, Oklahoma State Parks & Wildlife Department, Chickasaw Nation Tourism, Outdoor Recreation Industry Associations

Given state and national trends, Ardmore should develop a targeted tourism promotion strategy that highlights its premier outdoor assets, particularly its lakes and shooting sports. By positioning Ardmore as the "Gateway to Adventure," the community can leverage its strategic location while showcasing Lake Murray State Park and the Arbuckle Mountains as complementary outdoor recreation destinations. This effort should emphasize the diversity of experiences available within a short distance and intentionally connect downtown cultural amenities with nearby outdoor adventures.

The strategy should spotlight Lake Murray, Lake Texhoma regionally as well as Ardmore City Lake as destinations for boating, fishing and water recreation while also promoting the area's hunting grounds, shooting ranges and sporting clay facilities to attract outdoor sports enthusiasts. Marketing efforts should incorporate digital campaigns, regional partnerships and event-driven promotions to attract visitors. Curated experiences, such as guided fishing excursions, shooting competitions and outdoor adventure packages, will enhance visitor engagement and drive economic impact.

By launching a focused tourism initiative around a specific segment, the community and staff can better leverage state and regional resources while creating a scalable, measurable and replicable framework for future tourism development.

*   Develop an "Arbuckle Adventure Trail" connecting Ardmore to Turner Falls, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, and Arbuckle Wilderness
*   Create a "Waterfalls and Swimming Holes" route linking Lake Murray swimming areas with Turner Falls and Chickasaw National Recreation Area
*   Establish an "Ardmore Heritage Trail" linking historical sites
*   Create an "Ardmore Flavors" culinary trail connecting local restaurants with unique dining experiences like Arbuckle Mountain Fried Pies
*   Develop a "Geological Wonders" route highlighting the ancient Arbuckle Mountains alongside other geological features
*   Create a "Family Adventure Circuit" connecting family-friendly attractions across both areas

Tactic: Reignite the Arbuckle to Ardmore Marathon

Implement, Mid-Term

− **Partners:** ATA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Local Hotels, Restaurants, and Retailers, Parks and Recreation Department, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Oklahoma Department of Tourism & Recreation, USA Track & Field (USATF), Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS)

Reignite the Arbuckle to Ardmore Marathon as a premier running event that attracts visitors, showcases Ardmore's outdoor amenities and downtown revitalization. The event should feature a one-mile fun run, 5K, 10K, half marathon and full marathon to engage participants of all skill levels – and runners from near and far. Leveraging existing tourism assets such as the convention center for pre- and post-race activities, the marathon can drive overnight stays and local business engagement. Beyond promoting health and outdoor recreation, the event can serve as a high-impact fundraiser to support K-12 education programs (reading buddy program), strengthening community involvement. To elevate its appeal, the race should be structured to meet certification standards (USATF, World Athletics/AIMS, or equivalent) to become a Boston Marathon qualifier, positioning Ardmore on the national and international running circuit. By integrating scenic routes through the Arbuckle Mountains and downtown Ardmore, this event can establish itself as a signature tourism and economic development driver for the region.

Tactic: Explore Youth Sports Events at the Convention Center

Implement, Mid-Term

− **Partners:** ATA, Chamber, Ardmore Main Street Authority, Hotels, Restaurants, Retailers, Parks and Recreation Department, Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), Youth Sports Organizations, Murray State, Sports Commission Groups, Event Organizers

Capitalize on the rapid growth of the youth sports industry by evaluating the feasibility of hosting tournaments, camps and competitions at the Ardmore Convention Center. Conduct a market analysis to identify high-demand sports and facility requirements, leveraging national and regional youth sports participation trends. Partner with sports organizations, schools and event promoters to attract multi-day events that drive tourism, increase hotel stays and boost local business revenue. Example youth events to explore include cheer competitions, dance competitions, club volleyball, gymnastics and even esports. In addition, adult competitions such as DEKA events or HYROX could also be considered. Establishing Ardmore as a sports destination can create benefits while maximizing the convention center's utilization.

Best Practice: Roanoke Regional Partnership in Virginia includes the outdoor industry highlighting the area's natural resources including trails, events such as marathons and cycling events, parks and conservation lands. The efforts have been successful with the region home to two outdoor gear distribution centers, nearly 10 small manufacturers and a host of small businesses ranging from skills training to outfitters to retail.

ENHANCE STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

The Ardmore team faces challenges in expanding its marketing and communications efforts, not due to a lack of planning, but because of execution constraints. With a small staff managing multiple roles, launching new initiatives can be demanding. Economic development organizations are under increasing pressure to adopt more strategic, impactful approaches to their communications and marketing efforts. Successful organizations recognize that marketing and communications are vital to their overall success, requiring a balance between meeting the needs of internal stakeholders and engaging with external audiences.

To maximize their reach and influence, organizations must periodically step back to evaluate and refine their marketing strategies. This ensures their brand remains relevant, credible and effective. Such reflection is especially critical when supporting business development efforts aimed at key decision-makers in targeted industries and influencers involved in site selection, tourism development or small business start-ups.

To usher in a new era of marketing and communications for Ardmore, a more proactive approach is essential. The tactics aim to enhance operational efficiency, improve stakeholder engagement and modernize communication. By embracing digital tools, staff can enhance outreach efforts and maintain a competitive edge in an increasingly digital landscape.

Key tactics include:

01 Customize materials for stakeholder segments.
02 Increase earned media and public relations.
03 Expand social media to highlight strengths and opportunities.
04 Enhance website and expand online messaging.

These tactics are designed to provide a practical and effective framework that staff can manage in-house while continuing to utilize external vendors for design, media placement and specialized services. By adopting this strategic approach, staff can build a stronger, more engaging presence that effectively communicates the missions and drive economic growth.

AUDIENCE OVERVIEW

To be successful in its efforts, Ardmore's marketing and communications efforts must consider the customers' point of view. Below are the three main audience segments for outreach.

Out-of-Market Audiences //

Create relationships that keep Ardmore, Carter County and the region front of mind and generate opportunities for lead development as project opportunities arise.

- Site Location Consultants
- Business Decision-Makers
- Corporate, Commercial & Industrial Real Estate Professionals

Grasstop Advocates //

Mobilize those who have influence for Ardmore's messages and purpose.

- Existing Industry
- Utility & Rail Partners
- Education Officials (K-12 & State Colleges)
- Tribal Leaders
- Southern Oklahoma Development Association
- Rural Enterprises of Oklahoma (REI)
- Oklahoma Business Roundtable
- State Chamber of Oklahoma
- Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department
- Local Economic Development Organizations in Surrounding Counties

Internal Audiences & Influencers //

Internal audiences and influencers have a moderate level of interest but have a high level of influence on perceptions if not engaged at the right time and with the right information. Influencers are partners rather than mere recipients of information and need to be given the opportunity to provide some level of input.

- Elected Officials (State & Local)
- City, Airport and County Officials
- Oklahoma Department of Commerce
- Oklahoma Works

Tactic: Customize Materials for Stakeholder Segments

Implement, Mid-Term

− **Partners:** ADA, Chamber, ATA

The key to a successful communications strategy lies in creating multiple versions of core economic development materials tailored to the specific needs, interests and concerns of distinct stakeholder segments. These segments include internal audiences such as local businesses, investors, community organizations and government entities, as well as external audiences like business decision-makers, site consultants and brokers. By adopting a customized approach, ADA and its partner entities can deliver targeted information that resonates with each group, fostering stronger relationships, enhancing engagement and building greater support for economic initiatives.

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	EXTERNAL AUDIENCES
For economic development organizations, internal stakeholders play a crucial role in driving initiatives and ensuring alignment with strategic goals. Core marketing materials and outreach include:	*Economic development organizations can utilize various core marketing materials to effectively communicate with external audiences. Core marketing materials and outreach include:*
Targeted Email Updates: Regular email communications that highlight important announcements, upcoming events and relevant industry news to keep stakeholders engaged. **Staff Reports:** Detailed documents that provide insights into specific projects, initiatives or performance metrics, helping teams understand progress and impact. **Communications Guides:** Comprehensive guides that outline processes, best practices, talking points and resources for team to effectively execute strategies. **Strategy Documents:** Internal strategic plans that outline the organization's goals, initiatives and metrics for success, serving as a roadmap for the team. *(See Best Practices)* **Meeting Materials:** Agendas, presentations and summary documents for internal meetings, ensuring all team members are aligned and informed on key discussions.	**Brochures:** Marketing materials that highlight economic opportunities, resources and incentives for businesses and investors. **Fact Sheets:** Concise, data-driven documents that provide quick overviews of key economic indicators, demographic information and competitive industry advantages. **Infographics:** Visual representations of data and information that simplify complex economic trends, making it easier for audiences to understand key points at-a-glance. **Targeted Newsletters:** Strategic updates that share news, success stories and upcoming events related to economic development efforts, targeting specific external audience interests. **Case Studies:** Narratives showcasing successful projects, businesses or initiatives within the community (or region), highlighting benefits and lessons learned.

Performance Dashboards: Visual displays of key performance indicators (KPIs) that track progress towards organizational goals, making it easier for staff to monitor outcomes. *(Figure 9)*

Team Briefings: Regular briefings to discuss organizational updates, celebrate successes and address any concerns or questions from staff and/or partners.

Success Stories: Internal case studies highlighting successful projects or initiatives, reinforcing best practices and encouraging knowledge sharing among staff.

Workshops and Training Sessions: Interactive sessions focused on skill development, project management or industry trends, aimed at empowering staff and team to contribute effectively. *(See Best Practices)*

Annual Reports: Comprehensive reports that summarize activities, communities' advancements for quality of place, educational programs and impact on the community/region.

Press Releases: Official statements announcing new initiatives, incentives, partnerships or milestones.

Presentation Decks: Professional slide decks for use in meetings, conferences or pitches, designed to convey the competitive advantages of the state, region, community and utilities. Utilize the data and graphics contained in this report.

Videos: Engaging visual content that tells the story of the community, its economic opportunities and testimonials from industries.
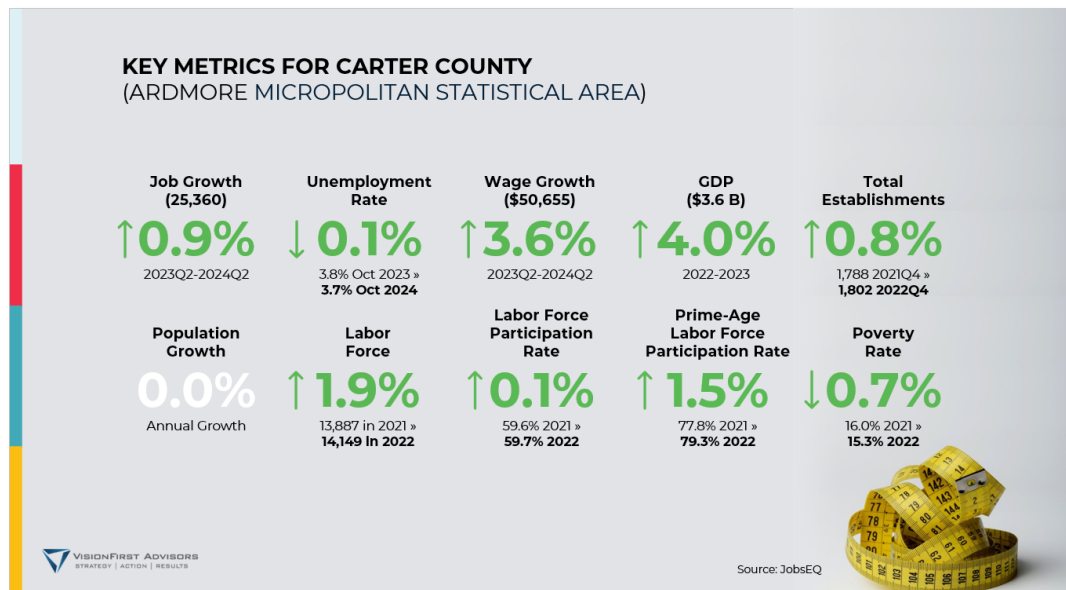
Website Content: A well-organized, user-friendly website that provides resources, guides and information about the state, regional and local economy, available properties, talent and support services.

Social Media Campaigns: Targeted social media posts and campaigns that promote key initiatives, competitive advantages and highlight success stories in real-time.

Annual Reports: Comprehensive reports that summarize activities, communities' advancements for quality of place, educational programs and impact on the community/region.

Press Releases: Official statements announcing new initiatives, incentives, partnerships or milestones.

Figure 9: Performance Dashboard Example

KEY METRICS FOR CARTER COUNTY
(ARDMORE MICROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA)

Job Growth (25,360)	Unemployment Rate	Wage Growth ($50,655)	GDP ($3.6 B)	Total Establishments
↑0.9%	↓0.1%	↑3.6%	↑4.0%	↑0.8%
2023Q2-2024Q2	3.8% Oct 2023 » **3.7% Oct 2024**	2023Q2-2024Q2	2022-2023	1,788 2021Q4 » **1,802 2022Q4**

Population Growth	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate	Poverty Rate
0.0%	↑1.9%	↑0.1%	↑1.5%	↓0.7%
Annual Growth	13,887 in 2021 » **14,149 in 2022**	59.6% 2021 » **59.7% 2022**	77.8% 2021 » **79.3% 2022**	16.0% 2021 » **15.3% 2022**

VisionFirst Advisors
STRATEGY | ACTION | RESULTS

Source: JobsEQ

Best Practice: Building Broad Understanding of Economic Development - The Jackson County Florida EDC (JCEDC) organized their strategic plan into a two-page PDF to guide residents, committee and board members, investors and elected officials through the key components of the organization's vision, mission, purpose, strategies and metrics for the next five years. The PDF is available for download and made available at all board and public gatherings.

The EDC also created **BASICS (Building Aware Stakeholders and Interested Citizens for Success).** The course spans two to three hours and focuses on five key components: an overview of economic development at all levels, the benefits of local economic development, the importance of competitiveness, supporting business and how residents can help. Cohorts are offered quarterly and rotate between lunchtime and early evening meetings to allow for maximum participation.
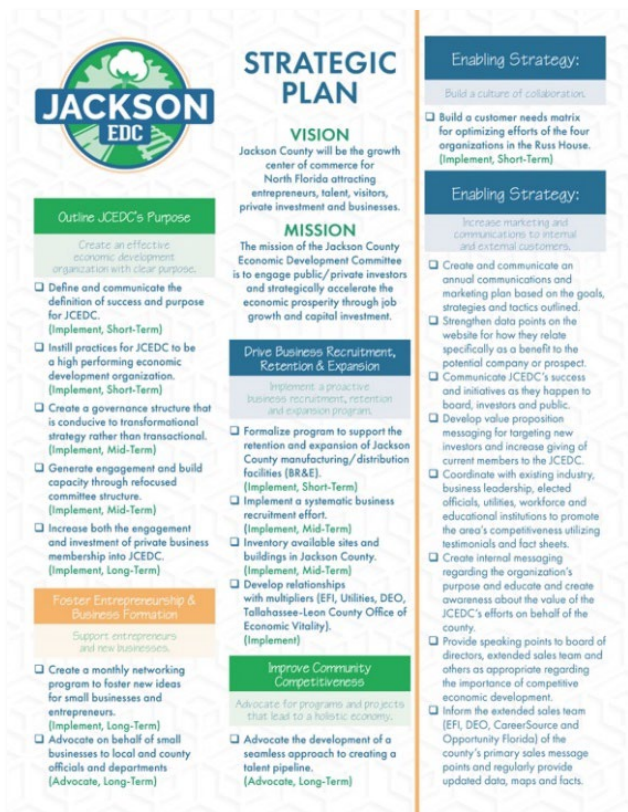
Tactic: Increase Earned Media & Public Relations

Implement, Mid-Term

– **Partners:** ADA, Chamber, ATA**,** Main Street Program, School Districts, Murray State, Southern Tech, Main Street, County and City Departments, Top Employers

There is no longer a traditional news cycle. Audiences tend to get their news from social media, meaning press releases and story ideas must resonate on social platforms the same way they resonate to a reporter. The ADA, the ATA and the Chamber should each think beyond the traditional practice of only issuing press releases or newsletters for program and initiative announcements and instead use data and metrics that better resonate with target audiences.

Including positive statistics and data in press releases along with infographics, makes news more shareable, more personal and more likely to garner engagement. In addition, more than ever quotes and headlines must be shareable and engaging. Parse out the more sharable information at different times of the day to different audiences to see what resonates and when.

- Outline an **earned media campaign** with the objective of successfully pitching or placing two to four stories/commentary articles per year.

- Develop **press releases with images**, videos or infographics to make the content more shareable. Use a mix of media to give context to the news from the perspective of the intended audience.

- Share and **enhance news from partners such as the school districts, Murray State, Southern Tech, Main Street** and major employers including the hospitals to underscore the progress of the community and reach more economic development specific audiences.

- Leverage success stories by **developing profiles of thriving local businesses and initiatives** to local and regional media outlets.

- Develop **feature stories that highlight successful local businesses,** community initiatives, or partnerships driven by the ADA, Chamber or the ATA, reinforcing each organization's role in fostering community growth.

Tactic: Expand Social Media

Implement, Short-Term

– **Partners:** ADA, Chamber, ATA**,** Main Street Program, School Districts, Murray State, Southern Tech, Main Street, County and City Departments, Top Employers

Social media has increasingly become a 'pay-to-play' medium. Every channel is dictated by their own rules, algorithms and metrics – all of which are constantly changing. Social media has the dual benefit of being lower cost than most traditional earned or paid media and being highly targeted, allowing the organization to maximize its budget as well as its well-designed brand. It does not replace the website or events but rather complements and promotes them.

To create a more cohesive, efficient and impactful social media presence that effectively engages stakeholders, amplifies Ardmore's initiatives and promotes the economic growth, there is a need to review and consolidate platforms. Each organization – the ADA, Chamber and ATA – should determine which platforms are the most effective for target audiences. If a platform cannot be maintained or has limited engagement – delete the account.

- **Conduct a full audit of all social media accounts** to assess performance, audience engagement and relevance.
- **Adjust content formats** (e.g., articles, videos, infographics) to fit the strengths of each platform while maintaining consistent messaging. Specifically,
  - **LinkedIn:** *Audiences:* Business professionals, entrepreneurs, local business owners and decision-makers. Investors and stakeholders in the community. Government officials and policymakers. *Content Focus:* Economic data, insights and trends. Success stories and case studies.
  - **Instagram:** *Audiences:* Younger demographics, including millennials and Gen Z. Creative professionals and entrepreneurs. Users who are interested in local businesses and events. *Content Focus:* Visual storytelling through images and videos. Highlights of community events and initiatives. Behind-the-scenes looks at local businesses and engaging personal spotlights.
  - **Facebook:** *Audiences:* A broad range of community members, including families and older demographics. Residents interested in community news and growth. Nonprofit organizations and community groups. Small business owners and local entrepreneurs. *Content Focus:* Community engagement and event promotion. Sharing news, updates and important announcements. Promoting collaboration with other local organizations and businesses to drive post reach.
- Use **social media analytics** to track engagement, impressions, click-through rates and follower growth.
- **Regularly review performance metrics** to identify which content types and strategies are most effective, adjusting future posts accordingly.
- **Cross-promote** with members and partner with local businesses, government agencies and community leaders to cross-promote content and broaden reach.

Tactic: Update Website & Enhance Online Messaging

Implement, Short-Term

– **Partners:** ADA, Chamber, ATA**,** Main Street Program, City & County Leaders, Education Partners, Top Employers, State Economic Development & Workforce Partners

Potential economic development projects often begin by considering states, defined geographic regions or key project drivers such as utility capacity. Rarely does a prospect, company or site selector have a specific county in mind.

Companies and site selectors research jurisdictions from afar, not engaging in economic development entities or community leadership in the discovery process. Site selectors pull data from reliable and known sources such as the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census Bureau, state departments of revenue and commerce, state statutes and regulations.

One of the best attraction tools available to local entities wishing to bolster the information being collected is a business-focused website. The current website has a clean design and navigation. However, the website should be expanded and updated to better position the community and its regional advantages.

Think of the website as a 24/7 sales and marketing team, selling the community long before a competitive project reaches the RFI process. Economic development websites most valued by site selectors and business decision-makers have a few things in common.

1. They understand their audiences and speak to them in their own language.
2. They are heavy on facts in bulleted format and light on filler.
3. They provide relevant, nuanced data in formats that users can download and manipulate themselves.
4. They are fast, easy to find and easy to use.
5. They have the right content, organized in a way that makes sense.
6. They are current, visually attractive and regularly updated utilizing photos and infographics to reinforce key pieces of information.
7. The organization's contacts are clear and accessible.

Using the seven elements referenced above, **the ADA, Chamber and ATA can finetune the website to better showcase competitive advantages to businesses, residents and visitors.** Consider the following recommendations.

- **Navigation:** To immediately position the community's website for success, reconsider the navigation with two menus. The main menu should include Target Industries, Workforce & Education, Sites & Buildings and Resources & Partnerships. The secondary menu should include: About, Michelin Transition Task Force and Newsroom.

- **Content Differentiation:** Ardmore has relied on its strategic position between Dallas and Oklahoma City as the basis of its recruitment efforts. However, the community is home to several large employers including Dot Foods, Dollar General, Dow Chemical and Valero –

each demonstrating the community's bottom line value in infrastructure, talent and overall cost. The community is home to two higher education institutions in Murray State and Southern Tech which awards nearly 800 degrees and certificates annually, but the region expands that talent pipeline with Southeastern Oklahoma State University and North Central Texas College, combined the four institutions are awarding more than 4,000 certificates along with four year and post graduate degrees. Leveraging existing industry relationships, the talent pipeline combined with industry specific assets such as the Noble Research Institute and the Airpark go well beyond the typical economic development messages.

- **Maps & Geographic Position:** Ardmore is known for its location, which is noted throughout the website. However, the homepage should showcase maps that feature the community's location not only between Dallas and Oklahoma City but also the nation. Consider how FDI companies and those not familiar with the area would be able to understand the location. Also, demonstrate logistical advantages beyond interstate access

- **Competitive Advantages:** Emphasize competitive advantages for target industries and the niche sectors identified. When utilizing data, the narrative around it must answer the question, "How does this fact help a business' bottom line?" Emphasizing specific advantages ultimately increases a community's online presence to provide a clearer direction for potential prospects to learn more about the region and its many assets.

- **Regional & Drive Time Data:** Using some of the data in this report, include strong numbers/percentages using simple infographics and short narratives. The only time decision-makers consider county lines is from a tax perspective. Labor, utilities, transportation and risk are all factored using a larger geographic footprint. Use the data demonstrating the community's laborshed rather than limiting it to Ardmore or Carter County alone. From a business perspective, it is critical to balance the data of the community with the larger regional advantages that will appeal to a business.

- **Incentives:** Today, many companies considering a new location will eliminate numerous communities based on desktop research that evaluates site availability, workforce availability, state and local business tax environment and especially the availability of local incentives. A review of the website shows some incentive and property information. While every consultant has their own criteria which change depending upon the needs of the client, the current website is missing the functionality to see and complete applications online and view a listing or link to access tax rates and structure. To be competitive in recruiting high paying jobs in targeted industries, this information should be readily accessible and clearly indicate both the incentives available and the approval and compliance process. The incentive page also provides an opportunity to demonstrate the long-term partnership of the county. Underscore the willingness of staff to walk a client through the process and provide white glove service through the local and state permitting
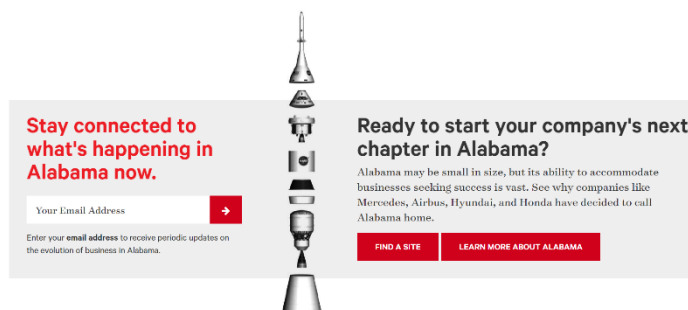
process and navigating programmatic solutions. Call out the benefit with case studies or testimonials.

- **Workforce & Education:** While communities have become better at featuring workforce on their websites, they often list basic demographic information and a listing of educational institutions. In a hypercompetitive market, organizations must highlight what business decision-makers cannot find through online databases. As noted earlier, both Murray State and Southern Tech offer significant business advantages thanks to educational leadership and the desire to be true economic development partners. Incorporate program data, timelines and quotes from presidents or board members of the colleges to demonstrate a willingness to work with business. Include various degrees and certificate programs within target industries and feature that data outside of the workforce section and on the target industry page as well. In addition, highlight the unique initiatives and accomplishments of the local schools that differentiate the community while combatting perceptions surrounding performance.

- **Target Industries:** The website does not list the target industries which is often one of the first places a site selector may look to see if the community is a viable long-term partner. Building target industry pages based on the data provided combined with local and regional assets demonstrates synergies between those industries and what the community and region offer. Incorporate a short narrative about each industry, followed by three to five bullet points with facts that answer the question "why?" [Consider the FloridaWest Economic Development Alliance and](#) the [Greater Wichita Partnership](#) as best practices. The section should:

  o Anticipate industry-specific priority factors for each targeted industry and present those data markers. Ensure the data is specific and updated.
  o Anticipate potential "pain points" of each, and how Ardmore intends to mitigate/rectify.
  o Demonstrate existing industry strengths, assets or quotes from relevant partners. According to Contentsquare's Digital Experience Benchmark report, the average time spent on a page across all industries is 47 seconds per page view, with desktop garnering 69 seconds and mobile securing 34 seconds per page. With such a short window to provide a visitor with the information needed, sites need to be useful and easy to navigate.

- **Utilize Case Studies & Testimonials:** Seeing success from a company perspective will always help differentiate a community. Success stories need to be told throughout the website. Testimonials should help a company understand the community behind the numbers. Include testimonials from business owners of all sizes on why they choose to live and work not just in the community but also the county and region. Use sidebars or callout boxes with infographics and stats on pages to convey more visual interest. Go outside of industry testimonials and highlight education and workforce partners, local leaders discussing permitting and mitigating risks and utility/infrastructure partners (rail, port and airport).

- **Newsroom:** Go beyond press releases and create a newsroom that features case studies, fact sheets, presentations and more. Consider including the following within a newsroom:
  - Press releases
  - Hot topics: include fact sheets on projects, recent rankings, releases from partners
  - Reports such as the Housing Study
  - Success stories or case studies
  - Multi-media: videos, photos, interviews
  - Contact information

  TEKGROUP notes that a search function is one of the Top 20 features expected in an online newsroom, "Consistently overlooked yet always atop our list of the top features to have in an online newsroom. Not everybody coming to your online newsroom is interested in breaking news. Some are doing research; some are looking for recent stories. All need to quickly find what they are looking for with search. Include the ability to search by date, subject, language and content type.

- **Contact Information & Call to Action:** Every page on a site should have a contact name, photo and a direct phone number and email. Also, include a call-to-action to generate contact. See Alabama's Department of Commerce and the Greater Wichita Partnership as best practices.

Stay connected to what's happening in Alabama now.

Your Email Address →

Enter your **email address** to receive periodic updates on the evolution of business in Alabama.

Ready to start your company's next chapter in Alabama?

Alabama may be small in size, but its ability to accommodate businesses seeking success is vast. See why companies like Mercedes, Airbus, Hyundai, and Honda have decided to call Alabama home.

FIND A SITE   LEARN MORE ABOUT ALABAMA

- **Accuracy:** Ensure all links and materials are up-to-date, removing outdated data or rankings. All information should not be older than three years.

Need help with your next business expansion or relocation?

We invite you to connect with the Greater Wichita Partnership for all of the information and resources available to companies choosing to locate or expand in Greater Wichita region.

Andrew Nave
Executive Vice President of Economic Development
andrew@greaterwichitapartnership.org
(316) 500.6650

Greater Wichita Partnership

ADVOCATE FOR K-12 EDUCATION IMPROVEMENTS

A strong education system is a cornerstone of economic development, workforce readiness and community vitality. But even beyond traditional economic development, K-12 education serves as a tipping point as to where a new resident chooses to live, impacts property values and can even influence where a small business may select to open. As leaders and residents alike are looking to see the community's population grow, the quality of K-12 education plays a crucial role in shaping the area's long-term success. While not a core function of the ADA or the Chamber, both are in a unique opportunity to advocate for and support improvements in the nine K-12 school districts, ensuring that students are prepared for careers while meeting the evolving needs of industries.

Advocacy is about building partnerships, having the difficult conversations and the courage to make the right decisions for the community's students of today and tomorrow. Together, the ADA, Chamber, along with school leaders, policymakers and business stakeholders can drive meaningful enhancements in education. Ket tactics include:

01 Integrate Education as a Board Agenda Item
02 Host Education Roundtables or Forums
03 Champion the Creation of an Early Literacy Volunteer Program
04 Encourage Exploration of the Success for All Early Education Programming
05 Promote the Expansion of Industry Based Camps

CARTER COUNTY
9 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Achievement indicator **uses annual state test scores in English language arts (ELA), math, and science** to show where groups of students are relative to grade-level expectations outlined in our Oklahoma Academic Standards (OAS). **The US average graduation rate for 21-22 was 87%.**

District Name	Grades	Graduation Rate	Composite Achievement	City	Students	Teachers	Schools	Locale	Student Teacher Ratio
ARDMORE	All Schools - D	64.5%	23.1%	Ardmore	2,617	117.63	6	Town, Remote	22.25
DICKSON	All Schools - C	71.9%	42.7%	Ardmore	1,270	63	4	Rural, Distant	20.16
FOX	Elementary - B, High School - D	50.1%	67.7%	Fox	162	13	2	Rural, Remote	12.46
HEALDTON	All Schools - D	60.7%	28.7%	Healdton	498	31.83	3	Rural, Remote	15.65
LONE GROVE	Elementary & Middle Schools - C, High School - B	90.9%	64.2%	Lone Grove	1,444	97.58	4	Rural, Distant	14.8
PLAINVIEW	Elementary & High School - B, Middle School - C	80.8%	77.9%	Ardmore	1,585	105.05	4	Rural, Fringe	15.09
SPRINGER	Elementary - C, High School - F	55.6%	17.5%	Springer	222	17.14	2	Rural, Distant	12.95
WILSON	Elementary - C, High School - B	77.7%	29.7%	Wilson	482	32.22	2	Rural, Remote	14.96
ZANEIS	K-8 - C	N/A	71.6%	Wilson	287	16.84	1	Rural, Remote	17.04
					8,567	494	28		

Data from the 23-24 Oklahoma Schools Report Card Website

Perception versus Reality

Often, perception is reality. In looking at the performance and achievement of the county's school districts according to the state's education report card, Carter County's school grades depict underperformance, low composite achievement and graduation rates well below the national average of 87.4%. While there are likely achievements to be celebrated within each district, utilizing the state's report card would cast doubt in the eyes of many combined with the fact that a county with a population of roughly 25,000 people has nine school districts for a total of 8,500 students. Finding and touting success stories in addition to the tactics recommended should be pursued by all partners.

Tactic: Integrate Education as a Board Agenda Item

Implement, Short-Term

– **Partners:** City & County Leaders, Education Partners, Top Employers, Workforce Partners

In its day-to-day operations and interactions with its board, the Chamber should view education and workforce development as integral components of economic development. Currently, the Chamber has an education committee chair. This position should be expanded to guide the board to develop three annual priorities for focused advocacy and facilitation. The efforts should go beyond reporting of data but instead focus on collaborative solutions. To reinforce this perspective, education should be a key agenda item at every board meeting, ensuring it remains a strategic priority. These discussions should include regular presentations from K-12 education leaders across all districts offering insights into achievements and programs.

Additionally, inviting the county superintendents or a designated representative to attend and present at board meetings will provide valuable insights into the challenges facing the local school system, particularly in hot topic issues such as chronic absenteeism, reading achievement and graduation. Strengthening collaboration between the business community and education leaders will help the Chamber and the ADA better support initiatives that enhance workforce readiness and economic growth in Ardmore.

Tactic: Host Education Roundtables or Forums

Implement, Mid-Term

‒ **Partners:** City & County Leaders, Education Officials, The More Foundation, Top Employers, Workforce Partners

The ADA and the Chamber should coordinate quarterly or bi-annual strategy sessions between K-12 (public and private schools), post-secondary institutions and industry partners to devise a plan on how to work together to increase education achievement and programming needed to support such progress. The roundtables should provide a platform for information exchange and build relationships to ensure students are receiving the education and relevant training that will prepare them for industries in the region. Topic areas for the conversations should include:

- Public school funding and budget process
- Private school options and opportunities
- Teacher and principal talent attraction and retention along with professional development opportunities
- Barriers students are facing in completing degrees or certificates
- Policies and programs that support student pathways aligned with higher-skill, higher wage and in-demand jobs
- Tours or hands-on workshops employers can provide to engage students at all grade levels

Tactic: Champion the Creation of an Early Literacy Volunteer Program

Advocate, Mid-Term

- **Partners:** City & County Leaders, Local and State Education Leaders, Higher Education Institutions, Top Employers, Workforce Partners

From kindergarten through third grade, children are learning to read. Then in fourth grade, they transition to use reading to learn. Children who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate from high school, according to a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For poor black and Hispanic students, that likelihood doubles. In addition, according to the Nation's Report Card only 33% of US fourth grade students are reaching grade-level proficiency in reading.

In Carter County's nine school districts the English Language Arts (ELA) achievement score varies significantly. While the state's overall achievement rate is 44.9 percent –its long-term goal is for at least 50 percent of students in all priority student groups to achieve a subject area proficiency in ELA, Math and Science by 2032. Of Carter County's districts, five are below 50 percent in their ELA achievement rate.

Figure 10: School District Achievement Scores

District Name	Composite Achievement	ELA Achievement	Graduation Rate	City	Students	Teachers	Locale	Student Teacher Ratio
ARDMORE	23.1%	35.4	64.5%	Ardmore	2,617	117.63	Town, Remote	22.25
DICKSON	42.7%	45.7	71.9%	Ardmore	1,270	63	Rural, Distant	20.16
FOX	67.7%	54.7	50.1%	Fox	162	13	Rural, Remote	12.46
HEALDTON	28.7%	33.2	60.7%	Healdton	498	31.83	Rural, Remote	15.65
LONE GROVE	64.2%	56.4	90.9%	Lone Grove	1,444	97.58	Rural, Distant	14.8
PLAINVIEW	77.9%	60.4	80.8%	Ardmore	1,585	105.05	Rural, Fringe	15.09
SPRINGER	17.5%	26.3	55.6%	Springer	222	17.14	Rural, Distant	12.95
WILSON	29.7%	42.2	77.7%	Wilson	482	32.22	Rural, Remote	14.96
ZANEIS	71.6%	54.4	N/A	Wilson	287	16.84	Rural, Remote	17.04

To address the immediate needs of students in the community and prevent high school dropouts, the creation of a public-private partnership for a reading buddy program should be implemented**.** Consider additional research from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, one in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on

time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers. There are several models that the community should consider implementing.

More than 25 percent of the population of Carter County is aged between 55 to 74, offering a pipeline of experienced adults who can serve as tutors to children who need additional intervention. The **AARP Foundation's Experience Corps** **is a volunteer program that trains people over 50 to tutor students to become better readers by the end of third grade.** Not only is the program proven to improve students' reading skills, but it also builds critical social and emotional skills they need for successful learning now and later in life. Currently, the Experience Corps program operates in 18 communities across the United States. The program has supported thousands of students during a school year and studies show:

- Among 2,573 students with at least two test scores, 95.3% showed improvement on at least one key metric.
- 98% of volunteer tutors reported that Experience Corps helped them stay physically and mentally active and build digital and workforce skills.

The Children's Movement of Florida's ReadingPals initiative asks volunteers to commit an hour per week with their student(s) for 25+ weeks during the school year using a structured reading lesson guide (some programs may offer a 30-minute per week or semester option). Each participating child takes home a new book every week to build their home library and encourage a love of reading. Often, the programing coordination takes place through the local United Way.[6]

Tactic: Encourage Exploration of the Success for All Early Education Programming

Advocate, Long-Term

– **Partners:** City & County Leaders, Local and State Education Leaders, Higher Education Institutions, Top Employers, Workforce Partners

Success for All (SFA) is a comprehensive school reform program designed to ensure success in reading for children in high-poverty schools. It provides schools with a K-5 reading curriculum that focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension and vocabulary development, beginning with phonetically-controlled mini-books in grades K-1. Cooperative learning is extensively used at all grade levels. Struggling students, especially first graders, receive one-to-one or small group tutoring. Children are frequently assessed on curriculum-based measures, and these are used to regroup children into reading groups according to current reading level, across grade lines. Extensive professional development and a full-time facilitator help teachers effectively apply all program elements. A Solutions Team works with parents to help them support their children's achievement and social-emotional development and to deal with issues such as attendance and behavior problems. The approximate cost is $75,000 per year for three

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[6] Children's Movement of Florida

years for a school of 500 students (about $150 per student per year). About half of this cost is materials and half professional development.

Consider the [Steubenville Ohio best practice](#) which has implemented the program for more than 25 years which begins at age three. The community's third graders are among the best little readers in the nation. For nearly 20 years, 93% or more of them have scored proficient on state reading tests. In fact, the elementary schools in this economically depressed area are producing better readers than some of the wealthiest places in the country. Nearly 80% of Steubenville's children attend preschool, which costs just $100 per month for full-day classes and is free for the poorest families.

Tactic: Promote the Expansion of Industry Based Camps

Advocate, Mid-Term

– **Partners:** City & County Leaders, School Officials, Higher Education Institutions, Top Employers, Workforce Partners

Exposing students to diverse careers and industries adds immense value to a student's educational experience. Career exploration regardless of age allows students to better understand the scope of opportunities available to them.

Going beyond traditional Carer and Technical Education (CTE) programs or the classroom walls and utilizing non-school time provides dual benefits – it fills a learning need over breaks to prevent learning losses while exposing students to new pathways. The ADA should encourage the development of industry based camps that could take place as summer programs, weekend workshops, school breaks and after-school programs.

Events, classes and certifications can be offered for all ages – from kindergarten through 12th grade. Utilizing state, regional and local partners, the events do not have to be limited to the Ardmore community but could include neighboring counties and the region.

Elementary: Touch-a-Truck events provide a unique opportunity for children of all ages to discover various vehicles used within the community, including public service, emergency, utility, construction, landscaping, transportation and delivery — all in one place. Children are allowed to explore vehicles, get behind the wheel and meet the people who help build, protect and serve the community. The event can also be expanded to include manufacturing related machinery and equipment.

Best Practices: Association of Equipment Manufacturers' Celebration of Construction. Options for older students include Be Pro Be Proud which is a national workforce development initiative focused on attracting students and young adults to technical careers through exciting simulation experiences and then connecting them to post-secondary opportunities and careers. The mobile workshop unit tours local high schools and middle schools and can be customized to a variety of professions and industries that are most relevant to specific communities.

Middle School: Summer skills trades camps allow a short-term, low commitment opportunity to expose students to hands-on career training. Managing the required courses in middle school leaves little opportunity for electives that showcase the full range of possible jobs that are available. Without exploration, students may select careers they see in their immediate surroundings or on television rather than those that align with their own interest, skills or work values. Nearly all careers require education beyond high school. Knowledge of certifications or degree opportunities, college options, entrance requirements, application process and financial aid is vital for students and families to learn. Camps have the added benefit of not being location specific depending on the opportunity offered.

Best Practices: Lively Technical College in Tallahassee held an all-girls building camp that also provided lunches reducing food insecurity challenges and this year is offering three career options for middle school students - building trades, baking/culinary and barbering. The Fabricators and Manufacturers' Association hosts manufacturing summer camps around the nation designed for students, ages 12-16, that allows them to experience modern manufacturing by creating, building and taking a product home. At camp, they tour manufacturing facilities, learn about entrepreneurship and meet top industry experts.

High School: For aspiring business students in high school, entrepreneurship camps can lay the foundation for future business ideas. Campers can learn concepts such as market analysis,

financial planning and business strategy. The concepts can apply to a student planning to attend a four-year university to major in business or a student who wants to own a salon or an HVAC operation.

Best Practices: The Nassau County School Board hosted a 5-Day Entrepreneurship Summer Camp funded by a competitive grant aimed at increasing the awareness of entrepreneurship across the area. The program was available to approximately 45 current 7th through 11th grade students from any school in the local area. The camp was free, but $100 was required to cover lunch, breakfast, activities and some materials during the camp. The FSU Jim Moran College of Entrepreneurship camp offers an understanding of business startups for a small group of high school students. Young entrepreneurs can learn the importance of strategically assembling a well-balanced team by working in groups. The groups develop innovative ideas accompanied by viable business models and pitch their businesses to a congregation of family and friends.

CROSS CUTTING: IMPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS

Ardmore's logo is creative and well thought-out. It highlights the many attributes that make this small community a desirable location to work, live, visit and grow a business. The collaborative and intersectional center of the A is not only representative of the community but the three organizations that promote its growth and economy vibrancy – the ADA, the Chamber and the ATA.
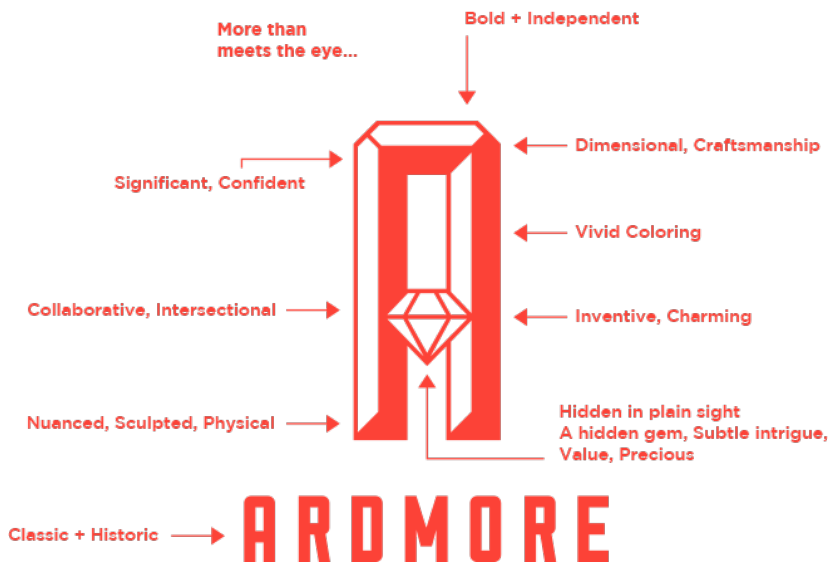
Recognizing the desire of the community to be bold, multi-dimensional and inventive, provides an opportunity to assess organizational structures to best meet the needs of customers and leverage collaboration for increased effectiveness.

To do so, key tactics include:

01   Identify the Needs of the Customer
02   Establish a Coordinated Framework
03   Establish Shared Metrics for Collaboration and Impact

Tactic: Identify the Needs of the Customer

Before developing annual activities, it is essential to outline the focus and responsibilities of each organization involved and then use this foundation to identify their customers and understand their needs. Based on the focus and responsibilities of each organization, VisionFirst developed a customer needs matrix, reflecting recommendations below, to optimize the efforts of these entities.

The responsibilities outlined in Figure 11 ensure roles are defined while identifying opportunities for strategic alliances. In a small community like Ardmore, with limited resources, coordination and collaboration are vital to serving a broad range of customers effectively.

Figure 11: Organizational Focus & Roles

Local Government	ADA	Chamber	ATA	Main Street
Deliver Public Services to Enhance the Quality of Life for Residents	Business Recruitment, Retention & Expansion within Targeted Industry Sectors	Small Business Support, Foster Entrepreneurship, New Resident Engagement and Advocate for K-12 Education Improvement	Increase Tourism to Ardmore by Generating Awareness & Demand	Development & Revitalization of Designated Main Street Corridor
Provide essential services, such as public safety, infrastructure and utilities, enforcing local laws and regulations, managing public resources and promoting the overall welfare and development of the community.	Attract new businesses, supporting existing industry and promoting job creation. In coordination with the city, lead land acquisition and sales, provide financial incentives and infrastructure support to foster a job creation and capital investment.	Support and advocate for the business community and its members, by providing resources, networking opportunities and representation to help businesses thrive.	Lead tourism planning, identify competitive advantages, create unique experiences, support the local community and ensure tourism sustainability.	Revitalize and preserve the downtown area by promoting by supporting local businesses and enhancing the community's quality of life through redevelopment and community engagement.

Understanding Customer Needs and Expectations

Not all customers are the same for each organization. Ultimately, there are two types of customers:

1. Core customers who are critical to the organization's existence.
2. Indirect customers or stakeholders, while not central to the organization's mission, can significantly impact its success (e.g., media).

Each customer group has distinct needs and expectations that are dynamic and vary over time (Figure 12). A holistic economic development approach optimizes Ardmore's ability to meet these needs by leveraging all organizations within a customer-focused framework.

The challenge is to establish ongoing methods to capture the "voice of the customer," translate these needs into improved products and services and gather feedback to assess performance. Successfully meeting these needs will turn customers into advocates for Ardmore, amplifying marketing and sales efforts.

	Needs	Expectations	Programs, Products, Services
Competitive Projects	• Developable sites that are shovel-ready • Competitive incentives and tax structure	• Accurate, timely and understandable information • Confidentiality • City and ADA are reliable partners • Seamless partner coordination	• Information on sites, buildings, incentives, regulatory environment, workforce, utilities • Long-term partnership
Existing Industry	• Long-term relationships that support growth • Available and reliable workforce • Conducive regulatory environment • Infrastructure to move product	• Accurate, timely and understandable information • Advocacy and partnership	• Assist in workforce development, attraction and retention • Relationships that support expansion, retention and prevent closure. • Connect to local suppliers to reduce logistics costs, getting critical materials
Small Businesses	• Programs that support business growth • Financing resources • Advocacy for policies and regulations that support growth • Access to customers • Market data	• Accurate, timely and understandable information • Advocacy and partnership	• Workshops and networking events, permitting and business regulation assistance • Advocate for small business growth • Inventory of space in downtown or other locations
Out-of-Market Retail	• Sites with infrastructure • Ease of permitting and regulatory environment	• Accurate, timely and understandable information • Advocacy and partnership	• Market demographics • Site characteristics • Public finance programs
Visitors	• Attractions • Events • Accommodations • Ease of travel • Ideas for leisure travel	• Accurate and updated information • Information is easy to find	• Websites, publications, news stories
Residents	• Housing options, quality education, safe environment, affordability, amenities, accountable government, job opportunities	• Knowledge of area as it relates to city services and options	• Online resources for new residents • Dashboard of economic measures

Figure 13: Which Entities Support the Customer Group

	Competitive Projects	Existing Industry	Small Business (In-Market Retail)	Out-of-Market Retail (Chains & Franchises)	Visitors	Residents
Local Government	X	X	X	X	X	X
ADA	X	X		Support (demographics)		X
Chamber			X		X	X
ATA			X		X	X
Main Street			X	X		X

Tactic: Establish a Coordinated Framework

To enhance coordination among all the entities, consider the following activities:

Set Shared Goals: Conduct a half-day joint planning session to establish shared goals that align with each organization's mission, objectives and customers. The session should be facilitated by a professional from outside the community. The session should include the staff of each organization, the board chair and appropriate local officials.

Identify Collaborative Projects: Identify and prioritize projects that leverage the strengths of multiple organizations and where increased synergies could be beneficial.

Quarterly Economic Development Meetings to include the executive director and board chair of each organization along with relevant partners. These meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss contracted programs and initiatives, provide updates on recruitment efforts or ongoing projects (within confidentiality agreements), and explore any resources or support needed from each organization to help achieve shared goals.

Implement Annual Board Training: It is important for board members to understand not only the operations of their own organization but also those within the broader economic development ecosystem. To achieve this, an annual joint board orientation should be established as part of the onboarding process for any new members and elected officials. Components of the orientation should include, but not limited to:

- Ethics policy
- Role of the board
- Programs, products & services
- How each organization fits in the economic development ecosystem

- Overall value proposition of past projects
- Role of the staff
- Financial overview
- Confidentiality of work and what is shared publicly

Long-Term Tactic: Consider Organization Expansion

While there is some existing optimization of resources and programs through the ADA, based on discussions, there is an opportunity to expand this effort through an umbrella public-private-partnership organization by adding the Main Street Program. Any expansion of the umbrella organization should be designed around a clearly defined vision and measurable outcomes, such as increasing visitor spending, hotel room nights, reducing downtown property vacancy rates, boosting retail sales, fostering small business growth, supporting new business start-ups and attracting manufacturing capital investment and jobs. More ambitious goals might include population growth, higher household incomes, reduced poverty rates and an expanded tax base.

The umbrella organization should be structured around the functions required and the needs of its customer groups (as outlined in the matrix), utilizing a single paid team and drawing on resources from special-purpose entities like the ADA and Main Street, which could contract with the new 501(c)(6) organization.

In this model, the boards of existing government organizations would continue to exist but would contract with the umbrella group, which would be led by a single CEO and governing board. Regardless of structure, each of the entities should strive to be high-performing organizations operating efficiently and professionally, focusing on meeting the needs of its customers and proactively engaging stakeholders.

Tactic: Establish Shared Metrics for Collaboration and Impact

To ensure collaboration and mission-focused activities, the following metrics should be considered to measure success and track progress by all entities which play a role in creating community vibrancy and economic development activities. The metrics below represent a full menu for consideration not all can be tracked simultaneously. Annually, consider five to 10 metrics for each organization to track. As items are completed, new metrics can be added.

CITY & COUNTY METRICS

Indicator	Quantity	Units
Population growth	Population	#, % share
Median income growth (total, race, gender)	Population	$, %
Tax revenue (sales, transient guest tax, etc.)	Revenue	$
Cost (Taxes) per citizen versus peers	Revenue	$
Surplus/deficit per citizen	Revenue	$
Population diversity	Population	#, % share
New housing starts and sales	Infrastructure	#, %
Businesses by employment size	Businesses	#, %
Percent of locally owned businesses	Businesses	#, % share
Total and per capita expenditures on arts and culture	Investment	$
Social amenities and services (parks, recreation, churches, schools, medical)	Facilities	#
Socio-economic profiles and indices (rank of local health areas)	Index	Rank
Poverty rate	Population	#, %
Health facilities (hospitals, beds, health centers)	Facilities	#
Average life expectancy, morbidity, mortality rates, other health measures	Years	#
Childcare openings	Facilities	#, % growth
Schools	Facilities	#
School achievement	Test scores	%
Third grade reading scores	Test scores	%
Attendance (reduce chronic absenteeism)	Achievement	%
Graduation numbers, rates	Graduation rates	#,%
Educational Attainment (associate degree & above)	Achievement	#, % increase in advanced education
Crime rates	Occurrences/1000	%
Transit services	Facilities	#, type
Festivals and events	Events	#, type

CHAMBER METRICS

Indicator	Quantity	Units
Members (new and retained)	Partnerships	#, %
Programs conducted (satisfaction survey)	Programming	#, %, qualitative
Recipients of coaching/advocacy	Recipients	#, qualitative
Recipients of technical assistance	Recipients	#, qualitative
Recipients of training	Recipients	#, qualitative
Small business assisted	Recipients	#, qualitative
Small businesses surveyed	Businesses	#, qualitative
Host small business start-up and growth programs	Businesses	#, qualitative
Minority businesses supported	Businesses	#, % change
Marketing campaigns, type, reach, efficiency	Campaigns	#
Marketing expenditures	Expenditures	$

ADA METRICS

Indicator	Quantity	Units
Businesses by industry	Businesses	#, %
Businesses created (by industry or sector) versus all businesses	Businesses	#, %
Availability and cost of business inputs (tax rates, energy, labor)	Various	#, $
Total or percentage increased sales/revenues by new businesses/industries	Investment	#, %, $
Increased tax base for local trading area	Investment	#
Business climate rating	Business climate	rank; qualitative
Labor force participation size and rate	Workforce	#, %
Relationships with site selectors	Relationships	#, qualitative
Number of RFIs	Attraction	#, %
Businesses attracted (by industry or sector) versus all businesses	Attraction	#, %, qualitative
Number of prospect visits	Attraction	#
Number of active projects	Attraction	#
Business leads that choose to locate in community/region	Attraction	#, %, qualitative
Job creation	Investment	#, %, $
Payroll increase (increase to average wage)	Investment	%, $
Capital investment (public or private)	Investment	#, %, $
Presence, quality, ROI of incentive programs	Investment	#, survey, qualitative
FDI attracted to the community/region	Attraction	#, $
Timeline for project completion	Attraction	#

Businesses retained (by industry or sector) versus all businesses	Retention	#, %
Businesses expanded (by industry or sector) versus all businesses	Expansion	#, %
New products, product lines, services	Expansion	#, qualitative
Exports and trade activity	Exports, trade	$, % growth
New market development	Expansion	$
Businesses at risk retained	Retention	#, qualitative
Assessment of business workforce needs	Workers	rating, narrative
Job training (new and incumbent worker)	Workers	#, narrative
Utilization of local, state, utility or federal resources and programs (funding)	Relationships	#, narrative
Branding efforts launched	Attraction	#, click rates, engagement
Media outreach and coverage	Attraction	#, click rates, engagement

ATA METRICS

Indicator	Quantity	Units
Tourists/visitors	Tourists	#, % change
Tourists/visitor total spending	Expenditures	$, % change
Tourist/visitor average spending	Expenditures	$
Tourist/visitor length of stay	Days	#
Accommodations facilities (hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, vacation properties, lodges, resorts)	Properties	#
Accommodation units (hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, vacation properties, lodges, resorts)	Rooms	#
Room revenues	Revenues	$
Campground/RV facilities	Properties	#
Campground/RV units	Sites	#
Success of new and existing festivals and events	Attendance, Revenue	#, $
Tourism businesses (include payroll and taxes if possible)	Businesses	#
Packages, experiences	Packages	#
Online reputation	Net Promoter Score (NPS)	%
Website/social media hits	Page hits	#
Tourism tax collected	Revenues	$
Convention Center Revenue Generation	Revenues	$
Event Count & Attendance	Attendance	#, $
Occupancy Rate / Utilization Rate	Revenues	#, $
Event Days & Multi-Day Events	Attendance, Revenue	#, $

MAIN STREET METRICS

Indicator	Quantity	Units
Total net jobs created (full, part-time, total)		#, $ payroll
Hourly wage increase		$, % change
Square feet of buildings rehabilitated		#, $ value
Vacancy rates		% change
Business program participants still in business 1 - 5 years		#, % change
Succession plans, transfers to new owners	Plans, Transfers	#, qualitative
Resources to current and prospective businesses		#, % change
Connect businesses with outside financial resources		$, % change
Networking and mentorship initiatives		#, % change
Minority businesses supported		#, % change
Offer direct financial support to businesses	Grants	#, $
Assist with business marketing efforts		#, % change
Volunteer recruitment, retention		#, hours
Online reputation	Net Promoter Score (NPS)	%
Website/social media hits	Page hits	#

THANK YOU

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