

Human Resources

Services and Agencies that Bolster Skill Development of Citizens Engaged in Business and Community Development

North Central Kansas is home to several service providers who strive to assist residents of the region in all facets of economic development. In addition, there have been several developments in the recent past at the state level that also strive to support development in rural Kansas, including the NCRPC service area.

NCRPC – The North Central Regional Planning Commission itself is active in promoting development of the human capacity in North Central Kansas. Primary contributions come in the form of an in-house non-profit that provides high speed internet access to area businesses. This access facilitates business functions, training and personal communication for employees. The NCRPC also has a sister organization, Four River’s Development that provides loan packaging services to qualified businesses seeking non-traditional financing for business start-up or expansion. The RPC also strives as it works with clients to elevate the overall understanding of members and constituents to the art and science of economic and community development. The RPC regularly provides speakers and workshops in the area to enhance understanding of community development practices. In addition, the NCRPC is co-sponsoring three on-line portals that facilitate dialogue between residents within and outside the area. The website www.eyeonkansas.org provides a glimpse of all that makes Kansas unique, the site www.ojrrp.org , the On-line Journal of Rural Research and Policy specializes in publication of original research of importance to rural areas throughout America. Finally, www.ncrpc.org is the web page of the RPC itself. Visitors to the site can find numerous resources including access to other resource providers, census and other data and the case histories of successful NCRPC projects.

Kansas Department of Commerce – The Kansas Department of Commerce has one Business Development Representative who serves North Central Kansas. The office, based in Manhattan is staffed by Rick Coon. The goal of the field staff is to connect business owners seeking to expand or start up with existing state resources that may facilitate or improve their odds of success. As the state’s primary community and economic development agency, the Department of Commerce brings significant financial and technical assistance resources to the table in North Central Kansas. For a complete overview of programs offered, consult the agency web site, <http://www.kansascommerce.com> .

Network Kansas - In 2004 the Kansas Legislature passed the Kansas Economic Growth Act. Part of that legislation created “Network Kansas”. The mission of Network Kansas is to “promote an entrepreneurial environment throughout the state of Kansas by establishing a central portal that connects entrepreneurs and small business owners with the right resource; expertise, education, and/or economic, at the right time. A key feature of network Kansas is a system of counselors available through a toll-free number and an on-line tool call “resource Locator” both which strive to make connections between clients and existing state resources. The web site that allows primary access to the on-line tools is <http://www.networkkansas.com> .

Cloud County Community College – Kansas boasts a plethora of higher education providers. With a total of 19 community colleges in the state, every region is home to at least one. Cloud County Community College, based in Concordia in the heart of the NCRPC service area serves all the counties in the NCRPC membership with the exception of Marshall County. In addition to the main campus, the College has expanded recently to have campuses in Geary County and Dickinson County. While Geary County is not in the membership of the NCRPC, its location near the southeastern boarder creates a relationship between the city and many cities in the NCRPC service area.

Community Colleges by their very nature are geared to meet the needs of their service area. Most approach this from two primary angles; first by providing a reasonably priced post-secondary education for traditional and non-traditional students from the immediate area who will become a significant portion of the labor pool in the area in the future and secondly, by meeting the needs of business and industry in the region. For example, due to the current interest in wind energy, Cloud County Community College has instituted a training program for that industry and will be installing a wind turbine this year to generate electricity to power the campus. The Community College web site is <http://www.cloud.edu> .

The Community College offers services from their Career Center to the region as a whole as well as students. They will assist residents in job search activities including resume writing, interviewing assistance and connecting with potential employers through their job listing service. Employers can utilize the Career Center to locate and screen potential employees and by utilizing the job listing service.

Cloud County Community College is also home to the Small Business Development Center that serves the region. More information regarding that service will appear below.

Kansas State University – Kansas State University (KSU) maintains a strong presence in the NCRPC service area. The main campus is located in Manhattan, just on the Southeastern edge of the RPC service area; a second campus focusing on technology and aviation education is located in Salina, the largest city in the NCRPC area. The main University web page is <http://www.k-state.edu/> . The Salina Campus web page is <http://www.sal.ksu.edu> . The close proximity of KSU provides not only easy access to post secondary and graduate level educational opportunities, but also opportunities for the NCRPC and the region to interface with the University on a more intimate level than might otherwise be possible. For instance, over the last three years the NCRPC has worked closely with the Advanced Manufacturing Institute (AMI) an EDA University Center based at KSU. AMI provides business and engineering services to companies and entrepreneurs to develop new products, processes and technologies and launch them into the marketplace; services are cost effective and provide access to expertise, equipment and resources needed to move projects forward. The staff at AMI provides a valuable service to business owners in the region. For more information see the AMI web site at <http://www.amiksu.org> .

North Central Kansas Technical College – The presence of the North Central Kansas Technical College (NCKTC) in Beloit rounds out the post secondary education opportunities in the region. The region is fortunate to a full range of options to meet the specific needs of all types of

students; both traditional and non-traditional. NCKTC is the leader in technical education for the region; the students provide not only a significant portion of the labor force for the region, but also often become entrepreneurs and move on to start businesses based on their particular technical skills. The region continues to benefit from the opening of new businesses or the transition of ownership to students in facets of the local economy that are critical such as automotive repair, nursing, computer technology, and construction.

One of the newest partnerships between NCKTC and the RPC involves the introduction of a new program of study focused on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS). GIS/GPS has significant applications in local government and for private business. The NCRPC is underwriting a portion of the cost of developing this new program and is also facilitating the working relationships between the College and local government or business that might have projects which the students could use for learning opportunities.

Small Business Development Center – The NCRPC service center is nearly identical to the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) based at Cloud County Community College. The SBDC strives to encourage entrepreneurship and strong small business ownership in the region by offering one-on-one counseling, seminars and access to other resources available to small businesses in Kansas. Aid with marketing, financial analysis and business planning are particular strengths of SBDC services. The web site for the SBDC is <http://www.cloud.edu/ksbdc/index.asp>.

One important program initiated by the SBDC at Cloud County is the Women Entrepreneur's in Business network. The Network provides a quarterly meeting where women in business can network and learn together. There is generally a solid attendance at events which move to various places in the region. The growing following speaks to the benefit of this networking opportunity.