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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

THE CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TIP would like to thank the Choctaw Nation, Choctaw Business and Economic Development, and the more than 180 individuals and businesses that participated in this planning process

ABOUT US:



TIP STRATEGIES, INC. is a privately held Austin and Seattle based economic development consulting firm committed to providing quality solutions for public and private sector clients. Established in 1995, the firm's primary focus is economic development strategic planning.

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INTRODUCTION

This economic development strategy will guide the organization and activities of the Choctaw Business and Economic Development Division to positively influence economic development outcomes across the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

The strategy establishes and formalizes a programmatic structure for how the Tribe conducts economic development to achieve its objectives. The objectives of the Choctaw Nation's economic development programs are the following:

1. Enhance economic opportunities for tribal members and local residents;
2. Contribute to healthy and sustainable communities; and
3. Provide diversified revenue streams to support tribal activities and resilient local economies.

These objectives serve as guideposts to ensure that strategies are aligned and working towards a common set of desired outcomes.

The strategy was developed to build upon the assets of the region and strengthen regional competitiveness with focused investments of time and resources. The strategy is organized around three programmatic goals that form the foundation of Choctaw Economic Development:

1. **BUSINESS FORMATION, RETENTION, AND EXPANSION.** Assist and enable the businesses that are here and continue to grow new businesses from within the region.
2. **BUSINESS ATTRACTION.** Attract new business investment and jobs.
3. **COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND ASSETS.** Strengthen communities' capacity for economic development.

Each of these goals is developed in more detail on the pages that follow.

Implementing these goals and strategies will take additional resources, and achieving measurable progress towards the objectives will require a sustained and long-term commitment. However, the Division will likely see early wins that result from a refined process, a formalized structure, and a new strategic focus.

At the center of the strategy are partnerships with the communities within the Nation's boundaries because the Tribe alone cannot create vibrant communities. Across the entire region, Choctaw Economic Development will be able to make significant strides in cultivating and strengthening the communities' base of leaders and deepen these leaders' expertise in community and economic development. However, the ten-and-a-half county region that is the Choctaw Nation is large and has communities that range in size and sophistication. To maximize its impact, Choctaw Economic Development will have to tailor its community partnerships and prioritize how it spends its time and resources. The largest counties – Bryan, Pittsburg, McCurtain, and LeFlore – are facing fewer challenges, have more competitive sites, and have more resources to put behind economic development efforts. With concerted efforts over the next five years, Pittsburg, McCurtain, and LeFlore could return to positive population and job growth. Bryan County has already reached that state. Many of the smaller counties, however, have less positive momentum to build upon and will require a good deal of "table-setting" to make progress towards addressing their complex

problems and preparing them for future success. As such, Choctaw Economic Development should differentiate its approach to partnership with the communities that are more “investment-ready” versus those that are more “market-challenged” in order to ensure the most effective use of its resources.

Over the course of the next five years, with the programs in place and the strategies moving forward, the efforts of the Tribe and the communities, together, will help address the region’s biggest challenges - housing, workforce, and infrastructure – and position the region for an optimistic future.

1 BUSINESS FORMATION, RETENTION, & EXPANSION

Take care of the businesses that are here

The Choctaw Nation is fortunate to have a strong base of existing employers. This network of companies includes major manufacturers across an enviable variety of industries, such as food processing, wood products, aerospace and metals/metal fabrication. In addition to globally recognized firms like Tyson Foods, International Paper, and Big Lots, the region is also home to a significant federal defense installation, McAlester Army Ammunition Depot. Together with the portfolio of home grown companies and international corporations, these employers are the backbone of the economy and must be at the center of the Nation's business development efforts.

Unfortunately, local businesses are often overlooked in a community's enthusiasm to attract new, headline-generating companies. Despite the emphasis placed on recruitment initiatives, business retention and expansion (BRE) programs are often a more effective use of resources. Like any product or service, the cost of retaining a customer is far lower than acquiring new ones. With this idea in mind, the objective of a BRE program is clear: dedicate time and energy to ensure that your current "customers" are satisfied. The focus of these programs is on forging relationships and building trust with existing employers, while identifying and responding to their needs.

In addition to helping to retain existing business and ensure they expand locally, a solid BRE program can also pay off in new business development since existing companies can be your best ambassadors. Corporate location decisions are often heavily influenced by industry peers. Because of their relatively modest resource requirements and their potential to pay off, a robust BRE program should be a baseline activity for Choctaw Economic Development and its community partners.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- 1 Region-wide Business Visitation Program
- 2 Supply Chain Development

MAJOR EMPLOYERS



1.1. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION.

Formalize a business visitation program in partnership with community economic developers.

- 1.1.1.** Create a business visitation guide to help standardize procedures for community partners to use in conducting and documenting business visits.
- 1.1.2.** Select a web-based customer relationship management (CRM) system to facilitate information sharing across the partnership. Examples of economic development-specific CRMs are Executive Pulse, Salesforce for ED, Cloud Nine | Economic Development, and Synchronist.
- 1.1.3.** Maintain a knowledge base about existing businesses by setting up Google alerts that will flag stories about companies located in the region.
- 1.1.4.** Conduct business visits to forge relationships with employers and to identify and respond to companies' needs.
- 1.1.5.** Collect information systematically in the CRM to track regional trends and common needs.
- 1.1.6.** Hold a roundtable with community partners quarterly to discuss findings from business visits and collaborate on solutions to assist businesses.
- 1.1.7.** Leverage business relationships to establish a business assistance and relocation referral network.
- 1.1.8.** Organize and sponsor an industry appreciation event that can recognize regional businesses and business leaders for their contributions to the communities in which they are located.

1.2. BUSINESS FORMATION. Continue to support the formation of new businesses and business owners in the region.

- 1.2.1.** Partner with Southwest Oklahoma State University's entrepreneurship program and with i2E to identify and support promising business ventures in the region by linking these entrepreneurs to co-work or incubator spaces, peer networks, and, in some cases, capital access that will ground the ventures in the 11-County area.

BUSINESS VISITATION GUIDE

A business visitation guide establishes standard operating procedures for all community partners to use when conducting business visits. The guide should contain the following elements:

- Sample text for emails or phone calls to set up business visits
- Checklist for preparing for visit
 - Tips for research the business and identify relevant industry trends
 - Reviewing information from last visit or interaction
- Topics for the interview
 - Must-asks
 - Headcount
 - Hiring/expansion plans
 - Needs or barriers to successful operations
 - Headquarters – any new initiatives or growth plans that might affect the region?
 - Other topics to explore
 - Suppliers – who are they & where are they located
 - Customers – who are they & where are they located
 - Industry trends and their implications on the business
- Resources to respond to business needs
 - Referral directory
 - Regular regional BRE roundtable
- Procedure for documenting and sharing visitation information

- 1.2.2.** Help communities create a directory of small business resources available in their areas and encourage them to distribute this information through local bankers, chambers of commerce, libraries and other community centers. On online resource such as SourceLink could also be helpful.
- 1.2.3.** Cultivate a spirit of entrepreneurship among tribal members and raise awareness of business opportunities in the Choctaw Nation to encourage and stimulate new business formation. This can be through events like Business Opportunity Days (see *case study on next page*), through programs such as Junior Achievement, through events such as 1 Million Cups, and through public relations and social media outreach.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY DAY

NAVAJO NATION

Hosted by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, the American Indian Procurement and Technical Assistance Center and the Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development, this day-long event focused on how to keep more sales tax dollars on the Navajo reservation. Breakout sessions covered topics like small businesses and entrepreneurship and included networking with off-reservation business opportunities. Outside organizations such as the Navajo CDFI and McCabe CPA Group hosted sessions on the foundations of accounting for small business owners. 2017 was the 7th iteration of this event and grows in attendance each year.

For more information, visit:
ncaied.org.

- 1.2.4.** Continue to strengthen the Chahtapreneurs network through technical assistance, training, and counseling.
- 1.2.5.** Establish a Chahtapreneurs mentoring program to facilitate peer networking and peer-to-peer support.
- 1.2.6.** Strengthen connections between post-secondary programs that align with target industries and entrepreneurship programs to encourage more students with technical skills to establish their own businesses. For example, studies in aquaponics or meat processing could lead to a specialty foods business.
- 1.2.7.** Help connect and support qualified, tribal-member buyers to business owners in the region who are looking to retire and interested in selling their business.
- 1.2.8.** Set up and manage a revolving loan fund or a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to help provide access to capital for Chahtapreneurs. Partner with regional microlenders, such as LiftFund, and local banks to bridge gaps in the capital access network.
- 1.2.9.** Continue to support tribally-owned small business with forgivable loans from the Community Development Fund.
- 1.2.10.** Evaluate the feasibility of a Choctaw Venture Fund that would invest in high-growth businesses owned by tribal members living in the Choctaw Nation boundaries. This fund could attract and pool capital from tribal members who are looking to reinvest in the Choctaw Nation.
- 1.3. VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT.** Improve the region's ability to meet the demand for goods and services locally, both in traded sectors and locally serving value chains.
 - 1.3.1.** Develop the region's supply chain to meet the needs of large "anchor" purchasers, such as the tribe, hospitals, school districts, and higher education institutions. To do this, convene anchor

institutions to identify the goods and services currently purchased outside of the region and prioritize purchasing needs that could be provided within the region.

- 1.3.2.** Continue to use retail leakage studies to identify retail segments where a high percentage of purchases are made outside of the area.
- 1.3.3.** Work with natural resource-based sectors in the region to map vendors and customers to identify opportunities for value-added processing or local purchasing that could be provided in the region.
- 1.3.4.** Identify businesses or individuals within the region that have the expertise or ability to provide the goods or services that are currently purchased, produced, or processed outside of the region.
- 1.3.5.** Support these business or individuals that can fulfill the needs of the anchor institutions, local consumers, or regional industries.
- 1.3.6.** Where there is not an existing business or individual, consider cooperative business models as a way to build equity and wealth for Choctaw members (*See case study on Evergreen Cooperatives*).

WEALTHWORKS.ORG

WealthWorks is a coalition of partners led by the Aspen Institute that is working to connect community assets with market-driven opportunities. In addition to financial resources, the WealthWorks model takes note of seven other types of capital, including natural resources, cultural knowledge, and built infrastructure. Using this more expansive view, the approach aims to create “wealth that sticks” by building networks of partners and interests that can help businesses and individuals position themselves to meet a specific demand for goods or services. The resulting “value chains” help to improve the livelihoods of local residents while building up the local economy.

To learn more, visit:
wealthworks.org.

THE EVERGREEN COOPERATIVES CLEVELAND, OH

With the help of leading anchor institutions in Cleveland (such as the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, and Case Western Reserve University), an opportunity to restructure services to these institutions was identified that would employ low-income workers and build wealth through cooperative ownership. Evergreen Cooperative businesses include Evergreen Energy Solutions (alternative energy), Green City Growers (produce), and Evergreen Cooperative Laundry Services (commercial laundry). Each business provides employment, training, and ownership opportunities for low-income or low-skill residents. Evergreen Business Services is a new addition that helps other cities replicate the Evergreen cooperative model. This model “focuses on economic inclusion and building a local economy from the ground up”.

For more information, visit:
www.evgo.com

2 BUSINESS ATTRACTION

Attract new business investment and jobs

Attracting new businesses to a community is one of the activities most commonly associated with economic development. The payoff for these efforts can be significant as a new business location stimulates the economy through capital investment and the creation of new jobs. The Choctaw Nation can influence this process and direct this investment through its site development, marketing, lead generation, and prospect management activities.

One of the most critical considerations for successful recruitment programs is the availability of suitable commercial and industrial locations. Businesses do not technically relocate to a community, but rather to a specific site or building. Maintaining a current inventory of available properties and ensuring an adequate supply of highly marketable properties is essential.

The next consideration is positioning the area with corporate decision makers and those that influence the site selection process. This category encompasses company executives as well as site selection consultants, real estate professionals, and state and regional economic development organizations. Building relationships with these firms, organizations, and individuals is part of this concept, along with traditional marketing and promotion. Clearly communicating the Nation's "value proposition"—the assets and advantages that differentiate it from the competition—is an essential element. Focusing on these key relationships will enable the Nation to establish their own "lead" generation network.

Targeting specific industries for lead generation and marketing activities is an effective way to maximize limited resources. By focusing resources on those sectors with the highest probability of expanding or relocating to the Choctaw Nation, the Tribe can better tailor its messaging, incentives, and investments. The practice of targeting specific industries does not preclude being opportunistic, however. The Nation should expect to

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- ① Deal-Ready Site Certification Program
- ② Incentives Policy Revision

TARGET INDUSTRIES

Six industry clusters were identified as having strong prospects for growth in the region and serve as the foundation for Choctaw Economic Development's marketing and lead generation activities. These industries include:

- Food processing
- Logistics and distribution
- Natural resources value chain
- Tourism
- Aerospace and defense
- Materials processing and remanufacturing

For each individual county, appropriate targets are indicated below:

	Food Processing	Logistics & Distr.	Natural Resources	Tourism	Aerospace/Defense	Remanufacturing
Atoka	●	●	●		●	●
Bryan	●	●	●	●	●	●
Choctaw	●		●	●		
Coal	●		●			
Haskell	●	●	●			●
Hughes	●		●			
Latimer	●		●	●		
Le Flore	●	●	●	●		●
McCurtain	●	●	●	●		●
Pushmataha	●		●	●		●
Pittsburg	●	●	●	●	●	●

receive inquiries from targeted and non-targeted prospects and should be prepared to respond accordingly.

Prospects are companies that are looking to relocate or expand outside their current location and that are considering a location within the Choctaw Nation. Managing these prospects effectively and demonstrating “top-notch” customer service is paramount. This requires a well-coordinated team of community partners, a library of compelling and relevant information, and an established procedure for organizing and hosting prospect visits. Also recommended is the use of a formal system, which not only allows for a more efficient and transparent process, but also helps document the kinds of leads that are coming to the region which can inform future targeting efforts.

2.1. SITE DEVELOPMENT AND INVENTORY. Curate an inventory of competitive, deal-ready sites in the region.

- 2.1.1.** For the most marketable or premier sites identified through the inventory, support investments in basic infrastructure, preliminary environmental assessments and engineering studies, and potentially design renderings.
- 2.1.2.** Assist land-owners (public and private) in accessing funding to support vital infrastructure development to improve the competitiveness of sites in the CNO boundaries. Consider using dollars from the Community Development Fund as a match to leverage other grant funds on strategic sites.
- 2.1.3.** Continue to work with economic development partners and land owners to maintain a database of sites. Ensure that this database stays relevant and up to date.
- 2.1.4.** Collect a common set of information for each site, including size, location, pricing, zoning, applicable traffic counts, area demographics, potential uses, utilities, infrastructure, and available technical reports.
- 2.1.5.** Create an online map that showcases these sites and digital flyers that detail the assets and attributes of each of the sites and buildings. Good examples of this can be found at www.tnecd.com/sites/certified-sites/ or www.louisianasiteselection.com/Details.aspx?p=s466

2.2. SITE CERTIFICATION. Develop a meaningful, shovel-ready site certification process for key sites in the Choctaw Nation to increase the inventory of deal-ready sites and buildings.

SITE CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of site certification programs across the US. In many programs, sites are certified by site selection firms. Other programs, such as the State of North Carolina, use a committee to review certification applications. While the mechanics of these programs vary widely from place to place, the primary value of the certification programs is the depth of information available on these key sites. An inventory of sites with this kind of information available can provide a community an edge over the competition.

Below is a list of the information that should be collected on key sites, to the extent that it is available:

- Ownership status
- Description of parcel(s), including current uses, zoning, special zones, and current assessment information
- Boundary survey
- Phase I environment audit/assessment
- Geo-technical studies
- Topographical analysis and maps
- Aerial photography
- Engineered site development plans
- Detailed analysis of development cost
- Complete information on pricing
- Utility services, including types of services and names of providers
- Industrial power quality
- Transportation access

- 2.2.1.** Create a working group of real estate brokers, site selectors, and economic development professionals to define criteria for meaningful site certification.
- 2.2.2.** Conduct outreach to landowners of sites and buildings with the potential for high economic development impact and encourage them to seek site certification. The potential for economic development impact can be determined by evaluating the job creation and non-residential tax base potential.
- 2.2.3.** Use the working group to review site certification applications and determine which sites meet the criteria. For sites that meet criteria, issue an official certificate.
- 2.2.4.** If necessary and possible, make funds available to defray the cost of site certification.

2.3. INCENTIVES POLICY & PROCESS. Refine the Tribe’s incentives policy and process to be more transparent and predictable while maintaining accountability and a reasonable return on investment.

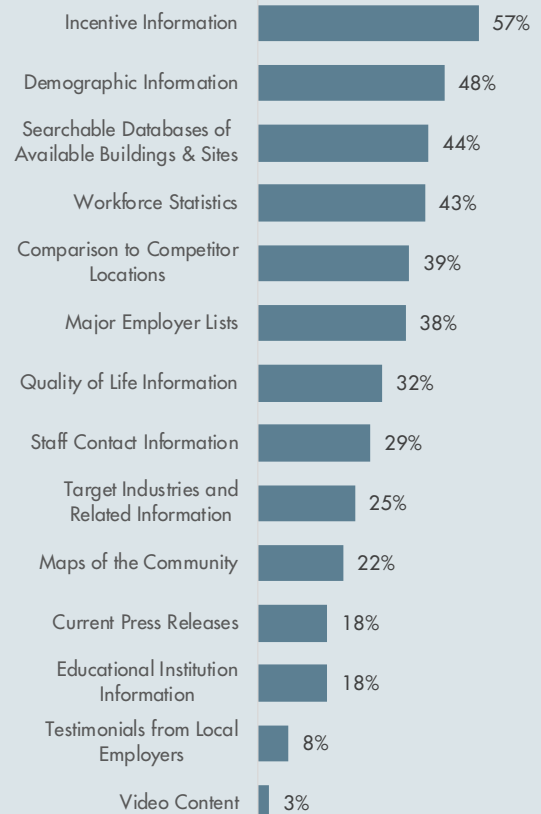
- 2.3.1.** Link policy goals and parameters to the guiding principles of the economic development strategy. Be specific in articulating the kinds of projects that the Tribe is interested in supporting and what the desired outcomes are. Recommendations include the following parameters:
 - *Right-sized and Community-Oriented Companies.* Available buildings and workforce constrain the size of project that many of the communities can support. Be inclusive of smaller communities by structuring a policy that supports smaller employers as well (< 50 employees with no revenue threshold). In addition, smaller employers (<300 employees) moving from larger metro areas are glad to be in a smaller community where they are valued and are likely to give back and be involved.
 - *Traded Sector.* The company should bring new dollars into the region by selling its product to customers located outside of the Choctaw Nation boundaries. However, it is not necessary for the sales to be out-of-state for the Choctaw region to benefit, just out-of-region.
 - *Good-Paying Jobs for the Region and Choctaw Members.* The project should create full-time jobs for people that live in the region and/or Choctaw tribal members. These jobs should pay more than the regional average wage.
 - *Positive Net Benefits to Regional Communities.* The project will generate new tax revenue for the local jurisdictions (city-county-school district) in which it is located, above and beyond the cost of providing services to the company (including infrastructure investments).
 - *Supported and Leveraged.* The project should be actively supported by the community in which it is located and access other sources of incentives of economic development partners to the extent possible.
 - *Structure.* A percentage (50 to 80 percent) of the estimated net benefits should be the upper bound of the incentive offered. Payments should be linked to desired outcomes (e.g. location in a high-need area; training/upskilling for local workers; local or tribal member hiring) and should not be disbursed until those desired outcomes are achieved.
- 2.3.2.** Include due diligence as part of the application review process to ensure that the company is viable and sustainable.

- 2.3.3.** Evaluate the expected Return on Investment from the perspective of CNO’s community partners (county, city, school district). Impact DataSource and Inform Analytics are two examples of comprehensive fiscal and economic impact models that can be used to measure expected ROI. In addition, the impact of a company’s employment of tribal members could be taken into account from the perspective of the cost of needs-based benefits the Tribe provides (e.g if tribal members are employed in jobs that pay well, they will require fewer of the Tribe’s needs-based services).
- 2.3.4.** Build performance expectations into the agreement with the company and structure the incentive as a reimbursement to ensure that no dollars are granted until the company has met its milestones. The company that receives the incentive will be responsible for reporting a set of required metrics related to the milestones and the parameters outlined above. These reports should be verified by a third-party. The term of the agreement should be three to five years.
- 2.3.5.** Monitor performance agreements and report the outcomes to community partners on an annual basis.

2.4. MARKETING & LEAD GENERATION. Craft a targeted outreach campaign to raise awareness of the Choctaw region as a destination for business investment and generate leads exclusively for communities in the Choctaw Nation boundaries.

- 2.4.1.** Design and launch an economic development-specific website.
- 2.4.2.** Continue to bring decision-makers and site selectors to the region in partnership with Oklahoma Southeast.
- 2.4.3.** Continue to cultivate strong relationships with the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.
- 2.4.4.** Cultivate relationships with brokers in near-by metro areas, including DFW, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Fort Smith. Join commercial real estate associations in these markets and attend events to network with brokers and inform them of the sites and opportunities in the Choctaw region. Associations include:
- [North Texas Commercial Association of Realtors](#)
 - [Central Oklahoma Commercial Association of Realtors](#)
 - [Commercial Real Estate Council of Oklahoma City](#)
 - [Commercial Real Estate Specialists](#)

MOST-USEFUL FEATURES OF AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION’S WEBSITE



Source: DCI’s Winning Strategies, 2017.

Greater Tulsa Association of Realtors

- 2.4.5.** Create a regional business roundtable that convenes existing business champions quarterly to help identify leads within their industry networks.
- 2.4.6.** Organize and/or attract conferences related to the target industries to bring industry-decision makers to the region.

2.5. LEAD RESPONSE & PROSPECT MANAGEMENT. Formalize a process for responding to leads and managing prospects among the economic development partners in the region.

- 2.5.1.** Formalize an agreement with community partners that establishes expectations and responsibilities.
- 2.5.2.** Develop and document a standard procedure for coordinating lead responses and submitting proposals in partnership with communities across the Choctaw region. Communicate and distribute this document to community partners in the region.
- 2.5.3.** Train teams from each community on the procedures and best practices for lead response and prospect management by holding workshops and/or webinars with community team members.
- 2.5.4.** Host a quarterly lead-response roundtable with community partners to discuss and refine the process and to provide a leads update.
- 2.5.5.** Create a master response template that consistently communicates the Choctaw Country brand and community brands, ensures continuity throughout the document, and reflects a unified and well-coordinated region. A Choctaw Country logo and community logo, if available, should be used on the title page and included as a headers or footers on each page to reflect a partnership.
 - Employ memorable design and/or content elements (e.g. a digital cover with images of the region for digital submissions or unique packaging such as a Choctaw branded binder for materials during site visits).
 - Create a master catalog of content to pull from and customize for each proposal. Include key talking points about regional advantages (including what it means to locate within a tribal nation), lists and logos of major employers, a comprehensive list and description of economic development incentives, infrastructure availability and maps, utility contacts, available sites and detailed information, workforce, and taxes.
- 2.5.6.** Establish a due diligence process to qualify leads and prospects that begins with a standard intake form and documents the due diligence along the way.
- 2.5.7.** If not chosen for a project, always follow up with the prospect to get feedback on how to improve the proposal and lead-response process.
- 2.5.8.** Document prospect contacts and activities in the CRM (See 1.1.2).

3

COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND ASSETS

Strengthen communities' capacity for economic development

Building economic development expertise and leadership capacity across regional communities is vital to the success of the Choctaw Nation's economic development efforts. First, having a trained economic development team in each community will enhance the region's ability to respond to and capitalize on economic development opportunities. Second, having a team of community leaders who wake up each day thinking about how to improve their communities and mobilizing their fellow citizens to take action will empower each community to affect positive change. This will, in turn, enhance each community's quality of place and community assets, which, in turn, plays a central role in economic development and in resilient and sustainable economies, in general (*See Asset-Based Community Development*).

Among a community's greatest economic development assets are its talent pool, vibrant places, and infrastructure. Housing also plays a critical role in economic development, particularly in rural areas, due to its relationship with talent attraction and retention. Currently, each of these areas pose significant barriers to economic development. The workforce is small and, in many cases, declining. The small rural towns are struggling. Infrastructure is older and often at capacity or deficient. And a shortage of quality housing that meets the diverse community needs is widespread.

By working hand-in-hand with community partners, Choctaw Economic Development can build up the 11-county area and position it for further economic development success. By working to build community capacity, Choctaw Economic Development can help foster self-sufficiency among its community partners while supporting their individual efforts and aligning regional efforts. This type of coordination can have a significant impact on the economic vitality of each community in the Choctaw Nation.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

- ① Southeast Oklahoma Leadership Institute
- ② Community Housing Fund

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Asset-based community development (ABCD) is place-based framework that views prioritizing and building on local assets as the most effective means to create a strong, sustainable economy.

Although specific approaches vary, most ABCD initiatives follow a similar process: map the assets that are unique to the community and mobilize them to address local issues.

The definition of "asset" also varies across programs, but can be thought of as falling under the following categories:

- Individuals – local residents, community leaders
- Associations – nonprofits, community organizations
- Institutions – private businesses, public sector agencies

Unlike "needs-based" frameworks, which focus on directing resources to identified problems, such as homelessness, crime, unemployment, the ABCD model emphasizes relationship-building as the primary means to affect change.

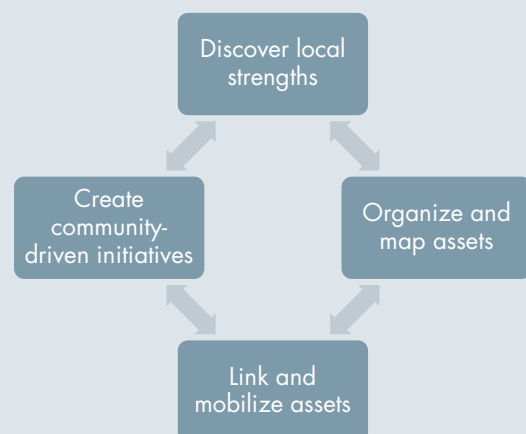


Diagram modeled after Community Innovation Network at Case Western Reserve University <http://msass.case.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Asset-Based-01-300x300.png>

3.1. LEADERSHIP. Cultivate civically-engaged, visionary leaders in communities across the Nation responsible for building and enhancing the social infrastructure of their communities.

3.1.1. Create the Southeast Oklahoma Leadership Institute to train a core group (five or more) of civic leaders in each community. The training would teach these leaders how to work collaboratively in their community and across communities to bring about positive change using an asset-based community development approach. The groups can be named TEAM Bryan or TEAM LeFlore and will become part of a regional leadership network – TEAM Choctaw.

3.1.2. Deepen economic development expertise in the region by ensuring that two to three leaders from partner communities are trained in the principles of economic development. Sponsor a two-day workshop in the region, in partnership with the Economic Development Institute of the University of Oklahoma or the International Economic Development Council, to teach attendees basic economic development.

3.1.3. Establish a trained team of community leaders to partner with Choctaw Economic Development on prospect visits and lead responses.

3.1.4. Hold an annual leadership summit to provide a regular forum for knowledge sharing, peer collaboration, and collective problem-solving.

3.1.5. Organize peer learning visits to communities within and beyond the Choctaw boundaries to showcase best practices and inspire creative ideas among the leaders in the region. These visits should include tours as well as meetings with the peer leaders who were behind the successful project.

3.2. WORKFORCE. Strengthen the region’s talent pipeline, educational infrastructure, and access to talent.

3.2.1. Partner with the Southern Workforce Board, Kiamichi Technology Center, and regional higher education institutions to align industry needs and the talent pipeline.

3.2.2. Help engage businesses in continuous improvement of the local training system through sector partnerships, business advisory councils, and industry associations.

3.2.3. Partner with Choctaw Career Development, the Southern Workforce Board, and school districts to provide opportunities for students not attending college to build employability skills and make connections with employers through hands-on career exploration, apprenticeship opportunities, career fairs, and other work-based learning activities.

DELTA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Delta Leadership Institute hosts an Executive Academy that teaches regional leaders about challenges facing the 252 counties served by the Delta Regional Authority, an extremely impoverished and distressed area. The institute focuses on topics such as the economy, public-private partnerships, coalition building, and infrastructure, among others. Participants travel to various communities to witness success stories firsthand. The academy trains leaders to improve the long-term, economic competitiveness of the area.

Since its founding, there have been over 500 alumni, whom now constitute the Delta Leadership Network. This network stays connected through meetings and annual conferences and play an on-going role in transforming their own communities.

For more information, visit leadership.dra.gov.

- 3.2.4.** Facilitate connections between tribal and community members inside the region and regional employers through career fairs, plant tours, and other activities to showcase regional employers and career opportunities therein.
- 3.2.5.** Facilitate connections between tribal members outside the region and regional employers, including the Tribe, looking to hire talent. As part of this, design and launch a Choctaw Talent Portal and drive users to the portal (job-seekers and employers) with a targeted outreach campaign.
- 3.3. ASSETS AND AMENITIES.** Boost the development of community assets to improve the region's quality of place and strengthen the region's competitiveness.
- 3.3.1.** Help community leadership organize to identify and prioritize transformational community development projects. Provide them with technical assistance to enable them to move priority projects forward (*See Asset-Based Community Development on page 12*).
- 3.3.2.** Continue to support transformational projects with the Choctaw Community Development Fund.
- 3.3.3.** Establish a network of Main Street programs to strengthen the peer network of community leaders working on downtown revitalization.
- 3.3.4.** Help connect communities to other funding resources (philanthropic, federal, and state) to support community development projects.
- 3.3.5.** Further the development of unique cultural and heritage tourism assets to become an international destination.
- 3.3.6.** Partner with the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) to promote destinations and tours in the Choctaw Nation through [NativeAmerica.Travel](https://www.nativeamerica.travel).
- 3.4. HOUSING.** Facilitate housing development in communities across the region, both rental units and units for purchase.
- 3.4.1.** Continue to partner with Choctaw Housing and other community partners to ensure Affordable Housing needs are met for those residents earning less than 60 percent of the Median Family Income.
- 3.4.2.** Conduct a housing demand study that documents the regional needs for market rate housing.

PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE INFILL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Maintaining, improving, and expanding the existing housing stock in rural towns is an important component of place-making and vibrant communities. It enhances the physical core, retains the historic character, and strengthens the connectivity of the communities.

A variety of policies and programs have been utilized across the US. Below is a list of policies and programs that could be useful in communities in the Choctaw Nation.

- **POLICY REVIEW.** Review and revise municipal policies and land use code to ensure that they encourage rather than inhibit infill development.
- **LOTS & DESIGNS.** Offer infill lots at little to no cost and make design plans of houses that could be built on the lots available at no cost.
- **TRAINING & LABOR.** Partner with school districts, KTC, and Southern Workforce Board to establish a construction training program that provides hands-on training while making construction labor more readily available in the region.
- **EXTREME MAKEOVER.** Encourage redevelopment of existing structures by making foreclosed or vacant homes available at little or no cost, providing low-cost labor (see training program above) to renovate them, and assisting homeowners in accessing low cost loans and/or grants for repair and restoration.

- 3.4.3.** Using the study that quantifies and documents housing demand, actively attract housing developers to the region.
- 3.4.4.** Enhance the region's stock of move-in ready housing by developing new housing for rent and for purchase.
- 3.4.5.** Establish the Community Housing Fund, which would be open to investors that live in the community or through the Opportunity Zone program. The fund would purchase homes and vacant lots, rehab or build houses, and sell or rent structures.
- 3.4.6.** Work with regional cities and towns to create policies and programs that incentivize the development and remodeling of infill housing.

3.5. INFRASTRUCTURE. Accelerate infrastructure investments and improve coordination of projects in the region.

- 3.5.1.** Identify and prioritize infrastructure projects that will directly influence regional competitiveness. To do this, engage in a regional planning process that looks holistically at infrastructure needs, with input from each county, and prioritizes projects based on estimated impact, feasibility, cost, and public support.
- 3.5.2.** Mobilize regional stakeholders around the highest priority projects to advocate for public funding and/or identify available grant funding.
- 3.5.3.** Provide stakeholder teams with technical assistance and support related to public relations and building community support to help them "sell" the projects to their community.
- 3.5.4.** Facilitate the creation of a regional transportation plan that prioritizes transportation investments and guides the region's advocacy agenda with ODOT and US DOT.
- 3.5.5.** Support the development of Interstate 49, which will bring an international trade corridor in proximity to the eastern portion of the Choctaw Nation.
- 3.5.6.** Assist communities across the region in accessing available grant funds to support critical infrastructure projects in their communities.
- 3.5.7.** Coordinate infrastructure projects with the needs of certified and other deal-ready sites to identify opportunities to improve infrastructure availability at the sites with projects that are already funded.

POTENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Over the course of the strategic planning process, a number of infrastructure limitations or project ideas surfaced. These ideas and projects included the following:

- East-west connectivity improvements – capacity and quality of Highways 9 & 3
- Natural gas capacity and access (the gas is present in the region, but being shipped out)
- Improved broadband connectivity
- Improvements to Port of Keota/Carl Albert
- Highway 75/69 – improvements to meet interstate standards
- General road maintenance
- Extension of Talimena Scenic By-Way into Talihina
- Additional access along Indian Nations Turnpike
- Expansion of short line rail road access using inactive Right of Way and rail sidings/spurs
- Strategic development of water-related infrastructure to support water-intensive industrial development
- Expansion/improvement of MKARN navigation system
- Connections to I-49

ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

To implement the economic development strategy, Choctaw Business and Economic Development will need to align its resources. To begin to make progress, the department will need at least three staff under the director. As the volume of leads and projects grow, the department will need more support staff.

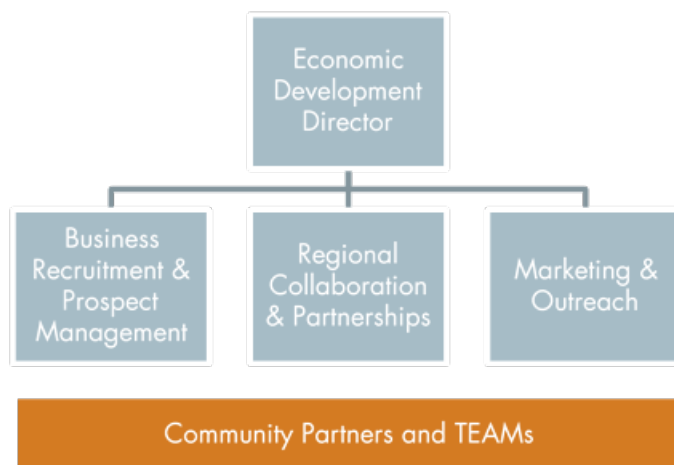
The partnerships with community organizations and TEAMS of community leaders will be instrumental to the scale, reach, and impact of the Choctaw economic development efforts. Initially, the capacity of these community partners will need to be built up. However, this investment in capacity will eventually be able to amplify the economic development efforts of the Choctaw Nation.

TIP recommends organizing around the following functional areas:

- **Economic development director** (in-place)
- **Business Recruitment & Prospect Management:** an analytical-minded, detail-oriented professional with experience working at an economic development organization. Responsible for coordinating and preparing responses to RFPs, organizing site visits, following-up with prospects, and tracking leads. Also involved in target industry research and lead identification. This function could eventually grow to include an analyst to assist with research and a coordinator to assist in preparing responses and coordinating site visits.
- **Regional Collaboration & Partnerships:** an experienced professional with established relationships in the region to serve as a “connector” between communities and stakeholders. Responsible for coordinating the regional business visitation program, building strong partnerships with regional communities, and providing communities with assistance in a range of things, from writing to grants to facilitating community stakeholder meetings. Over time, this function should be expanded to include field representatives located in Pittsburg, Le Flore, and McCurtain Counties.
- **Marketing & Outreach:** a coordinator who can design marketing materials/messages as well as develop and execute targeted outreach campaigns. Responsible for target industry marketing activities, event/meeting planning and coordination, assisting in RFP response preparation, and managing the Choctaw Economic Development brand.

In addition, special and priority projects will be assigned a project manager from among the dedicated economic development staff. The project manager will be responsible for assembling a team, moving the project forward, and reporting progress to the rest of the team.

FIGURE 1. PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Building staff capacity is every bit as important as building community leadership and capacity. TIP strongly encourages all of its clients to make investments in staff professional development, including basic economic development courses as well as more advanced course work from organizations such as the Economic Development Institute and the International Economic Development Council.