

Business Success & Job Availability

Goal 1: Create a prosperous county economy in which businesses thrive and good jobs are available and position county residents for success in today's economy.

Intended outcomes: Reverse the net outmigration of jobs from the county

Responsibility: Business Success & Job Availability Action Team

Challenges that remain, following mid-term review:

- Crawford County businesses continue to struggle with turnover, retention and attraction of new talent. Jobs are available locally, but hard to fill due to skills gap, generational shift and barriers such as child care, transportation, substance abuse and lack of “employability skills” (dependability, teamwork, work ethic).
- Technology and a low wage base continue to affect the quality of the workforce.
- Laid-off or unemployed workers struggle to regain work with sustainable wages and are unsure of what education or training is available to move forward.
- Administrative barriers originating in the public sector sometimes can impede creation and/or operation of businesses.
- Crawford County is limited in both what it has to offer potential businesses or talent, and has limited financial resources to market what it does have to offer. Nationwide, site selection is trending toward eliminating older buildings and sites that are not ‘shovel-ready.’ Crawford’s inventory of sites and buildings that would meet these criteria is low and will require significant infrastructure improvements to stay competitive.
- Small businesses and start-ups sometimes lack the financing or administrative expertise to successfully launch or expand.
- Entrepreneurial development needs to be promoted more, and information and assistance in navigating the process is not easy to find.

Strategy 1.1: Streamline public administrative services to make it easier and more efficient to do business.

- Improve communication with and relationships between local government and existing businesses; influence change to make processes, procedures, regulations and incentives easier to navigate. Increase collaboration between government and business leaders so they can help one another and stimulate growth/expansion.
- Help new businesses choose to locate in Crawford County by improving the flow of communication between local, state and regional Economic Development and government officials. Help to make local and regional information-- incentives, grant and loan opportunities, permits, zoning, regulations, infrastructure and utilities-- more accessible online and easier to navigate during the inquiry and site selection process.
- Support small businesses and entrepreneurs by creating a Small Business and Entrepreneurial Resource Network-- local experts who can help established small businesses and start-ups with business and financial planning, financial and personnel management, government regulations, permits, etc.
- Facilitate the development of programs that promote cross-training of government, business and education leaders to ensure that those seeking information know where to get the answers efficiently.

Strategy 1.2: Strengthen ability of businesses to compete, adapt, innovate and diversify in the global economy.

- Continue to assist the Crawford Partnership with Economic Development efforts such as Retention and Expansion visits and Wage and Benefit surveys. Support can include developing effective and relevant survey questions; conducting R&E visits to local businesses; gather, analyze and distribute data; strategize ways to further address concerns learned through these efforts; and connect businesses to solutions when applicable.
- Increase collaboration among economic development support systems and engage outside expertise to provide technical assistance when needed.
- Help facilitate programs and initiatives that improve the quality of the county's workforce through education, training and skill advancement from entry level status to executive level.

By the Year 2020: Work to increase access to funding for existing businesses and new businesses (small and large); research and possibly develop countywide fund that can further support retention, expansion, workforce, training and other business concerns that might be preventing growth.

Strategy 1.3: Promote economic growth countywide—planning for emerging trends and market-ready technologies.

- Work with existing businesses as they seek to expand or diversify.
- Promote and attract new business opportunities *with intent*—thus protecting the county's niche without stifling growth. Proactively plan site and spec building development to accommodate these new opportunities. Examples include, but are not limited to: bio-agriculture, food and beverage manufacturing, health and wellness/nutrition and flexible engineering/design of spec buildings and sites.
- Support small businesses and entrepreneurs by creating a Small Business and Entrepreneurial Resource Network-- local experts who can help established small businesses and start-ups with business and financial planning, financial and personnel management, government regulations, permits, etc.
 - Promote and encourage ways entrepreneurs and small businesses can support one another—incubators, maker-spaces, small business development centers, etc.
 - Leverage local resources and assess what gaps may need to be filled accordingly.

Strategy 1.4: Become advocates for Crawford County as being a great place to live, work and raise a family.

- Increase outreach and communication to businesses and local residents so they can be equipped to promote Crawford County as a place where people seek to live, work and do business.
- Help support improvements to the county's quality of life to encourage people who've left to come back here and raise their families, and also to attract new families.
- Continue to connect local students and educators to local job opportunities and business assets available countywide. Continue to promote leadership, educational, training and career pathways to strengthen the next generation's workforce.