

Making the Knowledge Economy Work for All Kansans ***Kansas Comprehensive Strategic Plan Update***

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Dear Fellow Kansan,

Seventeen months ago, when work began to update the state's strategic plan for economic development, one could not have imagined the degree of change that would occur within our economy and to our nation in such a relatively short period of time. Then, Kansas' and national economies were still producing favorable results, even though there were early signs of a slowdown. Then, conflict among nations was limited to that primarily carried out under the rule of law. Many were only beginning for the first time to recognize the name Osama bin Laden and few had heard of al-Qaeda. The challenge then confronting Kansas, Inc. and its partners in this venture was to create a sense of urgency that now was the right time to take stock of our economic standing and of our readiness to adapt to the emerging challenges of a changing world.

Today, as we release *Making the Knowledge Economy Work for All Kansans*, our complacency has been shaken. There is a prevailing sense of urgency driven by a national economy in recession. State revenues are insufficient to meet commitments already made to the people of Kansas (much less to provide for innovations that would jumpstart growth for a new era of economic well-being.) And America has entered into a war against terrorism like none other that we have faced in our history. Confidence must be maintained.

Making the Knowledge Economy Work for All Kansans incorporates the wisdom of more than eleven hundred Kansans, resulting in our competitive assessment of the Kansas economy, the main report, and policy action recommendations distilled therefrom. Whether through participation in an extensive series of community-based discussion groups, industry cluster meetings, gatherings of statewide associations, or by taking the time to complete the online survey created to enable every citizen to make his or her voice heard in the process, Kansans have left their indelible imprint on this work product. It represents the best of Kansas, and Kansas, Inc. proudly offers it as a consensus view of our strengths and weaknesses, of our challenges and opportunities, and of the changes that need to be made to assure our continuing strength.

Today is not a time for retreat. It is a time for bold action. The analysis that underpins this broad set of strategies and these specific policy recommendations, begins a process of economic renewal that will not be easily or quickly accomplished. In many instances, implementation of this plan will require a fundamental change in the way in which we view our state. It will require hard choices among competing interests for limited resources. It will require that we exhibit the confidence of those first Kansas pioneers who, at great risk, set out to create a new life for themselves and for following generations. But our enduring capacity to persevere in the face of difficult times, to take risk as a necessary means of achieving reward, is what characterizes Kansans. It is after all, our state's motto: *Ad Astra Per Aspera*.

Charles R. Ranson
President