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632 SW Van Buren, Suite 100
Topeka, KS 66603

KANSAS, INC. BOARD DISCUSSES REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Topeka, Kansas, September 16, 2010 --- The Kansas, Inc. Board of Directors met September 8, 2010 in Topeka, KS at the Kansas Children's Service League. Co-Chaired by the Governor, Kansas, Inc. is governed by public and private sector leadership representing key Kansas economic industrial sectors. A key aspect of Kansas, Inc. is the exchange of pertinent information from core business sectors and public sector leadership.

Prior to the Meeting, Janet Schalansky, President and CEO of the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL), provided an overview of the KCSL and its mission to protect and promote the well-being of children. Stan Ahlerich, President of Kansas, Inc. noted the presentation by Schalansky set the stage for the day's discussion and put everything in perspective as to why we want to succeed with our efforts.

Ahlerich summarized the day's discussion, noting, "State resources and policies that buttress regional economic development can be prudent tools in the arena of economic stability and growth. Because of the diversity of our state and its limited resources, these assets must be positioned in a balanced and thoughtful manner for local communities to embrace and use at their discretion." Furthermore, Ahlerich noted the regional approach to economic development discussed during the meeting built upon several concepts brought forth through Kansas, Inc. research, underscoring that the state must create an economic environment that helps both small and large businesses, whether they are located in rural or urban regions.

Highlighting regional economic growth opportunities, Brad Kramer, Director of the Advanced Manufacturing Institute (AMI), Manhattan provided an overview of regional economic growth through business innovation and opportunity networking. Kramer noted business innovation enables sustainable global competitiveness, and successful entrepreneurs are not necessarily smarter, just better connected than others.

Jeff Tucker, Associate Director of AMI, provided an overview of the Kansas Opportunity Innovation Network (KOIN), a current project intended to create an environment that transcends geographic isolation, discovers new markets, innovates openly and fosters global competitiveness to be at the intersection of new ideas and opportunities. Tucker noted the network will essentially provide the framework to build connections around opportunities and span traditional geographic boundaries to identify new opportunities.

Building upon the discussion, John Cyr, Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Regional Development Organizations (KARDO) highlighted regional realities and stressed the importance of creating functional, virtual regions that are not defined by administrative or traditional boundaries, but rather focus on building critical mass (population and expertise) to generate opportunities throughout Kansas.

Kansas Department of Commerce Secretary William Thornton described the importance of finding a balance between large and small business incentives and services with regards to state policy. Thornton noted this issue is critical for both rural and urban areas.

Donna Johnson, President of Pinnacle Technology, Lawrence, stressed the importance of high-speed internet accessibility in both rural and urban areas, as many businesses now rely on this technology for access to the global market. Johnson further noted businesses are willing to pay for resources that improve their bottom line, and opportunities such as business training, outreach, and other resources could be made available on a larger scale via the internet or regional workshops.

Representative Tom Burroughs, 33rd District, Kansas City, noted that when approaching economic development from a regional perspective, the impact of a shifting population must be considered. Burroughs further noted the ongoing trend of the state's population shifting away from rural to urban areas will have an impact on state-level economic development policy.

During the meeting, several individuals representing private sector businesses and industries, as well as various levels of government throughout the state, provided input regarding regional economic development efforts.

In conclusion, Ahlerich referred to the Kansas, Inc. Strategic Plan, noting that ultimately some communities are going to be successful and some are not. The attitude and actions of community members will determine their success, and this cannot be legislated. The regional approach to economic development offers collaborative opportunities that may encompass many more communities and provide the opportunity for success beyond the traditional boundaries of economic development.

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About Kansas, Inc. Kansas, Inc. is a public-private partnership designed to conduct economic development research and analysis with the goal of crafting policies and recommendations to ensure the state's ongoing strategic competitiveness for economic growth.

For questions or additional information contact: Debby Fitzhugh, Director of Operations, (785) 296.1460, (785) 296.1463 fax, or Email: ksinc@ink.org or visit the website at www.kansasinc.org