



The Kansas, Inc. *eREPORT* provides analysis intended to stimulate discussion in order to identify policy options and build consensus essential for concerted action on vital economic issues. Discussion points from several resources have been compiled in this publication; therefore some points brought forth may not necessarily represent the consensus views of the entire Kansas, Inc. Board, but are simply provided as a starting point for discussion.

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Addressing technology infrastructure needs in Kansas

Technology such as broadband and wireless voice access are crucial for today's business environment and must be considered as essential as traditional utility services. [Research has shown a link between infrastructure investments and economic growth](#), such as investments in highways and telecommunications accelerating economic growth, or investments in information technology contributing to increased labor productivity.

The [Kansas, Inc. strategic plan](#) highlighted the importance of studying, mapping and enhancing strategic technology assets in the state while identifying and addressing infrastructure gaps through collaborative cross-boundary relationships. Best practices brought forth in the plan included the [Connected Nation Model](#), which is intended to facilitate market-based strategies for expanding broadband availability and adoption rates through public-private partnerships.

Understanding and mapping existing technology infrastructure can assist both the public and private sectors, and a key aspect of the Connected Nation Model is the mapping function. The federal stimulus package recently signed into law includes \$7.2 billion for broadband grant and loan applications, and utilizing best practices can position the state to take advantage of these and other opportunities.

Encouraging entrepreneurship in Kansas

Entrepreneurship is a key aspect of several strategies and recommendations brought forth within the Kansas, Inc. strategic plan.

Developing an environment to grow existing businesses and encourage the creation of new businesses is critical to fostering economic opportunity in Kansas.

Within the [2004 Kansas Economic Growth Act \(KEGA\)](#), [NetWork Kansas](#) was created to promote an entrepreneurial environment throughout Kansas by connecting entrepreneurs and small business owners with the right resources, expertise or education at the right time.

During FY 2008 Kansas, Inc. examined the depth and quality of entrepreneurial activity as a result of NetWork Kansas and determined its programs were effective and the foundation was in place to have successes going forward. Further analysis regarding the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations are outlined in the report on our website www.kansasinc.org

Further information regarding Network Kansas and their development of the first statewide network devoted to entrepreneurship and small business is provided in their latest [annual report](#). The development and expansion of this network of entrepreneurial services delivered through various partnerships is critical to creating a successful entrepreneurial environment throughout Kansas.

Understanding the economic impact of the military on the state

A source of economic development often overlooked is the contribution of the military to the Kansas economy. Several military installations foster growth of the state's economy by increasing private sector jobs and overall economic well being. Following the [2005 Base Realignment and Closure \(BRAC\)](#) decisions, combined with decisions made by the Department of Defense regarding transformation, modularity and the global repositioning of military personnel and missions – estimates of the direct economic contribution of the military to the state were \$2.5 to \$3.0 billion per year by 2012.

Recognizing the importance of understanding the overall economic impact of the military on the state, the [Governor's Military Council](#), in partnership with Kansas, Inc. have commissioned a study to uniformly assess the direct and indirect economic impact of all military activities in Kansas. Focusing on the relationships the military has within the state's economy and understanding its impact can position the state for future opportunities. **The report is scheduled to be complete during summer 2009 and will be available on our website www.kansasinc.org**

Creating demand-driven workforce development

Workforce development is a critical issue across the state, and Kansas must be competitively positioned with a demand-driven workforce development system that meets the needs of the business community. The strategic planning process emphasized the importance of maintaining a qualified workforce throughout the state, as it is clear that business and industry will follow talent.

In collaboration with the Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Board of Regents, and Workforce Network of Kansas Board, Kansas, Inc. provided research that illustrated a looming disconnect between the skills and knowledge driving new technologies and ways of doing work, and the demographic and social factors impacting the workforce and workplace. The study concluded states that succeed in aligning workforce supply with demand will be most competitive in attracting, retaining and growing their competitive advantage nationally and globally.

The full report is available [here](#).

Three areas of workforce focus highlighted during the strategic planning process were: **1) training** (secondary, postsecondary and customized business training); **2) attraction and retention**; and **3) portability and lifelong learning**.

Kansas can enhance the structure of its current customized training system by utilizing existing state resources (Workforce Investment Act funds; Kansas Industrial Training/Retraining programs; Investments in Major Projects and Comprehensive Training program; and the Postsecondary Technical Education Authority) to design and implement customized training programs that deliver skilled employees to qualified companies in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Efforts such as those of the [Kansas Postsecondary Technical Education Authority](#) can provide accountability and assist in aligning the state's education system with the needs of industry through funding incentives and tangible partnering of state educational institutions.

Focusing on science, technology, engineering and math fields while developing partnerships between businesses and educational institutions can build workforce capacity and assist in retaining and attracting a skilled and educated workforce. Programs such as the [Olathe 21st Century High Schools Program](#) already implement these types of concepts and could be further developed as a template for statewide application.

Providing an educational continuum that allows individuals of all ages to seamlessly transition through all levels of education and training can encourage lifelong learning opportunities for all Kansans. Customized training certificates/credits, transferable college credits and common course numbers can all contribute to lifelong learning opportunities.

Further details regarding the focus on creating a demand-driven workforce development system is provided in the [Kansas, Inc. strategic plan](#) and a recent [Kansas, Inc. issue paper](#).