



## Ada Jobs Foundation

### Economic Development Strategies Accomplishments Since 1/2014

The Ada community has significantly advanced after participating in the Take PART (Planning Ada Right...Together) process which occurred over the summer of 2013. Several community stakeholder groups continue to meet and are providing direction in the areas of beautification and quality of life. The health and safety stakeholder group has yet to meet, but leadership has volunteered and are developing a plan to accomplish the identified goals. The Ada Jobs Foundation is the lead entity for economic development taskforce and was instrumental in coordinating the entire initiative.

The goal for economic development through the Take PART process was:

*To create an atmosphere for business and industry that supports the quality of life that residents wish to have.*

Economic Development Objectives were created in the areas of population, housing, income, wages, and retail sales with the following specific goals.

- By 2020, increase total retail sales by 10% through shopping local education campaigns and recruiting new businesses.
- By 2018, increase average wage by 10% by recruiting new businesses and industry, as well as, encouraging entrepreneurship through greater facility choices.
- ✓ Complete a workforce housing study by 2014. **[COMPLETE]**
- By 2020, increase county population by 10%.
- ✓ Develop a "Brand" for Ada. **[COMPLETE]**

The City of Ada completed the housing study in 2014 and included \$2M for workforce housing in an eight-year sales tax initiative that begins in January 2016. The AJF Board adopted an implementation strategy for the economic development strategic plan in the spring 2014 with the Council fully funding implementation in July 2015. The Plan, *Growing Big Opportunities for Ada's Economy*, included a target industry analysis, strategic initiatives to achieve goals, and an overall community branding effort which was ultimately adopted by the AJF, Chamber, and the City of Ada. The remaining objectives are benchmarked as follows:

	2013	Goal	Achieve by	Current	Accomplished
Retail Sales	\$360.37M	+10%	2020	\$378.37M	5.0%
Average Wage	\$34,385	+10%	2018	\$35,608	3.6%
County Population	37,492	+10%	2020	38,005	1.4%

Plan implementation was grouped into five strategic initiatives: Ready to Grow, Local Business Growth, Talent Growth, Targeted New Business Growth, and Home-grown Entrepreneurs. An implementation time line was developed taking into account the financial/budgetary constraints and organizational resources.

Allison Larsen with TadZo Consulting stated in the planning process that in order for Ada to be successful, the community must positively address opportunities within our control to overcome some of the weaknesses (lack of buildable sites, sufficient infrastructure for growth, decent and adequate workforce house, expedited development process, etc.). While many of the weaknesses are currently

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beyond local control (remote location, two-lane highways, smaller workforce, low unemployment rate, et. al.), efforts to influence decision makers at the state and federal levels are underway with the AJF leading in the areas of water, transportation and education.

### Ready to Grow

The three strategies include **Organizational Readiness**, **Product Readiness**, and **Marketing Readiness**. The fact that Ada has several entities that perform economic development tasks confuses site selectors. The recommendation was to fully integrate Ada Jobs, Ada Chamber, Science and Natural Resources Foundation (SNRF), and the Ada Industrial Development Corporation (AIDC). In December 2014, the Chamber Board voted to not merge with the AJF. SNRF sold 20 acres to Frontier Trading Company and 68 acres to AIDC. The SNRF Board voted to give \$400K to ECU and \$50K to the Nature Conservancy for water research and development. While not merging, SNRF is focusing on their core mission and away from economic development.

The AJF is leveraging resources through a cooperative partnership with ECU by sharing the economic development director, Sandra Stevenson's, time and with ECU providing physical space and support for BRE, Talent Attraction, and Entrepreneurship efforts. Sandra is leading the Ada Business Team, Intern Ada, scheduling site visits, and coordinating the quarterly manufacturer's breakfasts. Developing the industrial airpark (350 acres) was specifically identified in the plan for exploration. AJF, with funding through the City's Proposition Two account, commissioned Olsson Consulting to create a master plan to allow for growth on the east side of the Ada Municipal Airport.

Staff researched economic development websites and will manage the project by hiring a design firm and dictating content for the site. The AJF purchased the IP Address [www.GrowAda.com](http://www.GrowAda.com) and will migrate all existing content to the new site. An inventory of data sources has occurred and the ECU Department of Cartography and Geography has permitted the Stonecipher School of Business access to their GIS software which includes Business Analyst. Staff have identified data sources and has begun purchasing subscriptions. AJF staff are managing our branding efforts through an outside vendor, Community Matters, who is responsible for public relations, social media marketing, website content management, et.al. A full subscription to a new site consultant data source, State Book, was purchased. Data from across the US is accessible with variable query options which allows the real estate consultants to further narrow their searches very quickly. OGE and PSO contracted with State Book to waive the community licensing fee but the expanded subscription provides AJF for page customization and the ability to depict live data from the State Book microsite.

### Local Business Growth

Local visits have occurred with positive information being received. Flex-n-Gate invested approximately \$50M toward equipment and facilities which allowed them to add approximately 200 new jobs. Superior Fabrication has exceeded their employment and sales goals. Nearly every manufacturer expressed their greatest concern to be an insufficient talent pool of workers. iQor renewed their lease for an additional 5 years and plans to hire 100 new employees. The Local Manufacturers group has met twice and continues to gain momentum. Staff have set monthly goals for company visits and have been asked by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the Southern Workforce Investment Board for inclusion. AJF plans to purchase a full license to E-Pulse which is a customer relationship management (CRM) software package for economic development

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organizations. E-Pulse will provide continuity between visits and better tracking of conversations or requests from the companies between the Ada Business Team partners.

Staff and the Pontotoc Technology Center celebrated Manufacturing Week in early October. The AJF visited 8 facilities over a two-day period and presented a hard hat to commemorate the event. A photo was taken at each site and published on FaceBook, the website, and the October e-letter. Video production will occur in 2016 to highlight several products manufactured in Ada and celebrate local entrepreneurship.

### Talent Growth

Video production will occur in 2016 for talent recruitment. As the new AJF website is launched, a talent recruitment section will be added. Intern Ada was launched in September with AJF staff participating in career fairs at OSU, OSU-IT, and OU for the recruitment of engineering and technical career interns for next summer. Lodging is being finalized and 150 resumes were given to each of the participating companies. Additional career fairs are planned for the spring semester.

The AJF has recommended to the Council that digital manufacturing products be purchased. The PTC will house the equipment and make them available to local manufacturers. Students at the PTC will gain valuable knowledge using cutting edge technology as production moves to digital. The National Center for Manufacturing Sciences estimates that 90% of all products will be developed virtually in the future. They believe that digital manufacturing is one of America's greatest – and most underutilized – competitive assets.

The Career Discovery program has migrated from under the Ada Jobs Foundation umbrella where it will eventually be a free-standing entity. The 12<sup>th</sup> Grade element was added this fall. The nationally acclaimed program continues to gain recognition with Garvin and Bryan counties creating similar programs.

### Targeted New Business Growth

The marketing brochures for each targeted sector are available on the AJF website and printed for tradeshow or events. ROI Vision is providing lead generation services for AJF. Five appointments were held at the National Business Aviation Association tradeshow. Custom packets for each company were distributed highlighting Ada's advantages in their expansion. While the budget allowed for increased participation in ODOC events, scheduling conflicts prohibited staff from attending the NYC and Houston call trips and receptions.

The donation from SNRF is the seed money needed for ECU to create the Oklahoma Water Institute. Additional funds are anticipated when the ECU Foundation sells land on Stonecipher Blvd. Staff is scheduled to meet with EPA executives to discuss designating the Ada Area as a "Water Cluster". There are approximately 15 such designations around the US, but only one that concentrates on ground water. Meetings with highway and airport officials are planned during the trip to DC as well.

### Home-grown Entrepreneurs

The entrepreneurship strategy is not as defined as the other strategies. The AJF has recommended to the Council that a 10,000 s.f. structure be erected at the airport. The building will have the flexibility to house up to 6 businesses. ECU, PTC and AJF are collaborating to provide data and resources to local small businesses. The AJF sponsors the ECU business pitch competition called Tiger Tank with

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the competition growing in numbers and in quality each year. AJF is proud to continuously support the i2E Governor's Cup Competition with ECU sweeping the small business division.

### Tracking Growth

AJF was recognized internationally as having the best annual report for 2014 in the communities under 25,000 population category. Staff received the award at the International Economic Development Council's Annual Conference in October. Violet PR was commissioned to produce the 2015 Annual Report which should be completed by April 2016.

AJF has assembled all the necessary information to submit an application to become the smallest Accredited Economic Development Organization. Approximately 50 organizations have received the elite designation. The Metro Tulsa Chamber of Commerce and the Ponca City Development Authority are currently the only Oklahoma designees.