

Location:

Western Oklahoma
I-40 Corridor

Population:

98,817

Estimated median household income:

\$39,323

Estimated households below poverty level:

17.4%



The Stronger Economies Together (SET) initiative was created to help communities in rural America work together to develop and implement an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging strengths of their region. This program was adopted in the Western Oklahoma I-40 Corridor.

The Western Oklahoma I-40 Corridor is a region that includes 108 miles of Interstate Highway 40 that parallels historic Route 66 through Caddo, Custer, Washita and Beckham Counties. The corridor has experienced higher economic stability, while surrounding rural areas farther from the interstate highway have experienced population declines and lower economic activity. The key sectors of the economy have been and continue to be agriculture and energy production. New technological innovations are indicating that those key

sectors will be strong thanks in part to an increase in drilling activity and improved conservation cropping practices. These innovations provide a window of opportunity for economic development to build a stronger region.

Vision

The Western Oklahoma I-40 Corridor has strong communities collaborating to build a diversified economy with an aerospace industry, value-added agriculture products, strong energy sector and a high quality lifestyle.

Goals

The Western Oklahoma I-40 Corridor team has actively pursued several of their SET goals. These include reestablishing and expanding the aerospace industry, creating diversified agriculture and value-added products and developing amenities that will support strong community lifestyles.

Western OK I-40 Corridor SET Region



"I believe that the I-40 SET has positioned itself to be a significant player in this arena. Thank you to everyone who has worked to make this goal of our SET a reality."

-Jim D. Mason, Director of Economic Development, City of Elk City, Oklahoma

Aerospace

The research and testing of Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) was the key aspect of expanding the corridor's aerospace industry. The team sought to attract companies to the region that were involved in the developing, testing and/or manufacturing of UAVs. This would generate an estimated \$57.6 million economic impact in Oklahoma and create potentially thousands of jobs by 2025.

The team created a brochure marketing UVA opportunities in the region, as well as attended national UAV conferences and trade shows where the team members initiated discussions with aerospace companies looking to relocate or expand. The team was also awarded a grant from the Public Service Company of Oklahoma which allowed them to develop their own UAV/Precision Agriculture brochure and to attend the Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International annual meeting and trade show in Orlando, Florida. They received a very favorable response from the trade show attendees and

vendors. Representation at this show generated interest from companies who are focused on utilizing UAVs as part of their precision agriculture program. Great potential and opportunity still exists in this area as companies are waiting on the Federal Aviation Administration to release rules allowing for commercial usage of UAVs.

Agriculture

The agriculture sub-committee developed the "Drying Canola Project" in late May 2014 that tested the feasibility of drying canola in a peanut trailer. This pilot project was an effort to reduce the risk of high-moisture canola shattering and to explore diversified agriculture opportunities in the region. This resulted in a two-day drying process that reduced moisture from 30% to 6% through the use of peanut drying facilities. This was estimated to add \$78 per acre of harvested canola to the sale price at a cost of only \$6 per acre to dry. This is a great benefit for current canola growers in the region, and it also presents opportunity for growers who did not consider canola to be economically viable on their land. The project's results translate to \$7.2 million in additional income, not counting the potential income for those growers who may consider canola a viable option. The project will



continue to develop and expand over the next few of years, providing significant opportunities to growers to increase both their yields and overall incomes.

Community

The team has been aggressive in pursuing amenities that would enhance the quality of life for residents as well as potential residents. The region was especially in need of both additional daycare facilities and a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) facility. Through the team's efforts, both of these needs were fulfilled. Two additional daycare facilities opened up in Weatherford in late 2014 and early 2015, and a CDL facility opened in Hinton in late 2014. These facilities were a direct result of community discussions with the SET team.

Final Thoughts

Through collaboration with the Western Oklahoma I-40 Corridor team and the community, great strides have been made to securing the region's economic future and positioning it as a competitive region.



For more information, visit us online at srdc.msstate.edu/set or call the SRDC at 662-325-3207.

