

KANSAS CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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*Strategic Planning for Economic Development in Kansas
from a Local Perspective*

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Strategic Planning for Economic Development in Kansas from a Local Perspective

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the encouragement of state legislative initiatives, such as the Community Strategic Planning Assistance Act in 1990, Kansas communities began to assume greater responsibility for economic development. Currently, 100 of Kansas' 105 counties either have a strategic plan for economic development or are in the process of developing one. By looking at the strategic planning effort from a local perspective, including the early implementation efforts of the plans, we hope to contribute to the improvement of the strategic planning process in Kansas.

Methodology

We surveyed key players in the planning process at the local level to gather information and solicit opinions about the planning process, the strategic plan, and implementation of the plan. The purposes of our study were to 1) determine the process followed by the county in developing their plan, 2) determine the level of satisfaction by local leaders with strategic planning, and 3) look at early implementation efforts. No effort was made to determine if strategic planning resulted in increased economic activity, such as more jobs, higher wages, or more businesses. Because we wanted to look at some early implementation outcomes, we chose to study counties that had a strategic plan in place for two years or longer. Fifty counties were identified as potential participants for the study and these counties were contacted in the late summer of 1994. All 50 counties agreed to participate in the study, which consisted of two surveys: Leaders and Participants. Both surveys consisted of four parts: background information, the planning process, the strategic plan, and implementation of the plan. The results of the two surveys follow.

Background Information

One of the striking findings of the study is the high professional level of community leaders in both the public and private sectors that were involved in the county-wide strategic planning process. The role of leader was quite extensive with many leaders filling a number of key roles, including chair of the steering committee, chair of a task group, local coordinator, and facilitator. Participants were also very involved in the planning process, often times engaging in several roles such as members of task groups, members of steering committee and local coordinator.

The Planning Process

In general, leaders and participants were very positive about the usefulness of strategic planning with 86 percent of the leaders and 70 percent of the participants agreeing that it was a useful exercise. All the counties made a concerted effort to engage in a comprehensive and

thoughtful planning process. Most counties followed the recognized strategic planning steps—organize, data collection, analysis, vision, key issues, objectives, strategies, action plan, implement, and monitor, evaluate and update. All the counties also recognized the importance of broad-based participation for a successful planning effort and sought to include key leaders from both the public and private sectors in their process. For most counties, strategic planning was not an exercise quickly done, but rather a deliberate process that was done in a thorough manner. The strategic planning process took an average of 12 months to complete with a range of one to thirty months.

Completion of the planning process took a variety of people and organizations working together within the county and from outside the county. Counties relied on many different sources to finance their planning efforts, with county government, the state planning grant program, and the local economic development organization most frequently mentioned as helping. It also took the collaborative efforts of a number of key organizations and individuals within a county to keep the process on track. Economic development organizations, whether public/private corporations or private area chambers of commerce, provided the leadership necessary to complete the process. In all the counties we studied, some recognize group gave formal approval or adoption and in most counties more than one group formally approve it.

The Strategic Plan

The strategic planning process produced a written plan for all the counties studied. It also produced other outcomes, such as enhanced communication and educational awareness about economic development. Almost half the counties also reported that new organizations emerged as a result of the planning effort.

The leaders were very positive about the product of the planning process, the plan itself. They felt most strongly that the issues addressed were of importance to the county. They were also positive about the content of the plan with a majority of the leaders agreeing that their plan had creative, innovative strategies, identified resources, contained realistic timetables, and set clear priorities. Participants, on the other hand, appeared to be not as knowledgeable about the details of the plan with their large number of “not sure” responses or no response. However, statistical analysis showed no significant difference between the leaders and participants in their responses except for realistic timetables.

Implementation of the Plans

Despite doubt about some of the benefits of strategic planning, overall, leaders and participants felt that strategic planning in their county was successful. We found that 94 percent of the counties were currently implementing their plan and that, on average, 61 percent of the strategies were estimated to being implemented. The kinds of strategies being implemented varied from plan to plan with 84 percent of the counties implementing quality of life strategies followed by 82 percent implementing business environment strategies.

While most counties are doing a good job of implementing the majority of their strategies, less than half of the counties have an annual report telling what strategies are being implemented. This lack of reporting about implementation is echoed in the level of unsureness and disagreement by leaders and participants that the public is aware of the progress being made in implementation.

Both leaders and participants agreed that the county benefitted from strategic planning, with leaders agreeing more strongly. Some benefits of strategic planning agreed upon by over half of the leaders and participants were: enhanced communication, more awareness of other groups, raised awareness of economic development, and other outcomes besides the written plan.

Not all leaders and participants held positive opinions about strategic planning and its results. About 30 percent of the participants chose not give any opinion, favorable or unfavorable, about statements concerned with results and outcomes of the planning process. More than half of the leaders and participants did not agree that the plan was specific in identifying who was responsible for implementing the various strategies. Over half also felt that the plan was not consulted by government officials for decision-making about future economic growth. The majority of leaders and participants did not agree that the process was a vehicle for innovative change in the county and that new leadership was developed as a result.

Conclusion

A major conclusion of the study is that local leaders and participants believe that strategic planning has been a successful and beneficial effort. It has engaged leadership from both the public and private sector and encouraged broad-based citizen participation. The process for most counties has been a deliberate and thorough one with counties following most of the recognized planning steps. People involved in the process, in general, believe that it was a useful exercise and that their counties are addressing important issues in their plans.

More awareness on the progress being made with implementing the plans and the details of the plans is needed. There is also room for improvement for using the plans in decision-making by government officials. Given the turnover in local leadership, particularly with elected officials, a concerted effort to educate new leaders about the plan and the process used needs to be made. Regular updating of the plan (every 1 - 2 years) will help educate new leadership and provide an opportunity to make the public aware of what has already been accomplished.

Despite some of the weaknesses about the contents the specific plans, strategic planning has provided an opportunity for various organizations and people within a county to work together to set policy and direction for economic growth. We are just starting to see some of the impacts of strategic planning, such as the emergence of new organizations and the implementation of strategies. We expect to see more benefits as more counties finish their plans and start implementing them.

Strategic Planning for Economic Development in Kansas from a Local Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Rural communities in recent years have experienced external threats and internal weaknesses that endanger their standards of living and quality of life. The tradition of relying upon agriculture to sustain rural communities is no longer tenable for many communities in Kansas. Instead, community leaders, businesses, and state and local policy makers have recognized the role of planning in adapting to changing social and economic environments. The strategic planning method, which seeks to capitalize on the assessment of a community's strengths and weaknesses, has been used to advance local economic development in a number of states, including Kansas.

In 1990, the Kansas Legislature passed the Community Strategic Planning Assistance Act, a three-year program for non-metropolitan counties¹ that provided funds to county-wide and multi-county economic development entities to develop strategic plans and finance action elements of those plans. The purpose of the act was to:

- (a) Build and enhance economic development capacity at the local and regional levels;
- (b) develop and sustain long-term commitments for local development efforts;
- (c) encourage broad-based local and multi-county development strategies that build on local strengths and to complement and reinforce statewide economic development strategy;
- (d) maximize state investments in economic development through more efficient implementation of limited resources; and
- (e) provide recognition for successful communities to motivate other

¹Six counties were not eligible for funds under the 1990 act; those counties were: Douglas, Johnson, Leavenworth, Sedgwick, Shawnee, and Wyandotte.

communities (Substitute HB2603, 1990).

An additional incentive for strategic planning came from the 1992 Kansas Enterprise Zone Act which linked a county's qualification for the Non-metropolitan Regional Business program to the adoption of a strategic plan. In 1993 the Kansas Legislature renewed the strategic planning program for another three years and in 1994 eligibility was extended to include grant awards to neighborhood organizations for blighted areas in metropolitan counties (Substitute SB183, 1994).

With the encouragement of these state legislative initiatives, Kansas communities began to assume greater responsibility for economic development. As of April 1995, the Strategic Planning Program has made 52 planning grant awards to 66 counties and 59 action grant awards to 56 counties.² Strategic planning has extended beyond those counties receiving state support with 100 of Kansas' 105 counties currently either having a strategic plan or in the process of developing one.³

The proliferation of strategic planning by communities is relatively recent and the results have not been substantially evaluated.⁴ While annual reports are prepared for the Kansas Legislature by the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing, these reports do not evaluate

²Calculated from the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing's (KDOCH) Annual Report on the Community Strategic Planning Program to the Joint Committee on Economic Development, August 31, 1994 and from a list of Community Strategic Planning Program grant awards made during FY95 received from KDOCH. The planning grant numbers include 14 awards made to 3 metropolitan counties.

³Calculated by strategic planning update information gathered by KCCED at the University of Kansas as of April 1995.

⁴See bibliography of related articles in Appendix A. Please note the reference to Strategic Planning Committee Survey. In 1994, the Docking Institute for Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University conducted a survey on strategic planning. While the results have not yet been published, based on a review of the survey instrument, it appears that the study focused on the planning process prior to the written plan not implementation of the plan.

the program but rather state the number of grant awards made, amount of money spent, and types of projects funded. The Strategic Planning Program was also studied in 1992 when KCCED engaged in a study of county-wide strategic plans as part of Kansas Inc.'s effort to update the state's strategic plan (Ott and Tatarko, 1992). Thirty-six plans from forty-three counties were reviewed and analyzed with the aim of linking the results of local efforts to the state's strategic program. The aim of the study was to present the information found in the plans not to evaluate the plans or the process. It also did not evaluate the planning effort with regards to increased economic activity for the counties.

The Kansas Legislature has illustrated its long-term commitment to strategic planning and economic development through its support for the Strategic Planning Program and its extension into the metropolitan counties. Enough time has passed to see some results and outcomes of the planning effort. By looking at the effort from a local perspective, including early implementation of the plans, we hope to contribute to the improvement of the strategic planning process in Kansas. The methodology for our study follows.

METHODOLOGY

All 105 counties in Kansas were contacted in the spring of 1994 to update their strategic planning status. To obtain a better assessment of implementation outcomes, we chose to study only those counties that have had a strategic plan in place for two years or longer. Fifty counties were identified as potential participants for the study and these counties were contacted in the summer of 1994 (Figure 1). All 50 counties agreed to participate in the study, which consisted of two surveys: Leaders and Participants.

We surveyed key players in the planning process at the local level to gather information

and solicit opinions about the process, the strategic plan and implementation of the plan. Our purposes were to 1) determine the process followed by the county in developing their plan, 2) determine the level of satisfaction by local leaders with strategic planning, and 3) look at early implementation efforts. No effort was made to determine if strategic planning resulted in increased economic activity, such as more jobs, higher wages, or more businesses.

The Leaders Survey was conducted in the fall of 1994 and involved a telephone interview with the person most knowledgeable about strategic planning for the county. All the counties chose to participate in this portion of the study.⁵ The Participants Survey was conducted in the spring of 1995 and sought the opinions of a cross-section of potential participants in the strategic planning process.⁶ A random sample of 160 participants was generated and 93 participants from 45 counties (Appendix B) responded for a response rate of 58 percent.⁷

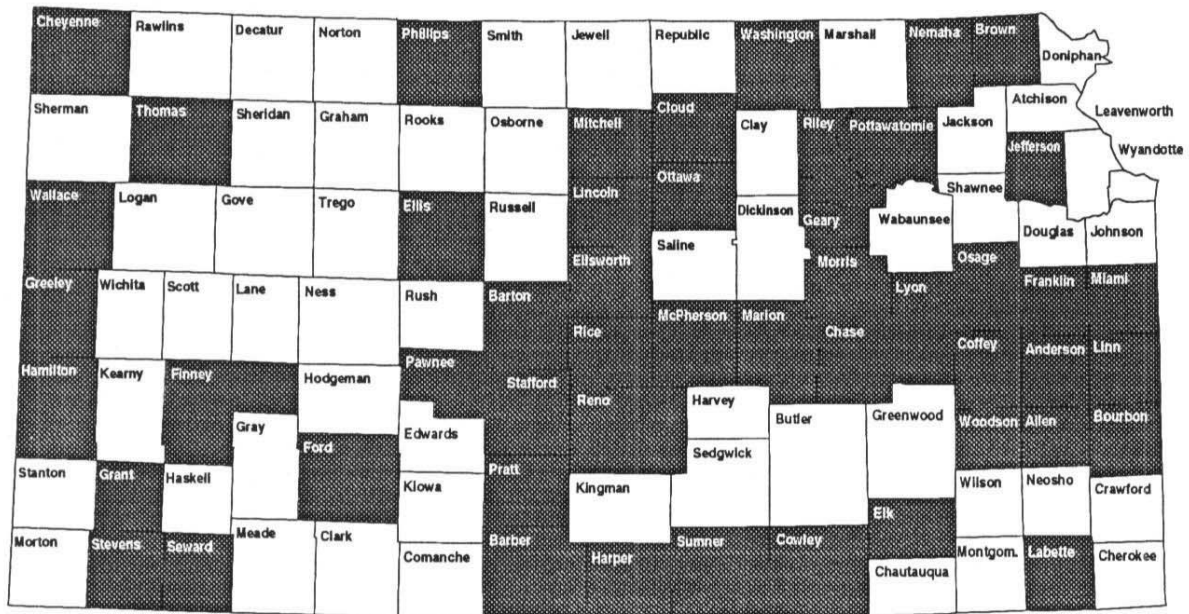
Both surveys contained questions organized under four sections: background information, the planning process, the strategic plan and implementation of the plan. The results of the two surveys follow.

⁵Chase and Lyon counties developed a joint strategic plan. Chase County asked that the person interviewed for Lyon County represent their county as well. Hence, the 49 participants in the Leaders Survey.

⁶The list of potential participants was generated from four sources: the local economic development leaders, the strategic plans, a list of county commissioners, and a list of city managers or clerks for the largest city in each of the 50 counties.

⁷The names on the participants list were surveyed by phone during a two-week period in February and March, 1995. Forty-five usable interviews were completed for a response rate of 28 percent. In an effort to improve the response rate, the same survey was mailed in April to the 95 participants not reached during by phone. From that mailing, 48 surveys were returned, bring the number of usable responses to 93 for a 58 percent response rate.

Figure 1
Counties Participating in KCCED Implementation Study



Source: KCCED, University of Kansas, Implementation Study, 1994-95.

RESULTS

Background Information

One of the striking findings of this study is the high professional level of community leaders in both the public and private sectors that were involved in the county-wide strategic planning process (Table 1). The majority of leaders (60 percent) were executive directors or presidents of the organization responsible for economic development in the county. This organization was either a public/private corporation, chamber of commerce, or a multi-government agency. A good number of leaders (20 percent) worked for the private sector and volunteered their time to the strategic planning effort. The role of the leader in the strategic

Table 1
Background Information on Survey Participants
Leaders versus Participants

<i>Title</i>	Leaders	Participants	Combined
Executive Director/President	59.2%	14.0%	29.6%
City Manager/Administrator/Clerk	0.0	36.6	23.9
County Commissioner	2.0	21.5	14.8
Director of Economic Development	8.2	4.3	5.6
Executive Vice President/Vice President	6.1	1.1	2.8
City Commissioner/City Council Member	2.0	3.2	2.8
Other ^a	22.4	19.4	20.4
N=	49	93	142
Organization Work for:			
	Leaders	Participants	Combined
City Government	0.0%	40.9%	26.8%
County Government	8.2	32.3	23.9
Public/Private Corporation	32.7	7.5	16.2
Private Sector	20.4	10.8	14.1
Chamber of Commerce	16.3	3.2	7.7
Multi-Government Agency	12.2	2.2	5.6
Other ^b	10.2	3.2	5.6
N=	49	93	142
Role in Strategic Plan			
	Leaders	Participants	Combined
Member of Steering Committee	85.7%	44.1%	58.5%
Chaired Steering Committee	42.9	8.6	20.4
Member of Task Group or Committee	73.5	54.8	61.3
Chaired Task Group or Committee	36.7	16.1	23.2
Local Coordinator	69.4	30.1	43.7
Facilitator for the Process	32.7	19.4	23.9
General Participant only	0.0	12.9	8.5
Other Roles Performed ^c	28.6	14.0	19.0
N=	49	93	142

^aOther includes: county administrator (3), chairperson of the steering committee (3), coordinator (3), secretary (3), extension agent (3), real estate agent (2), lawyer (2), accountant, school superintendent, publisher, and pastor.

^bOther includes: planning commission, economic development committee (2), combination of pub-priv corp/multi-govt/ chamber, private college, and citizen organization.

^cOther includes: publicity (3), liaison (3), grants/funding (3), board member (2), treasurer, analyzed results, research, and paperwork.

planning process was quite extensive, with many leaders filling a number of key roles, including chair of the steering committee, chair of a task group or committee, local coordinator⁸, and facilitator (Table 1).

The participants in strategic planning also came from high professional level positions within the community and their involvement in the process was extensive. The majority of participants (73 percent) worked for the city or county governments either as professional staff or as elected officials (Table 1).⁹ Participants were also very involved in the planning process, often times engaging in several roles such as members of task groups, members of the steering committee and local coordinator.

The Planning Process

In order to analyze the outcomes of strategic planning, one must understand the process used. Elements of the planning process include, the steps taken, participation by key groups, formal approval or adoption of the plan, year completed, financing, and outside assistance. It is also important to understand the driving force and leadership behind the process, the county's involvement, and whether or not people thought it was a useful exercise.

Defining the Process. Figure 2 illustrates steps in the strategic planning process. Before we begin discussion about which steps were used by the counties we studied, we feel that we first need to describe the various steps so that one can better understand just what strategic planning

⁸Local coordinators set up public meetings, communicated with the public and the facilitators, and, in general, kept the planning process on time and on task.

⁹Given the four sources used to generate the participants list (local leaders, strategic plans, county commissioners, and city managers or clerks), it was expected that at least half of the respondents would work for public-funded organizations. While the response rate for the public sector is greater than anticipated, it is not surprising given the trend of increased interest and involvement for this sector in local economic development.

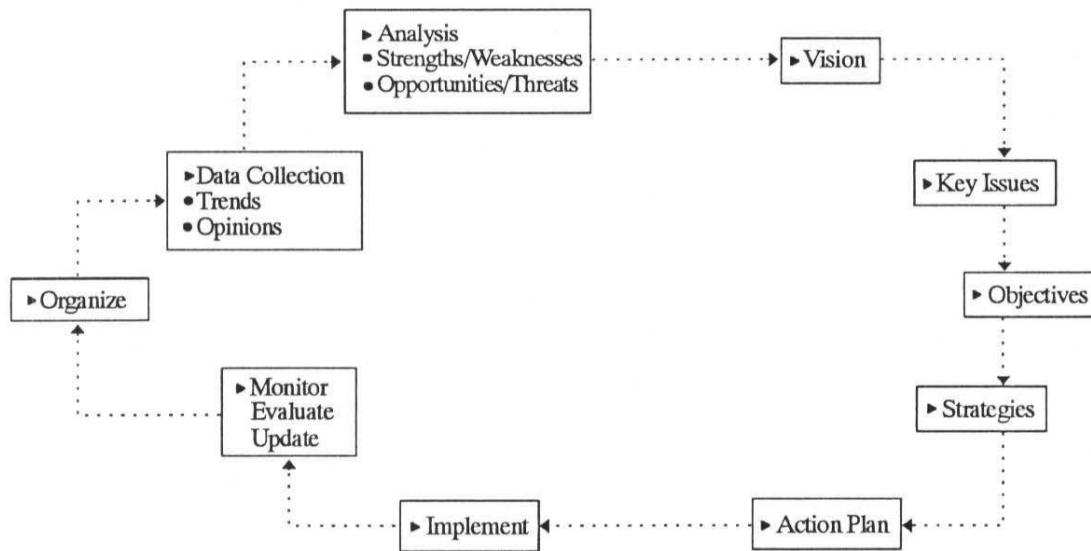
is.

The first step shown in Figure 2 is *organize*, which usually involves forming a steering or stakeholders committee comprised of civic, governmental, educational and business representatives. Members are selected that have the power and influence to insure that the plan is accepted, is implemented and is successful.

The next three steps—*data collection*, *analysis*, and *vision*—are concerned with taking stock of the county and understanding key factors and trends important to the county's future. Data collection includes community surveys, community meetings, and analysis of data gathered. The internal and external analysis is often referred to as a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. The internal analysis looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the county and what resources are available to address them. The external analysis, as the name implies, focuses on the outside trends—opportunities and threats—and how they affect the achievement of the goals of the plan. The vision component of strategic planning involves creating a value-based vision for the county through a creative process that focuses on forming a consensus for the county's "hoped-for-future".

The fourth step illustrated in Figure 2 is *key issues*. Key issues are selected on the basis of the data analyses and community surveys conducted in the previous steps. These issues are given priority by forming task or issues groups or committees around them. These task groups develop *objectives* and *strategies* for the key issues. Typically, goals and objectives for each issue are determined using information gathered from the internal and external analyses. The strategies and tactics are developed after the goals and objectives and focus on how to exploit the opportunities and minimize the threats that the county faces.

Figure 2
The Strategic Planning Process



Source: KCCED, Institute for Public Policy and Business Research, University of Kansas, November 1992.

The *action plan* specifies how the strategies will be put into action; it states who is responsible for doing what, what resources are available, and what the timetables are for each segment. The action plan is really the county's guide for the next step—*implementation* of the plan.

Because strategic planning is an ongoing process, the process is not complete without a mechanism to *monitor, evaluate and update* the plan. The plan is monitored with respect to its implementation, resources, timetables, and accomplishments. As it is monitored, it is evaluated to determine if the goals and objectives are being reached and if the timetables are being met. As

conditions change, the plan needs to be updated so that it is consistent with the new environment.

Recognized Process. All the counties made a concerted effort to engage in a comprehensive and thoughtful process, and most counties followed the recognized planning steps illustrated in Figure 2. All the counties indicated that they had a steering committee, developed a mission or vision statement¹⁰, held town or public meetings, and set up task or issue groups (Table 2). Most of the counties incorporated data collection in their process, with 94 percent conducting a data analysis and 90 percent using community surveys. Ninety-two percent of the counties reported that they conducted a SWOT analysis as part of their planning effort. A SWOT analysis by itself is a valuable exercise for any community because it provides a new perspective on the community particularly with regard to the external forces. It is not an easy exercise and the use of one shows a serious effort to conduct a thorough planning process.

The one weak link in the planning process was the development of a mechanism to monitor, evaluate, and update the plan. We found that 35 percent of the counties did NOT incorporate this step in their process (Table 2). However, we also found that 57 percent of the counties had updated their plan (Table 3) and 45 percent had an annual report regarding implementation (Table 4), leading us to conclude that most counties that had a mechanism developed were using it.

Broad-based Participation. Strategic planning is not a form of planning that can be successfully conducted by planners in an office. It is a participatory process that calls for broad-based citizen participation for a successful planning effort. All the counties recognized the

¹⁰In the 1992 KCCED study for Kansas Inc., 83 percent of the plans reviewed had vision and/or mission statements. In most cases, the plan contained a mission statement of the economic development group guiding the process. This 1994 survey did NOT distinguish between vision or mission statement in its questioning.

Table 2
The Planning Process: Steps Taken
Leaders Survey

<i>Steps</i>	Number	Percent
Steering or Stakeholders' Committee	49	100.0
Mission and/or Vision Statement	49	100.0
Data Analysis on County	46	93.9
Community Survey(s)	44	89.8
SWOT Analysis	45	91.8
Task or Issue Groups/Committees	49	100.0
Mechanism to Monitor, Evaluate and Update the Plan	32	65.3
Town or Public Meetings	49	100.0

Number of Public Meetings

Range: 1 - 20 meetings
Mean: 6 meetings

Top 5 Most Mentioned Number of Meetings

Number of Meetings	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
2 meetings	5	95.8
3 meetings	6	85.6
5 meetings	7	65.2
6 meetings	10	50.9
8 meetings	5	26.4

<i>Location</i>	Frequency	Percent
Dispersed across the county	24	49.0
Not Dispersed	14	28.6
Somewhat Dispersed	11	22.4

Table 3
The Strategic Plan: Outcomes
Leaders Survey

<i>Outcomes</i>	Number	Percent
New organizations emerged	24	49.0
Plan has been updated	28	57.1
 <i>Year Updated</i>		
1995	1	2.0
1994	16	32.7
1993	10	20.4
1991	1	2.0

Table 4
Implementation of the Plans: Strategies Being Implemented
Leaders Survey

Plan is being implemented: 46 counties or 94 percent

Percent of strategies being implemented (estimated)

Range: 5 to 100 percent **Mean:** 60.6 percent

Annual report regarding strategies being implemented: 22 counties or 45 percent

Kinds of strategies being implemented:

	Number	Percent
Quality of life	41	83.7
Business environment	40	81.6
Commitment capacity	34	69.4
Human capital	34	69.4
Infrastructure dev/assistance	31	63.3
Financial capital	26	53.1
Technology/Innovation	26	53.1

importance of broad-based participation and sought to include key leaders from both the public and private sectors (Table 5). All the counties reported participation by city residents, rural residents, elected city officials, elected county officials, business leaders, and chambers of commerce.

Not only should strategic planning be broad-based but it should also be open to input from all members of the community. Public or town meetings are critical to maintaining an open process. All the leaders said that their county held town or public meetings (Table 2). The number of public meetings ranged from one to twenty with an average of six public meetings held throughout the planning process. And, 96 percent of the counties had two or more public meetings during the process. Almost half (49 percent) reported that the public meetings were dispersed across the county. The effort exhibited by most counties to solicit participation and input shows an understanding of the importance of participation in securing a successful planning effort.

Measure of Success. One measure of a successful planning effort is the formal approval or adoption of the plan, which serves to enhance the implementation of the plan. Some recognized group gave formal approval or adoption of the plan in all the counties, and most counties had more than one group formally approve it (Table 6). County government formally adopted or approved the plan in all but one of the counties studied and in well over half of the counties the local economic development organization or council, city government and state government formally approved the plan. This high success rate illustrates that the right people in the county were linked into the process and indicates that the process was a serious and deliberate one that worked towards the endorsement of key groups to enhance the plan's

implementation.

Table 5
The Planning Process: Participation
Leaders Survey

<i>Groups</i>	Number	Percent
City residents	49	100.0
Rural residents	49	100.0
Elected city officials	49	100.0
Elected county officials	49	100.0
Business leaders (includes bankers)	49	100.0
Chambers of Commerce	49	100.0
Economic Development Organizations	45	91.8
Education leaders	42	85.7
Media	42	85.7
City or County Staff	34	69.4
Other ^a	10	20.4

^aOther includes: senior citizens, youth, civic groups, minority groups, legal profession, historical society, convention and visitors bureau, regional planning commission, social services agencies, libraries, churches, extension, farmers, and outlying communities.

Table 6
The Planning Process: Formal Approval or Adoption
Leaders Survey

<i>Groups</i>	Number	Percent
County government	48	98.0
Local econ dev organization or council	38	77.6
City government	36	73.5
State government agency	28	57.1
Extension office	18	36.7

Deliberate and Recent Process. For most counties, strategic planning was not an exercise quickly done but rather a deliberate process that was conducted in a thorough manner. The strategic planning process took an average of 12 months to complete with a range of one to thirty months (Table 7). Sixty-three percent of the counties completed the process in 12 months or less; only one-fourth of the counties spent less than 6 months to develop a written plan.

Strategic planning in Kansas is mostly a recent local effort that has grown through the support of legislation at the state level, starting in 1990. Therefore, we were not surprised to find that the majority of plans had been completed in 1991 and 1992 (Table 7). The median response was 1992.¹¹ We did find 10 counties that had plans prior to 1990, including one county that completed its plan in 1988.

Working Together to Complete. Completion of the planning process takes a variety of people and organizations working together within the county and from outside the county. Counties relied on many different sources to finance their strategic planning efforts, with county government, the state planning grant program, and the local economic development organization most frequently mentioned as providing funding (Table 8). Twenty-eight different combinations of sources were reported. Just eight counties reported using only one source to finance their planning effort.

¹¹Please note that the researchers chose not to study a county unless it has had a strategic plan for at least two years in order to allow enough time to see some implementation results.

Table 7
The Planning Process: Length and Year Completed
Leaders Survey

Length in Months: **Range:** 1 - 30 months **Mean:** 12 months

Top Responses	Frequency	Cumulative
		Percent
24 months	3	98.0
18 months	7	91.8
14 months	3	71.4
12 months	11	63.3
9 months	4	38.8
6 months	6	24.5
3 months	3	8.2

Year Completed: **Range:** 1988 - 1994 **Median:** 1992

Year	Frequency	Percent
1988	1	2.0
1989	3	6.1
1990	6	12.2
1991	14	28.6
1992	17	34.7
1993	5	10.2
1994 ^a	3	6.1

^a1994 plans are updates of earlier plans.

Table 8
The Planning Process: Financing the Process
Leaders Survey

<i>Group</i>	Number	Percent
County government	37	75.5
State planning grant	34	69.4
Econ dev organization or council	26	53.1
City government	24	49.0
Chamber of Commerce	20	40.8
Local business	18	36.7
Other ^a	4	8.2
<i>Top Five Most Frequent Combinations</i>	Number	Percent
County/State Planning Grant	6	12.2
City/County/Chamber/ EDO/State Planning Grant	5	10.2
City/County/Local Business/ Chamber/EDO/State Plan Grant	5	10.2
State Planning Grant Only	4	8.2
City/County/State Planning Grant	3	6.1

^aOther includes: individuals, news media, banks, and community college.

Not only did counties seek financial assistance from a variety of sources to complete the process, they also sought planning assistance from a number of outside organizations (Table 9). The universities in Kansas provided assistance to over half of the counties. The involvement by the universities illustrates the strong leadership role played by higher education in strategic

planning, particularly with regards to educating community leaders about strategic planning.¹² Counties most frequently sought outside assistance for data analysis, facilitation of public meetings, community surveys, vision/mission statement, and report writing.

It also took the collaborative efforts of a number of key organizations and individuals within a county to keep the planning process on track. Economic development organizations, whether public/private organizations or private area chambers of commerce, provided the leadership necessary to complete the planning process. These groups were frequently recognized as the driving force behind the process along with the steering committee and specific individuals (Table 10). Some key individuals mentioned included the director of the chamber of commerce, the director of the economic development organization, and chair of the steering committee. The leadership of these groups and individuals was critical for a successful planning effort at the local level.

Useful Exercise. In general, the leaders and participants were very positive about the usefulness of strategic planning, with 86 percent of the leaders and 70 percent of the participants agreeing that it was a useful exercise for the county (Tables 11, 12, and 13).¹³ The majority of both groups also agreed that the county was very involved in the creation of the strategic plan. While it appears that leaders felt more strongly about involvement and usefulness than did the participants, statistical analysis found no significant difference in their responses (Table 11).

¹²The original 1990 legislation designated specific funding to the University of Kansas, Kansas State University, and Fort Hays State University to provide assistance to counties receiving state planning grants.

¹³The leaders were asked to respond to several statements about the strategic planning process by stating if they "strongly agreed", "agreed", were "unsure", "disagreed," or "strongly disagreed" with certain statements. To simply the discussion, agree in the text refers to a combined "strongly agree" and "agree" response and disagree refers to a combined "disagree" and "strongly disagree" response unless otherwise noted through quote marks.

This high level of agreement about the usefulness of and involvement in the planning process reinforces the premise that a serious effort was made by counties to develop a plan that would be implemented.

Table 9
The Planning Process: Outside Assistance
Leaders Survey

Outside Organization Provided Assistance: 45 counties 91.8 percent

<i>Type of Organization</i>	Number	Percent
University	32	65.3
Private Consultant	19	38.8
Cooperative extension	17	34.7
Community College	10	20.4
Other ^a	5	10.2

Type of Assistance Provided

Data analysis	41	83.7
Facilitation of public meetings	40	81.6
Community surveys	34	69.4
Vision and/or mission statement	34	69.4
Report writing	32	65.3
Other ^b	6	12.2

^aOther includes: regional planning commission and Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing.

^bOther includes: education/information, writing executive summary, general advice/counsel, review plan, and help with meetings.

Table 10
The Planning Process: Driving Force
Leaders versus Participants

Driving Force Behind the Planning Process

Organization	Leaders	Participants	Combined
Economic dev organization	46.9%	16.1%	26.8%
Specific individual ^a	10.2	23.7	19.0
Chamber of commerce	12.2	7.5	9.2
Steering committee	10.2	4.3	6.3
Private consultant	4.1	4.3	4.2
City government	4.1	4.3	4.2
County government	0.0	5.4	3.5
Other ^b	12.2	24.7	20.4
N=	49	93	142

^aSpecific individuals includes: director of the chamber of commerce (6), director of the economic development organization (6), chair of the steering committee (4), director of a regional econ dev organization (2), local banker (2), state senator, county commissioner, and economic development coordinator.

^bOther includes: several individuals in the community (6), combination city govt and concerned citizens (2), planning commission (2), combination economic development organization and co-chairs of the steering committee, combination city and county government, combination private sector and president of area industry group, combination econ dev org and specific individual, staff, resource conservation district, small business dev association, co-chairs of the steering committee, local extension office, people with special purpose agenda (2), local issues that were important at the time, recognition to focus on resource and talents, getting communities to work together, and seeing a need for planning.

Table 11
Opinions: Combined "Strongly Agree"/"Agree" Response^a
Leaders versus Participants^b

Question	Leader	Participant	Combined
The Planning Process			
County involved	69.4%	54.9%	59.8%
Overall, useful exercise	85.7	69.9	75.3
The Strategic Plan			
Important issues addressed . . .	95.9 ^{††}	81.8	86.6
Innovative, creative strategies	85.7	56.0	66.2
Identifies resources	75.6	46.2	56.3
*Realistic timetables	71.4	38.7	50.0
Clear priorities	73.5	50.6	58.4
Implementation of Plan			
Public aware of progress	53.1	35.5 [†]	41.5
Identifies responsibility	67.4	38.7	48.6
Consulted for decision-making by govt.	55.1	40.8	45.7
More awareness of economic development	71.4	54.9	60.6
Other outcomes than plan	81.6	49.5	60.6
Vehicle for innovative change	63.2	36.6	45.7
Educational tool and raised awareness	83.6	61.3	69.0
New leadership developed	65.3	34.4 [†]	45.1
*Enhanced communication	89.8	66.7	74.7
**County benefitted	93.9 ^{††}	63.4	73.9
**Overall, successful	87.8	61.3	70.5
N=	49	93	142

^{††} median response=strongly agree; [†] median=not sure; otherwise, median=agree.
^aResponses coded: 5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=unsure; 2=disagree; 1=strongly disagree. Strongly agree and agree responses combined for the percentages exhibited in the table.
^bChi square analysis used to test the significance in responses between the two groups. A "*" indicates a statistically meaningful different response between leaders and participants: the probability that this would have occurred through strictly random variation is less than 5 times out of 100. A "***" indicates significance with the probability less than 1 time out of 100.

Table 12
Leaders' Opinions about the Planning Process and the Plan
Leaders Survey

N=49	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>The Planning Process</i>					
County very involved in creation of strategic plan	30.6%	38.8%	16.3%	12.2%	2.0%
Overall, process a useful exercise	46.9	38.8	10.2	2.0	2.0
<i>The Strategic Plan</i>					
Issues addressed in plan of importance to county ^a	63.3	32.7	4.1	0.0	0.0
Plan has innovative, creative strategy that county needs ^b	44.9	40.8	12.2	2.0	0.0
Plan does a good job in identifying resources to help implement	32.7	42.9	20.4	4.1	0.0
Realistic timetables stated in plan	30.6	40.8	16.3	10.2	2.0
Clear priorities set in the plan regarding strategies that county should pursue	30.6	42.9	24.5	2.0	0.0

^aImportant issues include: economic development/business (4), infrastructure (3), tourism (2), health care (2), housing (2), water (2), retail, planning for growth, value added agriculture, new business development, historic value, drug and alcohol prevention, crime prevention, beautification needs, education, government accessibility, technology/information superhighway, and regionalism.

^bInnovative, creative strategies include those concerned with: networking/communication (3), start-up business, sales tax to support economic development, showing off talents of the population, government accessibility, infrastructure needs, and creating a regional congress.

Table 13
Participants' Opinions about the Planning Process and the Plan
Participants Survey

N=93	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
<i>The Planning Process</i>						
County very involved in creation of strategic plan	19.4%	35.5%	26.9%	14.0%	2.2%	2.2%
Overall, process a useful exercise	32.3	37.6	20.4	3.2	4.3	2.2
<i>The Strategic Plan</i>						
Issues addressed in plan of importance to county ^a	40.9	40.9	10.8	3.2	1.1	3.2
Plan has innovative, creative strategy that county needs ^b	23.7	32.3	11.8	5.4	0.0	26.9
Plan does a good job in identifying resources to help implement	16.1	30.1	17.2	8.6	0.0	28.0
Realistic timetables stated in plan	9.7	29.0	26.9	6.5	0.0	28.0
Clear priorities set in the plan regarding strategies that county should pursue	19.4	31.2	18.3	4.3	0.0	26.9

^aImportant issues include: bus retention, expansion and creation (9), tourism (6), human resources (5), leadership (4), health care (4), housing (4), quality of life, includes arts, history, and community center (3), transportation, includes elderly (2), water supply (2), land use (2), natural resources, solid waste, retirement, infrastructure/roads, coordinate efforts of the two major cities in the county, set direction for econ dev, two counties working together, establish an econ dev office, and county-wide survey.

^bInnovative, creative strategies include those concerned with: pulling communities together and involve large groups of leaders (5), tourism, includes historic sites (4), bus retention, expansion and creation (3), recreational activities (3), industrial promotion and recruitment (2), housing (2), investment in community with loc resources (2), human resource issues (2), establishing an econ dev group, retirement living, and regional telecommunications outreach.

The Strategic Plan

The following section discusses some of the outcomes of strategic planning as well as the plan's contents, such as issues, strategies, resources, timetables, and priorities.

More Outcomes than just the Plan. The strategic planning process produced a written plan for all the counties studied. Sixty-one percent of the leaders and participants agreed that the process produced other outcomes than just the written plan (Table 11). Other outcomes specifically mentioned included better communication and information, emergence of cultural activities and organizations, increased awareness for tourism efforts, and addressing issues important to the community such as landfills and historic buildings. The majority of leaders and participants also agreed that the process enhanced communication and raised awareness between various groups and individuals within the county regarding economic development (Table 11). Almost half of the counties reported that new organizations emerged as a result of the planning effort (Table 3). Some of the organizations mentioned included county housing department, county health network, downtown improvement committee, human resource council, housing committee, beautification committee, recreational planning group, and health care group.

Addressed Important Issues. The leaders were very positive about the product of the planning process—the plan itself—and they strongly agreed that the issues addressed were of importance to the county (Table 12). Some important issues addressed included business retention, expansion and creation, tourism, health care, housing, and human resources. They were also positive about the contents of the plan with the majority of leaders agreeing that the plan has creative, innovative strategies and that it identified resources, contained realistic timetables, and set clear priorities (Table 12). Innovative strategies discussed included those

concerned with networking and working together, tourism (including historic sites), start-up business, and government accessibility.

Participants appeared to be not as positive about the plans as the leaders. Almost 30 percent of the participants chose not to respond to statements concerning innovative strategies, resources, timetables, and priorities (Table 13). This, along with their “not sure” responses (17 to 27 percent), would tend to indicate that the participants were not as knowledgeable about the details contained in the plans as were the leaders. However, except for realistic timetables, statistical analysis showed no significant difference between the leaders’ and participants’ responses (Table 11).

Implementation of the Plan

The following section discusses the current status of the strategic plan, the strategies being implemented, and who is responsible for implementing the strategies. It also includes leaders’ and participants’ opinions regarding implementation, outcomes, and overall success.

Status and Strategies. Given the high level of public participation and involvement in the planning process, we expected that most counties would be implementing their strategic plans. We found that 94 percent of the counties were currently implementing their strategic plans and that, on average, 61 percent of the strategies in the plans were estimated as being implemented (Table 4).

The kinds of strategies being implemented¹⁴ varied from plan to plan, with 84 percent of

¹⁴Strategies for economic development have been categorized in previous research under seven foundations: business environment, commitment capacity, financial capital, human capital, infrastructure, quality of life, and technology/innovation capital. Quality of life strategies were defined as those concerned with the cultural, artistic, recreational, environmental, educational, and historical aspects of a community. Business environment strategies were those strategies that create business, create business opportunities, or improve business competitiveness. Financial capital strategies were those that provide capital to businesses in different stages of development. Technology/

the counties implementing quality of life strategies, followed by 83 percent implementing business environment strategies (Table 4). Quality of life strategies, while not considered traditional economic development activities, impact a community's ability to retain and attract citizens and jobs and Kansas communities and counties are increasingly recognizing their importance. We found counties were least likely to be implementing financial capital and technology/ innovation strategies with a little over half of the counties implementing these strategies (Table 4).¹⁵

Responsibility for Implementation. It took many different groups or organizations within a county working together to implement the strategic plan (Table 14). The three groups most frequently identified as responsible for implementing the plan's strategies were the local economic development organization or council, county government, and city government. These were also the groups most frequently identified as responsible for financing implementation with county government and city government identified more frequently than the economic development organization or council. Other groups also identified by more than half of the counties as responsible for financing implementation were the local chamber of commerce, state government, the private sector, and existing local agencies/organizations.

innovation strategies refer to those that stimulate technology development, coordination, application, and transfer. Commitment capacity referred to those strategies that provide assistance and support to business and economic development.

¹⁵These findings are consistent with a previous study, which found business environment, commitment capacity and quality of life strategies emphasized in the strategic plans reviewed and financial capital and technology/ innovation strategies not emphasized (Ott and Tatarko, 1992).

Table 14
Implementation of the Plans: Responsibility and Financing
Leaders Survey

Responsible for Implementing:

	Number	Percent
Economic dev organization/council	43	87.8
County government	41	83.7
City government	40	81.6
Chamber of commerce	36	73.5
Newly created task force/committee	34	69.4
Cooperative extension service	22	44.9
Regional planning commission	21	42.9
Community college or AVTS	16	32.7
State university	14	28.6
Other ^a	12	24.5

Responsible for Financing Implementation:

County government	42	85.7
City government	35	71.4
Economic dev organization/council	34	69.4
Chamber of commerce	34	69.4
State government	32	65.3
Private sector	27	55.1
Existing local agencies/organizations	25	51.0
Federal government	13	26.5
Other ^b	9	18.4

^aOther includes: civic groups, schools, local stock/dev corp, regional medical center/health care, agriculture coalition, KDOCH, PRIDE, private business, airport board, planning board, county appointed boards, individuals, and main street organization.

^bOther includes: non-profit organizations, community college, historical society, lake association, bank, regional grant, and venture capital.

Benefits of Strategic Planning. Leaders and participants, in general, were in agreement about most of the results and outcomes of strategic planning (Table 11). Seventy-four percent of them agreed that their county benefitted from the strategic planning process, with leaders more strongly agreeing than participants. As previously discussed, some benefits or outcomes agreed upon by more than half of the leaders and participants were enhanced communication, more awareness of other groups, raised awareness of economic development, and other outcomes besides the written plan (Tables 11, 15, and 16).

Areas of Weakness. Not all leaders and participants held positive opinions about the strategic planning process and its results (Tables 11, 15, and 16). More than half of them did not agree that the plan was specific in identifying who was responsible for implementing the various strategies. Over half also felt that the plan was not consulted by government officials for decision-making about future economic growth. The majority of leaders and participants did not agree that the planning process was a vehicle for innovative change in the county and that new leadership was developed as a result of going through the planning process.

About 30 percent of the participants chose not to give any opinion, favorable or unfavorable, about statements concerned with results and outcomes of the planning process (Table 16). Most of the participants that chose not to respond were with the public sector, particularly city managers, city clerks and county commissioners. Because turnover occurs in leadership roles within a city or county, it is important that those responsible for implementing the strategic plan educate leadership, old and new, about its aspects and progress.

Beneficial and Successful. While statistical analysis showed that the leaders were more sure that the participants that the county benefitted from strategic planning and that planning was

Table 15
Leaders' Opinions about Implementation
Leaders Survey

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N=49 *N=48
Public aware of progress being made in implementation	28.6%	24.5%	28.6%	12.2%	6.1%	
Plan is specific in identifying responsibility for implementation	32.7	34.7	24.5	6.1	2.0	
Plan is consulted by government officials when making decisions*	32.7	22.4	26.5	8.2	8.2	
More awareness by organizations and individuals of others	36.7	34.7	18.4	6.1	4.1	
Other outcomes than just the written plan ^a	40.8	40.8	12.2	2.0	4.1	
Planning process served as a vehicle for innovative change*	40.8	22.4	26.5	8.2	0.0	
Worked as an educational tool and raised awareness about econ development	46.9	36.7	10.2	6.1	0.0	
New leadership developed as a result of the planning process	26.5	38.8	20.4	14.3	0.0	
Communication regarding economic development was enhanced	42.9	46.9	8.0	2.0	0.0	
County benefitted from the strategic planning process	51.0	42.9	6.1	0.0	0.0	
Overall, strategic planning was successful	42.9	44.9	12.2	0.0	0.0	

^aOther outcomes include: multi-community involvement, development of tour package, expansion of local business for 35 new jobs, joint meeting between city and county commissioners, increased overall community awareness of economic and social development, awareness of other organizations avoids duplication, and regional leadership program.

Table 16
Participants' Opinions about Implementation
Participants Survey

N=93 Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Public aware of progress being made in implementation	16.1%	19.4%	17.2%	18.3%	2.2%	26.9%
Plan is specific in identifying responsibility for implementation . . .	14.0	24.7	20.4	11.8	0.0	29.0
Plan is consulted by government officials when making decisions	16.1	24.7	20.4	7.5	2.2	29.0
More awareness by organizations and individuals of others	23.7	31.2	9.7	6.5	0.0	29.0
Other outcomes than just the written plan ^a	23.7	25.8	20.4	1.1	0.0	29.0
Planning process served as a vehicle for innovative change	14.0	22.6	22.6	9.7	2.2	29.0
Worked as an educational tool and raise awareness about econ development . .	22.6	38.7	7.5	2.2	0.0	29.0
New leadership developed as a result of the planning process	12.9	21.5	23.7	12.9	0.0	29.0
Communication regarding economic development was enhanced	22.6	44.1	16.1	8.6	1.1	7.5
County benefitted from the strategic planning process	29.0	34.4	21.5	5.4	2.2	7.5
Overall, strategic planning was successful	20.4	40.9	19.4	8.6	3.2	7.5

^aOther outcomes include: cultural activities and organizations (6), tourism efforts, includes increased awareness (4), better communication and information (4), addressed issues, such as land fill, historic buildings (3), housing programs, includes CDBG grant, housing authority (2), attraction of new business (2), economic development director/coordinator (2), enhanced leadership (2), economic development group or task force (2), improved school quality, individual communities started addressing their needs, action grant, enterprise zone designation, and human resource council.

successful in their county, the majority of both groups had favorable views (Table 11). Ninety-four percent of the leaders and 63 percent of the participants agreed that the county benefitted from the strategic planning process. Overall, 88 percent of the leaders and 61 percent of the participants felt that strategic planning has been successful in their county.

CONCLUSION

Local leaders and participants in the strategic planning process in Kansas counties, in general, are positive about the planning process and its results. The experiences for each county are unique, but several conclusions can be drawn about the local perspective of strategic planning for economic development.

Leaders vs Participants. We thought that leaders and participants would have somewhat different opinions about the results of strategic planning and that these differences could be attributed to the level of involvement of the two groups in the planning process and consequently their greater stake in the outcomes of the process. While leaders and participants came from somewhat different backgrounds (Table 1), and therefore assumed different ways of looking at economic development, their opinions about strategic planning varied only slightly (Table 11).

Overall, Useful, Successful, Beneficial. The majority of leaders and participants felt that strategic planning in their county, overall, was useful, successful and beneficial.

Important Issues and Innovative Strategies. Leaders strongly agreed that the issues addressed in the strategic plan were of importance to the county. The majority of leaders and participants also agreed that the plan contained innovative, creative strategies that their county needed.

More Outcomes than just the Plan. While the strategic planning process produced a

written plan for all the counties studies, it also produced other outcomes—communication was enhanced, awareness about economic development was raised, and new organizations emerged.

Reliance on Partnerships to Fund and Implement the Plans. Counties relied on many different sources to finance their planning efforts, with over half the counties relying on county government, the state planning grant program, and the local economic development organization or council. We also found that it takes many different groups or organizations within a county working together to implement the strategic plan, especially partnerships between the local economic development organization, county government and city government

Participation and Implementation. All the counties recognized the importance of broad-based citizen participation and sought to include key leaders from both the public and private sectors in their committees and task groups. All the counties also reported holding town or public meetings during the process to solicit citizen input. We found that 94 percent of the counties are currently implementing their plans, leaving us to conclude that the efforts to enhance local participation increased the likelihood of implementation through greater ownership and more built-in support for the plan.

Lack of Awareness on Progress being Made and Details in the Plan. While most counties are doing a good job of implementing the majority of their strategies, leaders and participants expressed unsureness and disagreement that the public is aware of the progress being made. We found that less than half of the counties have an annual report telling what strategies are being implemented. We also found that participants were not as knowledgeable about the some of the details of the plans—responsibility, timetables, priorities, resources—as were the leaders. This leaves us to suggest that a greater effort is needed in many counties to publicize

the efforts being made to implement the strategic plan.

Room for greater Utilization in Decision-Making. The strategic planning process for almost all the counties was a deliberate and thorough effort that involved a high level of community leaders from both the public and private sectors and sought citizen input from a variety of mechanisms. Yet, we found that less than half of the leaders and participants agreed that it was consulted by government officials when decisions are being made that will effect the future economic growth of the county. More effort is needed to educate new leadership about the plan and the process used to develop. More counties should consider regular updating of the plan, which would involve new leadership in the planning effort and provide an opportunity to make the public aware of the progress being made.

Despite some of the weaknesses about the contents of the specific plans, strategic planning, from a local perspective, has been a successful and beneficial effort. It has involved the leadership from both the public and private sector and has forged partnerships between city, county and state governments along with local private sources to finance the efforts. The process for most counties has been a deliberate and thorough one with counties following most of the recognized planning steps. People involved in the process, in general, believe that it was a useful exercise and that their counties are addressing important issues in often innovative or creative ways in their plans. We are just starting to see some of the impacts of strategic planning, such as the emergence of new organizations and partnerships and the implementation of the strategies. We expect to see more benefits as more counties finish and approve their plans and start implementing them.

APPENDIX A - BIBLIOGRAPHY

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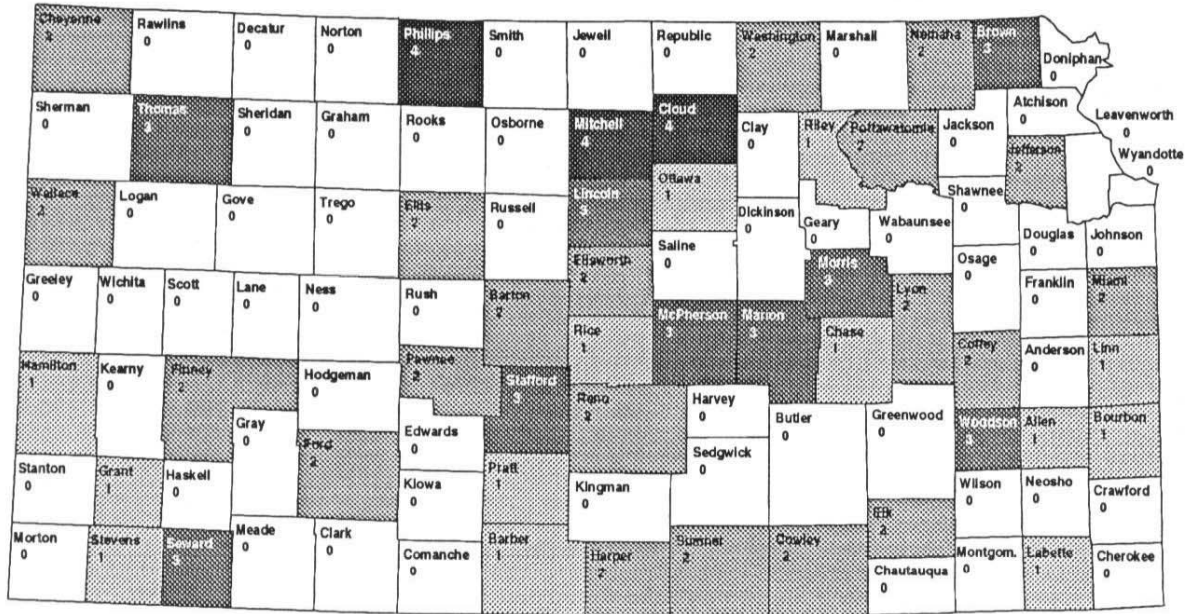
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APPENDIX B

Figure 3
Representation by County in Participants Survey



Source: KCCED, University of Kansas, Implementation Study, Participants Survey, 1995.