

ENGAGE

2020-2023

Champaign County Economic Development Corporation **STRATEGIC PLAN**



OUR MISSION

The Champaign County Economic Development Corporation:

- is a public-private partnership dedicated to fostering a cooperative, county-wide approach to economic development,
- works to improve the economic well-being of all Champaign County through efforts that entail job creation, job retention, tax base enhancements, small business development, and promotion of quality of life, and
- brings together community partners to support economic development by aligning interests through productive relationships, open dialogue, and advocacy efforts.

The Champaign County Economic Development Corporation accomplishes its mission with the following principles in mind:

- Listen, engage, and adapt.
- Communicate and connect.
- Be trustworthy and transparent.
- Provide excellent customer service.

2020-2023 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Business Outreach & Industry Engagement
- Workforce Development
- Regional Promotion & Talent Attraction
- Transportation & Logistics
- Small Business Development
- Regional Collaboration
- Economic Development in Minority Communities



BUSINESS OUTREACH & INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Conduct business outreach visits with local employers
 - Visit non-retail companies annually to identify opportunities, challenges and workforce needs; involve other partners as requested and strategically appropriate
 - Connect company leadership to local service partners, business opportunities
 - Increase awareness of opportunities available through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Conduct industry roundtables that create peer-to-peer relationships and dialogue leading to collaborative efforts
 - Host roundtables annually, based on geographical locations and/or industry needs
 - Be intentional about identifying and including minority-owned businesses
- Assist businesses in accessing public and private financial assistance and local, state, and federal grants
- Provide technical assistance to navigate regulatory processes and enter new markets
- Help new businesses find sites and recruit workers
 - Identify and pursue companies each year that would fill gaps in our supply chain
 - Identify and pursue companies each year that would benefit from our transportation logistics
 - Promote the county as a great place to work in multiple industries
 - Identify job skills needed for company's workforce and collaborate with partners to recruit workers and provide necessary training
- Compile, update, and advertise sites and buildings in Champaign County; build quick, flexible data presentation capabilities to differentiate our advantage in the site selection process
 - Incorporate geographical information systems (GIS) into the database management process
 - Create a bi-weekly reporting system for local brokers and property owners
 - Host a bi-monthly meeting for local brokers and property owners to stay engaged with properties and projects, create opportunity for communication and collaboration
 - Lead county responses to inquiries regarding site selection criteria and expansion opportunities for local businesses



A diverse economy is not just a lofty goal, but a must-have for ongoing regional prosperity.

BUSINESS OUTREACH & INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES CONTINUED

- Identify local industry clusters, local challenges to business growth, attraction opportunities, and talent development in the identified growth sectors of AgTech, MedTech, FinTech, Defense, Data Sciences, and Manufacturing
- Host public and private job fairs as necessary with regional partners to meet the needs of companies and promote the hiring of a diverse local workforce
- Work closely with municipalities to identify best practices and benchmark Champaign County for the creation and management of economic development incentives at the local level
- Identify shared skill needs to prepare joint workforce development and training programs to serve industry clusters, including technical talent recruitment and mid-level management needs
- Be the go-to source for workforce data and reports, including industry and occupation data related to jobs, growth, earnings, demographics, and more
 - On a quarterly basis, publish the following reports, available to investors and community stakeholders: Economy Overview, Highest Ranked Occupations, Gross Regional Product, and Job Posting Analytics
 - Publish the Top Employers Directory on an annual basis
 - Benchmark Champaign County on an annual basis using available tools and industry feedback, including demographic, social, industry, and occupation data
- Identify and work with partners to secure grant funding to support infrastructure, site development, workforce training, and other community/business assets
- Serve as the one-stop office for coordination of economic development projects in Champaign County
- Through the Economic Development Council, host quarterly meetings to share updates on economic development projects, including community partners of the EDC, and hear presentations from businesses, industry, and workforce development partners in Champaign County
- Create a **Business Outreach & Industry Engagement Task Force** that meets quarterly to share ideas, make connections, and hear updates on key programs from one another
- Programs / events / engagement:
 - National Manufacturing Day / Illinois Manufacturing Month
 - CATALYZE, A Professional Networking Event
 - University of Illinois – Chancellor’s Economic Development Advisory Council

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Access to a skilled workforce is the most important factor cited by businesses when making a decision on where to locate or expand.

- Work in conjunction with community partners to support a robust, diverse and resilient talent pool for existing and future businesses
- Engage with businesses to know their current and future talent demand as well as local and national trends; work with educational institutions to turn that information into training programs
 - Identify the most critical job needs in the region and appropriate learning pathways for those jobs, communicate those opportunities with students, parents, educators, and community organizations
 - Explore the implementation of a soft skills certificate program that is recognized as a standard in the county
 - Partner with agencies to increase minority employment in full-time jobs with benefits
- Partner with workforce agencies to develop policies that support businesses and workers alike
- Work with the Chancellor's ED Group Coding Bootcamp Work Team to develop a local coding academy to address the hiring needs of technical talent locally
- Create copy and materials that clearly identify career pathways through educational and workforce programs that exist in Champaign County
- Work closely with partners like the New American Welcome Center and Champaign County Black Chamber of Commerce to ensure that Champaign County is a place where newcomers, immigrants and minority-owned enterprises can thrive and flourish
 - Launch and build upon the Welcoming Economies Technical Assistance Pilot
- Create a Workforce Development Task Force that meets quarterly to share ideas, make connections, and hear updates on key programs from one another
- Programs / events / engagement:
 - #CTEinIL
 - Early College & Career Academy
 - ICATT Apprenticeship Program
 - New American Welcome Center
 - Workforce Innovation Board of East Central Illinois



REGIONAL PROMOTION & TALENT ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

- Develop and execute marketing and attraction strategies and campaigns to market Champaign County to existing and potential businesses and talent
- Explore collaboration opportunities with Parkland College and the University of Illinois to attract alumni back to the community, as well as retention opportunities while students are on campus
- Promote assets and programs/policies of Champaign County for the improvement of the county's image locally, national, and internationally
- Create a new suite of open source digital materials, including videos, to showcase the more traditional economic development assets of Champaign County as a tool for business retention and attraction
- Expand Chambana Proud program in partnership with Visit Champaign County (VCC) - and other appropriate community organizations - to include additional community promotional items to build community pride, create a newcomer program for newly-established community residents and remote workers, and continue to build the Champaign County Recruiters network of local HR professionals
 - In partnership with VCC, create and publish the Community Checklist on a quarterly basis for the Champaign County Recruiters network, which is geared towards new hires
 - Host roundtables and events for the Champaign County Recruiters network
 - Create a Welcome to Champaign County orientation session as part of the newcomer program, to take place twice per year
- Work with municipalities and other interested parties to create a unique incentive program to retain college graduates and attract new talent to the community
- Attend economic development and industry trade shows and conferences to build relationships and market Champaign County for business attraction
- Create a marketing strategy to promote Champaign to Decatur as the I-72 AgTech Corridor, highlighting our ag assets as a region; identify how we can work together more closely to not only collaborate with the existing resources we have, but increase opportunities for workforce training, business and talent attraction, and a general awareness of what's possible here through marketing and branding strategies



Marketing our region and attracting top talent is essential in fostering long-term employment growth.

REGIONAL PROMOTION & TALENT ATTRACTION STRATEGIES CONTINUED

- Support activities for individual and business recognition and celebration
- Create a Regional Promotion & Talent Attraction Task Force that meets quarterly to share ideas, make connections, and hear updates on key programs from one another
- Programs / events / engagement:
 - Innovation Celebration
 - TechMix
 - Made in Champaign County
 - You're Welcome CU
 - Chambana Proud
 - Champaign-Urbana AgTech Week



FAQs

What is Economic Development?

Economic development is defined by the International Economic Development Council as the intentional practice of improving a community's economic well-being and quality of life. It includes a broad-range of activities to attract, create, and retain jobs, and to foster a resilient, pro-growth tax base and an inclusive economy. The practice of economic development is comprised of a collaborative effort involving industry, government and myriad community stakeholders.

Why invest in Economic Development in Champaign County?

Economic development is the core of well-being and quality of life for communities across the United States. It encompasses policies, programs, and activities that seek to create and retain jobs and ultimately facilitate economic growth. The Champaign County EDC works diligently every day to make our county's economic future as bright as it can be through robust, resilient, and inclusive actions that strengthen our local economy and quality of life.

TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTIC STRATEGIES

Enhance regional assets that move people and freight to make our region more competitive.

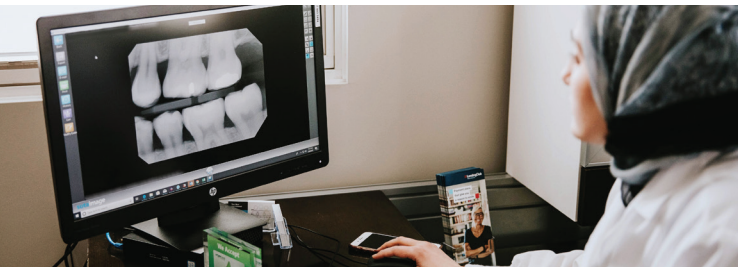
- Create an infrastructure network map to assist businesses needing to locate main transportation routes, fiber optic cable lines, electricity grids, and more
- Identify and support business opportunities as a result of the new port of entry located at Flightstar
- Work closely with Willard Airport staff, University of Illinois leadership, and community businesses to attract new air service development and enhance the visitor experience inside the airport terminal; grow community support of Willard Airport through local pledge campaign
- Focus on addressing challenges and taking advantage of opportunities identified in the Champaign County RPC's Champaign-Urbana Region Freight Plan, including the need for increased rail access, signage for freight routes across the county, and solutions for short-and long-term freight parking
- Support efforts to position Champaign County as a leader in autonomous vehicle research and development
- Continue work with regional partners to address passenger rail challenges of on-time performance, keep a focus of increased daily service routes
- Explore opportunities to enhance the airline industry resources that exist in Champaign County
- Programs / events / engagement:
 - Willard Airport – Executive Committee, Advisory Committee, Marketing Committee
 - Long Range Transportation Plan Steering Committee (Champaign County RPC)
 - Champaign County First



SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

More than half of Americans either own or work for a small business, and they create about two out of every three new jobs in the U.S. each year.

- Host and work to expand the Illinois Small Business Development Center, including the International Trade Center; continue relationship with Bradley University to offer PTAC services
- Assist businesses in accessing public and private financial assistance and local, state, and federal grants
- Work closely with municipalities and community partners to develop, manage, and provide resources to small business programs that support women and minority entrepreneurs



- Advocate for the state of Illinois to implement a matching grant program for SBIR and STTR grants, and other programs that would support the growth of small businesses in our region
- Develop training and workshops around small business needs locally, as well as state and national trends
- Work with partner agencies to develop more opportunities for access to capital for small business owners
- Expand access to SBDC advisors, implement technology solutions to better accommodate schedules and client sessions
- Transition the First Friday Group into a One Million Cups chapter in partnership with community partners engaged in entrepreneurship
- Create a Small Business Task Force (with SBDC Advisory Board) that meets quarterly to share ideas, make connections, and hear updates on key programs from one another
- Programs / events / engagement:
 - Illinois Small Business Development Center at Champaign County EDC
 - National Small Business Week
 - Small Business Saturday
 - First Friday
 - Bridge, Champaign County's Virtual Incubator

REGIONAL COLLABORATION STRATEGIES

Economic development is a team sport.

- Restructure and launch Illini Angels (previously the Urbana-Champaign Angel Network); mobilize network of angel investors, including alumni, who engage regularly and listen to presentations from local companies seeking investment
- Create a regional trailing partner (+1) program with regional EDO partners to assist talent in locating in our region and support employers who have a large regional presence



- Work with regional partners to enhance and expand broadband access in order to support business development, job growth, and economic opportunity
- Advocate for policies and programs through the state of Illinois that better align with workforce needs and business retention and attraction challenges and opportunities in order to better compete against other states for talent and projects
- Collect, strategize, and report the top five economic development priority projects from each municipality on an annual basis in order to be prepared for funding opportunities at the state and federal level
- Work with regional EDO partners to host foreign delegations to highlight our region's business strengths and opportunities for investment
- Champaign County First - Champaign County First is a united countywide effort to identify projects and/or initiatives that, when successfully completed, will greatly benefit the citizens of Champaign County; spur economic development; and improve the quality of life in Champaign County. Champaign County First partners are committed to advocating on behalf of the identified projects at the local, state and/or federal level with one voice in order to transform Champaign County.
- Programs / events / engagement:
 - Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
 - Regional EDO Group
 - Intersect Illinois
 - Cost of Living Index

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Champaign County's economy is most successful when it benefits all members of our community. As such, we will be intentional in ensuring that community members who may not have benefited in the past are incorporated and supported in our collective efforts to grow the regional economy.

- In the Strategic Objective areas of Business Outreach and Industry Engagement, Workforce Development, Small Business Development Strategies, and Regional Promotion and Talent Attraction, promote and support intentional efforts for minority participation and inclusion through communication, collaboration and engagement with high growth business and industry sectors
- Encourage and support minority entrepreneurship, with a focus on high growth sectors, through collaborations and engagement with entities such as the U of I Research Park to gain exposure, identify mentors, secure internships, develop workshops, and facilitate access and engagement with the entrepreneur startup ecosystem in Champaign County



- Partner with local and regional financial institutions and governmental agencies to host and co-sponsor activities to increase access to startup capital, working capital and work to overcome barriers minority businesses experience in gaining access to capital for growth and expansion
- Advocate for and support the development of programs to promote procurement of goods and services based on separate goals for minority, women and veteran's business enterprises in the public sector
- Collaborate with the twenty largest private sector employers in Champaign County to plan and co-host a semi-annual minority-majority business-to-business match-making procurement event. Ensure all categories of operational and capital spending are eligible

Champaign County Economic Development Corporation

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