

ROAD TO RECOVERY

RESILIENCY, AND RENEWAL & TRANSFORMATION


EMPORIA
Area Chamber & Visitors Bureau

INTRODUCTION

This is the second document from the Road to Recovery group. Partners from across the Emporia and Lyon County Community joined forces to strengthen the local economy in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. Covid-19 necessitated an unprecedented shut-down of the economy to manage the virus. Businesses and organizations are now looking for ways to pivot into the next phase of being resilient and how to transform. Our hope is that this document will give you the information needed to make the necessary changes to ensure the future success of your business or organization.

Road to Recovery has been led by the Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce and Ignite Emporia. Partners in creating these documents are the City of Emporia, Lyon County, Emporia State University, Flint Hills Technical College, Emporia Main Street, Hispanics of Today and Tomorrow, Emporia Arts Center, and numerous business owners and community organizations representatives. The Road to Recovery engaged business leaders who shared insights, identified challenges, and built actionable strategies to restore the local economy in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Our first report focused on how to Restore our economy. You may find that document at: <https://emporiakschamber.org/road-to-recovery-restore-document/>. Seven teams addressed specific industries and sectors working to identify, and help craft solutions that can assist businesses in the Emporia and Lyon County area to emerge from the current crisis. This report focuses on Resiliency, and Renewal & Transformation. The following pages are the findings of each of the seven committees.



Please be advised that some or all the information contained in this document may not be applicable to some businesses or places of work and may not include all information necessary for certain businesses and places of work. Due to unique industry operational factors and associated sub-industries, other trade associations and professional groups may have additional input. As COVID-19 circumstances continue to evolve, so will the public health and safety recommendations and requirements, and as a result this document may not include all current governmental or health expert requirements and recommendations beyond the prepared date. We strongly advise that before implementing any of the practices and procedures contained herein, companies carefully evaluate and consult with their own legal counsel and other advisors regarding the legality, applicability and potential efficacy of this information in their place of business and determine if any other recommendations or requirements may apply to their business.

LEVERAGING STRENGTHS OF ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS:

Educational institutions (Pre-K – Higher Education) are the cornerstone of developing a community's knowledge base, training, and continuity of resources. Healthcare facilities promote and support the overall wellbeing of the community by providing vibrant, affordable, up-to-date, and comprehensive care. These anchor institutions represent some of the largest employers in the community and keeping them strong will have a major impact on the recovery process.

RESILIENCY:

Reliable Access to Resources:

Though returning to the classroom is the priority for the education sector, remote learning may be necessary. This could be en masse, or in isolated groups required to quarantine.

- Ensure availability of remote components to help keep students on track and provide the opportunity to engage in the educational process, especially in rural communities.
- Provide access to necessary technology and high-speed broadband internet.
- Ensure County leaders prioritize the goal of the community to be a Rural Innovation Hub to fuel the digital economy not just for the current situation but for long-term resiliency.

Proper Preventative Preparation:

A key element of restoring anchor institutions and being prepared for the possible changes in the coming months will be ensuring that every institution has access to core safety materials.

- Ensure City and County leaders prioritize building a stockpile of PPE and larger stores of cleaning products, coordinated storage of materials, and a system for distribution.
- Consistent and rigorous implementation of recommended safety equipment protocols.

Continued Cooperation in Leadership:

Continued collaboration between core leadership, while working together to promote a unified message and response will increase adaptability to meet future challenges and foster resiliency.

- Coordinate communication and planning between Emergency Management, County Health, and Local Healthcare Facilities.
- Coordinate communication and planning between Educational Boards, Superintendents, Higher Education Presidents, and Childcare Directors.
- Continue interaction and support between local health and educational groups.

RENEWAL & TRANSFORMATION:

Flexible Model to Adapt to The Evolving Situation:

As leaders in the community, each level of education will need to create new possibilities to provide flexibility to meet the developing situation as it unfolds.

- All educational sectors may need to focus on limited cohort interaction, smaller class sizes and layout and alter how students move from class to class.
- Identify and make available large venues for use as expanded classroom options, community remote work options and/or student remote education space.

Leading Edge of Adapting for the Future:

The Lyon County educational institutions have long been on the leading edge of transformations. Multiple schools have been recognized for innovative redesigns. Now is the time to:

- Allow for thinking outside of the box.
- Capitalize on innovative spirits and lead the country in not only getting institutions open for business, but open in a way that is sustainable and adaptable to the unfolding future.

RESTARTING HOSPITALITY & TOURISM:

Tourism & Hospitality are critical components to our community. Both important to our economy and our identity, guests traveling to, or through Emporia will need to feel safe as we move forward. Our hotels, airbnbs, points of interests, and special events must adapt to our current environment in order to serve the travelers that are in Emporia and our area for either work or play.

RESILIENCY:

- Continued maintenance and development of high-speed internet.
- Continued development of our reputation for the activities/ events that historically bring folks to town; gravel cycling, disc golf, Veterans Day, zoo, etc....
- The Business Traveler is paramount in the restoration of the lodging businesses in the Emporia Area.
 - » We must promote our location along I-35 as an ideal location to stop, stay and get their work done.
 - » Promote broadband and connectivity when completing their work in our community.

RENEWAL & TRANSFORMATION:

- Develop a "pledge program" that hotels, airbnb's, points of interest and attraction, and special events can voluntarily agree to which would label them as "safe & clean". The requirements to make this pledge would be published and entities that make the pledge would be recognized and promoted. Someone would need to manage this program. Maybe this is not limited to hospitality - but all businesses can do this.
- Reverse the "I am almost to Wichita or KC, so why stop?" mentality to a "Why wouldn't I stop in Emporia!" mentality through aggressive marketing of a community that is "safe & clean".
- Develop a market that includes a robust delivery service of food and other essentials; specifically, to our hotels.

REBUILDING NONPROFIT, FAITH AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

Non-Profit/Community Organizations are the foundation of support helping to develop and maintain healthy communities. They provide support for all individuals, focusing on those that may experience barriers to services and need additional supports during or after a crisis. The programs and services provided by Non-Profit Community groups are critical components to the overall health, safety and culture that enhance the collective good of our community and region. Successful recovery by these organizations will be critical to the successful recovery of the full community.

RESILIENCY:

- Identifying opportunities for long-term financial stability.
- Reliable Access to Safety and Information Resources.
- Proper Preventative Preparation: Planning for Second Wave.
- Modernization of technology and operations: More specific that this is continual budget priority, community wide effort?
- Disaster and Communications Planning (both receiving and sharing) (template/examples)

https://www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID_19_business_plan_template.pdf

RENEWAL & TRANSFORMATION:

- Adapt and develop new resources and methods to identify and engage additional clients.
- Adjust Operating Model to reflect the Evolving Situation.
- Adaptive workforce and operations plan.
- Find opportunities for collaboration and cooperation with other agencies, organizations and businesses.
- Referring to additional agencies and connecting/networking opportunities – List Serve Healthier Lyon County and Family Resource Council.

REVIVING SMALL BUSINESSES

While the phrase “Small Business” seems like something everyone understands, in reality it covers a wide range of organizations and operations that interact with the community in many different ways. A plan for restoring small business will have some similar overlap but each entity will have to find their unique path forward to stability and resiliency. Industry guidelines and trends will be an important resource and giving each business the time and space needed to adjust will be critical. Below we have outlined additional points of information and guidance as well as steps we should take locally to assist small businesses as they transition to new ways of operation.

RESILIENCY:

- Businesses should develop a business continuity plan using the lessons learned so far.
- Identify opportunities to adjust business model to adapt to Pandemic.
- Develop community support resources and support for technical solutions.
- Modernization of technology and operations for long-term viability.
- Disaster and Communications Planning (both receiving and sharing).

RENEWAL & TRANSFORMATION:

- Be open to transition and abandoning practices that are no longer practical or effective.
- Adjust Operating Model to reflect the Evolving Situation.
- Create adaptive workforce and management plans to improve efficiency.
- Develop ideas around collaboration and cooperation with other businesses, organizations or entities to create new opportunities to thrive.
 - » Sales or Marketing Partnerships
 - » Co-Op Purchasing efforts to access better pricing
 - » Co-Location or product hosting strategies

PROTECTING ARTS & CREATIVE ECONOMY

Protecting the arts and creative economy are vital to our community's wellbeing. The creative arts community enriches our life for children of all ages with educational opportunities, presenting art forms, and promoting artists events.

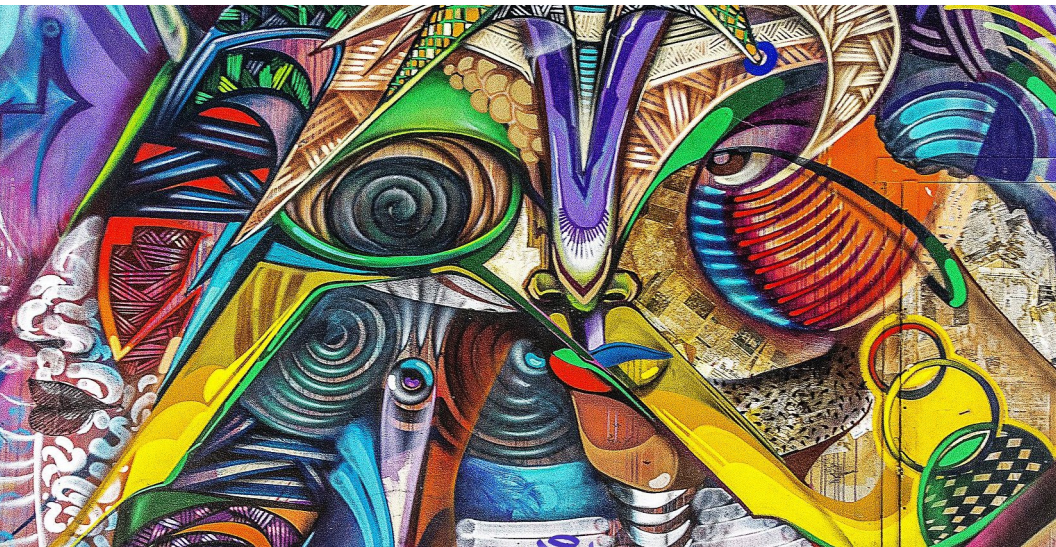
The Emporia Arts & Creative Economy were all closed down during the pandemic. The Arts community pivoted and continued virtual performances by various artists, virtual exhibits, music and drama.

RESILIENCY:

- Promoting and supporting Emporia Arts and Creative Economy events.

RENEWAL & TRANSFORMATION:

- Continue to deliver programming virtually.
- Welcome back the total sensory experience of live entertainment and exhibits.
- Be prepared the pivot deliver the arts and creative economy.
- Continuous collaboration between all the local Arts & Creative Economy entities supporting each other.



ASSESSING KEY INDUSTRIES

Industry and manufacturing are a critical aspect to our community offering most of the jobs for our region. They are the backbone of our local economy. The rapid development of the goods our industries provide enables our community to produce a wide variety of consumer goods that are used all over the world. The essential food and agricultural businesses; meat processing, pet nutrition, bakery and soybean mill operation were operating at or near full capacity during the stay at home order. Fabricators, Manufacturers & Distributors experienced a dramatic drop in sales, which resulted in significant reduction in staffing. The diversified basic industries lessen the economic impact on our area. We all profit as a community and thrive through our industries and manufacturing successes.

RESILIENCY:

- The challenge of high unemployment is ongoing. In the recent past, our primary labor area had nearly full employment. Today we have record setting unemployment with over 1,263 persons.
- Utilize the Flint Hills Technical College, Emporia State University and Ignite Emporia for retraining the workforce. Public funding (Federal, State and Local) and private funding will be needed.
- Develop programs for the retention of laid off or furloughed skilled employees.

RENEWAL & TRANSFORMATION:

- Many of the health and safety protocols developed during the Covid-19 pandemic will become part of the normal health and safety procedures for all businesses.
- It is highly recommended that PPE be stockpiled until the vaccines and/or "herd immunity" is achieved.
- Not only will business and industry need to practice health and safety protocols, it is also the civic duty of every individual to ensure overall community health and safety.
- Be prepared for future pandemics and have a plan in place to quickly adjust to possible stay at home restrictions or phased restrictions.

PREPARING VITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

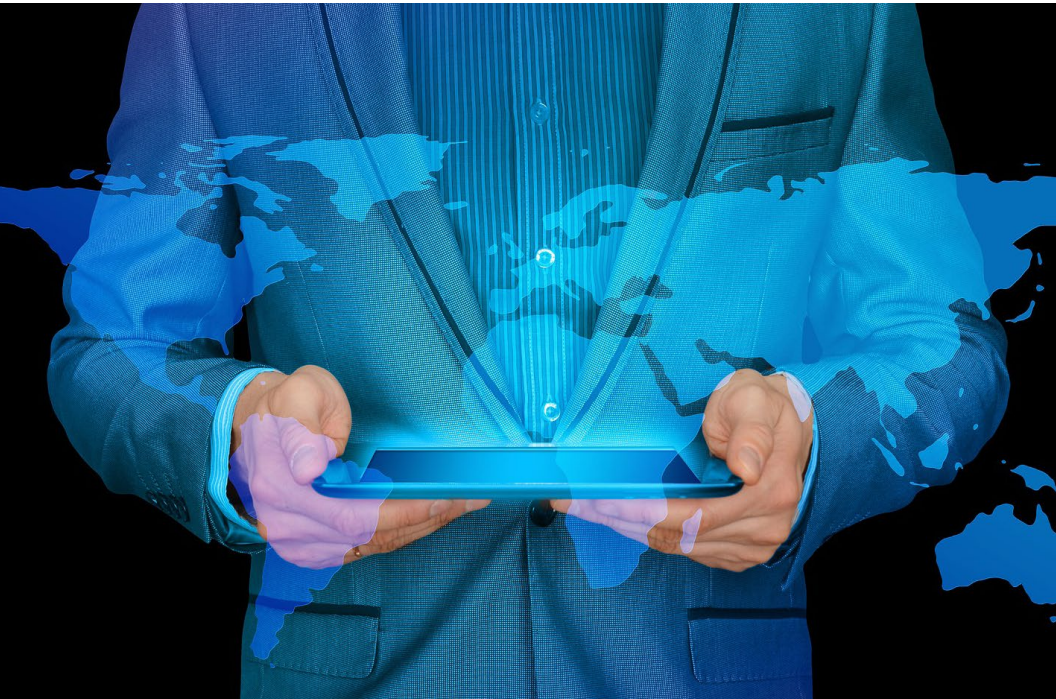
Economic infrastructure are basic services that represent a foundational tool for the economy of the Lyon County region. Both “hard” and “soft” infrastructure are important, and this committee focused on the safety, health, and technology when reviewing the Road to Recovery.

RESILIENCY:

- Work with local public health officials on acquiring contact tracers. Those who are bi-lingual. This can be on a voluntary or paid basis depending on the situation.
- Acquiring PPE for the community as a whole.
- Continued adaptation of public buildings for usage of wi-fi to minimize the disruption of our citizens everyday activity.

RENEWAL & TRANSFORMATION:

- Work collectively as a community to expand broadband to our rural areas.



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Over the past few months we have learned that things change quickly and sometimes easy solutions are in front of us but never crossed our minds. Listed below are a few of those items. If you have a new best practice let us know! If you would like to learn more about any one of these aspects, please reach out to us. We would be happy to give you more detailed information.

- Add a phone line (or 2) to accommodate the increased calls. Also consider adding auto hold.
- Scheduling appointments to meet with customers and clients. This could be even in groups.
- Offer flexible work hours as employees return.



PREVIEW: RESILIENCY, RENEWAL AND TRANSFORMATION

Recognizing the complexity of this journey ahead of us, we encourage all businesses to follow best practices as well as getting input from their customers, and the general public. It is critical that we protect the well-being of our workforce and communities in the Lyon County area, but it is also imperative that we approach our moving forward with careful operational considerations. All indicators would suggest that social distancing is likely to persist throughout the next twelve to eighteen months until there is an available vaccine.

SOURCES

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (www.osha.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

National Institute for Occupational Safety and health (www.cdc.gov/niosh)







