

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Overland Park Chamber of Commerce

Project Charter

February 2026
V1



Purpose of Charter

This charter defines the purpose of the Overland Park Chamber Workforce Development initiative, created through the Opportunity NOW strategy, including objectives, requirements, description of effort, risks, milestones, and stakeholders.

The intended audience is the team and partners involved in project execution. This includes Chamber volunteer leaders, executive leadership, Talent Council, and Opportunity NOW Investors.

Project Overview

Attracting and retaining a talented and diverse workforce is essential to sustained growth and vitality in the Overland Park area. As a result of this need, the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce launched Opportunity NOW in 2022 as a five-year community and economic development initiative of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce in consultation with private and public local and regional partners. The initiative is designed to ensure Overland Park remains competitive at a regional, state, national, and global scale.

Highlighting input received over several years of analysis, Opportunity NOW focuses on three central pillars of the Overland Park Chamber's scope of work: Workforce Development, Economic Development, and Public Policy. Each goal of Opportunity NOW centers around programming and resource development for each of the three focus areas which includes a mix of scaling existing programming and creating new initiatives.

Opportunity NOW provides both financial and human capital to carry out the objectives of the five-year strategy. From 2022 to present, the Chamber has increased capacity through the hiring of four full-time staff. This includes:

Workforce Development:

Director of Talent – Full Time

Workforce Program Coordinator – Full Time

Public Policy:

Public Policy Coordinator – Full Time

Contract Lobbyists

Marketing and Events:

Director of Marketing – Full Time

Below is a summary of recognized and relevant terms related to the Chamber's workforce development initiative:

Workforce Development Initiative: the Overall effort by the Overland Park Chamber to address workforce development needs and opportunities and improve access for a trained and ready workforce

Talent Council: Broader group of workforce development stakeholders and investors who will guide the work of the Chamber's workforce initiative to improve access to a trained, ready workforce.

Talent Council Steering Committee: Group of Talent Council volunteer leaders who will provide oversight for the direction of the Talent Council.

Assumptions, Constraints and Risks

This section identifies the following believed assumptions and barriers that define this charter and promote sustained success of the workforce development initiative:

- Regional economic development and growth will continue
- Competitive demand for qualified employees across all labor grades and diversity categories will continue and likely accelerate
- Regional employer growth will be limited by the ability to attract and retain talent
- Wage disparity and access to training, skills and employment will continue to grow unless there is greater regional cooperation and partnerships improve.
- Artificial Intelligence will continue to seek exponential increases in growth and usage which will affect future workforce needs and occupations.
- Talent efforts are constrained by financial considerations until dedicated funding becomes available for strategic workforce programming.

Supporting Data

In the United States, as of December 2025, there are 6.5 million job openings compared to 7.5 million job seekers. This represents a shift to a softer labor market demand within the last decade. Comparatively, prior to Covid there were 6.7 million job openings but just 6.4 million workers to build them.

The national workforce landscape has experienced significant shifts in recent years, with the U.S. labor force participation rate hovering around 61.6% as of 2023. This rate reflects ongoing challenges post-pandemic, alongside a growing emphasis on remote work and flexible employment models. Industries such as technology and healthcare continue to show robust growth, with projected job increases of 15% and 13% respectively over the next decade. These trends highlight the necessity for adaptive workforce strategies at both local and national levels.

In Kansas, the workforce participation rate stands at approximately 66.8%, which is higher than the national average. The state's economy is diverse, with key sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Notably, Kansas has seen a rise in demand for

skilled trades and technical professions, driven by advancements in automation and technology. The Kansas Department of Labor forecasts a steady growth in jobs, particularly in healthcare and information technology, emphasizing the importance of training programs and workforce development initiatives.

The Kansas City region, encompassing both urban and suburban areas, has a vibrant labor market with a workforce participation rate of around 65%. Overland Park, as a growing city within this region, boasts a low unemployment rate of 3.2%. The area is known for its strong corporate presence, including companies in the financial services, telecommunications, and healthcare sectors. With a median household income of approximately \$85,000, Overland Park showcases a high standard of living, which is attractive for retaining talent and attracting new businesses. This data underscores the critical role of workforce planning to ensure alignment with economic growth and community needs.

Additional local data can be found in Appendix A: OP Talent NOW Workforce Study

Scope

The workforce initiative at the Chamber seeks to execute the objectives in the Opportunity NOW strategic framework. The main advisory body of the initiative is the Talent Council. The purpose of the Talent Council is to provide oversight, guidance, and input to staff for the development of workforce programs and resources for the Overland Park Business community. Serving as an advisory committee to Chamber leadership and staff, the Council aims to,

- Validate perceived workforce needs, opportunities, resources, and misalignments.
- Utilize the guiding framework of the Opportunity NOW goals and objectives
- Identify and refine specific actions resulting in a comprehensive workforce development strategy for the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce

The time commitment for Council members will vary based on engagement with additional initiative events and programs. Typical time commitment for the Council will be one and half hours per month. Meetings will be scheduled for the third Friday of every month. In coordination with Chamber leadership and staff, the Talent Council will assist in coordination and advising on the following objectives:

1. Develop comprehensive plan

- Comprehensive Plan: Hire professional firm to develop a comprehensive talent / workforce plan to meet the needs of existing and future employers
- Data Driven: Ensure a data driven final plan that includes DEI best practices to assist employers

2. Establish a Talent Council

- Input: Create Talent Advisory Council to provide consistent business input that aligns business needs with educational offerings for all people

3. Improve talent pipeline

- **Business / Pre-K-20 Collaboration:** Launch workforce roundtables for target industry and education representatives to share perspectives on workforce needs and educational engagement opportunities regarding alignment of skills and programming to be forwarded to the Talent Advisory Council
- **Work-Based Learning:** Coordinate with regional school districts, colleges, and universities to facilitate internships, apprenticeships and externships with area employers, making the process accessible for all
- **Workforce & Education Summit:** Convene conference of business leaders, HR professionals and educators to share best practices and ideas to recruit and retain talent, and discuss future needs
- **Regional Collaboration:** Amplify success through partners like KC Rising, KCADC and Greater Kansas City Chamber by connecting strategies, avoiding redundancies, and focusing on connecting workforce tactics locally with employers and education partners

4. Retain Talent

- **Retain Graduates:** Partner with local educational, trade, and technical institutions to engage alumni and attract graduates back to the area
- **Roundtables:** Host sessions to share retention best practices and tactics
- **Retention Toolkit:** Develop an employee retention toolkit
- **Community Connections:** Create system to match Leadership Overland Park alumni and Overland Park Young Professionals to leadership, engagement, and personal development opportunities

5. Target and attract talent

- **Marketing:** Brand and position Overland Park as a premier magnet and destination to find quality talent
- **Attract:** Develop a talent-focused communications campaign highlighting career opportunities and lifestyle assets in Overland Park to increase the working age population, particularly 25-44 year-olds
- **Trailing Partners:** Create trailing spouse / partner program, “Trailing Partners KC,” to identify job opportunities, often a barrier to recruiting
- **Direct Support:** Provide direct recruitment support to employers, including community profiles, executive briefings, and customized community tours
- **Employer Resources:** Determine, through Business, Retention & Expansion (BRE) calls and roundtables, the specific kinds of information, training and workforce resources employers need, especially those pertaining to enhance DEI

6. Address barriers to talent sustainability

- **Barrier Identification:** Identify talent retention and attraction impediments (e.g., housing affordability, transportation access, lack of affordable childcare) and develop / implement programmatic solutions
- **Advocate:** Address barriers to attracting and training a quality workforce through policy / legislative advocacy

RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

Result	Description
1	Current and future employers are able to find the talent with the appropriate skills they need
2	Increase the number of students participating in work-based learning and certification programs
3	Increase diversity across business and community leadership

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE STRUCTURE

The Overland Park Chamber Workforce Development Initiative includes an ongoing Talent Council, Opportunity NOW Investors, Steering Committee, regional stakeholders, and Chamber members. The Council includes members from industry, secondary education, post-secondary education, non-profit. The Council is structured with an executive volunteer leadership positions that consist of Chair and Co-Chair roles. The remaining committee members are considered Members at Large. There are no term limits. Chair selections are coordinated through Chamber and volunteer leadership guidance with final decisions made by staff.

The purpose of the Talent Council is to provide oversight, guidance, and input to staff for the development of workforce programs and resources for the Overland Park Business community. Serving as an advisory committee to Chamber leadership and staff, the Council aims to,

The Talent Council includes a Talent Council Steering Committee comprised of ten volunteer members. The purpose of the Talent Council Steering Committee is to provide timely action on initiative programming and deliverables. Input from the steering committee will be provided to the full Talent Council for additional guidance.

Every other month the Talent Council will focus efforts on providing opportunities for businesses to offer insight into workforce challenges, barriers, and resources through industry focus groups. These sessions are open to both Talent Council and general Chamber members. The focus sessions allow for small group discussion to provide guidance for Chamber staff and the workforce initiative. Input from the focus groups will be summarized and reported out on a bi-monthly basis. The Steering Committee will meet on a quarterly basis.

High-Level Steering Committee Requirements

Requirement	Description
1	Active engagement of the Talent Council Steering Committee and Talent Council members
2	Utilize OP Talent NOW study for data and recommendation guidance to target and develop action plans
3	Identify and deploy solutions for sustained workforce success in Overland Park and the region both short/long-term
4	Identify and recruit local, regional, state, and national partners for workforce development solutions
5	Participation in and promotion of Overland Park Chamber workforce initiative programs

DELIVERABLES

The Talent Council will develop a regular standard for engagement and community within the workforce development initiative for the broader Chamber members. Regular updates of a high-level program plan with initiatives and timing will be reported to the Council for routine feedback and guidance.

Current Programming

Program	Description	Release Year
All in Overland Park	Lifestyle website designed to showcase live, work, play concepts in Overland Park to attract talent.	2025
Community Concierge	Talent attraction and retention tool to help out of market talent acclimate to Overland Park	2024
OP Talent NOW Workforce Study	Comprehensive workforce study for Overland Park	2024
Real World Learning	Provides work based learning opportunities to K-12 students in Overland Park	2023
Student Chamber of Commerce	K-12 focused initiative to support youth business owners	2024

Summer in OP	College internship collaborative showcasing Overland Park activities	2024
Talent Connect Summit	Annual workforce development conference	2024
Talent Council	Advisory committee providing guidance and structure for the Chamber's workforce development initiative	2023
Talent Reimagined	Change management workshop focused on skills-centered talent attraction and retention	2025

Activity and Progress Measures

Measure	Description	Status
1	Development of comprehensive workforce plan	Complete
2	Development and deployment of marketing plan to support Overland Park as a top market for exceptional talent	Complete
3	Establish liaison between employers and education to communicate and fulfill needs and connect students to real-world-learning opportunities	Complete
4	Develop employee engagement in Talent Council and Roundtables	Ongoing

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, & PARTNERSHIPS

Project Role	Responsibilities
Chair/Co-Chair	Oversee initiative, strategy, implementation.
Director of Talent (Chamber)	Oversee and implement initiative strategy and development
Workforce Program Coordinator (Chamber)	Implement initiative programming and research
Talent Council	Regular initiative engagement and serve in advisory capacity
Talent Council Steering Committee	

Stakeholders (Internal and External) – updated Feb. 2026

- Blue Valley School District
- City of Overland Park
- DeBruce Foundation
- Greenlight Fund
- Johnson County Society of Human Resource Managers
- Kansas City Area Development Council
- Kansas Department of Commerce – Office of Registered Apprenticeships
- Kauffman Foundation
- KC SourceLink
- KC Tech Council
- Olathe School District
- Overland Park Chamber of Commerce
- Overland Park Economic Development Council
- Project Charter Approval
- ProX
- Shawnee Mission School District
- US Chamber of Commerce
- Workforce Partnership

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Implemented By	Revision Date	Reason
1.0	Andrew Weisberg	February 11, 2026	

DRAFT

APPENDIX A: OP Talent NOW Workforce Study

DRAFT

OP Talent NOW

Workforce Development Study

September 2024



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TIP Strategies, Inc., (TIP) would like to thank the following members of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce for their guidance throughout the engagement as well as the many stakeholders who contributed important insights to the planning process.

Overland Park Chamber of Commerce Team

Tracey Osborne Oltjen, CCE
President & CEO

Libbey M. Tucker, CEcD
Sr. Vice President, Economic Development

Isabella Hagen
Director of Marketing

Natalie Vesta
Economic Development Project Coordinator

Kevin Walker, IOM, CCE
Executive VP & Chief Policy Officer

Andrew Weisberg
Director of Talent

Courtney Cavlovic
Workforce Project Coordinator

Consulting Team



TIP Strategies, Inc., is a privately held Austin-based firm providing consulting and advisory services to public and private sector clients. Established in 1995, the firm's core competencies are strategic planning for economic development, talent strategies, organizational development, resiliency planning, and equity initiatives.

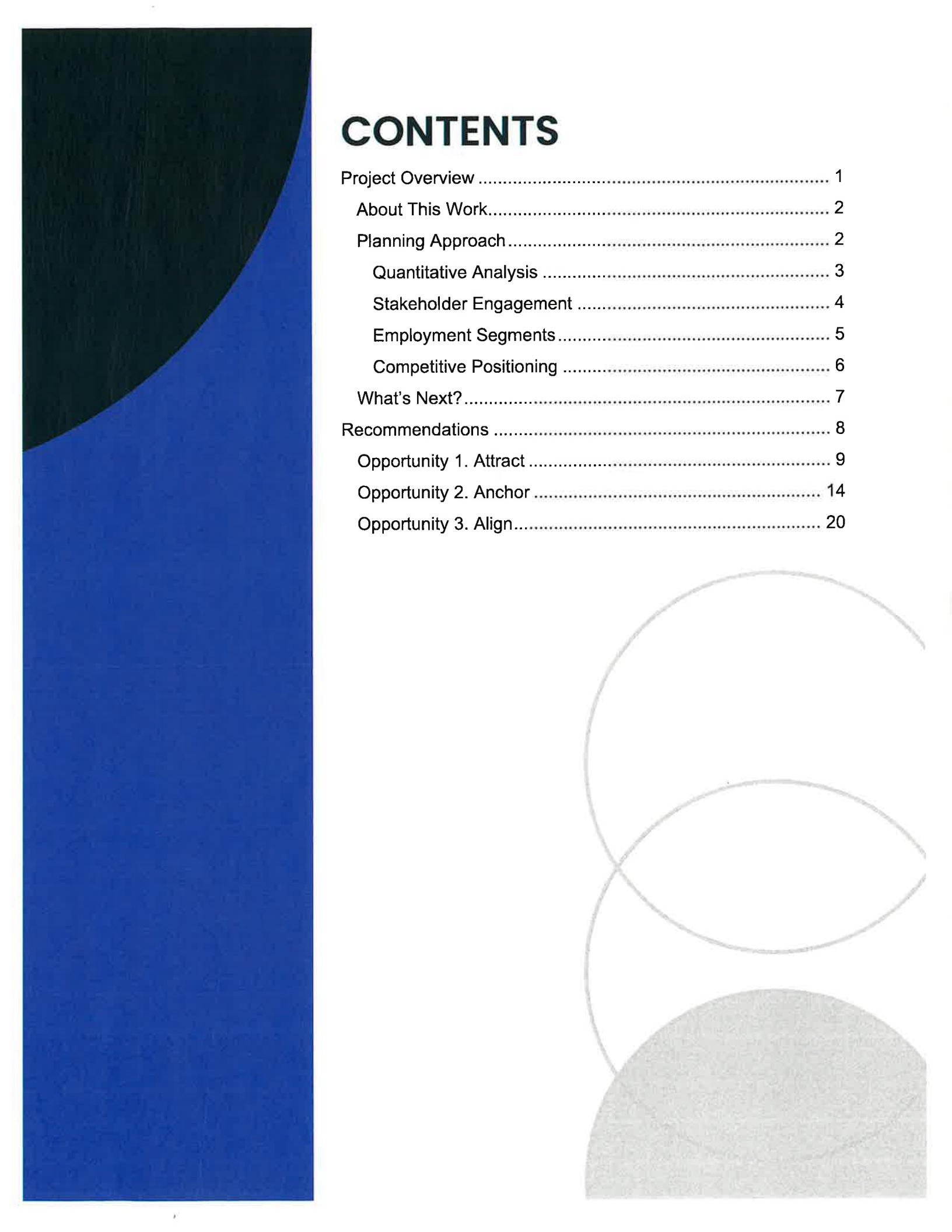
Contact

TIP Strategies
13492 N Hwy 183, Suite 120-254
Austin, TX 78750

PH: +1 512 3439113
www.tipstrategies.com

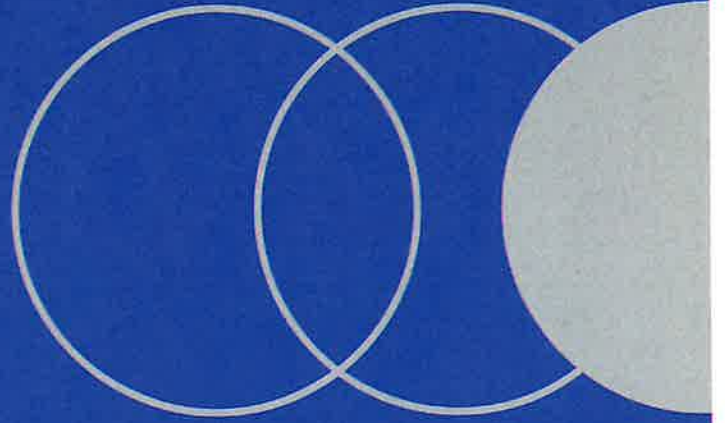
Project Contributors

Tom Stellman, CEO/Founder
Karen Beard, SVP, Production
Katrina Parkey Fraser, Senior Consultant
Jess Myers, Intern



CONTENTS

Project Overview	1
About This Work.....	2
Planning Approach.....	2
Quantitative Analysis	3
Stakeholder Engagement	4
Employment Segments	5
Competitive Positioning	6
What's Next?.....	7
Recommendations	8
Opportunity 1. Attract	9
Opportunity 2. Anchor	14
Opportunity 3. Align.....	20



PROJECT OVERVIEW



ABOUT THIS WORK

In 2023, the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce (OP Chamber) launched *Opportunity NOW*, a five-year community and economic development initiative aimed at addressing the city's competitiveness. The initiative is centered on a vision for meeting today's business and workforce challenges by addressing the following interrelated goals.

- 1 Ensuring that Overland Park employers have access to the **Number** of quality workers they need.
- 2 Building a local economy that provides **Opportunity** for all through strong businesses and high-quality jobs.
- 3 Creating an environment that is **Welcoming** and attractive to employers by serving as the voice of business.

Backed by leaders and investors from across the community, the *Opportunity NOW* framework recognizes that a strong workforce is vital for economic prosperity. The connection between the labor pool and competitiveness is illustrated by the fact that *Opportunity NOW*'s first strategic goal is to attract, retain, and align talent in Overland Park. A primary component of this goal is developing a comprehensive talent and workforce plan to meet the needs of existing and future employers. *OP Talent NOW* is that plan.

In late 2023, the OP Chamber engaged TIP Strategies, Inc., (TIP), a nationally recognized workforce and economic development consulting firm, to prepare a comprehensive talent and workforce study. *OP Talent NOW* aims to address the needs of current and future employers in Overland Park by providing recommendations to overcome barriers and seize opportunities for attracting, retaining, and developing the city's workforce. It is built on a foundation of comprehensive research, stakeholder engagement, and a deep understanding of the unique characteristics that define Overland Park's competitiveness.

By analyzing workforce challenges, labor shortages, and skills gaps in key sectors, *OP Talent NOW* provides chamber leaders, stakeholders, members, and committees with the insights needed to develop data-driven programs and strategies. These efforts are crucial for supporting the *Opportunity NOW* goals of attracting and aligning talent, boosting job growth and business investment, and enhancing OP's pro-business environment.

***OP Talent NOW* Vision Statement**

Overland Park will be a **catalyst** for talent attraction, retention, and promotion of the community.

PLANNING APPROACH

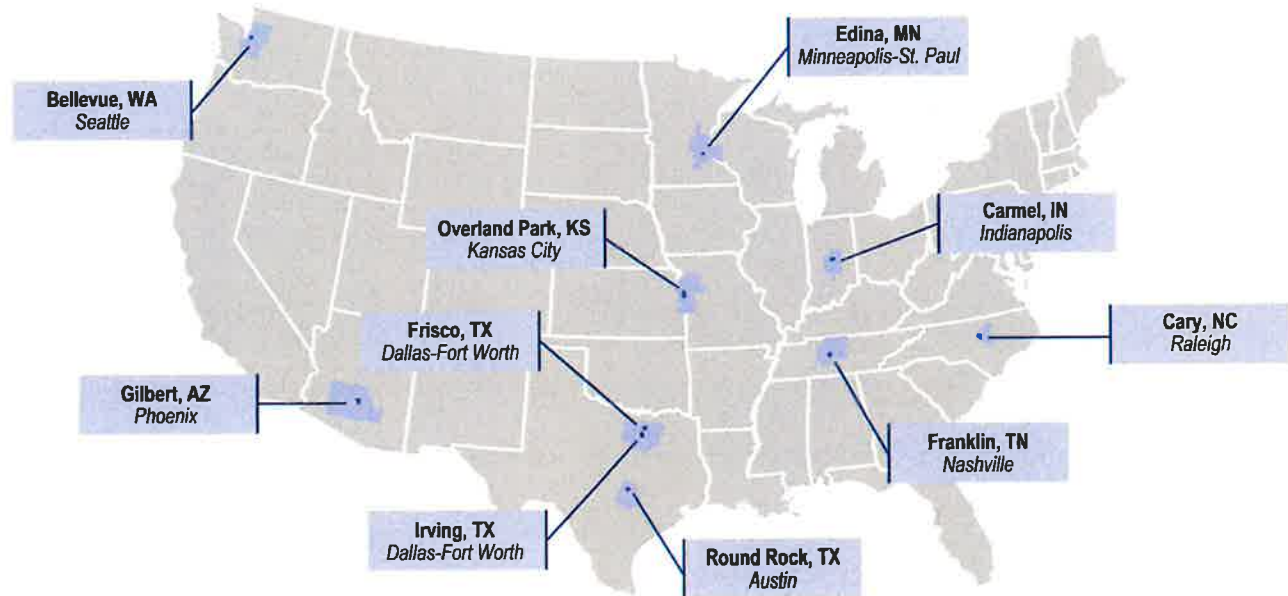
TIP used its rigorous three-phase model—discovery, opportunity, implementation—to guide the planning process. The initial **discovery** phase focused on identifying reliable data sources, developing relevant analytics, and assembling a comprehensive list of local stakeholders. During the **opportunity** phase, TIP combined the quantitative analysis with stakeholder feedback to analyze Overland Park's competitive position and identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in its education and workforce development pipelines. And, finally, the **implementation** phase consisted of identifying clear goals and actionable strategies for bolstering local workforce efforts and achieving OP's talent goals.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

At the outset of the engagement, TIP conducted a [comprehensive quantitative analysis](#) of labor, industry, demographic, and economic conditions in Overland Park. Presented as an interactive data visualization, the [Workforce Development Analysis](#) included comparisons where applicable to Johnson County, the Kansas City metropolitan statistical area (MSA), Kansas, and the US, as well as to nine benchmark cities identified during the *Opportunity NOW* planning process. The peer communities are shown in Figure 1 and include Bellevue, Washington; Carmel, Indiana; Cary, North Carolina; Edina, Minnesota; Franklin, Tennessee; Frisco, Texas; Gilbert, Arizona; Irving, Texas; and Round Rock, Texas. This data-driven approach addresses historical, current, and emerging labor market trends to strategically position Overland Park as a competitive community player among its peers.

Along with a baseline assessment of talent supply and demand data, TIP prepared [Overland Park Job Quality & Access](#) (JQA), a custom data visualization that characterizes more than 700 detailed occupations in terms of their [job quality and accessibility](#). The interactive JQA tool goes beyond common indicators like wages and required education to consider more complex factors when evaluating occupations. Factors such as local cost of living, career advancement opportunities, and automation risk are used to assess job quality. Considerations related to accessibility include whether the occupation typically offers flexibility, requires work experience, and demographically matches the region. The proprietary JQA tool combines these factors and categorizes each occupation as having high quality and access, low quality and access, or a mix. This interactive analysis is designed to promote equitable growth and opportunity by helping organizations in the workforce and educational arena obtain a better understanding of job quality and accessibility and make data available for decision-making.

Figure 1. OP Peer Communities with Associated Metropolitan Area



Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): The map reflects the boundaries for the associated metropolitan statistical area as delineated by the federal Office of Management and Budget. Informal names are used for legibility (e.g., Dallas-Fort Worth vs. Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Metropolitan Statistical Area).

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

This quantitative work was complemented by **extensive stakeholder outreach** designed to gather qualitative feedback on OP's talent pipeline. As illustrated in Figure 2, stakeholder engagement was accomplished through roundtable sessions and one-on-one conversations with stakeholders that play a vital role in supporting Overland Park's workforce, including businesses, workforce organizations, healthcare providers, local government, and education institutions. Nearly all *Opportunity NOW* investors contributed to the engagement process. This feedback illuminated the talent needs of employers and provided crucial insight into the region's current and future labor supply.

Figure 2. Stakeholder Engagement Overview



Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

Over the course of stakeholder engagement, several common themes emerged that shed light on the challenges that Overland Park's employers face in attracting, retaining, and developing talent. These challenges include the following.

- **Comparative advantage.** Within the Kansas City region, Overland Park has a higher cost of living, especially in terms of housing. Compared to coastal markets, Overland Park touts less traffic and a lower cost of living, highlighting advantages for in-migration.
- **Regional perspective.** When employers are recruiting talent, they are selling the region as a whole. The Kansas City region offers strong employment opportunities and amenities in sports and entertainment. Because other parts of the region are more affordable, recruitment efforts to attract talent into Overland Park require special attention.
- **Barriers to success.** Transportation, housing, and childcare can be barriers to employment. Many employers pointed out difficulties with accessing and using public transportation, both within Overland Park and across state lines. Moreover, while there are strong single-family housing options, affordable housing options such as multifamily and student housing are lacking. Finally, childcare slots are limited. Participants suggested creative ways to expand childcare, such as property tax exemptions for childcare centers and philanthropic support to bolster childcare expenses.
- **Mid-career talent gaps.** Many of Overland Park's top employment segments struggle to find mid-career talent. The Architecture and Engineering roundtable shared that the Great Recession (2007–2009) caused a "donut" in the talent pool. Information Technology roundtable participants expressed that it is tough to find talent with 8 to 10 years of experience.

- **Bottleneck occupations.** Roundtable participants shared difficulties with recruiting for “bottleneck occupations,” jobs that are vital to successful operations, but for which few positions are needed. Examples mentioned during the roundtable sessions include pharmacy and surgical technicians, medical assistants, engineering technicians, and land surveyors, most of which are accessible without a bachelor’s degree. More messaging about career paths outside of a traditional four-year degree would be helpful in expanding the pool of candidates for these vital roles.
- **Retention strategies.** With the tight labor market, employers shared that they need help understanding retention incentives, like benefits packages, bonuses, work schedules, and strategies to enhance work culture. Once employers find good talent, they want to tap into more tools to keep them.

EMPLOYMENT SEGMENTS

Following the quantitative and qualitative analysis, TIP identified 10 key employment segments for further examination (see Figure 3). These segments were intended to illustrate the talent needs of regional employers and were the basis of an analysis of real-time job postings for representative companies. This review of talent demand was complemented by an analysis of talent supply data, including regional postsecondary education completions. Looking at the talent needs of Overland Park employers by segment allowed for a cohesive view of industry sectors with overlapping sources of talent and employment challenges. The results are included in the interactive *Workforce Development Analysis* described on page 3. Summary data for each segment is presented in Figure 3. In addition, TIP developed a unique profile for each of the 10 employment segments illustrating talent demand, supply, and career pathways (Figure 4, page 6). These profiles (delivered separately) will assist the OP Chamber in its efforts to empower employers, educators, and workers with information tailored to different industry needs. Armed with an understanding of the talent needs of employers, Overland Park will be better positioned to support coordinated, industry-led initiatives designed to tackle the community’s biggest workforce challenges and anticipate future obstacles.

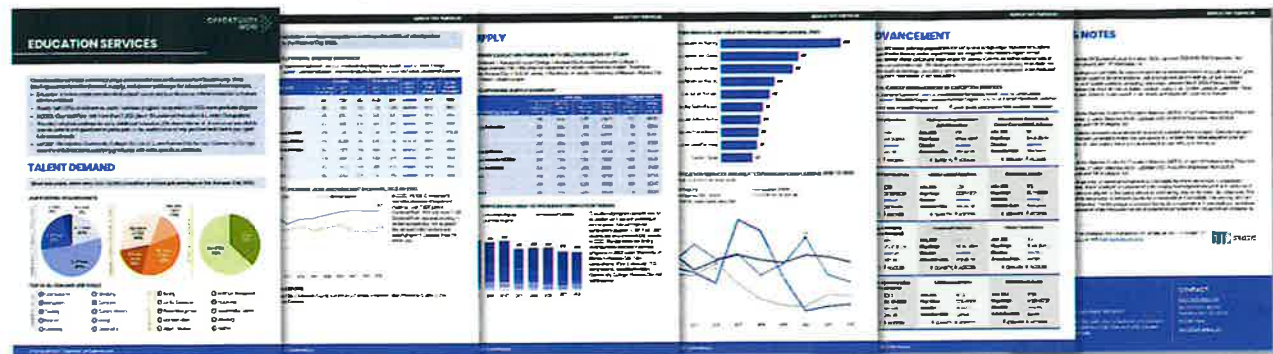
Figure 3. Regional Statistics for Key OP Employment Segments

SEGMENT	AVERAGE ANNUAL JOB POSTINGS	2022 RELATED POSTSECONDARY COMPLETIONS
Education Services	6,444	606
Engineering Services	3,904	685
Entertainment and Hospitality	5,463	91
Healthcare	21,493	4,790
Information Technology	836	869
Professional Services	6,224	2,621
Public Sector	1,188	645
Skilled Trades	1,028	739
Telecommunications	1,669	521
Transportation and Logistics	613	681

Source(s): Lightcast 2023.4—Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Job postings include non-staffing, unique, active job postings for full-time, part-time, and flexible positions, excluding internships, between March 2022 and February 2024. Regional data refers to the Kansas City MSA defined as Bates, Caldwell, Cass, Clay, Clinton, Jackson, Lafayette, Platte, and Ray Counties in Missouri, and Johnson, Leavenworth, Linn, Miami, and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas. Postsecondary completions include degrees and awards conferred by regional institutions for which IPEDS data are available. Completion data for satellite campuses like Kansas State University–Olathe and University of Kansas–Edwards are reported under the university system’s main campus and are not included in regional reporting. While other major universities, such as Kansas State University, the University of Kansas, and the University of Missouri, also contribute to the pipeline of recent graduates who may move to the Kansas City MSA, this analysis focuses on institutions within the MSA for which IPEDS data are available.

Figure 4. Example Employment Segment Profile



COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

During the opportunity phase, TIP combined the quantitative analysis with stakeholder feedback to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Overland Park's education and workforce development pipelines (Figure 5). More in-depth narrative about how the quantitative and qualitative data shaped TIP's understanding of OP's competitive position can be found in the Recommendations section of this report. This phase culminated with a workshop during which OP Chamber staff provided feedback on the *OP Talent NOW* framework and on the preliminary opportunities and recommendations that would be addressed by the study.

Figure 5. Summary of OP Education and Workforce SWOT Analysis



Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

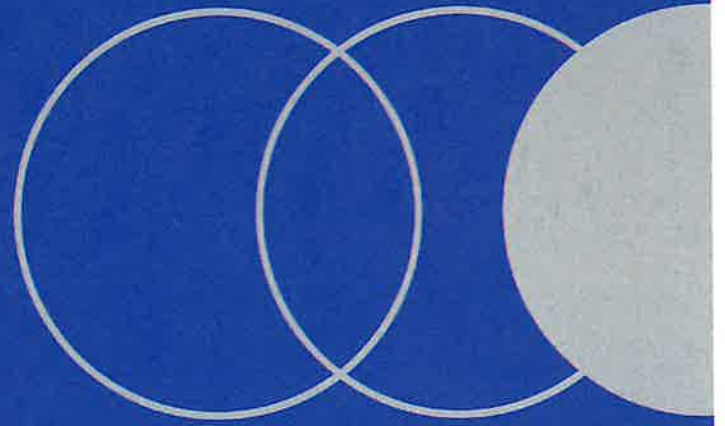
WHAT'S NEXT?

OP Talent NOW outlines three opportunities for action, each with a set of prioritized recommendations to make a meaningful impact on Overland Park's talent goals. The first, **Attract**, recognizes that a coordinated effort to recruit talent to the region is needed for Overland Park to supply the skilled pipeline required by existing and future employers. The **Anchor** opportunity focuses on retaining home-grown talent by investing in quality of place and supporting local companies with employee retention initiatives. Finally, the **Align** opportunity highlights the importance of strengthening the education and training infrastructure to match employer needs and to help people gain in-demand skills.

Along with the recommendations, the planning process produced several tools to support the OP Chamber in achieving *Opportunity NOW's* first strategic goal to attract, retain, and align talent in Overland Park. These include two data visualizations, the *Workforce Development Analysis* and the *Overland Park Job Quality & Access* tool, which can be used by the OP Chamber and its partners to explore community questions and aid decision-making beyond the life of the planning engagement. Findings from these interactive tools were used to prepare standalone profiles of the 10 employment segments for use in sharing the study results and raising awareness of hiring needs in the segments. *OP Talent NOW* was also accompanied by a detailed implementation matrix (delivered separately) that can be used to guide the OP Chamber's workforce efforts, identify partners and Talent Advisory Council champions, and track progress on the recommendations.

The *OP Talent NOW* recommendations were the result of extensive community input process and a comprehensive look at the barriers and opportunities to attracting and retaining workers. They lay the groundwork for a collaborative, employer-driven approach to building a robust talent pipeline and creating a more competitive workforce. With these tools in hand, the OP Chamber is well-positioned to meet the city's talent goals.





RECOMMENDATIONS



OPPORTUNITY 1. ATTRACT

Attract talent to the region and recruit workers to ensure a robust supply of skilled talent for existing and future employers.

Overland Park has a highly desirable quality of place and a wealth of employment opportunities. Conducting a targeted promotional campaign around these advantages can help attract young professionals and skilled individuals to the community. Data from the [Workforce Development Analysis](#) can be used to focus this campaign on metro areas that contribute to the flow of workers into the Kansas City area as well as those that are top destinations for workers migrating out of the region. In addition to filling essential roles, a talent attraction initiative and employee recruitment contribute to economic prosperity by building a pipeline of workers that can help retain current employers and support the recruitment of new companies. Growing the Overland Park workforce also translates to new residents who generate other positive impacts to the city's tax base, such as increased property and sales tax revenues.

Overland Park's population has grown over three decades, but not as rapidly as peer cities.

Overland Park has added more than 85,000 residents since 1990, with the city's population approaching 198,000 by 2022 according to the most recent US Census Bureau estimates. ([Estimates published by the city](#) place Overland Park's current population at more than 200,000 residents.) This gain translates to an average annual growth rate of 1.8 percent, a rate similar to Johnson County (1.7 percent) and well above the growth rate experienced in the Kansas City metropolitan area (1.0 percent), the state of Kansas (0.5 percent), or the US (0.9 percent) during the period. As shown in Figure 6, Overland Park's average annual growth rate over the past three decades lagged the majority of the peer communities, outperforming just three of the nine cities: Irving, Texas (1.6 percent); Bellevue, Washington (1.3 percent); and Edina, Minnesota (0.4 percent). The two Sunbelt peers—Frisco, Texas, and Gilbert, Arizona—saw phenomenal growth rates, reflecting their location in two of the nation's top-gaining metropolitan areas: Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington (Texas) and Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler (Arizona).

Figure 6. Population Growth Comparisons, 1990 to 2022

With net population change and compound annual growth rate (CAGR)

COMPARISONS	METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA)	1990	2022	NET CHANGE	CAGR
Overland Park, Kansas	Kansas City, MO-KS	112,305	197,726	+85,421	1.8%
Johnson County, Kansas	Kansas City, MO-KS	357,309	619,195	+261,886	1.7%
Kansas City MSA	Kansas City, MO-KS	1,618,905	2,209,494	+590,589	1.0%
Kansas	—	2,481,349	2,937,150	+455,801	0.5%
United States	—	249,670,111	333,287,557	+83,617,446	0.9%
PEERS	METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA)	1990	2022	NET CHANGE	CAGR
Frisco, Texas	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	7,096	219,587	+212,491	11.3%
Gilbert, Arizona	Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ	30,249	275,346	+245,097	7.1%
Franklin, Tennessee	Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN	20,893	86,895	+66,002	4.6%
Round Rock, Texas	Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX	31,994	126,697	+94,703	4.4%
Cary, North Carolina	Raleigh-Cary, NC	45,660	180,388	+134,728	4.4%
Carmel, Indiana	Indianapolis-Carmel-Greenwood, IN	26,638	101,964	+75,326	4.3%
Irving, Texas	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	155,675	254,715	+99,040	1.6%
Bellevue, Washington	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	99,990	152,767	+52,777	1.3%
Edina, Minnesota	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	45,993	52,437	+6,444	0.4%

Source(s): US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program; Moody's Analytics; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Population estimates prior to 2010 are sourced from Moody's Analytics. Estimates from 2010 to 2022 are sourced from the US Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program vintages 2020 and 2022.

A review of the three components of population change—natural change (the difference between births and deaths), domestic migration (the net number of new residents from within the US), and immigration (net gains from locations outside the US)—provides clues to forces influencing population growth for Overland Park and the peer communities. With few exceptions, all 10 counties (the only geography for which this data set is produced) experienced annual net gains in each component across the three decades analyzed. However, the role each factor played in overall population growth varied. For Johnson County, natural increase and domestic migration each played a significant part in the county's population gains until the Great Recession (2007–2009) when domestic migration dropped off, leaving natural increase as the primary driver. Net population gains slowed across all three components in Johnson County by 2019.

By contrast, strong net domestic migration throughout the period drove population gains in the counties of high-growth peers: Frisco (Collin County, Texas); Gilbert (Maricopa County, Arizona); Franklin (Williamson County, Tennessee); Round Rock (Williamson County, Texas); Cary (Wake County, North Carolina); and Carmel (Hamilton County, Indiana). Dallas and Hennepin Counties (home to Irving, Texas, and Edina, Minnesota, respectively) were the only counties to experience extensive net outmigration over most of the three decades analyzed and were also among the slowest growing of the group. Only one county, King County, Washington (home to Bellevue), saw significant net gains resulting from immigration.

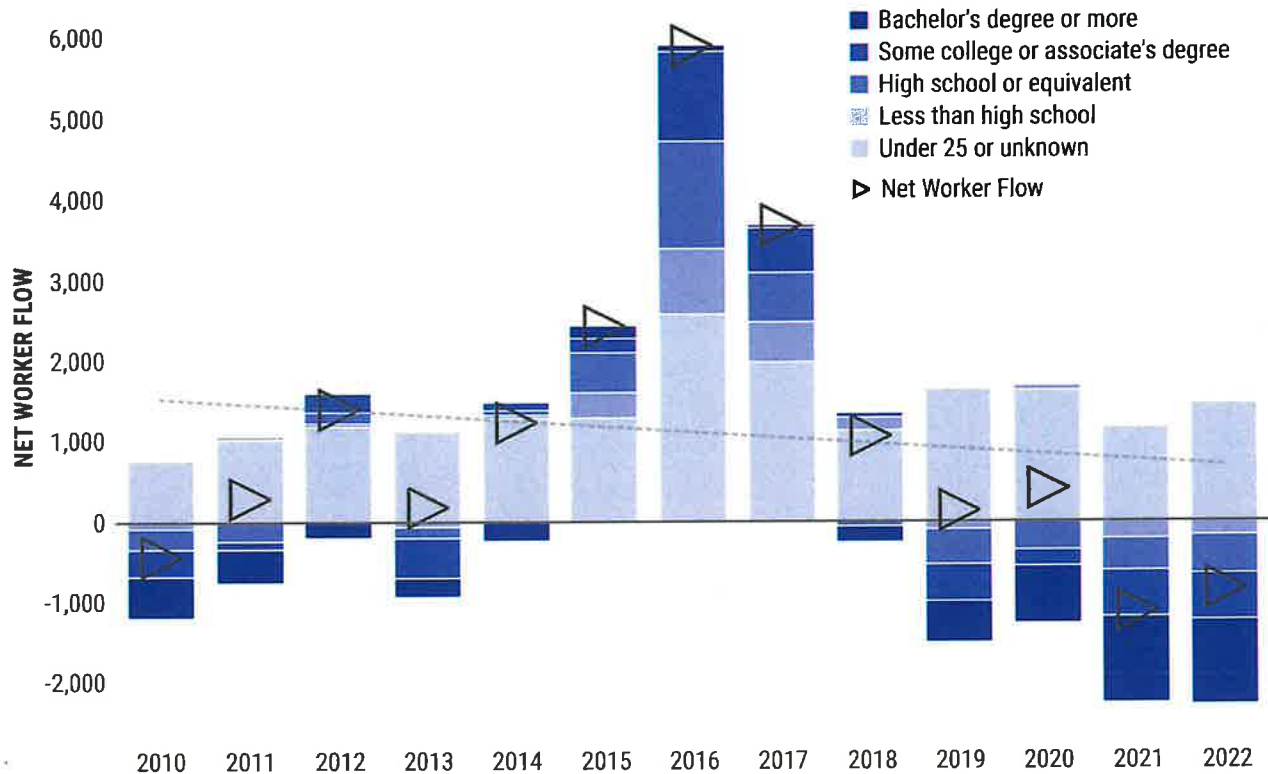
The flow of workers into the Kansas City MSA is trending downward.

Worker migration to the Kansas City, MO-KS MSA is largely driven by exchanges with other parts of Kansas and Missouri. These bistate flows have contributed thousands of workers annually to the MSA for more than a decade. However, the overall trend for both states has been downward in recent years, with the contributions of the two diverging dramatically in 2019. While the MSA continues to receive net positive migration from Kansas, adding an average of 1,200 workers to the MSA each year between 2019 and 2022, these gains have been offset by average annual net losses of more than 500 workers to Missouri. Ramping up talent recruitment is essential to counter these worker migration declines. Yet, there are some positive patterns in the region's worker migration data. Young workers under the age of 25 (or whose educational attainment level is unknown) contribute heavily to the region's inflow of workers, experiencing a net positive trend each year since 2010 (see Figure 7). On the other hand, the Kansas City MSA experienced net losses of workers with a bachelor's degree or higher in every year except 2015, 2016, and 2017.



Figure 7. Net Flow of Workers

Trends of workers to and from Kansas City, MO-KS, by education level.



Source(s): US Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), Job-to-Job Flows; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Data include hires and separations of workers between establishments that experienced brief unemployment (one quarter or less). Only establishments with unemployment insurance covered employees are included. Educational attainment only available for workers age 25 or older. Some states are missing data for the most recent period, and some are limited to previous quarters (AK-2016.1; AR, MS, and TN-2018.1; MI and LA-2021.3).

In 2022, the St. Louis, MO-IL MSA was the top source of incoming workers to the Kansas City MSA, providing over 21,500 workers. Nonmetro areas in both Missouri and Kansas were top contributors, along with net flows from MSAs including Wichita, Topeka, Lawrence, and Manhattan in Kansas, and Springfield, Columbia, and St. Joseph in Missouri. When Kansas and Missouri are excluded, the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX MSA was the top source, contributing over 1,400 workers in 2022, followed by the Chicago, Denver, Phoenix, Omaha, Los Angeles, and Houston MSAs. In addition to these metro areas, which have been consistent contributors across the 12-year period analyzed, metro and nonmetro areas in nearby states like Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Nebraska have been top sources of worker flows and should be targeted for talent recruitment efforts.

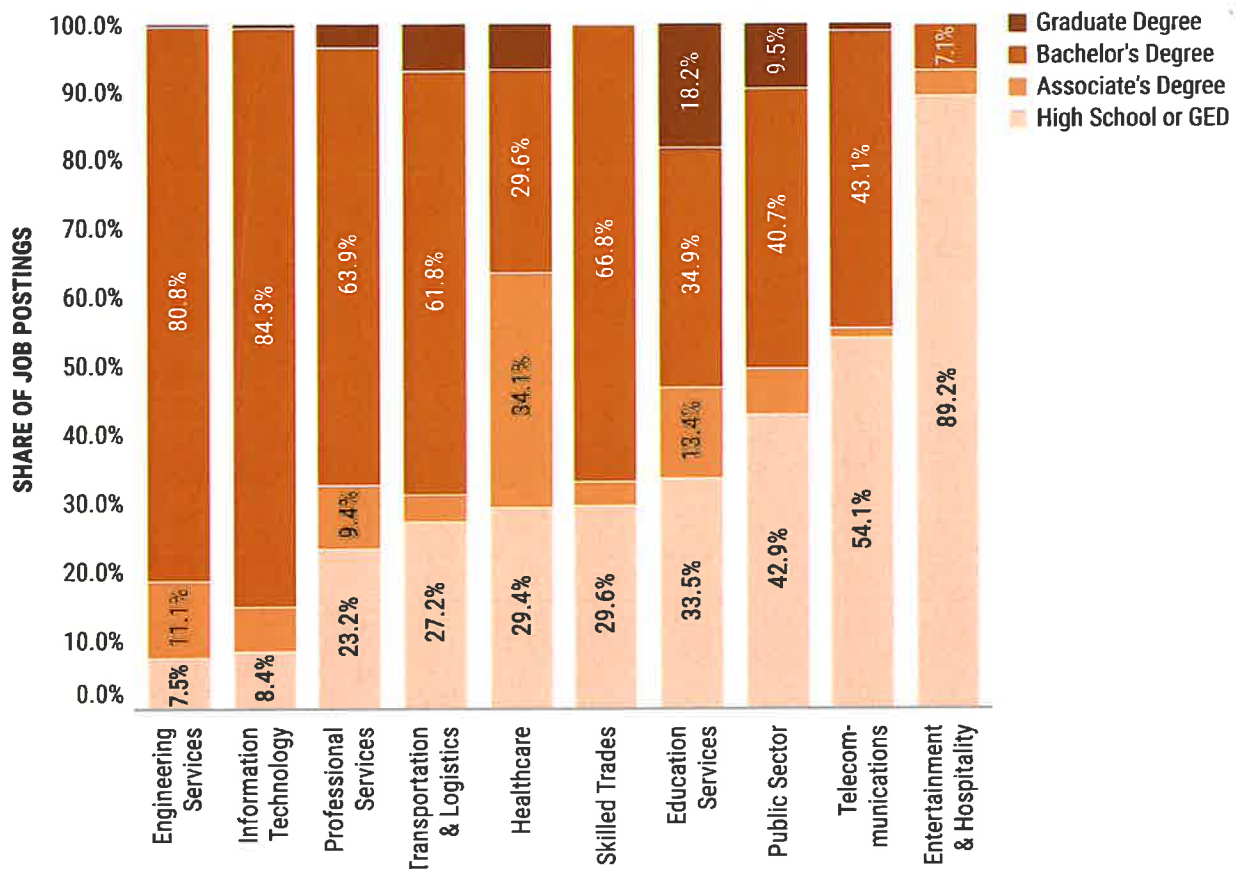
The flow of workers leaving the area follows a similar pattern. The St. Louis MSA was the top destination for outgoing workers, capturing more than 23,600 workers leaving the Kansas City MSA in 2022. Like the incoming flows, other parts of Missouri and Kansas comprise the remaining top destinations for outgoing workers. The pattern also holds when Missouri and Kansas are excluded, with the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX MSA attracting over 1,900 workers from the Kansas City MSA in 2022. The other top talent attracters outside of the bistate area also mirrored the incoming flows with the Chicago, Denver, Phoenix, Omaha, Houston, and Los Angeles MSAs serving as top destinations for workers leaving the region. With the recent selection of Overland Park as a pilot city for the state's Love, Kansas initiative, the OP Chamber is well-suited to help market the state and Overland Park to career professionals living in these regions.

Overland Park's diverse industries offer an advantage for the recruitment of talent across education levels.

As a strong hub for corporate and professional services, Overland Park features 25 million square feet of office space, accounting for one-fifth (19.6 percent) of the MSA's total office inventory. For over two decades, office and administrative support roles have consistently employed more people than any other major occupational group in Overland Park. While corporate and professional services workers are typically more educated, job postings that request certain educational levels vary widely across Overland Park's key employment segments (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Minimum Education Requested on Job Postings by Key Employment Segments

Based on an analysis of two years of job postings in the Kansas City MSA.



Source(s): US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); Lightcast 2023.4—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; TIP Strategies, Inc.
 Note(s): Job postings include non-staffing, unique, active job postings for full-time, part-time, and flexible positions, excluding internships in the Kansas City MSA between March 2022 and February 2024. The Kansas City MSA includes Bates, Caldwell, Cass, Clay, Clinton, Jackson, Lafayette, Platte, and Ray Counties in Missouri, and Johnson, Leavenworth, Linn, Miami, and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas.

For example, nearly 90 percent of entertainment and hospitality job postings analyzed requested a high school diploma or equivalent. On the other hand, four out of five engineering services job postings (81 percent) requested that candidates have at least a bachelor's degree. Job postings in the information technology (IT) field had even higher educational attainment requests. With over 85 percent of analyzed job postings requesting a bachelor's or graduate degree, IT employers had the highest education requests for job candidates among the 10 employment segments. This understanding of industry-specific education requirements is crucial for tailoring recruitment strategies and workforce development programs. Aligning recruitment efforts with the educational needs of Overland Park's employers will help attract talent across education levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. Target boomerang talent attraction efforts in the top destination MSAs for outgoing Kansas City workers.
 - 1.1.1. Tap into Kansas City regional alumni associations in those MSAs to promote job openings and career opportunities in Overland Park through their channels.
 - 1.1.2. Engage regional alumni in those MSAs by arranging networking events and meetups, providing a platform for Overland Park employers to connect directly with potential boomerang talent.
- 1.2. Offer supports for trailing spouses highlighting the Overland Park community.
 - 1.2.1. Develop comprehensive relocation packages that include information on local amenities, housing, job opportunities, and multicultural resources in Overland Park.
 - 1.2.2. Offer community tours to relocating professionals and their spouses to help newcomers feel welcome and integrate into the Overland Park community.

HelloWestMichigan

HelloWestMichigan is a staffed talent attraction and retention initiative funded by the private sector and supported by The Right Place, an economic development organization. It promotes living and working in the Grand Rapids region through marketing, networking opportunities, and community events for new residents, including interns and remote workers. Testimonials from recent transplants provide a personal, relatable, and reassuring perspective that enhance HelloWestMichigan's talent attraction efforts. The initiative's website also outlines multicultural resources to ensure all newcomers feel welcomed and included. Additionally, HelloWestMichigan partners with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and other statewide talent attraction efforts on promotional activities.

- 1.3. Tap into existing programs to support employers with recruitment services to attract candidates from a more diverse talent pool.
 - 1.3.1. Partner with TeamKC to enhance recruitment efforts, leveraging its existing resources and activities to help employers find and attract skilled candidates.
 - 1.3.2. Leverage programs like Hiring Our Heroes, SkillBridge, and Job One to tap into diverse talent pools, providing employers with a broader range of talent to fill critical roles.
- 1.4. Emphasize the importance of skills-based hiring to help businesses recruit from a more diverse talent pool and help residents with better economic opportunities.
 - 1.4.1. Offer training sessions to help employers implement skills-based hiring practices.
 - 1.4.2. Connect employers to other resources to help with skills-based hiring practices.

Skills-Based Hiring Resources

Adopting skills-based hiring practices can help address talent shortages by broadening the applicant pool, supporting career advancement within companies, and improving talent retention. This approach encourages employers to focus on the competencies needed for a role when hiring rather than requiring a specific degree. While formal degrees can still be useful indicators of knowledge and skills, skill-based hiring helps ensure candidates have the practical abilities and hands-on experience needed to excel in a role. Resources on the topic include the Business Roundtable's [Skills-Based Internal Mobility Playbook](#), Jobs for the Future and Rework America Alliance's [Skills-Based Sourcing & Hiring Playbook](#), and the Society for Human Resource Management Foundation's [Skills-First Toolkit](#).

OPPORTUNITY 2. ANCHOR

Retain the region's home-grown talent and support local companies with employee retention.

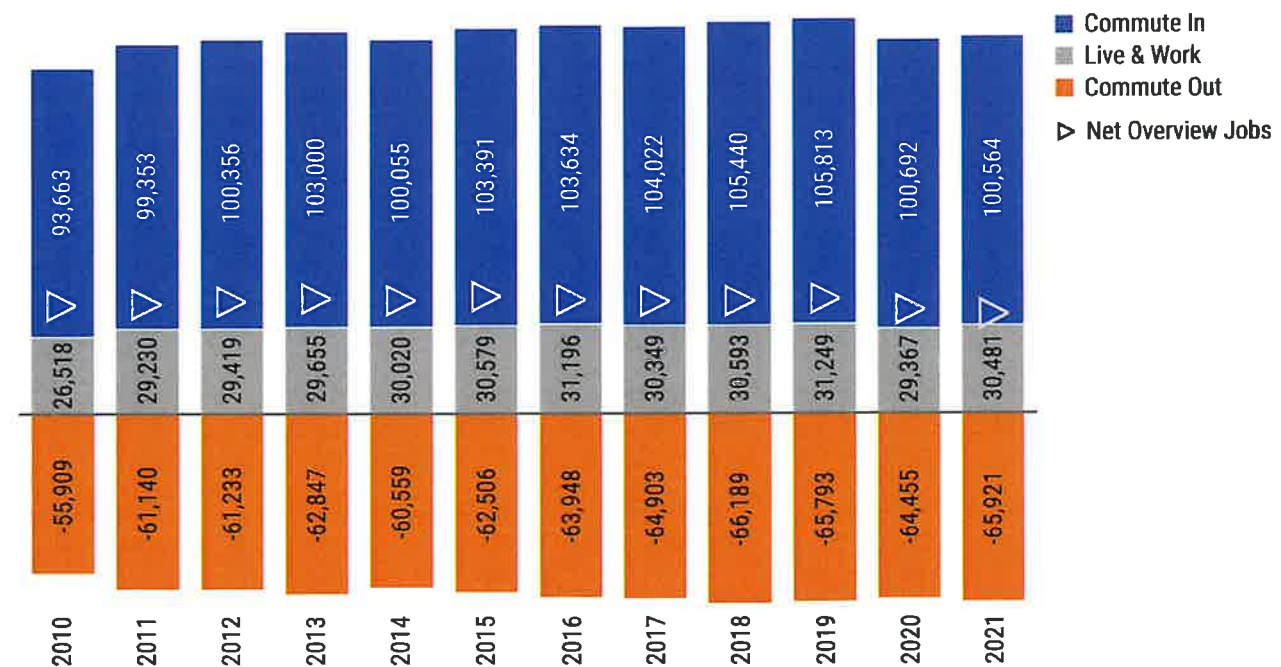
Along with a targeted recruitment strategy, Overland Park can fill its talent gaps by taking steps to retain existing workers and to facilitate the entry of first-time entrants into the job market. Supporting employer retention efforts by providing resources and initiatives that enhance employee satisfaction is one way the OP Chamber can help businesses maintain a stable and motivated workforce. This, in turn, boosts productivity, reduces turnover costs, and fosters a thriving business environment within the region. Removing barriers to workforce participation, such as housing affordability, childcare availability, and transportation access, is an important, yet complicated, element of this strategy. Efforts to better connect students at all levels with the community is another approach for anchoring talent in the region.

Overland Park's employers draw city residents and commuters alike.

As shown in Figure 9, Overland Park's commuting patterns have remained steady for over a decade. Between 2010 and 2021 (the most recent available data), the share of Overland Park residents who live and work within the city limits has hovered around 32 percent, or roughly one-third of the employed population. The city has also consistently been a net importer of workers during this period, with more workers commuting into Overland Park than employed residents leaving the city for work. Overland Park's ability to provide employment opportunities for residents and for a large number of inbound commuters—roughly 100,000 workers annually—speaks to its strong base of employers. Of Overland Park residents employed by establishments outside the city, the top destination was Kansas City, Missouri, accounting for roughly one in six outbound commuters (16 to 17 percent) each year since 2010. Olathe, Lenexa, and Kansas City, Kansas, captured nearly one-quarter (23 to 25 percent) of Overland Park's outbound commuting flow during this same period.

Figure 9. Commuting Pattern Trends

Flow of workers and residents through Overland Park, Kansas, 2010–2021.



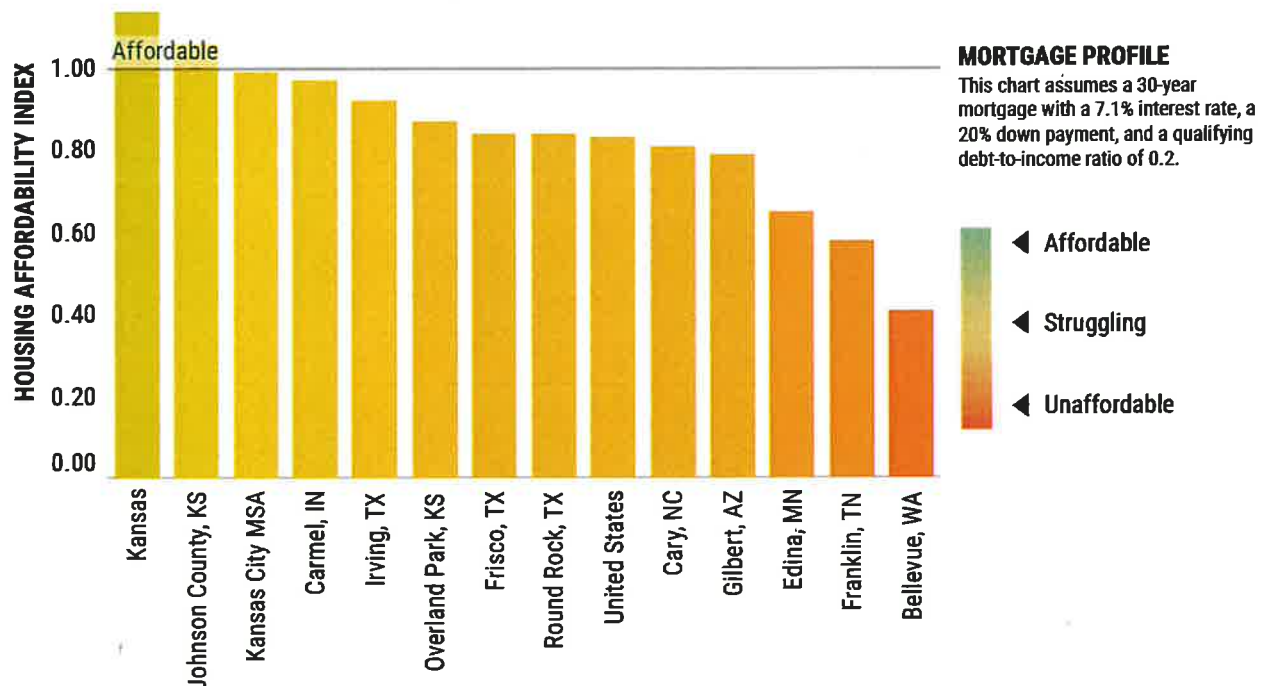
Source(s): LEHD, Origin-Destination Employment Statistics; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Only includes residents and workers in Kansas and Missouri.

Overland Park compares well on housing affordability relative to peer communities but falls short regionally.

Access to attainable housing is a pressing concern in Overland Park. Employers in focus groups and one-on-one interviews noted that many of their lower income employees struggle to afford living in Overland Park. The housing affordability index shown in Figure 10 (page 15) gauges Overland Park's performance relative to peer and regional geographies. The index compares each geography's median household income to a typical mortgage payment on a median-priced home in the area, with a score of 1.00 and above considered affordable. Using this measure, Overland Park has a housing affordability index score of 0.87, making it less affordable overall than the Kansas City MSA (0.99), Johnson County (1.06), and the statewide affordability score for Kansas (1.14). However, Overland Park fares much better on this indicator when compared to the nine peer communities. Among this group, only Carmel and Irving were deemed more affordable than Overland Park, with index scores of 0.97 and 0.92, respectively. When compared on median home value alone (independent of household income), Overland Park ranked third among the peer cities, trailing only Irving and Round Rock. Home ownership was least affordable based on the index for residents of Bellevue (0.41), Franklin (0.58), and Edina (0.65).

Figure 10. Housing Affordability Index, 2022



Source(s): 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year sample; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): The Housing Affordability Index was adapted from Texas A&M University's Real Estate Center by TIP Strategies, Inc. The index compares median household income to a typical mortgage payment on a median-priced home. A value of 1 indicates the median income is exactly enough to purchase a median home. Values <1 indicate unaffordability, and values >1 indicate affordability. Estimated mortgage payments only include the monthly payments on the loan; they do not include insurance or tax payments.

Rental housing is also less affordable in Overland Park when compared to the surrounding region. Overland Park's 2022 median monthly rent (\$1,378) exceeded median rents in Johnson County by more than \$100. The discrepancy was even greater relative to median rents in the Kansas City MSA and the state, which were \$230 and nearly \$400 lower, respectively, than Overland Park. However, like with home values, Overland Park has an advantage on this indicator when considered outside of the region; the city's median rent was lower than any of the nine peer communities, often by hundreds of dollars.

Housing vacancy rates also differ. Overland Park had a 4.6 percent vacancy rate in 2022, lower than the US rate of 10.8 percent. All other benchmark geographies, except Gilbert, Arizona (3.7 percent), and Franklin, Tennessee (4.5 percent), had higher shares of vacant housing units compared to Overland Park. This lower vacancy rate suggests a tighter housing market in Overland Park—a potential challenge to the retention and recruitment of workers.

Additional supports for transportation and childcare can help with workforce participation.

Along with promoting its relatively lower housing costs, Overland Park can also tout the lowest commute times among the nine benchmarks. According to the 2022 American Community Survey, the average travel time to work for Overland Park residents was 20 minutes compared to the longest commute of 29 minutes in Frisco, Texas. However, stakeholders shared that this indicator is not the reality for those who lack reliable car transportation. Based on the transit access and demand analyses in the [Workforce Development Analysis](#), more transportation options are needed along sections of southern Overland Park as there is high demand but low to no access in these areas (see Figure 12). Stakeholders also shared that public transportation can be difficult to access for day-to-day mobility.

Access to affordable childcare represents another barrier to employment. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Living Wage Calculator estimates annual childcare costs in Johnson County at \$12,102 for one child, \$22,208 for two children, and \$29,027 for three children. For a household earning Overland Park's median annual income of \$100,900, these costs represent between 12 percent and 29 percent of its income. These significant expenses highlight the financial challenges faced by families as they navigate decisions about work.



Figure 11. Concentration of Resident Workers by ZIP Code

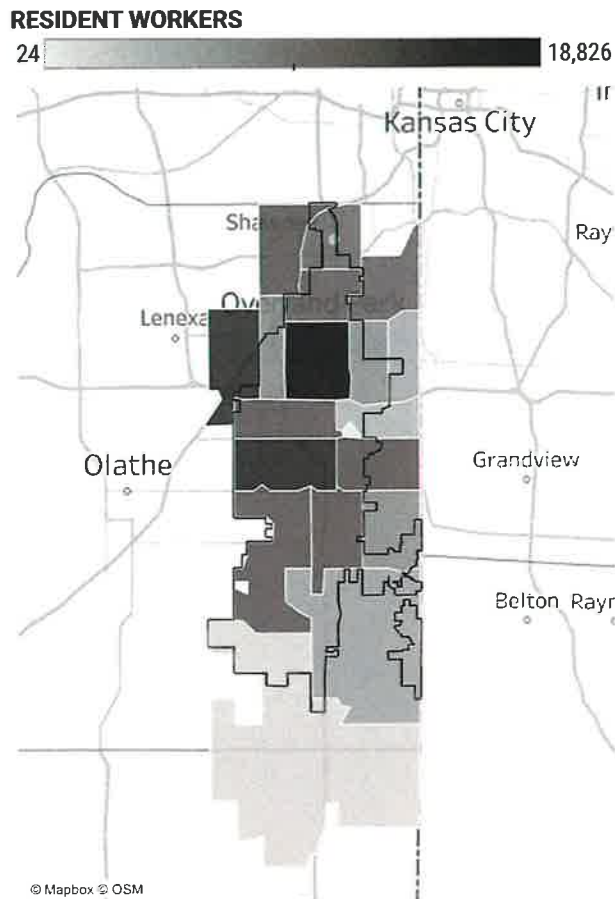
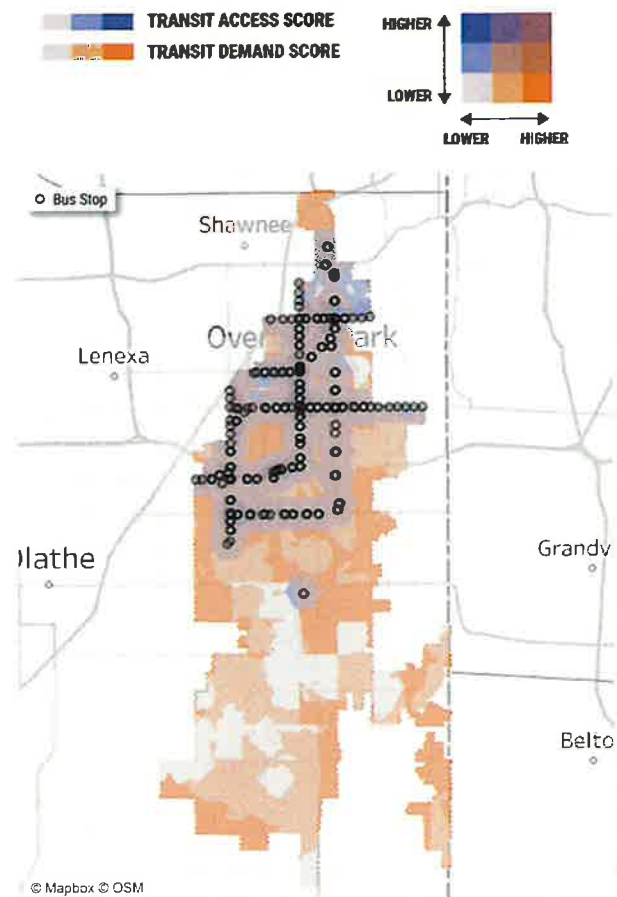


Figure 12. Transit Access and Demand by ZIP Code, with Bus Stops



Source(s): BLS; Lightcast 2023.4—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement and Basic Monthly Surveys in 2023, National Compensation Survey 2023; US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-year aggregate sample, Population Estimates Program 2022 Vintage; US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Occupational Information Network version 28.2; Amy K. Glasmeier, MIT Living Wage Calculator; Institute of Museum and Library Services, Public Libraries Survey; ParkServe; Kansas City Area Transportation Authority; state of Kansas; state of Missouri; US Department of Agriculture, Food Access Research Atlas; TIP Strategies, Inc.

About Transit Access and Demand

The transit access score is intended to approximate the quality of transportation service within Overland Park, relative to the Kansas City MSA. This is based on headways and the duration of travel between transit stops with grid cells containing higher-quality transit stops receiving higher scores. A walkability decay factor assigns lower access scores with farther distance from transit stops. The transit demand score is intended to approximate transit demand within Overland Park, relative to the Kansas City MSA, based on multiple social equity and physical infrastructure components, including proximity to schools, proximity to public libraries, proximity to employment centers, proximity to green space, supermarket access, education level, median household income, unemployment rate, health insurance coverage, household vehicle access, age, race, SNAP participation, and population density.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Enhance the quality of life in Overland Park to retain workers by addressing workforce participation barriers like housing, transportation, and childcare.
 - 2.1.1. Work with local entities and developers to support the development of a diverse range of housing options and destinations in Overland Park.
 - 2.1.2. Consider creative ways to expand transportation options in Overland Park, like ride share credits for transport within Overland Park city limits, to better connect employment centers and residential developments or public transit stops.
 - 2.1.3. Launch a childcare needs assessment and study to understand the affordability, availability, and accessibility of childcare in Overland Park to target expansion efforts that broaden access to high-quality care.
 - 2.1.4. Maintain an ecosystem map of local and regional programs to connect Overland Park community members to organizations or service providers that could help address other barriers to workforce participation.
- 2.2. Develop an employee retention toolkit for local businesses.
 - 2.2.1. Include topics like benefits, scheduling flexibility, hybrid routines, retention bonuses, and workplace culture in the toolkit.
 - 2.2.2. Record a webinar for local businesses on how to effectively use the toolkit and implement retention strategies.

Retention Benefit Resources

Employers often struggle to find affordable and easy-to-administer benefits that effectively retain talent. Free resources from Forbes Advisor can offer valuable insights. The online resource, [*What Are Voluntary Benefits? The Ultimate Guide*](#), lists optional benefits such as identity theft protection and pet insurance, including cost details and implementation steps. [*What Are Fringe Benefits?*](#) outlines optional benefits exempt from Internal Revenue Service (IRS) taxation, such as giving employee recognition awards and offering employee discounts. Other ways to assess retention tools include surveying employees to identify their needs, analyzing competitors' job postings, and researching benefits providers.

- 2.3. Leverage Leadership OP and OP Young Professionals to strengthen community ties and raise awareness about career advancement opportunities in Overland Park.
 - 2.3.1. Invite industry leaders from Overland Park's key employment segments to speak at these gatherings, helping raise awareness about major industries and career advancement opportunities.
 - 2.3.2. Connect participants with regional education and training institutions that offer short-term upskilling opportunities like professional certificates.
 - 2.3.3. Engage diverse voices of participants to understand the challenges and opportunities to retaining strong community leaders in Overland Park.
- 2.4. Incentivize recent Overland Park high school graduates to stay in the region.
 - 2.4.1. Promote existing programs like the Kansas Promise Scholarship that provide service scholarships for students attending Kansas community colleges and technical colleges in specific fields of study.

- 2.4.2.** Target scholarship opportunities tied to training pathways offered in the region that lead to high quality jobs in Overland Park's key employment segments.
- 2.5.** Expand college student retention programs and collaborate with local colleges to share stories of postgraduation outcomes.
 - 2.5.1.** Tap into existing events offered by TeamKC or programs like ProX to help retain young talent in the region.
 - 2.5.2.** Establish a feedback mechanism to gather insights from college interns in Overland Park to understand ways to improve retention strategies and programs.
 - 2.5.3.** Market internship opportunities offered by Overland Park employers to regional education partners.

Bloom in Bloomington

Bloom in Bloomington is a youth workforce development program that matches individuals ages 16 to 24 with summer internships in Bloomington, Minnesota. It connects participants with local government, nonprofit, and private sector employers to support career exploration, skills development, and leadership growth. Young adult interns receive two, three-hour job preparedness orientations, while high school interns attend a leadership academy every Friday to learn more about public speaking, networking, and racial equity. Research indicates that interns are more likely to remain with their employers long-term compared to outside hires.

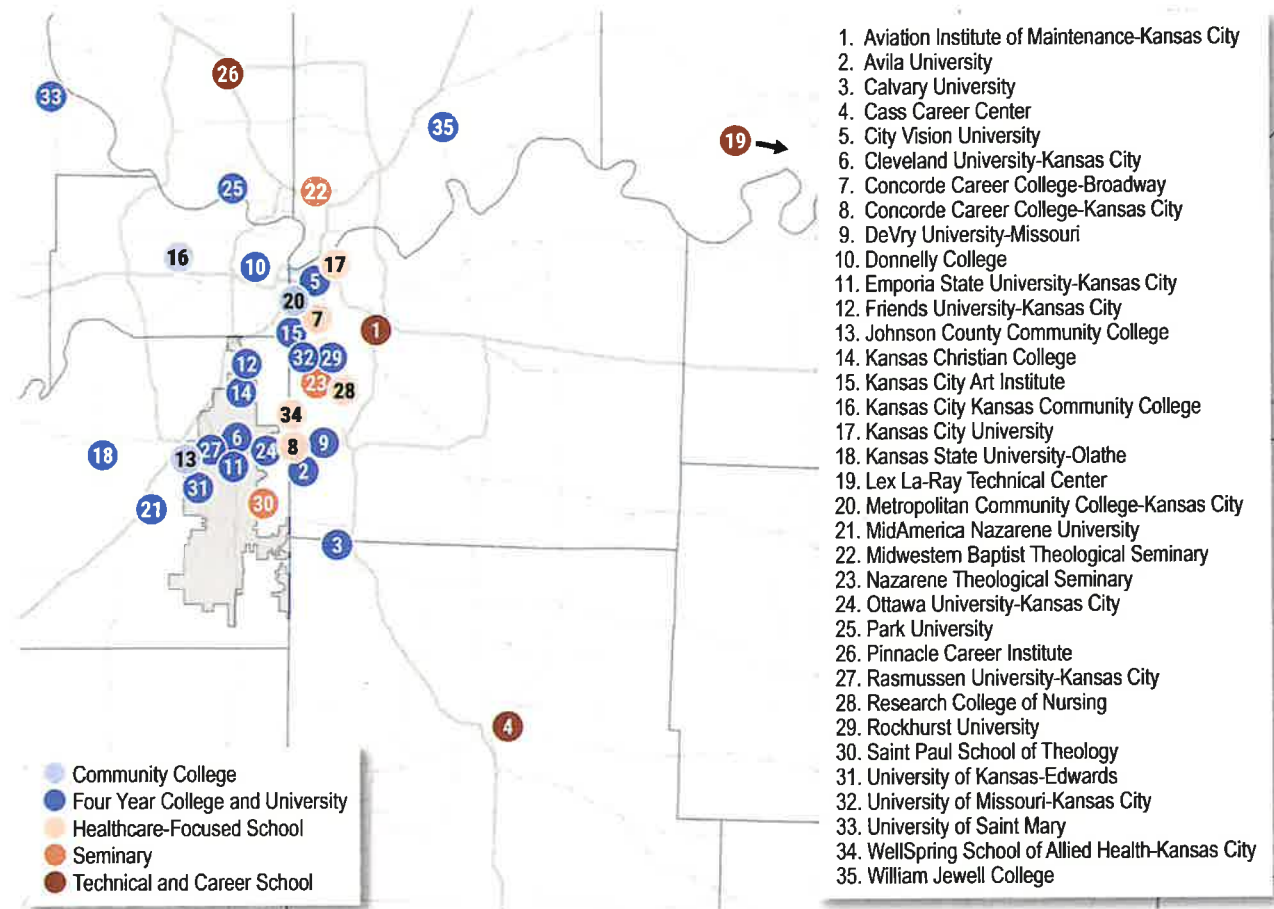


OPPORTUNITY 3. ALIGN

Strengthen the education and training infrastructure to match employer needs and to help people gain in-demand skills that lead to living wage jobs.

A strong pipeline of talent that matches employer needs not only enhances the local workforce's competitiveness but also attracts businesses looking for skilled and adaptable workers. A critical component to building a flexible and resilient labor pool is engaging employers in regional workforce efforts. Initiatives that benefit from private sector involvement include providing real world learning opportunities to high school students, validating postsecondary curriculum, and participating in employer collaboratives to collectively address industry workforce challenges. Investing in regional education and training infrastructure supports economic growth by equipping career seekers with in-demand skills for living wage jobs. By emphasizing pathways in high-demand employment segments and supporting informed career choices, the OP Chamber helps students and workers align their skills development to match the real-time needs of local employers.

Figure 13. Selected Regional Higher Education Institutions



Source(s): National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); Lightcast 2023.4—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Overland Park is shown in light gray for context within the overall MSA. The Kansas City MSA includes Bates, Caldwell, Cass, Clay, Clinton, Jackson, Lafayette, Platte, and Ray Counties in Missouri, and Johnson, Leavenworth, Linn, Miami, and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas. Completion data for satellite campuses like Kansas State University–Olathe and University of Kansas–Edwards are reported under the university system's main campus and are not included in regional reporting. While other major universities, such as Kansas State University, the University of Kansas, and the University of Missouri, also contribute to the pipeline of recent graduates who may move to the Kansas City MSA, this analysis focuses on institutions within the MSA for which IPEDS data are available.

The region develops a consistent supply of educated talent, bolstered by community colleges.

The Kansas City MSA educates talent through a variety of higher education institutions, including community colleges, four-year universities, healthcare-focused schools, seminaries, and career and technical schools (see Figure 13). In 2022 alone, these institutions conferred more than 19,700 degrees and awards resulting from the completion of an academic or occupational/vocational program of study. The largest contributor to this total was the Metropolitan Community College (MCC) network, with over 3,600 awards in 2022, representing 18.6 percent of regional completions. Roughly two-thirds of MCC's total completions (68 percent) were comprised of associate's degrees and awards of less than two years in liberal arts. The University of Missouri–Kansas City was the largest four-year university by degree completions, awarding nearly one in five (17.3 percent) of the MSA's total in fields like computer science, business, nursing, and biology.

Among the postsecondary institutions located in Overland Park for which completion data is available through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Johnson County Community College (JCCC) granted the highest number of degrees and awards in 2022, accounting for 2,809 (14.2 percent) of the Kansas City MSA's total. Like MCC, most JCCC awards were in liberal arts and healthcare, though MCC's healthcare awards were primarily comprised of registered nurses (more than 3 percent of all MCC awards), while the majority of JCCC's awards in the field were focused on nursing and patient care assistant/aides (15.8 percent of all JCCC awards).

The remaining Overland Park higher education institutions for which IPEDS data is available are four-year universities. Ottawa University–Kansas City awarded 185 bachelor's and graduate degrees in 2022, with information technology being the largest field of study (44.3 percent of the total). Cleveland University–Kansas City awarded 164 degrees in 2022, primarily in the chiropractic doctorate program (78.7 percent of its awards). Kansas Christian College awarded 25 degrees in organizational leadership and theology in 2022.

Trends in the top Kansas City MSA degree completion areas have stayed fairly consistent for the past two decades. In 2022, there were about 4,790 completions in health and health-related higher education programs in the MSA, making up 25 percent of the year's completions. Of those degrees, 26.1 percent were in registered nursing; 12.8 percent were related to nursing and patient care assistance; and 5.8 percent were in osteopathic medicine. Over 4,100, or 21 percent, of the total 2022 awards in the region were liberal arts degrees, and nearly 2,625, or 13.7 percent, were in business, management, marketing, and related support services. Other notable categories include computer and information sciences and support services (4.5 percent), theology and religious vocations (3.8 percent), psychology (3.3 percent), education (2.9 percent), and biological and biomedical sciences (2.3 percent). Altogether, the Kansas City region produces a top-notch talent pipeline, with thousands of students annually completing degree programs related to key employment segments (see Figure 3, page 5).

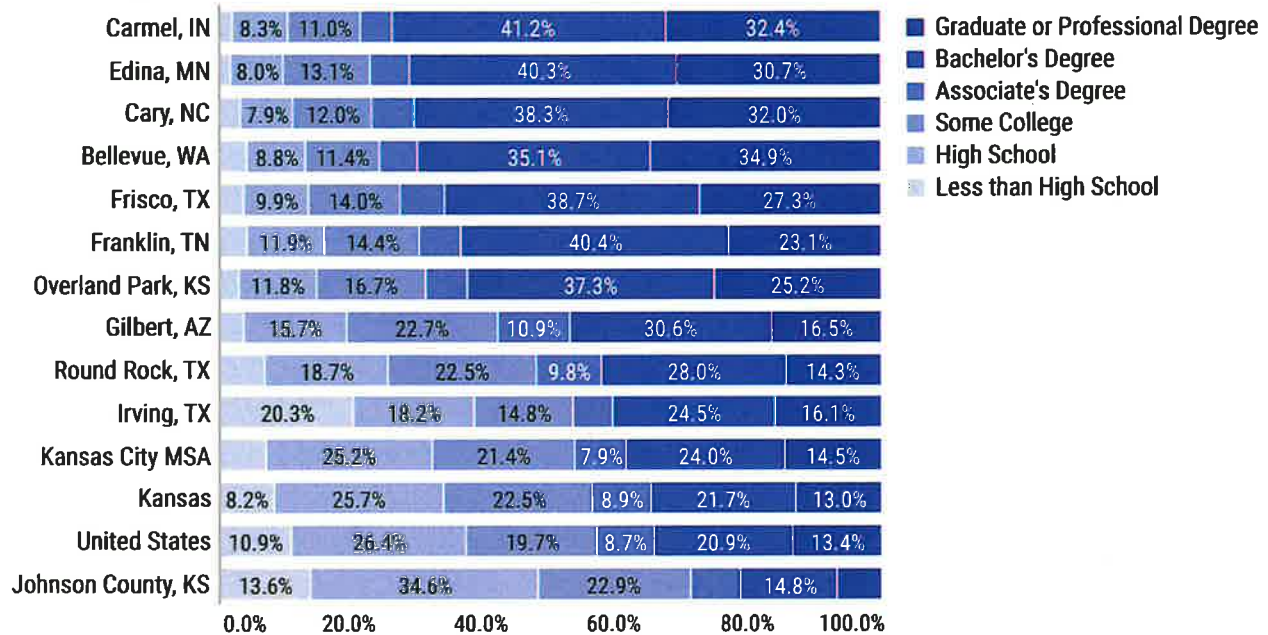
Even with high educational attainment rates, there remains opportunity to connect Overland Park residents to further education and training.

Compared to Johnson County, the MSA, Kansas, and the US, Overland Park has higher levels of educational attainment. For example, almost two-thirds of Overland Park residents age 25 years and over (62.5 percent) have a bachelor's degree or higher. In Kansas and the US, that share is more than 20 percentage points lower at 34.7 percent and 34.3 percent, respectively. Notably, one in four adults in Overland Park (25.2 percent) has earned a graduate or professional degree. In contrast, only about 13 percent of people over the age of 25 in Kansas and the US have achieved this level of education.

While Overland Park outperforms the state and the US, it ranks near the bottom in terms of the percentage of adults who have completed a formal degree program when compared to the nine benchmark geographies. Just over 68 percent of Overland Park residents age 25 and older have completed an associate's degree or higher. This figure falls short of educational attainment in Carmel, Indiana (78.7 percent); Edina, Minnesota (77.2 percent); Cary, North Carolina (76.9 percent); Bellevue, Washington (75.7 percent); Frisco, Texas (72.6 percent); and Franklin, Tennessee (69.6 percent).

Figure 14. Educational Attainment, 2022

Resident population 25 years and over



Source(s): 2022 ACS 5-year sample; TIP Strategies, Inc.

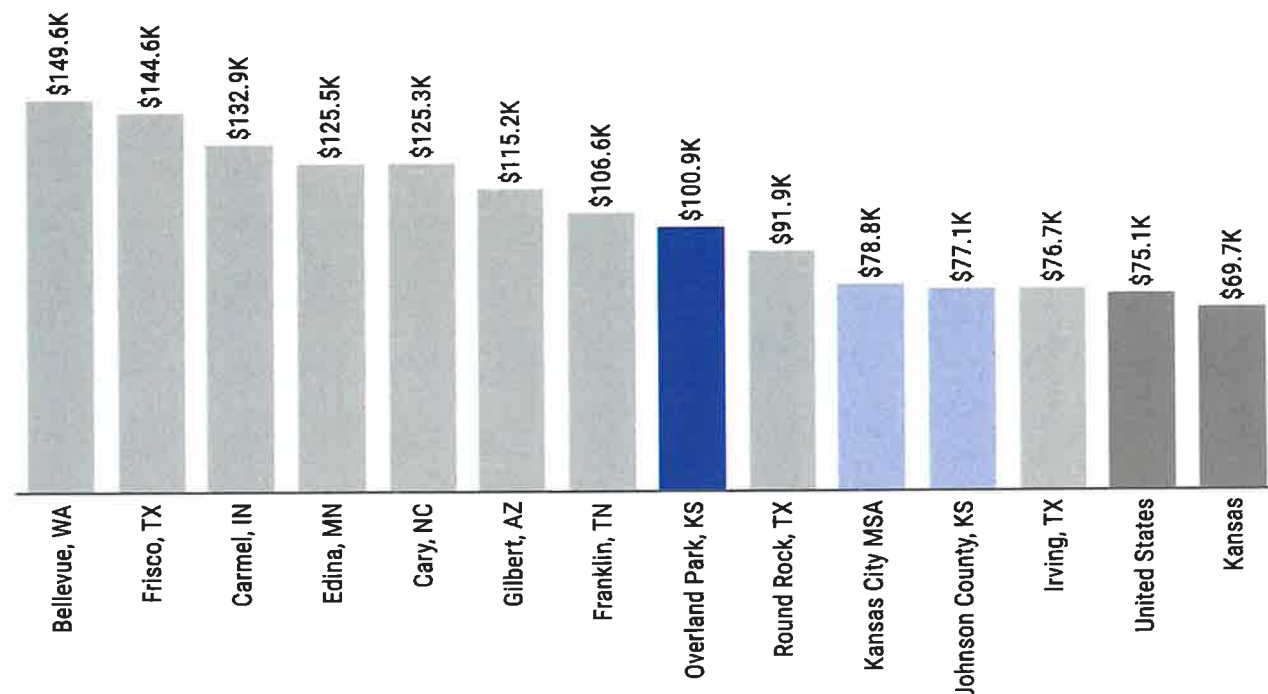
Note(s): Educational attainment only measured for population 25 and older. High school includes equivalency. Some college indicates that no degree was received. Graduate degree includes professional degrees and doctoral programs.

Even with the city's above-average educational attainment rates, there remains a clear opportunity for improvement. Approximately one in six Overland Park residents (16.7 percent) have earned some college credits but lack a degree. Addressing this gap by supporting pathways to degree completion can enhance the city's skilled workforce further, boost career readiness, and ensure that more individuals benefit from the economic and personal advantages of higher education.

Despite Overland Park's high median household incomes, one in five households still earns less than \$50,000 annually.

Overland Park's median household income measured at \$100,900 in 2022 (see Figure 15), exceeding figures for the Kansas City MSA (\$78,800), Johnson County (\$77,100), the US (\$75,100), and Kansas (\$69,700). This time, Overland Park ranks eighth among benchmark geographies with its median household income exceeding that of Round Rock, Texas, and Irving, Texas.

Figure 15. Median Household Income, 2022



Source(s): 2022 ACS 5-year sample; TIP Strategies, Inc.

However, it is important to note that nearly one in five households in Overland Park earn less than \$50,000 a year. Connecting these families to career advancement and upskilling opportunities could help them reach a living wage, transforming their quality of life. Through the following recommendations, Overland Park can more effectively address the diverse needs of its population and ensure a robust, inclusive talent pipeline that supports both local employers and career seekers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. Consider launching employer collaboratives for key employment segments, like healthcare, which expressed critical bottlenecks in their talent pipelines.
 - 3.1.1. Identify employer champions ready to collaborate with one another to address industry talent needs.
 - 3.1.2. Expand on the corresponding employment segment profile by gathering information directly from employer champions about the company's projected job openings to make data-driven decisions.
 - 3.1.3. Invite regional educational leaders with related training programs to serve as support partners and to strengthen competency and credential attainment.

Talent Pipeline Management Resources

The US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management approach is a strategic framework designed to align workforce development with the needs of industry through employer collaboratives. It aims to address skills gaps and workforce shortages through an employer-led, demand-driven model. [Building the Talent Pipeline: An Implementation Guide](#) provides details on the critical steps for success.

- 3.2. Expand educator externship programs to provide context to content taught in career and technical education programs while prioritizing work-based learning experiences in Overland Park's key employment segments.
 - 3.2.1. Connect related educators and local companies by matching them with teaching content area and industry.
 - 3.2.2. Incorporate a time for reflection into the externship program for educators to refine curriculum to better align with real-world applications.
 - 3.2.3. Schedule company leaders and industry experts to visit classrooms and provide guest lectures when educators are teaching the refined curriculum.

iWork: Teacher Externship

The iWork: Teacher Externship program allows teachers to directly incorporate what they learn from job shadowing into their instruction and interaction with students. Allen Economic Development Corporation staff worked with Allen Independent School District (ISD), Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, and 20 local Allen companies to host 26 teachers from Allen ISD and Denton ISD for a week in the summer of 2023. Employers participating in the initiative included five City of Allen municipal departments, showcasing the wide variety of experience needed in city government. The program was funded by Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas and participation was at no cost to school districts or industry partners.

- 3.3. Advocate for smooth transfers between noncredit trainings, dual credit options in high schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions of higher education in the region.
 - 3.3.1. Develop thought pieces outlining the benefits of improved transfer processes and share with regional institutions and partners.
 - 3.3.2. Inform legislative deliberations that consider credit transfers and degree pathways between Kansas higher education institutions.
- 3.4. Increase awareness of high-quality employment opportunities in Overland Park and the range of paths to access them.
 - 3.4.1. Record video spotlights of Overland Park employers aligned to the key employment segments to share more about roles in local companies.
 - 3.4.2. Develop fact sheets that detail specific occupations crucial to Overland Park's key employment segments that detail day-to-day tasks, demographics, training requirements, available training locally, and related occupations for upward economic mobility.

UpSkill Houston

UpSkill Houston, a Greater Houston Partnership initiative celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2024, is a collaborative effort involving employers, school districts, higher education institutions, and community organizations in the Houston, Texas, area. The program addresses the skills gap by raising awareness of middle-skill jobs—positions that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. UpSkill Houston highlights well-paying careers with benefits and advancement opportunities in sectors like construction, health science, petrochemical, and transportation. To inspire students to pursue these careers, UpSkill Houston has created *My Life As* videos and career fact sheets.

3.5. Connect employers to resources that help them strengthen their talent pipeline.

- 3.5.1.** Increase awareness of the state tools that employers can use to strengthen their workforce, like apprenticeship tax credits.
- 3.5.2.** Continue marketing the OP Chamber's Resource Hub for Work-Based Learning for K–12 Students to recruit more employers to participate in Real World Learning opportunities.
- 3.5.3.** Deploy creative incentives for employers to participate in talent pipeline activities, such as leasing agreements or recognition programs, to encourage their involvement in work-based learning.





www.tipstrategies.com

+1 512 3439113

contact@tipstrategies.com

STRATEGY • TALENT • RESILIENCE • ADVISORY