

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW 2022

Fund: Economic Development

Department: Cowley First

Mission Statement

This countywide partnership is dedicated to assist in expansion and retention of existing businesses, support local entrepreneurs, attract new businesses and industries while utilizing Cowley County's prominent business atmosphere, high quality of life, recreation and tourism opportunities and excellent education facilities.

Description of Services

The Cowley County Economic Development Department, also referred to as Cowley First, is a public-private partnership between Cowley County, City of Arkansas City, and the City of Winfield. Funded by the three government entities and a host of Cowley County Business Partners, Cowley First represents, and serves the entire county. As one cohesive group, Cowley First focuses on economic and community development to drive the economy.

Cowley First's emphasis is on entrepreneurship, small business growth and development, expansion and retention of all existing businesses, and business recruitment projects. Through Economic Development Cowley First also strives to ensure there is an educated and talented labor pool for area businesses and industries for not just this generation, but for the next generation as well.

Community Development focuses on the improvement of quality of life which has a direct effect on businesses and their employees. By addressing health care needs, educational and training gaps, youth development, access to housing and positive promotions of Cowley County as a great place to live, the communities are better served and attractive for new residents.

Strategic Focus

Partnership/Community Involvement

- Maintain a database of manufacturing, industrial and supplier businesses in Cowley County and maintain active industry call program to identify and serve the needs these businesses.
- Offer educational opportunities to businesses on topics with interest and impact to all local businesses, such as, incentives, training, legislation, finance, customer service, marketing, etc.
- Provide concentrated technical assistance to any business that indicates possible job creation, growth potential and capital investment to ensure all state and local resources are being utilized.
- Market and manage Cowley County funding sources, including the E-Community Loan Fund and Revolving Loan Fund, to support local business growth and new development countywide.
- Work with and assist local employers in identifying new ways to attract and retain skilled workforce as identified and requested as a significant issue, such as job fairs, area marketing, housing, etc.
- Work with area high schools and colleges to develop the next generation of workforce. Carryout programs that will build awareness to students of local job potential and training opportunities.
- Work with communities to identify housing needs and options to address these needs and issues.

Customer Service

- Provide one-on-one consulting services to new and existing businesses.
- Develop a marketing plan to promote services through a variety of media resources.
- Develop brochures to print and distribute information pertinent to meet the needs of local businesses as well as attracting new business and industrial firms to the county.
- Utilize new marketing materials to promote Cowley County through business recruitment activities.

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- Utilize Cowley-Works recruitment program website and items to promote Cowley County workforce / employment opportunities.

Leadership

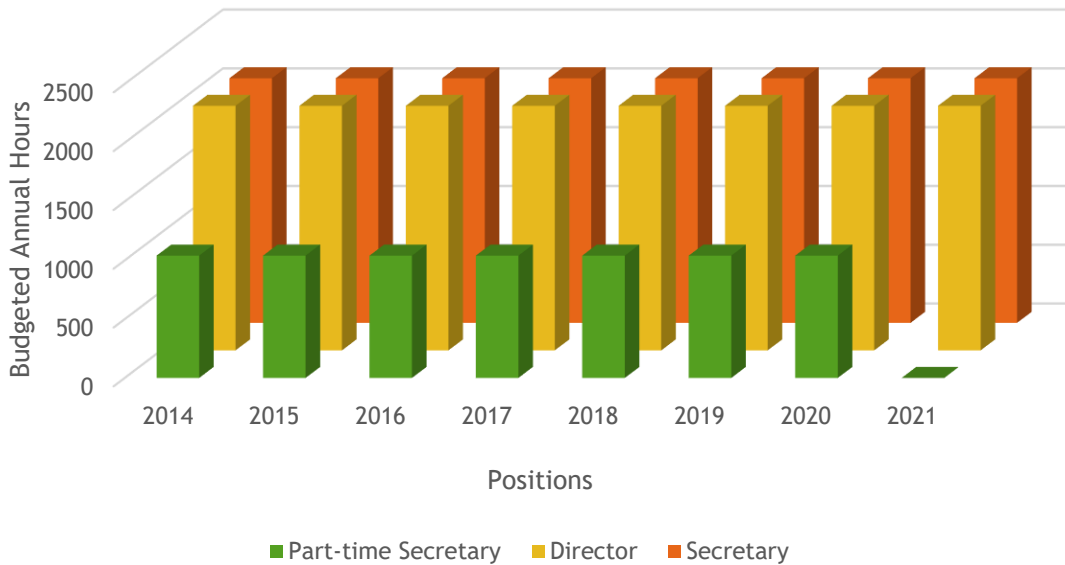
- Continue working with Leadership Cowley County to educate and develop community leaders.
- Develop broader communication with communities to assist in addressing needs of rural areas.

Significant Budget Changes

Funding has continued to be consistent, allowing for operations to likewise be consistent. The Projects & Loan portion of the budget continues to be adjusted dependent upon planned activities and loans approved and repaid through the revolving loan fund. Cowley First will continue hosting a workforce training and education classes. Cowley First will pay for the classes and will be reimbursed by attendees. Profits from classes are reinvested in future classes. The County workforce recruitment marketing plan, Cowley-Works, developed in partnership with area representatives and industries, continues to grow with increased marketing efforts. The part-time position has been valuable in assisting with workload of projects and activities. Last May, however, the internship was not renewed due to the impact on events and activities caused by COVID-19. With activities beginning to pick back up, the part-time staff position will again be filled.

Staffing Overview

Work Hours Budgeted



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Organizational Chart



Budget Overview