

2023



ANNUAL REPORT

grow
ellsworth county

www.growellsworthcounty.com

Growing Ellsworth County

2023 brought a whirlwind of change and growth through this office, as we transitioned into providing the services and identity of the Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce, which dissolved at the end of 2022. Maintaining the spirit of holistic services through Ellsworth County Economic Development and member-based enrichment services through our “chamber” division was an opportunity for us to provide more robust services to our business community, and understand their operational needs from a new perspective.

What we learned from our first year operating two umbrellas of service under one is reflected in our 2024 member benefit listing. We are honored to be able to provide our business community with a list of enhancements that can provide the networking, development, marketing, and support to continue to GROW and prosper, and we hope you will join us in 2024 as a member. Your membership dollars allow us to continue to offer the additional services and opportunities such as those listed in this report.

As times change, we must also adapt. And so we are. We have ideas on the horizon for 2024 to assist your business in ways that suit our community’s current business demands, including innovative digital marketing, succession planning, and new ways of networking, marketing, and economizing. We are excited about our 2023 accomplishments, and can’t wait to see what 2024 brings.

Stacie Schmidt
Executive Director



Michelle Skurkis
Assistant Director





About Us

Ellsworth County Economic Development dba Grow Ellsworth County serves as the lead agency to drive economic health and prosperity to Ellsworth County. We do this through creating and implementing a plan to increase population, business growth, jobs, and opportunity to Ellsworth County.

We source information and develop tools for incentives, referrals, and information on matters relating to community and economic development. We believe in the progressive spirit of Ellsworth County as the community of choice, and welcome new residents, businesses, and partners to join our community.

We believe that equally important to economic health is supporting our existing businesses, and through this effort we continue to provide professional development, resources, and troubleshooting support to our business community.

We have a high standard for performance and confidentiality, and a code of ethics that guides our deployment to the community.

Services include: Business financing, workforce development and employment assistance, business plan and pro forma development, grant writing, community development, networking and marketing, professional development, succession planning, sourcing information for community members, entrepreneurship development, incentive creation and site visits, recruitment and retention, and providing quality of life events and activities.

Ellsworth County Economic Development is a 501c(6) not for profit organization.



The Umbrella of Service

Transitioning into a wide umbrella of service including those offerings previously provided by the Chamber of Commerce has been an opportunity for us to reflect on our services, what we do well, and what can be learned and improved upon for the future. We are providing this guide as a resource for our community and our members to understand the functionality of our office and who to contact for their specific needs.

Eco Devo

Lead: Stacie Schmidt

- Business Finance Packaging
- Business Planning and Projections
- Pro Forma
- Business Succession Planning
- Workforce Development & Incentives
- Employment Assistance
- Grant Support
- Incentive Development
- Site Visits
- Entrepreneurial Development
- Website/Social Media
- Leadership Training
- State of Kansas, County & City Connection
- NexGen (Young Professionals) Program
- Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

Chamber

Lead: Michelle Skurkis

- Networking & Marketing
- Sourcing Information
- Referrals
- Quality of Life Events
- Shop Local Support
- Professional Development
- Membership Support Services
- Community Development
- Big Kansas Road Trip
- Ribbon Cuttings
- Camp Invention
- Mural Development
- Relocation Guide
- Travel & Tourism
- Retail Relationships

Many of our services are confidential in nature and very individualized. The following calendar of highlight activities are those which are front facing or public in nature and should not be considered a full accounting of the work we provide through this office.

jan

Hosted:

- **Lunch & Learn**
- **Grant Writing Workshop ***
- **Strategic Doing Meeting**

Created new community events calendar

Rolled out new Grow Ellsworth County egift card

Mentorship twice a week with Youth Entrepreneurship students

Celebrated Kansas Day with an Ellsworth County video

Created new process structure for City of Ellsworth transient guest tax requests

feb

Hosted:

- **Wake Up Wednesday**
- **2 ribbon cuttings**

Closed new business acquisition loan

Featured on KINA radio show for Youth Entrepreneurship success

Partnered with local businesses on retail driven initiatives

2nd Annual Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge 2.20

mar

Hosted:

- **After Hours**

Participated in the EJSHS Career Fair

Participated in the Kiwanis Home & Garden Show

Honored to share a roundtable experience with our youth board members at the Dane G Hansen Forum

Welcomed over 100 people at our annual meeting

apr

Hosted:

- **Lunch & Learn**
- **Let's Talk Shop Members Only Roundtable**

Celebrated Community Development Week

Closed 2023 Membership Drive with 76 members | \$26,150 for membership services

Celebrated the success of our students at the State Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

may

Hosted:

- **Ribbon Cutting**
- **Breaking Ground Ceremony**
- **Wake Up Wednesday**

Participated in the first ever Farm, Field & Family event hosted by Ellsworth County Medical Center

Celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week with a full week of celebration

Opened the Explore! Ellsworth County Art Contest

Celebrated the accomplishments of two partnership opportunities:

- \$100,000 in SPRINT funds awarded to Wilson Opera House
- \$300,000 awarded to Holyrood for CDBG funds

Received Network Kansas' Fund Utilization Award

Celebrated the opportunity to host 2024 **Big Kansas Road Trip**, along with Lincoln County & Lucas



The Big Kansas Road Trip is a multi-day 'open house' type event highlighting unique points of interest, museums, attractions, shops, and restaurants. The BKRT is organized by the Kansas Sampler Foundation (KSF) and 2024 will be its sixth year.

The BKRT will bring people from all over the state and beyond to the area for a "Build Your Own Adventure". These faithful adventurers love to explore, see the treasures, savor the local cuisine, and spend at their favorite stop shops! It is an honor to be a host location for 2024!

jun

Hosted:

- **After Hours**
- **Members Only Let's Talk Shop Roundtable**

Facilitated, marketed, and provided administrative support for the first ever Camp Invention in Wilson Kansas. 34 kids participated in the STEM learning fun-filled week!

Began administration and marketing for the new Chamber Blue healthcare access program

jul

Hosted:

- **Lunch & Learn**
- **Members Only Let's Talk Shop Roundtable**

Facilitated, marketed, and provided administrative support for the second annual Camp Invention in Ellsworth. 71 kids participated in the STEM learning fun-filled week!

Facilitated 3 Chamber Blue Informational Zooms (members only benefit)

Welcomed new student board member Isabelle Lindsley

aug

Hosted:

- Wake Up Wednesday
- Ribbon Cutting
- Big Kansas Road Trip Community Meeting
- Golf Tournament

Funded a Buy One Get One Shop Local promotion, resulting in \$1,100.00 captured locally

Closed capital stacking of \$145,000 using 3 programs for business acquisition

Welcomed new Assistant Director Michelle Skurkis to the team

Awarded \$10,000 Networked Grant

Reached a milestone of over \$1.2 million in gap funding loans expedited through this office

Vintage to Vibrant + Lemonade Day

sep

Hosted:

- **After Hours**
- **Ribbon cutting**

Closed a facade improvement loan

Hosted STEM at the Drive In at Kanopolis Drive In Theater

oct

Hosted:

- **Ribbon Cutting**
- **Members Only Let's Talk Shop Roundtable**

Partnered on Tailgate event featuring local business

Hosted a series of Big Kansas Road Trip On the Road meetings

Honored our To the Stars State, Regional, and Merit Award Winners

Hosted over 300 people at the 3rd Annual Fall Fest

nov & dec

As part of our effort to collect data and recruit for 2024, this annual report will not include November and December information, as we are going to print in early November. So, instead, we'll just tell you what we're working on for November and December!

Rolling out 3rd Annual Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

Replacement of billboard skins at various locations

Collection of events, attractions, and shop stops for Big Kansas Road Trip Color Guide

Advertising for the Big Kansas Road Trip Color Guide

Shop Local Holiday promotions, including Small Business Saturday

Hosting our first-ever Hometown Holiday celebration on December 9



Facebook At A Glance Jan 2023- Oct 2023



Reach

44,078

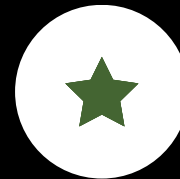
↑ 25.8% from 2022



Content

443

published posts



Visits

19,974

↑ 405% from 2022



Facebook Audience:

Women | 76.5%

Men | 23.5%



Estimated Audience Size:

31K-36K

http://

www.growellsworthcounty.com



Website Analytics Jan 2023- Oct 2023



8,089

Site
Sessions

↑ 364%



5,698

Unique
visitors

↑ 308%



3,665

From
Google



41%

Visit the
"Events" page

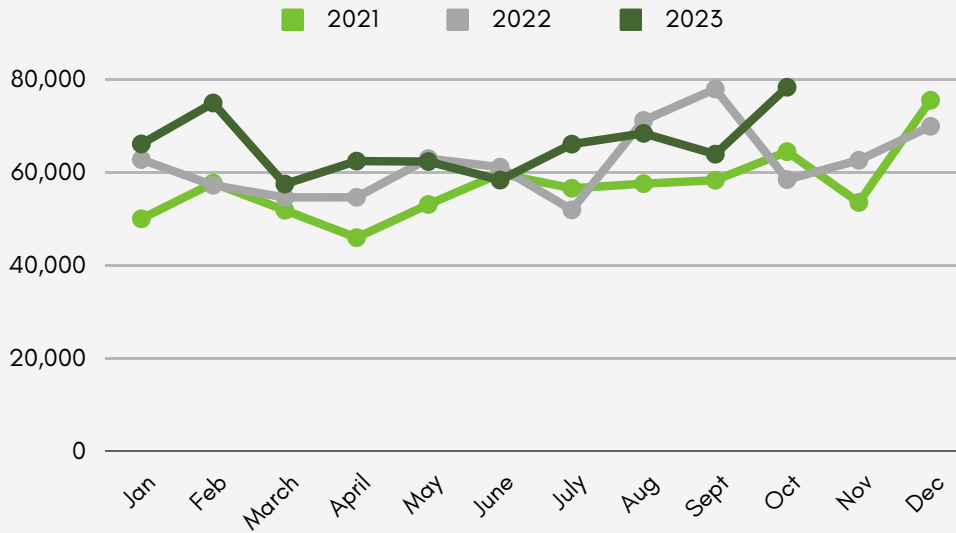


Newsletters

15,380 newsletters via MailChimp delivered
53% average open rate ↑ 22%

Sales Tax

November and December 2023 numbers were not yet available at the time this report was created.

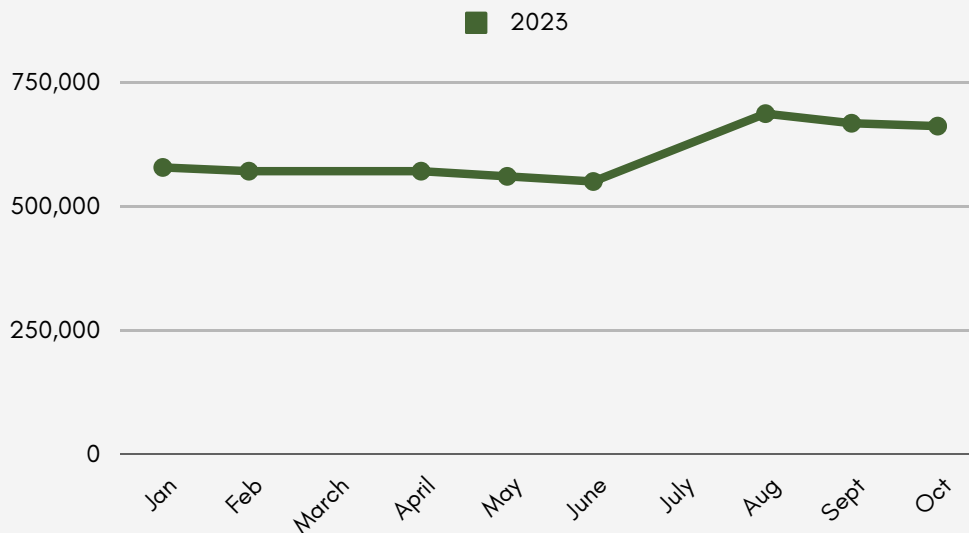


oct 2023

was the highest sales tax number in the last three years!

Loans

Our loan balances are an indicator of our financial packaging for start-up, retention, and acquisition. Some additional loans that we packaged are not reflected here, as we are not the administrator for all loans. Some of you maybe wondering why we celebrated over a million in loans but it's not reflected here. That is because we don't administer over \$350,000 of the funds we secured on behalf of our clients. It should be noted that a healthy loan portfolio will show both reductions due to payments collected and increases as we close new loans. Our gap funding averages 48% of the total project, making these numbers a multiplier of investment in our community.



48%

Our gap funding is an average of 48% of the total project cost!