

A large, thick orange arrow points from the top-left towards the bottom-right, dominating the right side of the page. The background is white with orange geometric shapes: a triangle in the top-left, a trapezoid in the top-right, and a triangle in the bottom-right.

# **JEDO**

## **Quarterly Report**

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## **2024 Q4**

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# New Business Attraction

GO Topeka works continuously to bring awareness of the business assets in Topeka and Shawnee County to site selectors and companies looking to relocate or expand. Currently, the new business attraction portfolio holds 29 active projects in various industry sectors: 12 advanced manufacturing, five aviation and aerospace, three data center, nine food/logistics/office.

**29** NEW ACTIVE PROJECTS



Manufacturing

**12**



Aviation & Aerospace

**5**



Data Center/Tech

**3**



Food/Logistics/Office

**9**

## New Business • Retention & Expansion • Small Business • Women & Minority • Choose Topeka YTD as of 12/31/24

**219**

New Projects

**138**

Completed Projects

**55**

Active Projects

**602**

New Jobs

**1754**

Retained Jobs

**790**

Training Investment  
(number of people impacted)

**392**

Outreach/Assisted  
(number of companies/  
individuals)

**\$138,780,160**

Capital Investment



# Business Retention and Attraction

## HME Inc. Expansion

Previously referred to as “Project Finish Line,” the company’s expansion is expected to result in 300 new jobs and the addition of a manufacturing facility at their current location. JEDO is primarily investing in the job creation and associated training, with some support earmarked for property and equipment. The expansion project is expected to generate an economic impact of \$1.2 billion, representing a 171% return on investment for the community.

“On behalf of the HME Group, I want to express our gratitude to GO Topeka and JEDO for their continued support. This incentive is more than just financial support—it is a testament to the shared vision we have for Topeka and Shawnee County,” said Angela Ayala, controller. “Together, we are building a community of opportunity, where both businesses and employees have the resources they need to succeed. As we kick off this expansion, we look forward to continuing this partnership and delivering on our commitment to making a positive impact in Topeka.”

“HME’s continued success is a testament to the innovation and resilience found right here in Topeka,” said Topeka Mayor Michael Padilla. “This expansion underscores the strength of our local economy, and I’m proud to see HME thrive in our community through investment and job creation.”

“HME’s growth is not just a win for the company but for all of the Topeka area,” said Molly Howey, president of GO Topeka. “This project reflects the hard work and commitment of a business that is deeply rooted in our community. The jobs being created will no doubt contribute to local economic prosperity for years to come.”

## Vaerus Aviation Expanding

Previously referred to as “Project Brick,” the company’s expansion is expected to result in 13 new, well-paying jobs. JEDO is investing in the creation of those jobs, with salaries ranging from \$60,000 to \$110,000. The expansion project is expected to generate an economic impact of \$18.9 million over 10 years, representing a 301% return on investment for the community.

“The greater Topeka community has been an excellent launchpad for us, and we look forward to many more years of growth and opportunities for reinvestment in our community,” said Patrick Traul, vice president and director of operations at Vaerus. “We are proud to be building the foundation of our business here in Topeka.”

“Vaerus is a strong local company with national reach, and I’m proud to see it growing alongside our community,” said Shawnee County Commission Chair Kevin Cook. “Vaerus continues to invest in the Topeka area, and I’m glad they see the value of launching and scaling in Shawnee County.”

“Vaerus is a key player in the region’s aviation industry, and I’m excited to see their expansion at Forbes Field continue to unfold,” said Topeka Mayor Michael Padilla. “It’s a win for the community when we can help a company create new jobs, with good pay, for our residents.”

“With this expansion being an addition to growth they announced earlier in the year, Vaerus is helping transform the aviation landscape in our community,” said Molly Howey, president of GO Topeka. “We’re excited to see a local employer like Vaerus continue to invest in and see the value of doing business here. I’m confident the jobs they’re creating will have a positive impact on Topeka’s economic prosperity and enhance the company’s presence in their industry.”

# Innovation & Entrepreneurship

## Washburn University Pitch Competition

The Washburn University School of Business hosts this competition to encourage students to explore and express their business ideas in a friendly and encouraging environment. The competition is open to all Washburn University students, including Washburn Institute of Technology (Washburn Tech). GO Topeka provides \$25,000 in cash prizes to help winning students start a new business venture.

This year over 100 students entered the pitch competition at Washburn University. Knockout Rounds were held on October 17th where the field was narrowed down to 12 semi-finalists and then the top 5 were selected to pitch in the finals held on November 7th. Washburn senior Peyton Price is the winner of Washburn's annual Pitch Competition with her idea "HydraKick," a new alcoholic beverage infused with electrolytes. Price is from Topeka and is majoring in Entrepreneurship and Marketing. Chase Ryckman, freshman from Overland Park, earned second place for his pitch "Sky Safe Signal," a mini drone distress signal. Emily Harmon, sophomore from Topeka, took third place for "Pocket Keys," a trumpet-inspired fidget toy. Mersadie Spray, freshman from Great Bend, came in fourth place for her "Athlete4Christ" Bible study app. Kody Nicklin, freshman from Topeka, came in fifth place for "Mobile Hope," his idea for tiny homes disaster relief. Jack Pekarek, Topeka, earned the Top Freshman entry for his Wellness AI subscription idea. Xavier Tauber, Topeka, earned Top Washburn Tech Entry for his idea for a new hydrogen motor design.

## Global Entrepreneurship Week

The Topeka and Shawnee County Entrepreneurial Ecosystem was hard at work during the week of November 11th-15th to showcase and support the entrepreneurs in our community. The week kicked off with a Media & PR Training with local media pros India Yarborough and Danielle Martin who provided insights for small businesses and startups on techniques for building their brand's presence, including on camera practice session.

On Tuesday GO Topeka partnered with the Kansas Chamber to hold the Kansas Women in Business conference with over 250 attendees and amazing keynote speakers, panel discussions and breakout sessions focusing on Audacious Optimism to overcome challenges and make confident decisions; tools for Igniting your career and Empowering workplace success. GO Topeka's SVP of Innovation, Stephanie Moran had the honor of moderating panel discussions with female industry leaders from across the state.

Thursday focused on our Youth Entrepreneurs with a collaborative event hosted by K-State Extension, Omni Circle Group, Network Kansas, Shawnee Startups and GO Topeka. Students in 7th-12th grade had the opportunity to attend training sessions leading up to the event held at Omni Circle on November 14th where they pitched their business ideas in front of judges, friends and family for an opportunity to gain experience and win prizes. The future of Topeka is very bright with these talented young people!



## Business Concierge Office

GO Topeka is proud to announce the opening of a new resource hub for Shawnee County entrepreneurs. In collaboration with Kansas State University, and with support from NetWork Kansas, Omni Circle Group, Washburn University School of Business, and the Washburn Small Business Development Center (SBDC), GO Topeka has officially opened the Topeka/Shawnee County Business Concierge Office in downtown Topeka.

The Business Concierge Office, located at 715 S. Kansas Ave., will serve as a comprehensive resource hub for Topeka and Shawnee County business owners. It is designed to support entrepreneurs at every stage of their business journeys, offering support to both budding startups and established enterprises. At the downtown resource center, entrepreneurs can access a range of resources, including hands-on support, expert guidance, and insights on navigating the complexities of launching and scaling a business.

"GO Topeka is thrilled to be launching the Business Concierge Office in partnership with Kansas State University and its K-State 105 initiative," said Stephanie Moran, SVP of Innovation for GO Topeka. "This effort reflects our commitment to fostering a vibrant, thriving entrepreneurial community in Topeka and Shawnee County. By creating this resource hub, we aim to empower local business owners and fuel economic growth in the area."

The Business Concierge Office will work closely with organizations like Washburn SBDC, Omni Circle, and NetWork Kansas to bring together valuable expertise from across the region. It will also be regularly staffed by interns from the Washburn School of Business. These collaborations aim to create an inclusive and accessible support system for entrepreneurs looking to innovate and grow, positioning Topeka as a leader in business sustainability. (cont.)

## Business Concierge Office cont.

"This type of collaborative engagement with community partners is the mission of a next-generation land-grant university like Kansas State University put into action," said Jessica Gnad, K-State 105 director. "The K-State 105 initiative is focused on economic growth for all 105 Kansas counties. We're so excited to collaborate with GO Topeka and other community partners to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Shawnee County through the new Business Concierge Office."

GO Topeka invites community members to visit the new Business Concierge Office to discover opportunities available to elevate their business ventures. Updates about the resource center will be made available online at [GOTOpeka.com/resource](https://GOTOpeka.com/resource). This hub is the next step in building a stronger, more prosperous entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kansas' capital city.

## Plug and Play Summit

Several community leaders, university partners and GTP team members attended the Plug and Play Tech Summit in San Jose, California November 18th-21st. The event showcased over 300 startups in 17 diverse industry sectors with over 3,500 attendees throughout the week. Dynamic breakout sessions offered insights into trends in innovation and investment. Washburn University student, Emily Harmon had the opportunity to attend the event as a Washburn Pitch finalist and was given the opportunity to pitch her business idea on stage in front of large, diverse audience, providing this young entrepreneur with an invaluable experience as she continues to grow her business.

# Small Business Incentive Program

## Incentive Types

Construction

28

Marketing

16

Architecture  
& Design

8

Equipment

46

Proof of Concept

1

Professional  
Services

4

Global Markets

1

PREAPPROVAL  
2024

104

Incentives  
Totaling

\$613,210

LIFE OF PROGRAM

783

Incentives  
Totaling

\$3,539,682

\*Some companies may have been awarded more than one incentive.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF APPLICATIONS IN PROCESS

22

Minority Owned

51

Women Owned

7

Veteran Owned

0

Disabled Owned

0

SBA 8(a)- Certified



# Small Business

## Small Business Council Training

The Small Business Council hosted an insightful Legislative Outlook on December 12, featuring Juliet Abdel, President of the Greater Topeka Partnership Chamber. Around 20 attendees joined us for this engaging session, where Juliet provided a deep dive into the upcoming legislative session agenda and the key policy issues that could impact small businesses.

Juliet also recapped the latest election results, offering analysis on how local, regional, and national outcomes may influence the business climate. Additionally, she shared updates from the recent Washington, D.C. Fly-In, highlighting key discussions and advocacy efforts on behalf of our business community.

A few local elected officials were also in attendance, contributing to a dynamic discussion about legislative priorities and the evolving policy landscape. Attendees left with a clearer understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead, reinforcing the importance of staying informed and engaged in the legislative process.

Thank you to everyone who participated, and we look forward to continuing these important conversations in the future!

Our next Small Business Council Training will take place on Feb 6 and will be led by Rebecca Collins from Bartle. Generational Insights: Enhancing Workplace Belonging for All Ages. As the workplaces become increasingly diverse in age, understanding the unique needs and perspectives of different generations is crucial for creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels they belong. This engaging conversation will delve into the characteristics and expectations of different generational cohorts, offering practical strategies to ensure everyone feels valued and included. Whether you're a leader, team member, or simply curious about the evolving workplace, this session will equip you with the tools to embrace generational diversity and drive positive change in your organization.

### SMALL BUSINESS COUNCIL TRAINING

#### Generational Insights: Enhancing Workplace Belonging for All Ages

As workplaces become increasingly diverse in age, understanding the unique needs and perspectives of different generations is crucial for creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels they belong. This engaging conversation will delve into the characteristics and expectations of different generational cohorts, offering practical strategies to ensure everyone feels valued and included. Whether you're a leader, team member, or simply curious about the evolving workplace, this session will equip you with the tools to embrace generational diversity and drive positive change in your organization.

FEB 6 9-10:30AM @ GTP

go  
topeka  
Small Business Council

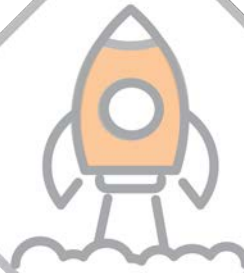


Rebecca Collins  
Bartlett & West

20  
25



# SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS



**Nominations  
close February 28,  
2025. 5pm**

# CALL FOR NOMINATIONS!

**S**mall businesses are the heart of our city, driving innovation, creating jobs, and fostering a sense of community. They embody resilience, creativity, and the entrepreneurial spirit that makes our local economy thrive. By nominating a small business for the 2025 Small Business Awards, you're recognizing their hard work, dedication, and impact. Whether they've introduced groundbreaking solutions or brought people together through their services, your nomination can help shine a light on their achievements and inspire others. Let's celebrate the businesses that make our city unique and vibrant!



**go  
>topeka**

# Equity & Opportunity

## Entrepreneur Empowerment Fair

We partnered with the City of Topeka to host a Supplier Diversity Expo. This was hosted at the Bishop Center and it was well attended, with a significant portion of the attendees being from outside the County inquiring about how to move and open a business in Topeka. Nearly half of those in attendance were Spanish-first speakers and translation services were provided by the City and Go Topeka bilingual staff. This event focused on insights for small business owners on how to successfully do business with government entities such as the city. The event also hosted an entrepreneurial resource fair with vendor tables for small businesses and entrepreneurs to connect with valuable resource partners such as Omni Circle, Washburn SBDC, Network Kansas, GO Topeka and many others. Preceding this event, Israel Sanchez, Director of Equity and Business Development, made several media appearances promoting this event and GEW.

## Supplier Diversity Workshop

Also in collaboration with the city of Topeka, a Supplier Diversity Workshop was held at the Greater Topeka Partnership. Many of those who had attended the Entrepreneur Fair were also in attendance at this Lunch and Learn event. Spanish translation was offered by Israel Sanchez and Manny Castro.

## Economic Equity Incentives

A budget proposal and new plan for Economic Equity Incentives, entry level startup programming, youth workforce development and rehabilitation of blighted properties was presented to JEDO in Q4 with contingent approval based on edits proposed by JEDO members.



# Workforce & Talent

## 2024 Q4 Workforce Data

**Total Working  
Age Population**  
(16 YEARS AND OVER)

**142,447**  
SHAWNEE COUNTY

**2,339,516**  
KANSAS

**271,122,729**  
UNITED STATES

**Labor Force  
Participation**

**94,519**  
SHAWNEE COUNTY

**1,530,887**  
KANSAS

**168,569,229**  
UNITED STATES

**Employment**

**91,410**  
SHAWNEE COUNTY

**1,470,072**  
KANSAS

**165,944,204**  
UNITED STATES

**Jobs**

**109,503**  
SHAWNEE COUNTY

**1,623,246**  
KANSAS

**172,509,692**  
UNITED STATES

**Average  
Wages**

**63,463**  
SHAWNEE COUNTY

**69,747**  
KANSAS

**75,149**  
UNITED STATES

**Labor Force  
Participation  
Rate**

**67.80%** SHAWNEE COUNTY

**67.00%** KANSAS

**62.90%** UNITED STATES

**Employment-  
Population Ratio**

**64.17%** SHAWNEE COUNTY

**62.84%** KANSAS

**61.21%** UNITED STATES

**Unemployment  
Rate**

**3.50%** SHAWNEE COUNTY

**3.50%** KANSAS

**3.90%** UNITED STATES

\*Total Civilian Non-institutionalized Population

# Choose Topeka 2.0 Relocation Incentive

## \$335,017

IN TOTAL COMMITTED FUNDS

\$295,017 EMPLOYER MATCH FUNDS

\$30,000 BOOMERANG FUNDS

\$10,000 TRANSITIONING SERVICEMEMBER FUNDS

### 83

APPROVED  
FAMILIES

### 44

RENTING

### 37

PURCHASED  
HOMES

### 21

# OF STATES  
MOVED FROM

### 75

EMPLOYER  
MATCHED

### 6

BOOMERANG

### 32

UNIQUE  
EMPLOYER  
SUBMITTALS

### 13,000+

PROFILES  
CREATED ON  
SKILLFIT

### 2

TRANSITIONING SERVICE MEMBERS

## ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

## \$85,524

TOTAL AVERAGE SALARY

\$94,945 EMPLOYER MATCH

\$76,103 BOOMERANG & MILITARY

## 16.3x

\$1,517,992

RETURN ON INVESTMENT  
IN YEAR 1

## 83.7x

\$7,816,782

RETURN ON INVESTMENT  
AFTER 5 YEARS

## \*INTERESTING FACT\*

Topeka is now a pilot community for the statewide boomerang talent attraction program launching this summer. We expect to see an increase in boomerangs moving back to Topeka.

## CHOOSE IN THE NEWS

GO Topeka uses several public relation tools and have cultivated relationships with regional and national media to help maintain brand awareness through earned media. In 2023 we secured the New York Post, Wall Street Journal, NBC News, Telemundo, Telemadrid, and more. This totals an earned media value of \$14M since 2019.





# Workforce/Childcare/Talent Development

## National Child Care Innovation Summit

Trina Goss and Sarah Elsen, Executive Director of Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas, attended the National Child Care Innovation Summit: Business Leaders in Action in Washington DC. The Summit was held in partnership with Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC) and the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation with the focus of equipping key business and community leaders to activate and lead child care solutions in their communities. The summit dove deep into the processes and mechanisms involved in addressing child care challenges faced by employees and communities, and why the business community should engage in child care, and how child care solutions can play a part in solving workforce retention and recruitment challenges. During the event, the U.S Chamber Foundation launched the Employer Child Care Navigator, which will help businesses of all industries and sizes determine the best routes to take to support the child care needs of their teams. Check out the navigator here: <https://employerchildcarenavigator.org/>



## Made For Manufacturing

Our third annual National Manufacturing Day event, "Made for Manufacturing," was held on October 4th at Ag Hall. Around 200 students from 10 area high schools had an engaging morning with local manufacturing companies where they learned about what it would take to be a part of a manufacturing team, development programs available to them, and the history of the participating companies. Washburn Tech was also available at this event for students to explore the various certification pathways in the manufacturing world. In their downtime, students worked with their peers to build solar powered car models. Thank you to this year's sponsors, Ernest Spencer Metals and HF Mixing Group for helping make this great event happen! Next year's Made for Manufacturing event is scheduled for October 3rd, 2025.

# Forge Young Talent

## New Member Report

Forge had another successful year in 2024 and continued to see growth in membership and event engagement. In 2024, Forge grew by 203 new members, which is on par with the growth in new members we've seen over the last several years. In the last 3 years, Forge has grown by close to 650 new members, with the largest new-member number being 243 in 2023.

## Forge Welcomes New Board Members

Forge would like to thank and welcome our members who are joining the Forge Board in 2025. Those members are:

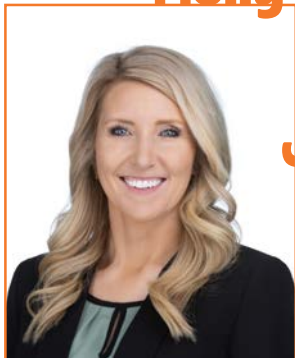
Daisy KAMIRI  
Ashley GRUBB  
Sasha CONRADE  
Laura NICHOLS  
Austin LANTERI  
Russell HARP  
Natasha GUNN  
Perry PLUMMER  
Jacob BOND  
Kyler MILLIGAN  
Andrew EDWARDS

Welcome to Forge and the Greater Topeka Partnership!

# GO Topeka Staff

**Molly**

**Howey**



President,  
GO Topeka

**Stephanie**

**Moran**



SVP  
of Innovation

**Trina**

**Goss**



Director, Business &  
Talent Initiatives

**Rhett**

**Flood**



Executive Director of  
Forge Young Talent

**Ashley**

**Lehman**



Director of Business  
Development

**Israel**

**Sanchez**



Director of Equity &  
Business Development

**Stephanie**

**Norwood**



Director of  
Entrepreneurship  
& Small Business

**Erin**

**Young**



Marketing  
Project Manager

**Manuel**

**Castro**



Executive  
Coordinator

**Michelle**

**DeWeese**



Executive  
Coordinator

**Matt**

**Pivarnik**



CEO, Greater Topeka  
Partnership







# HERE. GREAT GROWS.

Positioned as an industry leader, the new GO Topeka will strive to innovate, collaborate and boldly move Topeka and Shawnee County into the future.

**Great. Grows. Here.**

**Visit [GoTopeka.com](http://GoTopeka.com)**





# 2024 Go Topeka Board of Directors

## Elected Directors

|                    |                                                    |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Scott Hunsicker    | Kansas Financial Resources                         |
| Chris Faulk        | McElroy Electric, Inc.                             |
| Jim Klausman       | Midwest Health                                     |
| Cassandra Taylor   | HTK Architects                                     |
| Jacob Wamego       | Prairie Band, LLC                                  |
| Doug Wolff         | Security Benefit                                   |
| Jeff Martin        | Evergy                                             |
| Paul Bossert       | Premier Staffing                                   |
| Martha Piland      | MB Piland                                          |
| Sara Girard        | Central National Bank                              |
| Manny Herron       | Haus Property Partners                             |
| Dr. Rob Kenagy     | Stormont Vail Health                               |
| Kevin Rake         | HME, Inc.                                          |
| Travis Morris      | Summit Materials                                   |
| Troy Simoneau      | Kansas Gas Service                                 |
| Dr. Sam Al-Murrani | Bimini                                             |
| Daina Williams     | L&J Building Maintenance                           |
| Scott Campbell     | The University of Kansas Health System St. Francis |
| Kurt Kuta          | CoreFirst Bank & Trust                             |
| Shane Hillmer      | Southwest Publishing                               |
| Calla Haggard      | Community Bank                                     |
| Joe Caldwell       | Bartlett & West                                    |
| Tammy Dishman      | Capitol Federal                                    |

## Directors Appointed at Large

|                  |                              |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| Michael Odupitan | Omni Circle                  |
| Dr. Kevin Hahn   | Tri-Source Pharma            |
| Linessa Frazier  | American Century Investments |
| Marvin Spees     | Capital City Oil             |
| Neal Spencer     | Ernest-Spencer               |
| Ashley Bettis    | PTMW, Inc                    |
| Joe Hishmeh      | Fellowship Bible Church      |

## Directors By Virtue of Position Held

|                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Michael Padilla     | City of Topeka, Mayor        |
| Kevin Cook          | Shawnee County Commissioner  |
| Rich Eckert         | Shawnee County Counselor     |
| Neil Dobler         | City Council Member          |
| Curtis Sneden       | MTAA                         |
| Marshall Meek       | Washburn University          |
| Dr. Robert Perez    | City of Topeka, City Manager |
| Lt. Col. Chris Hill | 190th Refueling Wing         |



A Greater Topeka Partnership Organization

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



Accredited Economic Development Organization



Prepared for JEDO  
Joint Economic Development Organization