

Regional Competitiveness Plan

2025



Why regional collaboration?

- Marketing a larger geographic area makes us more competitive with comparable cities for labor force, business sites, housing, and education resources.
- Regionalism allows us to pool resources for common goals, including increased talent attraction marketing, advocacy efforts, and development projects.
- Regional marketing to talent creates the first-ever digital entry point to showcase the unique culture as a whole.
- Leaning into the largest MSA builds brand equity with the external audience and gives new audiences a geographic reference for the region.
- Collaborative efforts help create a common language and overarching marketing strategy for attracting people and jobs.
- Developing a strategic synergy allows for coordinated advocacy efforts that benefit the region as a whole.

Watch an overview video here:



There's power in numbers.



Our area instantly becomes more competitive when we approach companies with a united front. Our economic development organizations have been working together for 30 years. Using our total population numbers instead of individual county numbers elevates our chance of competing with competitor cities for business.

– **Gina Greathouse,**
EVP, Economic Development

Challenges:

- Lack of shovel ready land for development
- Housing availability
- Lack of skilled labor
- High development costs
- Relatively unknown to outside audiences
- Behind competitor cities in regional marketing investment

Strengths:

- Access to healthcare
- Location and accessibility
- Public Safety
- Public schools & higher education
- Cost of living
- Quality of life

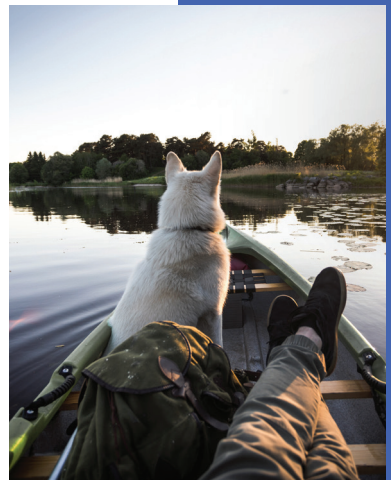
Regional Competitiveness Plan Goals

1. Increase the regional job, wage, & GDP growth rates to the national average.
2. Increase the regional labor force including the attraction and retention of young professionals.
3. Attract state and federal funding and advocate for policy improvements to support the plan.



7 Action Items Determined by Regional Leaders

1. Increase investment in regional branding and site selector awareness of key sectors with focus on quality of life and new land availability.
2. Support multi-jurisdictional product development strategy to secure more shovel ready land and buildings, including a regional business park.
3. Educate key leaders in the region about economic development needs and competitive realities
4. Develop a regional talent attraction/retention marketing campaign with messages aligned with the economic development branding effort.
5. Develop a strategy to connect businesses with students in the region to increase the stickiness of young adults.
6. Coordinate advocacy for federal and state infrastructure, product development, and talent marketing funding.
7. Advocate for improved policies related to key competitiveness issues such as improved tax/regulatory policies and housing affordability.



WORKFORCE

New Talent Website:

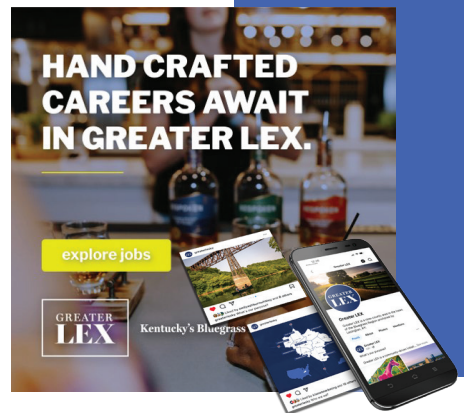
The new, modern regional talent attraction website - www.LookAtLex.com is live. The site launched in early September 2024 and features more than 30 pages of content and resources on living, working, and playing in Greater LEX. Key features include a cost-of-living calculator, regional jobs board, interactive regional map highlighting each of the 9-counties, and key industry profiles. Additional tools and resources continue to be developed included a new 'community quiz' set to launch in 2025.

Digital Marketing Campaign:

Commerce Lexington is working with Kismet Marketing on a robust talent attraction marketing campaign to raise awareness of the Greater Lex region as place to live and work. The first phase of the talent marketing campaign is serving digital ads to “warm” target audiences, including alumni of the region’s colleges and universities and previous or prospective tourists. Digital ads promoting the region’s jobs and quality of life assets direct audiences to lookatlex.com for more information. The initial campaign launched in October 2024.

Talent Retention Strategy:

This year, Commerce Lexington is placing a strong emphasis on strengthening business-to-student connections to enhance career readiness and help retain young talent in the region. By fostering student engagement with local industries, businesses will be able to identify and cultivate their future workforce. In partnership with educational institutions, Commerce Lexington will continue to promote meaningful work-based learning opportunities through online platforms like “Handshake.” Along with the new talent attraction website, we’ve launched a Resource Hub for employers. The hub helps ensure students and employers have easy access to valuable tools, opportunities, and insights—further supporting workforce development and community connection.



Visit the Resource Hub here:
lookatlex.com/resourcehub

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Website Refresh for Jobs Marketing:

Commerce Lexington's economic development website (locateinlex.com) has a new modern look with a strong regional approach. The new web presence uses the Greater LEX brand, provides easier access to important data and reports, workforce demographics, available business sites, incentives, and detailed key industry sector profiles.

Key Sector Engagement:

Commerce Lexington and the Bluegrass Alliance are raising the profile of the Greater Lex region by attending conferences and events around the country. The strategically selected events focus on attracting targeted industries, enhancing Foreign Direct Investment opportunities and meeting directly with companies interested in relocating to the region.

Engagement with Site Selectors:

Commerce Lexington and regional partners continue to connect with site selectors to promote the Greater Lex region. In 2024, increased engagement included new email communications and hosting events, both in the region and at events around the country. Our team aims to build relationships through unique experiences and VIP events helping to raise awareness of the region's economic advantages, sector clusters, available workforce and available properties.

New Digital Marketing:

In April of 2025, Commerce Lexington launched a digital marketing campaign to position the region as a premier, sophisticated business hub. The campaign highlights competitive advantages and industry success stories. The campaign audience is decision-makers such as C-suite executives, site selectors, entrepreneurs, and influential community members. Through strategic efforts, including geofencing at industry events, the campaign ensures Greater Lex is recognized as a cost-effective, business-friendly location for companies seeking to relocate, expand, or start new.



Visit the updated site:
locateinlex.com

10+
Consultant Events
2024

125
Site Selector
Connections
2024



POLICY/ADVOCACY

State and Federal Advocacy:

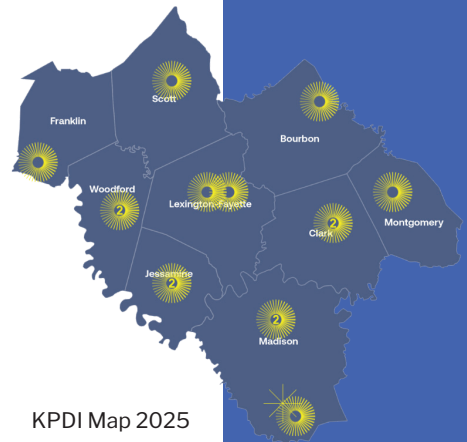
Advocacy to key leaders remains a priority, as demonstrated by policy outreach in Frankfort and Washington, D.C. Through the Greater Lex Regional Policy Group, regional leaders identify advocacy priorities to improve competitiveness. Regional leaders are advocating for increased investment in critical infrastructure, as well as policies to address a better business climate to help attraction and retain more jobs and workers in the 9-county region.

Recent examples of effective advocacy include continued investment by the Kentucky General Assembly in the Kentucky Product Development to help accelerate the availability of more job-ready sites in the Greater Lex region and promote regional approaches to product development.

In 2025, regional leaders continue to focus on advocacy for policy solutions to help accelerate more housing in the region to address workforce needs. A recent report by the Kentucky Housing Corporation found the 9-county region needs 37,000 housing units to meet current demand. Leaders also continue to work with stakeholders to advocate for investments in a talent attraction marketing campaign for Kentucky and grants to support regional talent attraction efforts.

Leadership & Education Events:

Commerce Lexington continues to host education and leadership events for business and community leaders and local officials to build support for regionalism, including updates on the Regional Plan to key stakeholders, economic development leadership workshops, policy leader engagement events and the annual state of the region, known as The Regional Summit. The events provide important education, insights and resources to help regional leaders continue to build high performing economic development efforts in the region.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Economic Development Simulation

Join Commerce Lexington and regional partners on June 23, 2025, for an interactive Economic Development Simulation to experience the daily work of recruiting good-paying jobs and the role community leaders play in the process. Elected officials attending can earn continuing education credit hours through the Department of Local Government or the Kentucky League of Cities. Scan the QR code to register.



Register here!

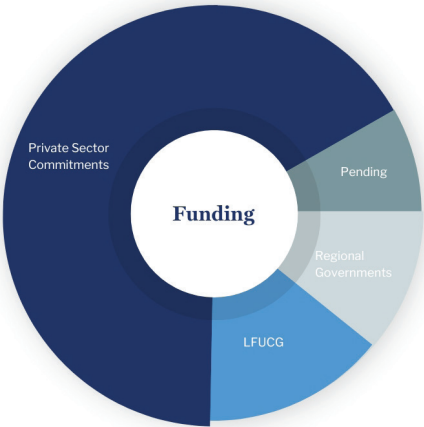
Regional Summit

The Regional Summit provides an opportunity for businesses, community, and local government leaders within the 9-county Bluegrass Region to network with each other, receive updates on the Regional Competitiveness Plan, and learn from industry experts about how we can make Greater LEX more competitive for jobs and talent. In 2024, the Summit set record attendance and featured national speakers on Economic Development, Workforce , and Advocacy Efforts.



Learn more!

FUNDING



Commitments:

Private Sector (Business)	\$1,000,000
City of Lexington	\$322,000
Regional Governments	\$275,000
Total	\$1,597,000

Pending:

Regional Governments	\$50,000
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We are better together.

For many years, Commerce Lexington has partnered with a nine-county region across Central Kentucky to strengthen our collective economy through job recruitment and retention, public policy advocacy, and leadership development. Throughout that time, one truth has remained constant—we are better together.

In today's rapidly evolving economic landscape, it has become clear that a more unified, strategic approach is essential to keeping our region competitive on a national and global scale. That's why, alongside regional leaders, Commerce Lexington has led the charge to develop a Regional Competitiveness Strategy—a bold and forward-thinking roadmap designed to position Central Kentucky as a destination of choice for jobs, talent, and innovation.

This initiative, guided by a dedicated Regional Advisory Committee, brought together some of the nation's foremost experts in economic and community development to evaluate global trends and assess the current state of our regional economy. Global experts in economic development and talent attraction marketing brought additional insight and firepower to this effort.

What makes this strategy unique is the depth of collaboration and input it has received. Over 1,700 surveys, dozens of focus groups, hundreds of workshops and committee meetings helped ensure the strategy reflects the needs, strengths, and aspirations of our entire region.

The findings from this robust process were clear and compelling: the challenges we face don't stop at county lines—and neither should our solutions. By working together, we can leverage our collective strengths, share resources, and elevate Central Kentucky as a united front in a competitive world.

Regionalism isn't just a concept; it's our greatest asset. Together, we can ensure that every community in our region benefits from shared prosperity and long-term economic success.