

# Rural Action Partnership Program

## 2014 Legislative Report

### Background

Launched in 2004, the Rural Action Partnership Program (RAPP) was designed as a statewide public-private partnership, whose mission was to foster healthy and sustainable communities by connecting economic development resources with the needs of rural Oklahoma.

The RAPP legislation directed the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to apportion the state into quadrants with one Rural Development Specialist (RDS) assigned to serve each quadrant. Under the direction of the Rural Development Coordinator (RDC), the RAPP “Team” sought to encourage the formation of regional alliances to address issues such as out-migration, housing, workforce development, business retention & expansion, strategic planning, low wages and declining economies. Additionally, the RAPP Team focused on making contact with the Oklahoma’s rural communities, assisting them locate appropriate resources for their needs, and developing a solid foundation to address their challenges.

### The RAPP Team Today

In 2011, *Rural* Development Specialists became known as *Regional* Development Specialists (RDSs). Each RDS lives within the region served and works primarily with local and regional entities in the areas of business recruitment, retention and expansion, regional marketing, workforce development support, trade assistance, community and economic development, existing business assistance and strategic planning. Rather than quadrants, the state is now divided into seven designated regions: Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, Southwest, North Central, West Central and the Oklahoma City Metro.

The RDS provides resources to local communities and regional economic development partnerships. A vital tool the RDS provides is access to economic and market studies. This is accomplished through both the ODOC Research and Economic Analysis Services and through partnership with Rogers State University’s Dr. Ray Murphy, Director of the Oklahoma Center for Rural Development at Northeastern State University. Dr. Murphy provides reports at minimal- to no-cost, including demographic summary reports for population growth, housing value, education attainment and workplace summaries, as well as GAP Market Demand Supply Analysis.

Regional Development Specialists take an active role in providing updates from their region to the **RAPP Advisory Team**, which continues to meet quarterly.

### The RAPP Advisory Team

To support the mission of the Rural Action Partnership Program, an Advisory Team was formed with no direct control or policy making authority. The RAPP Advisory Team is composed of the Executive Director of ODOC; representatives of Rural Enterprises of Oklahoma, Inc. (REI); the Oklahoma Small Business Development Centers (OSBDC); the Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence; Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education; Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education; USDA Rural Development; Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST); USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry; Oklahoma State University Department of Agricultural Economics; Oklahoma Association of Regional Councils; the U.S. Small Business Administration, Oklahoma District; and ODOC staff directly involved in

rural/regional economic development. An informal, round-table discussion provides an opportunity for representatives of each agency to update team members of policy changes, activities, programs, and special events within their respective organizations.

The RAPP Advisory Team is the only organization of its kind in the state which provides a forum for economic development professionals serving rural communities in Oklahoma to update, share best practices and seek solutions to problems facing outlying communities within the state. The Team meets on the first Thursday of the month on a quarterly basis (February, May, August, and November) and is facilitated by the ODOC Regional Development Team Supervisor.

### **2014 Annual Report**

#### **RAPP Advisory Team meetings:**

- February 2014 – cancelled due to inclement weather
- May 1, 2014—Francis Tuttle Career Tech, Rockwell Campus
- August 7, 2014—Francis Tuttle Career Tech, Rockwell Campus
- November 6, 2014—Francis Tuttle Career Tech, Rockwell Campus

#### **RAPP Advisory Team roster (as of December 2014):**

**Deby Snodgrass, Executive Director and Secretary**  
Oklahoma Department of Commerce and Tourism

**Jamey Allen, Director, Market Development**  
Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry

**Bill Carter, State Director**  
Oklahoma Small Business Development Center (OSBDC)

**Kenny Simpson, CEO & President**  
Rural Enterprises, Inc.

**John Lingenfelter, Vice President**  
Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance

**Buffy Heater, Planning & Development Manager**  
Oklahoma Health Care Authority

**Kathy James, CED/Public Info Coordinator**  
Oklahoma USDA Rural Development

**Connie Lake, Workforce and Economic Development**  
Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

**Tom Lucas, RC&D Coordinator (Ret.)**  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

**Steve Paris, Rural Economic & Public Information Manager**  
Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science Education (OCAST)

**Dottie Overall, State Director**  
U.S. Small Business Administration, Oklahoma District

**Dr. Dave Shideler, Assistant Professor and Community Development Specialist**  
Oklahoma State University Department of Agricultural Economics

**Regional Development Specialists (as of December 2014):**

- **Stan Ralstin, NW Regional Development Specialist** - Enid, OK
- **Scott Dean, NC Regional Development Specialist** - Stillwater, OK
- **Darla Heller, NE Regional Development Specialist** - Broken Arrow, OK
- **Glenn Glass, SE Regional Development Specialist** - Coalgate, OK
- **Roger Pulley, SW Regional Development Specialist** - Davis, OK

**Results: By the Numbers**

- RDS Activities completed for Oklahoma businesses: **633**
- RDS Activities on behalf of Community and Economic Development Organizations: **435**
- OK existing businesses announcing expansion plans: **43**