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## EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Throughout 2025, the Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP) focused on strengthening regional collaboration, engaging its membership, facilitating learning opportunities on regional issues, advancing the REAP Work Plan, expanding partnerships, and serving as a trusted convener for communities across South Central Kansas.

REAP served as a regional convening partner, connecting local elected officials and key partners across economic development, education, business, and workforce systems to support a shared understanding of policy issues affecting the region. Through coordinated outreach and engagement with state and regional partners, including the South Central Kansas Legislative Delegation, REAP helped advance regional priorities in transportation, water strategy, workforce development, and economic development.

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## 2025 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Regional Collaboration & Convening

REAP strengthened its role as a regional forum for collaboration, providing consistent opportunities for communities and partners to connect across jurisdictions and sectors. Rather than focusing on the meetings themselves, REAP emphasized creating the conditions for ongoing dialogue, information sharing, and coordinated problem-solving on regional issues.

REAP's convening role supported the region by:

- Providing a neutral space for peer-to-peer exchange and shared learning among communities
- Facilitating the flow of timely information from regional and state partners
- Elevating cross-jurisdictional challenges and opportunities that benefit from regional coordination and advocacy

### Legislative & Government Engagement

In 2025, REAP was positioned as a consistent and credible regional voice with legislators and state agencies. Activities included:

- Monitoring South Central Kansas elections and conducting outreach to newly elected officials
- One-on-one meetings with legislators and local elected leaders
- Coordinating legislative briefings and follow-up conversations tied to REAP priorities
- Supporting REAP member participation in legislative tours and regional policy discussions

These efforts strengthened awareness of local government perspectives and reinforced REAP's role as a connector between communities and policymakers.

### **TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**

Transportation remained a core focus area for REAP in 2025. REAP played a key role in:

- Preparing members for the KDOT Local Consult process
- Developing and sharing background resources and hosting informational webinars
- Encouraging coordinated participation and feedback from REAP communities

REAP also supported ongoing corridor-based collaboration, including continued engagement with the K254 Corridor Development Association, the K96 Corridor Development Association, the Northwest Expressway Coalition, and other priority routes. These efforts ensured local voices were informed, prepared, and aligned during critical planning discussions.

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### **WATER & REGIONAL RESILIENCE**

Water emerged as one of the most significant regional issues discussed throughout 2025. REAP elevated water strategy as a priority by:

- Hosting the Regional Water Summit
- Participating in regional water policy discussions and conferences
- Sharing information related to water supply challenges, reservoir sedimentation, and long-term planning
- Creating space for members to learn from state agencies and subject-matter experts

REAP's role was not to advocate a single solution, but to ensure communities had access to shared information and a regional perspective as water policy conversations continue to evolve.

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### **WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

REAP continued to support workforce and economic development conversations by:

- Participating in regional economic forums and learning events
- Engaging with workforce partners on talent and skills discussions
- Supporting collaboration tied to childcare, housing, and other workforce-related challenges
- Recruiting stakeholders and leading development of a Youth Jobs Training Community Development Block Grant application

These efforts reinforced the interconnected nature of the workforce, infrastructure, housing, and economic growth across South Central Kansas.

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## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Throughout the year, REAP maintained consistent communication with members through:

- Meeting notices and follow-up summaries
- Legislative and policy updates
- Shared resources and partner announcements

Member engagement remained a strength of the organization, and continued emphasis was placed on keeping contact lists current and ensuring information reached the appropriate local leaders and staff.

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## LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

### 2025 REAP Officers

- **Chair:** Ashley Coleman, Mayor, City of Kechi
- **Vice Chair:** Rod Kreie, Mayor, City of Newton
- **Treasurer:** Russ Kessler, Mayor, City of Haysville

REAP benefited from steady leadership and thoughtful guidance from its officers throughout the year.

### 2026 Officers

- **Chair:** Mayor George Liebe, City of Goddard
- **Vice Chair:** Council Member Nick Engle, City of Derby
- **Treasurer:** Mayor Russ Kessler, City of Haysville

REAP looks forward to continued leadership and momentum in the year ahead.

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## LOOKING AHEAD

By the end of 2025, REAP was well-positioned for continued impact in 2026. With defined priorities, active participation, strengthened partnerships, and a unified regional voice, the organization enters 2026 prepared to support economic development and champion strategic investments in infrastructure and policy. Looking ahead, REAP will continue to focus on informed engagement, regional coordination, and providing value to its members through learning, connection, and collaboration aligned with the 2026 organizational goals.