

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

## MISSION

The Chamber's mission is to serve as the leading advocate for business, catalyst for economic growth and champion for enhanced quality of life throughout the Springfield region.

## YEAR ONE: A STRONG START

In 2025, the Chamber took an important step forward by implementing the first year of our five-year strategic plan. This work followed an intensive planning process over the previous year that relied heavily on the insight, experience and leadership of our members and business community.

This strategic plan reflects a shared belief that the Chamber must lead boldly on behalf of business. Throughout the year, our board and committee members supported an approach that encouraged taking big swings for high-impact and using the Chamber's outside voice to address issues that matter to the region's economic future. That meant strengthening partnerships, convening stakeholders and, at times, advocating clearly and publicly for business-friendly policies and solutions.

The progress outlined in this report is the result of engaged members, committed volunteers and partners who believe the Chamber should not simply respond to change, but help shape it. Together, we delivered measurable results that have laid the groundwork for our region's ambitious 2030 goals.



Matt Morrow, Chamber President

## STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES • 2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### LEAD REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Objective: Position and promote the 10-county Springfield region for business investment and talent competitiveness.**

- Managed more than 40 active economic development projects throughout the year, announcing 280 new jobs and \$96M in new capital investment across the region.
- Conducted 192 Business Retention & Expansion visits with local leaders and made 167 contacts with site consultants outside of the market.
- Launched a regional asset map (GURU) to improve how sites and buildings are marketed to prospects.
- Helped position Springfield with Global Location Strategies to be **recognized as one of the nation's top hubs for food manufacturing**, earning a spot in the Top 25 nationally and Top 5 in the West North Central region.

#### KEY MILESTONE

Restructured and relaunched the Ozarks Regional Economic Partnership (OREP), a collaborative effort driving sustainable growth and regional prosperity across southwest Missouri. Engaging regional partners through a no-cost model, OREP supports business expansion, attracts new investment and fosters collaboration across a 10-county region.



## GROW THE WORKFORCE-READY POPULATION

**Objective: Attract, retain and develop talent while addressing workforce barriers.**

- Gathered input from 52 employers, K-12 and higher education leaders through industry focus groups, identifying employer workforce needs to align future education and training.
- Engaged with more than 340 young professionals as members of The Network, hosting **31 events throughout the year**, including the seventh annual **SGForum** summit.
- Interacted with 324 college students through classroom presentations and distributed 3,022 **CampuSGF** guides.
- Connected business and education to advance the development of future workforce through **Teacher Externships**, **GO CAPS**, 7th and 8th Graders Go to Work, and engagement in the Greater Ozarks Real World Learning (**GORWL**) program.

### KEY MILESTONE

Successfully advocated for and secured \$2.5M in state funding to launch a Child Care Community Exchange pilot, informed by conversations with 70 local businesses. Locally, Community Partnership of the Ozarks was awarded funding to expand child care capacity, with a pilot scheduled to launch in 2026.

## STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT BUSINESS

**Objective: Advocate for a business-friendly environment and amplify the voice of business.**

- Engaged in community issues by emphasizing business priorities during the City of Springfield's search for a new city manager, city code implementation and a **lodging tax ballot measure**.
- Kept members informed through 20 **Advocacy in Action** communications and comprehensive **Voter Education** resources.
- Organized staff and members to attend 48 Springfield City Council meetings, with business leaders speaking directly to City Council 14 times on development and workforce issues.
- Advanced the ten **2025 Ozarks Regional Legislative Priorities** at the state level through coordinated advocacy.
- Welcomed Governor Mike Kehoe to Springfield, with a record-breaking audience, for his first **State of the State event** to share about his administration's priorities.
- Hosted the 31st annual Community Leadership Visit, providing more than 80 business and community leaders with **insight into Cincinnati's nationally recognized redevelopment efforts and legacy of public-private partnership**.

### KEY MILESTONE

Hosted the inaugural Ozarks Regional Advocacy Day at the Missouri Capitol and expanded regional alignment with more than 50 organizations signing on to shared priorities for 2026, nearly doubling the number of public and private organizations from the first year.

## OPERATE WITH EXCELLENCE

**Objective: Strengthen internal operations, communications and member engagement.**

- Attracted 226 new members to the Chamber, raising the total membership to more than 1,550 businesses and organizations.
- Launched new **INGITE Leadership Conference** and **Chamber Travel Program**.
- Raised \$1.1M in The Reach Campaign, helping members align their marketing goals with the Chamber's events and programming.
- Strengthened relationships with local and regional media outlets through the development of a media roundtable format and increased outreach through press releases, advisories and opinion pieces.
- Implemented the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) to accelerate the Chamber's organizational focus and member service.

### KEY MILESTONE

Launched a grant-funded pilot program to offer 40 startups in Missouri State University's efactory incubator a no-cost Chamber membership for their first year, providing early opportunities to engage with the regional business community.