

2.10 Agribusiness

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Assessment Process	
A.	Annual surveys, focus group studies, and an annual strategic planning retreat order the assessment and guide the direction for the Agri-Business program.
B.	The local University Outreach and Extension Council conducts an assessment and goal prioritization process annually. These strategy tools are incorporated into a five-year plan.

Program Standards	
A.	Organization: The newly-formed Agribusiness Committee of the Chamber of Commerce includes membership of the University Outreach and Extension, Barton County Community Development Corporation, Lamar Vo-Tech School and representatives from local agricultural businesses.
B.	Mission Statement: The prime directive of the Agribusiness program is to increase the profitability of ag-related producers and businesses, increase the usage of locally-produced ag products in the manufacturing cycle and in energy generation, and to further develop the target of Life Sciences and Biotechnology in the Industrial Attraction program, documented in Section 2.2.
C.	Youth Activities: Lamar has an abundance of agricultural-related activities for area youth. Lamar High School has a very active FFA program and many courses of agricultural study at the Lamar Vocational-Technical Center. The Extension Council oversees several 4-H programs across Lamar/Barton County and maintains a full-time Youth Specialist in the Extension Office at a new community center designed, in part, to serve area youth.
D.	Young Farmers Activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several young farmers' organizations are active in Lamar through the FFA and 4-H 2. The Lamar Fair provides a showcase of agricultural activities to thousands of regional residents and visitors. Young farmers through the 4-H and FFA are extremely vital to the agricultural awareness and overall success of the Fair. 3. A farm family that epitomizes the ethic of the community is recognized annually in Barton County and represents the county at the Missouri State Fair. This family has children who are active in either in the 4-H or FFA programs.
E.	Business: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A newly-formed Agribusiness Committee through the Chamber will explore further opportunity for economic impact from local agricultural products. 2. The Chamber of Commerce recognizes an Agribusiness of the Year each April. 3. Lamar boasts four financial institutions each with a strong investment in the local farm economy. 4. Local agricultural products are a centerpiece at community festivals and special events throughout the year. 5. A local Farmers Market, sponsored by Lamar Community Betterment with endorsement by the Lamar City Council, is held twice weekly during the growing season. This market is well represented by producers throughout the area. The Farmers Market provides an important niche in both marketing for the producers and supplying the needs for the local consumers. 6. The Agri-Missouri program serves the community as a marketing tool on a wider basis. Many entrepreneurs utilize this medium of promotion across Lamar/Barton County. 7. Lamar/Barton County participates in the "Harvest Connection" program to link farmers with local grocery stores and farmers with local restaurants.

F.	Special Events:
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Lamar Fair, Missouri's largest free fair event, features a primary emphasis on agricultural exhibits and contests. 2. Farm tours conducted through the Chamber of Commerce and University Outreach and Extension are provided on an annual basis for students of the EXCEL Leadership Development program. 3. Familiarization tours of the local agriculture industry are provided in conjunction with the Chamber's Industry of the Quarter program (see Section 2.4 on Business Retention and Expansion for more information on Industry of the Quarter.) The new agribusiness committee will conduct familiarization tours.
G.	<p>Needs Assessment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A specialized inventory to assist in the development of ag-related businesses in the life sciences and biotechnology sectors will be utilized as a primary tool of the Agribusiness Committee. 2. The local University Outreach and Extension Council conducts an assessment and goal prioritization process annually. These strategy tools are incorporated into a five-year plan.

Program Goals and Planning

Goal #1	Recruit and support the development of Agricultural-related companies in the Biotechnology and Life Sciences sectors
Strategy	(See MoCAP Section 2.2 on Industrial Attraction for more on this mutual goal.)

Goal #2	Increase economic impact of agricultural-related business and attractions for tourism
Strategy	Promote specific local attractions and businesses as part of a targeted agri-tourism program
Funding	Chamber resources, Barton County Commission, Southwest Missouri Tourism Association, Missouri Division of Tourism
Timeline	Two to Four Year Project: Identify potential attractions, both existing and future; conduct feasibility study for agri-tourism; enhance resources of attractions to handle agri-tourism capacity; catalog agri-tourism attractions and amenities into brochure and website formats; launch regional promotional campaign
Evaluation	Increases in visitor counts, increases in retail sales, decreases in retail leakage, increases in employment opportunities in hospitality and retail-related firms

Program Evaluation

<p>The success of Agribusiness endeavors for Lamar are addressed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific economic indicators available from the local agencies, the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center and the U.S. Census Bureau • Benchmarks established through the Lamar Baseline Study • Best practices guidelines established through the Missouri Department of Agriculture, the Missouri University Outreach and Extension, and the Missouri Biotechnology Association. • Monthly focus group sessions conducted by the Chamber of Commerce • Annual Surveys of the local business community • Annual Strategic Planning Retreat of Chamber Board Members and invited executives from other local civic partners engaged in economic development
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