



## **Lawrence County: It Starts here**

### **A Marketing Strategy to Elevate Lawrence County Among External Audiences**

*FINAL | September 30, 2021*

In conjunction with Garner Economics, Development Counsellors International (DCI) partnered with Lawrence County to develop an authentic, forward-looking marketing strategy which aims to promote the region to external audiences such as corporate executives and site selection consultants.

The following plan created by DCI comes based upon five-months of focused work, building upon information gained through internal stakeholder focus groups as well as DCI's extensive knowledge of economic development and 61 years of experience in place-marketing.

### **FOUNDATIONAL WORK**

Below, we've included several internal recommendations that serve to help bring Lawrence County's story to life and aide in telling that story to an external audience. Please note that some of these recommended tactics are already in progress by Lawrence County.

#### **Invest in Visual Assets**

This step may also be in progress as part of your new website work, but it's important to note that visual assets are a crucial piece of telling Lawrence County's story. Consider working with a local photographer to capture the diversity of the county's existing industry base, business assets, community and people. These assets are critical, as they can be used across the board in all marketing tactics, ranging from website to social media to advertising.

Go deeper than basic building shots. Identify 2-4 executives and employees who can be photographed on location and secure a testimonial from the executive(s) and employee(s) on why Lawrence County is a prime location for business and for life. For example, we love the Forward Lawrence video series that features regional business leaders and decision makers discussing why they enjoy working, managing a business and living in Lawrence County. These first-hand testimonials from leaders across a wide range of backgrounds (healthcare, plumbing, local government, education and the arts), shows the diversity of career paths and opportunities available in the area.

#### **Marketing Materials Audit/Refresh**

DCI reviewed Lawrence County's existing marketing materials in order to gauge the quality of design and content, as well as their utility. DCI's review included the Lawrence County Economic Development

Corporation's Marketing Brochure, the existing chamber website and the new Forward Lawrence website. Please note that some of the recommendations that follow include ideas for amplifying these assets, but below, we wanted to call out a few overarching findings:

The launch of Lawrence County's new brand provides a prime opportunity to update all marketing materials to ensure cohesive structure and lean into the fresh new brand guidelines. As part of our work together, DCI created the following "mockup" marketing materials, which serve as the foundation from which Lawrence County can build:

- Regional Map
- Industry Brochure Template
- Stakeholder PowerPoint Template

We recommend zeroing in on what's most important to an economic development audience, and concisely putting that information into context through collateral pieces that include fresh design elements, including maps, industry data and information, major employers, key assets, etc.

DCI recommends building out the following marketing collateral pieces and making them easily accessible/downloadable on your new website:

- **Target Industry Brochures** – Once your target industries are finalized, pull key stats and information for each of your industries and build out individual brochures using the template created by DCI. There should be a brief industry brochure available for each target industry. These items should provide site selectors and corporate executives with an easy to read, collateral piece that showcases the regional industry and brief community information.
- **Community Profile** – A community profile is an opportunity to showcase Lawrence County and provide an overview of the things that make the county unique – your population, talent, available land, major employers, quality of life options and more. We suggest keeping this community profile succinct, perhaps a one-page front and back sided document, covering the following:
  - A general overview of the County
  - Map
  - Target industries
  - Workforce
  - Major employers in key industries
  - Community demographics
  - Community assets
  - Key assets including cost of doing business and accessibility, labor costs, tax policy, and/or incentives.

Examples of community profiles can be found below:

- [Metro Little Rock Arkansas](#)
- [Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership](#)
  
- **Digital Brand Packet for Partners** – Give your county partners the tools they need to begin to spread the Forward Lawrence message to their audiences. Consider building this as a custom page on your website or as a digital folder to make it easily shareable and useful for partners. Materials in the digital packet may include:
  - Key messaging document
  - Updated collateral pieces
  - PowerPoint template incorporating brand and messaging
  - Logos/brand guidelines
  - Branded Zoom backgrounds

### **Invest in Printed Materials**

Updating any printed collateral is essential to ensure the latest information is shared with target audiences. Even in today's largely digital world, printing is still valuable, and key audiences appreciate a good leave-behind.

DCI recommends identifying 1-2 of your strongest collateral pieces for professionally printing (consider printing a community profile, keeping it simple and concise). These items should be printed in small batches to allow for regular updates to regional data. Industry fact sheets/other one-pagers can be printed in house/as-needed to save on external expenses. If possible, source a local printer for an in-kind donation of printed materials to reduce cost.

## **EXTERNAL MARKETING PLAN**

### **BRANDING**

Kudos to the Forward Lawrence team in the recent launch of your new website! The new brand and website have a modern look and feel and do a great job of reaching your internal audience.

The next step is updating your external brand presence and thinking through how Lawrence County positions and promotes itself to target audiences, including corporate executives and site selection consultants. DCI recommends either:

- Rebranding the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce as Forward Lawrence (and thus using the new, existing, Forward Lawrence website to market to both external and internal audiences); or

- Creating a new, separate sister brand to Forward Lawrence and using it to rebrand the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce. This new sister brand would be displayed on a refreshed and relaunched website for the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce.

With either of these options, DCI recommends putting the place name front and center. Creating a sister brand to Forward Lawrence, for example, might enable you to include “PA” in the brand mark, which shines a spotlight on your Pennsylvania location. In the next “Online Presence” section, we’ve provided more specific recommendations on how to move forward.

## ONLINE PRESENCE

As we consider ways to both rebrand and amplify your online presence to reach the external audiences of corporate executives and site selection consultants, there are a few options:

### 1. **Forward Lawrence 2.0: A Phase II Approach to Add External-Facing Content**

Expand and build upon the new site by adding valuable economic development content from lawrencecounty.com. Ultimately, the goal will be to create a robust economic development website that converts users and generates leads, whether that be a site consultant signing up for your e-newsletter or a corporate executive emailing a direct contact to learn more.

Suggestions include:

- **Insert clear user pathways on the homepage** with clear calls-to-action for internal versus external audiences. Consider pulling the economic development items directly onto the marquee area of the homepage to make it crystal clear to your external audience where their valuable content lives. You might title the economic development section “Doing Business Here,” for example.
- **Conduct a website audit and content analysis** to curate the best information, statistics and data from lawrencecounty.com to fold into forwardlawrence.com. See below for more details on conducting an audit.
- **Refresh homepage content** with your external business audience in mind. Phase I of the Forward Lawrence website has done an exceptional job of creating the internal momentum and crafting content for your internal audience. As part of Phase II, it’s time to blow out the content to make it external facing. The updated homepage could feature the new regional map of Lawrence County, the updated business attraction key messages and additional SEO copy that tells the “Why Lawrence County” story.
- **Leverage data and visual assets** to bring the region’s advantages and story to life. Create a one-stop-shop for your external audience by inserting key information and data

in a way that's easy to access and gives users the information they're looking for. See the below "Best Practices" section for more details on what information is most valuable to corporate executives and site selection consultants.

## **2. Create a Sister Brand for External Audiences & Relaunch LawrenceCounty.com**

Lean into the modern look and feel of the new Forward Lawrence brand and design a sister brand for economic development, specifically geared toward external audiences. This would enable you to keep your internal content/website separate from your external content/website. The new economic development brand would ultimately live on a relaunched lawrencecounty.com.

The strategy for creating a new economic development brand and external website requires many of the same suggestions as outlined above in Option 1. The advantage of relaunching the site completely lies in having full control over the website's structure and technical build, allowing for a customized look, feel and user experience.

### **Conduct a Website Audit of LawrenceCounty.com**

Whether you choose to move forward with Option 1 or Option 2, the first step requires taking a deeper dive into the content that's resonating by conducting an audit of user behavior on all existing website pages. Conduct the review from a technical perspective using Google Analytics and an SEO tool like Moz. Look at top pages, where traffic is most engaged, and areas of strength and opportunity for keywords to identify content gaps and areas to optimize. This will help you identify what content users are interacting with, and what content they're not. User behavior can also help you outline a plan to combine certain elements or change page names to arrive at better SEO recognition. Ultimately, this audit would give you the knowledge to build out a site map and navigation structure that best suits your economic development audience.

Additionally, conduct a content and data analysis of all pages to determine data and content that is missing or needs updating. This will help you revamp content and data, add new key messaging, and ensure everything is presented in a way that's clear, concise and up-to-date.

### **Prominently Display New Marketing Materials**

Once you've finalized your new marketing materials (target industry brochures, key messages, regional map), make sure to display them prominently on your website and make them downloadable when possible. This makes it easy for external audiences and your community partners to access useful materials.

### **Best Practices in Creating a Successful Economic Development Website**

DCI believes that all great marketing is rooted in research. As such, DCI has been conducting original industry research since 1996 to track trends in how location decisions are made by gauging the perspective of site selection consultants and corporate executives. DCI's "Winning Strategies in

Economic Development Marketing report,” released every three years, has come to be known as the “bible of economic development marketing.”

The most recent Winning Strategies report, released in 2020, showed that an economic development organization’s website and internet presence is the **most** effective marketing technique (as has been the case since 2014), and 77 percent of respondents reported a strong likelihood that they would visit an economic development organization’s website during the next site search.

What’s more, the research tells us that decision-makers are going to your website first before they contact you, with 65% saying they wait until **at least** the short list to contact an EDO directly.

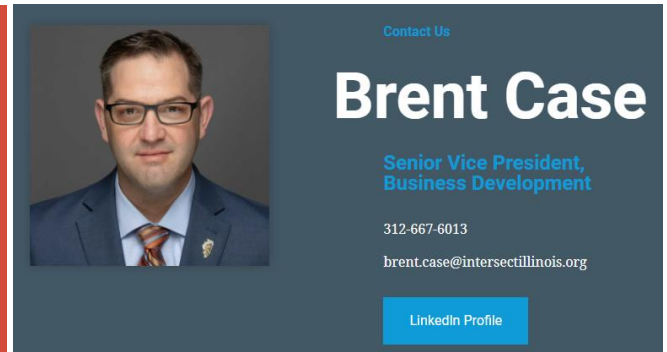
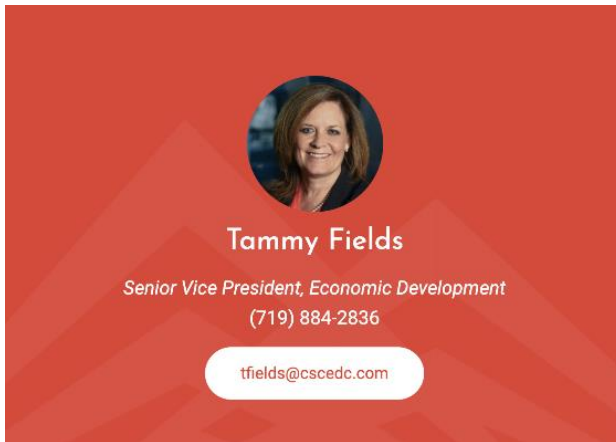
So, in order to be considered and added to that short list, it is vital that you ensure the data you have on your website is accurate, the content is easily digestible, and your website appropriately tells the story of Lawrence County.

Below, we’ve included several recommendations to create a successful economic development website:

- **Include the Essential Information** – Present the information your audience craves in a way that’s clear and easily accessible. These are the topics that Winning Strategy respondents state as most important to their location search:



- **List a Direct Contact** – Drilling down even further, site selectors in particular say that the No. 1 most useful tool is staff contact information. If they are on your website, they want to know who to contact: A real person, with a name, title, phone number and email address. DCI also recommends including a headshot for the contact person, enabling you to start forming a personal connection. Do not create a generic form for them to fill out or have them send an email to an “info@” address. Here are a few examples of how you might include these key contact details in a strong call-to-action on your website.



- **Report on Meaningful Metrics** – Once your website strategy is set, your content is revamped and your site is live, the final step is ensuring you report on meaningful metrics so you can track the success of your website. DCI recommends tracking the following metrics:

**Awareness:**

- Increase in site visitors
- Sources of traffic (direct, organic, social media, other marketing efforts) as well as actions driven by each

**Engagement:**

- Goal completions (pages that are indicative of gold standard behavior for your website’s overall key performance indicators)
- Downloads
- E-newsletter sign-ups

**Conversions:**

- Contact outreach
- Any other big CTAs on your website

**Website Content Creation**

Creating fresh content across your website is one of the best ways to bolster your digital presence. Not only will it help with your SEO, but it provides great content to be distributed across social media channels, which in turn, drives traffic back to your website.

Below, we’ve included recommendations for creating content that highlights your local businesses:

- **Build Out a Blog Strategy** – To stay relevant in the eyes of Google and your users, it’s imperative that a website not remain static and instead should have a regular posting

schedule of valuable content. We recommend creating a blog strategy and editorial calendar that will give you a chance to tell the Lawrence County story on a regular basis that's also promoted through engaging social media posts.

Regular blog content will also help with your website's SEO and search rankings. The following themes will drive the editorial calendar strategy for Lawrence County's content moving forward:

- New Business/Expansions/Announcements
  - Workforce
  - Industry
  - Quality of life
- **Success Story Series** – Feature the county's business success stories through a blog series. From Ellwood to Pyrotechnico and Pizza Joe's, the businesses in Lawrence County and their accomplishments deserve to be celebrated. The goal is to tell the story of each company's presence and growth in the region, including when they first established operations (especially if they relocated from another state) and how they have grown with reference to any recent announcements or achievements. Creating written success story verbiage in addition to a video series (see below) is ideal and provides an opportunity to play up key statistics about the company and industry in Lawrence County. Consider monthly or quarterly success stories and videos to keep your content fresh.

When building out success story pages, reputable news coverage is a good place to look – either local/state-level coverage or economic development trade outlets like Business Facilities and Site Selection. For examples of what these profiles look like, reference websites like [Carolina Core](#) and [Invest in Holland](#).

- **Business Attraction-Focused Video Series** – Building upon your existing, Forward Lawrence video series, DCI recommends creating a subset of these videos that focus solely on content for external business attraction audiences. These videos should leverage the stories of key business leaders to bring the business attraction messaging to life, showcasing why businesses chose to put down roots (or stay, expand and grow) in the area, the benefits of doing business in Lawrence County and the industries they span.

### **Conduct an Online Reputation Audit**

Too often, we hear from smaller communities and regions that online reputation is preventing potential workforce from moving there or giving companies hesitancy about their ability to recruit a workforce if they expand to that region. In today's world where everything is online (including the good, the bad and



the ugly), it's important to understand everything that is out there now so that you can identify opportunities to improve your digital reputation and address gaps in perception going forward. An online reputation audit can focus on channels such as search engines and social media (primary drivers of traffic in the digital space) and provide a holistic analysis of your online reputation.

## **SITE SELECTION CONSULTANT OUTREACH**

Site selection consultants impact an estimated 40% of all projects involving 100 jobs or more, so it is crucial to cultivate relationships with this key national audience. We recommend implementing the following tactics to reach these influencers.

### **E-Newsletter**

Site selection consultants are receiving dozens – if not more – of digital communications from economic development organizations every day. Lengthy e-newsletters are often ignored so it is best to focus your digital communications on 1-3 messages – keeping them short and sweet. Create an e-newsletter template potentially featuring the new Forward Lawrence brand. Consider using a platform like Campaign Monitor, Mailchimp or Constant Contact, which are all intuitive/user friendly and easy to get up and running.

Cut through the clutter by featuring timely news such as a company expansion, relocation or a strong ranking, aiming to communicate with consultants every 4-6 weeks, or as news warrants. Make sure the e-newsletter has a strong, eye-catching subject line and preview text. Direct inquiries to just one business development contact.

If ever in a lull for timely announcements, consider sharing evergreen content on Lawrence County's business advantages or piggybacking on Pennsylvania news, rankings or legislation and tying it to Lawrence County to have a consistent touchpoint with consultants. When possible, link to the Forward Lawrence website. While consultants will most likely bounce from the site after clicking, it is best practice to give them an opportunity to click within your website instead of sending them to a third-party site. This means it is advantageous to repost news coverage to the Lawrence County site to create an owned link.

Here are a few examples of succinct site selector e-newsletters:

- [Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development](#)
- [North Carolina Core](#)
- [Metro Little Rock](#)

### **Participate in a Site Selectors Guild Virtual Table Talk**

Virtual Table Talks are a premier networking opportunity with Site Selectors Guild members, conducted via Zoom. The format enables smaller communities the chance to meet with seven Guild members for 15 minutes each, allowing for free-flowing conversation and the chance to connect with directly with site selectors.

### **Leverage State and Regional Partnerships**

Most corporate executives and site selection consultants develop their location selection shortlists by looking at states and major metro areas. With this in mind, look for ways to partner with regional and state organizations on all things Lawrence County. This type of partnership can also be a critical means by which to reach the important site selection audience.

For example, perhaps there are opportunities to partner with the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance on work already being done that may range from outbound missions/meetings with site selectors, delegations to trade shows, or inbound familiarization tours with site selectors. Similarly, you might consider partnering with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Another powerful “influencer” can be regional colleges and universities, which may have extended relationships through alumni networks and private industry partnerships.

Depending on partnerships available with key regional/statewide players, you might consider:

### **Site Selector Missions**

Build relationships and share Lawrence County’s story through missions to major cities with the largest concentration of consultants. You might consider hosting a luncheon in markets like New York City/New Jersey, Atlanta, Chicago or Dallas. Invite a small group (5-7) of consultants for an intimate luncheon at an upscale restaurant. Or, set up a series of on-on-one appointments in these major markets.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **Generate Awareness by Turning up the Volume on Social Media**

A strong social media strategy can be the foundation for not only creating energy and buzz around your location but can also be an important part of your content marketing strategy. When executed properly, social media can be a large driver of traffic to your website, which when implemented with a business development-focused website, can turn into valuable lead generation activity for Lawrence County.

- **Prioritize LinkedIn for Business/Economic Development** – LinkedIn should take top priority for your business/economic development audience, with Twitter taking second priority.
- **Emphasize Value Over Volume** – There’s not a one-size fits all to post frequency. It really depends on quality of content to share and resources available to manage social media. It’s

more important to post content that is impactful, timely and will resonate with your audience versus posting something just for the sake of posting. Try to post at least ~3x/week across channels, but some may be more or less depending on what content is available to share.

When it comes to hashtags, we recommend 1-3 hashtags on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. A good guideline is to use a branded hashtag, a more general place hashtag, and a hashtag for the industry (especially industry jobs, i.e., #manufacturingjobs) you're sharing content on.

- **Content Recommendations** – The Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce social media channel content should include timely news such as company expansions and locations, local development and rankings as well as evergreen content like key industry data, company success stories and testimonials, business advantages and assets, business climate data and available buildings and sites.

Given Lawrence County is reaching both internal audiences for Chamber initiatives and external audiences for corporate location decisions, consider the following rough breakdown for social content:

- 40% of content on economic development
- 40% of content on Chamber initiatives
- 20% of content on community happenings

## **ONE FINAL IDEA TO TARGET TALENT**

### **Promote Lawrence County's Quality of Life**

DCI has been conducting research on how talent chooses jobs and locations since 2017. DCI's most recent 2020 "Talent Wars" research showed that nearly 70% of respondents said "YES" they'd be willing to relocate, and 53% of the talent surveyed said they form their perceptions of a place through internet research (behind only first-hand experience).

The research also shows us that talent increasingly values quality of life amenities as they select locations. Don't underestimate the value of shining a spotlight on your quality of life assets, even on an economic development focused website. Top location factors talent takes into consideration when relocating include:

- Cost of living
- Housing cost
- Housing availability

- Quality healthcare
- Welcoming/friendly local population
- Climate
- Outdoor recreational opportunities

Work to carve out space within your online presence to tout these factors, and consider implementing easy-to-use tools for talent such as a cost of living calculator or a jobs board.

## **TIMELINE**

Below, we've outlined a recommended timeline for carrying out the tactics outlined in this marketing strategy. Please note that the tactics are broken down by each quarter, beginning Oct. 1, 2021, and concluding Sept. 30, 2022.

Keep in mind this marketing strategy has been developed as a long-range roadmap and so we suggest viewing this timeline as a living document that can be altered based on time/staffing availability and budget, among other factors. DCI's proposed timeline aims to prioritize some of the foundational pieces first, along with the suggested rebrand and online presence.

| <b>Year 1: Lawrence County Business Attraction Marketing Campaign<br/>October 2021 - September 2022</b> |   |  |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|---|
|   | <b>Q4 2021</b>                                      | <b>Q1 2022</b>   | <b>Q2 2022</b>   | <b>Q3 2022</b>  |
| <b>Invest in Visual Assets</b>  | Source local photographer                           | Work with local photographer to capture images of region and regional businesses |  |   |
| <b>Marketing Materials Audit/Refresh</b>  | Complete profiles for each industry                 | Upload marketing materials to website  |  |   |
|   | Finalize all marketing materials                    | Invest as needed in printed materials  |  |   |
| <b>Update External Online Presence</b>  | Conduct online reputation audit                     | Rebrand Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce                             |  |   |
|   | Identify solution for updating your online presence | Conduct website audit & update your online presence                              |  |   |
| <b>Create Digital Content</b>   |   |  | Build out blog and social media strategy   | Start success story series and business attraction focused video series |
|   |   |  |  | Turn up volume on social media  |
| <b>Promote Lawrence County's Quality of Life</b>  |   |  |  | Carve out space online to tout quality of life                          |
| <b>Site Selector Outreach</b>   |   |  | Participate in Site Selectors Guild Virtual Table Talk                             |   |
|   |   |  | Leverage state and regional partnerships to engage with Site Selection Consultants |   |
|   |   |  | Consider creating a site selector e-newsletter                                     |   |

## **BUDGET**

Given the limited marketing budget available, DCI recommends that Lawrence County prioritize funds to first focus on the rebrand/positioning of the Lawrence County Regional Chamber of Commerce, and from there, focus and prioritize updating Lawrence County's external-facing online presence.

Pending available/additional budget, the other items in this marketing strategy may be taken into consideration in the longer-term future.