Serving Our Geography

Ogallala Commons (OC) is a nonprofit education and leadership organization with an ambitious mission—to reinvigorate communities across a vast 8-state region that is centered over or connected to the Ogallala Aquifer. Our mission territory extends east and west along an 850-mile axis—stretching from White River, South Dakota down deep into the Texas plains.

In the past year, OC has made remarkable progress toward a key focus of our Strategic Blueprint—serving our geography. Our work requires ample financial resources and increasing community partnerships, and we are pleased to feature some highlights of the past year in this report. We hope you will take pride in the achievement of these outcomes while continuing to offer support and collaboration that can move OC even further down the road in 2019.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Ogallala Commons works to reinvigorate commonwealth to build vibrant Great Plains communities. This mission is carried out through a 4-part approach:

- **Weaving a Collaborative Network of Diverse Partners**
- **Building an Educational Outreach**
- **Fostering a Sense of Place**
- **Rebuilding Commonwealth to Sustain Land and People**
Teaching high school youth about the 12 Key Assets that already exist in their communities, is the heart of OC’s Youth Engagement Program. This foundational knowledge opens the door for youth to consider entrepreneurship and local career options that can lead them back to their towns, if they choose.

In the past year, OC conducted 8 Commonwealth Academies, 6 Youth Entrepreneur Camps, 3 Youth Entrepreneur Fairs, and 3 Career Cabs...impacting a total of 2,000 youth in Colorado, Texas, South Dakota, and New Mexico.

Reinvigorating Commonwealth Through Educating Youth

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019

OC plans a 3-county pilot Youth Engagement Project in the Texas Panhandle (Swisher, Briscoe, and Hall counties).

OC will renew its Youth Engagement Project in eastern New Mexico.

We are launching Grow SECO (Southeast Colorado) Initiative in 9 counties.
In collaboration with over 70 Community Partners, OC’s Community Internship Program created 57 Internships and Apprenticeships in South Dakota, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, and Texas during 2018.

New sponsorships were gained through a partnership with CoBank (www.cobank.com) and 5 Farm Credit Associations:

- Premier Ag Credit, Sterling, Colorado
- Farm Credit of Southern Colorado, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- American Ag Credit, Santa Rosa, California
- Farm Credit of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Farm Credit Services of America, Omaha, Nebraska

Thanks to these sponsorships, 16 Internships were created with new community partners in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, and South Dakota.

New Partnerships to create Community Interns in Oklahoma and Nebraska. Increased digital outreach to OC Intern Alumni.

Create new digital outreach to OC Intern Alumni.
Over the past 12 months, OC staff conducted 6 Playa Festivals. With grant funding from High Plains Water District and the Dixon Water Foundation, OC also conducted 2 Playa Field Days in collaboration with Texas Playa Conservation Initiative that helped to restore 13 playa basins and 439 total acres of wetlands.

We experienced substantial growth in rebuilding the Llano Estacado foodshed with funding from Tecovas Foundation and by conducting two Taste of the Llano benefit dinners in Lubbock and Amarillo, TX, that raised $12,000 to build public awareness of local food producers, farmers markets, and the Double-Up Food Bucks Program.

**LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019**

OC will conduct 5 Playa Field Days in five counties to support Texas Playa Conservation Initiative work.

OC will develop public education outreach for two new foodsheds: the Canadian River Foodshed in Texas & Oklahoma panhandles and the Arkansas Valley Foodshed in southeast Colorado and western Kansas.
TELLING STORIES ABOUT Resilient Communities

Each day, week, and month of the past year, OC has been implementing a robust social media strategy to tell digital stories to an audience living in sparsely populated regions spread across 8 states. OC invests resources in Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to tell our stories. Each week, OC puts up 5-7 posts on all our outlets, while using a monthly newsletter that is emailed to over 500 people.

Looking Ahead to 2019

- 24 blogs for publication on OC Facebook (2 per month)
- Building out a new OC initiative:

Connect with us:

- StewardingOurAquifer
  - stewardingouraquifer.com
  - @stewardingouraquifer

- OgallalaCommons
  - ogallalacommons.org
  - OgallalaCommons
  - @ogallalacommons
  - @ogallalaaquifer

- LocalLlano
  - localllano.org
  - @localllano

Rural and Remote
  - @workruralremote
2017 Ogallala Commons Finances

**INCOME**

- Youth Engagement Program: 47.33%
- Workforce & Leader Development: 42.99%
- Rebuilding Local Food Systems: 3.80%
- Stewarding Natural Resources: 3.33%
- Annual Appeal: 2.49%
- Interest Earned on Account: 0.06%

**Total Income** $451,809.81

**EXPENSES**

- Workforce & Leader Development: 49.61%
- Youth Engagement Program: 39.45%
- Stewarding Natural Resources: 3.38%
- Rebuilding Local Food Systems: 3.25%
- Ogallala Commons Expenses: 4.31%

**Total Expenses** $373,849.68

- Workforce & Leader Development: $185,466.83
- Youth Engagement Program: $147,483.70
- Stewarding Natural Resources: $16,112.92
- Ogallala Commons Expenses: $12,636.12
- Rebuilding Local Food Systems: $12,150.11
Bobby Gierisch

OC was greatly saddened when our friend, Bobby Gierisch, passed away on May 12th in Austin, TX at the age of 71, following a brief bout with cancer. Bobby worked closely with our organization for the past 8 years, serving terms as a Board member, an Advisory Council member, and 3 years as Board President. We all benefited greatly from Bobby's wisdom, experience, and friendship. He was a great promoter of our interns, championing their career journeys and helping to connect alumni to professional networks and service in other organizations.
Major Partners

In 2018, 6 major partners are providing outstanding financial support for Ogallala Commons Youth Engagement, Community Internship, Stewarding Natural Resources, and Rebuilding Local Food Systems Programs.

**Daniels Fund**

The Daniels Fund is a private charitable foundation dedicated to making life better for the people of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming through its grants program, scholarship program, and the ethics initiative. Daniels Fund continues the legacy of generosity established by its founder, Bill Daniels, a cable television pioneer known for his compassion for those in need and his unwavering commitment to ethics and integrity.

**CoBank**

CoBank is a national cooperative bank serving vital industries across rural America. The bank provides loans, leases, export financing and other financial services to agribusiness and rural power and communications providers in all 50 states. CoBank is a member of the Farm Credit System, a nationwide network of banks and retail lending associations chartered to support the borrowing needs of U.S. agriculture and the nation's rural economy. In addition to serving its direct retail borrowers, the bank also provides wholesale loans and other financial services to affiliated Farm Credit associations, servicing approximately 70,000 farmers, ranchers and other rural borrowers in 23 states around the country.

**Amarillo Area Foundation**

The Amarillo Area Foundation is a community foundation that serves the northernmost 26 countries of the Texas Panhandle. The Foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life in the Texas Panhandle. Since its inception in 1957, the Foundation provides grants and a variety of other services to strengthen nonprofit organizations and the services they deliver.

**The Tecovas Foundation**

The Tecovas Foundation has been built upon a clear proposition. People have the capacity to solve their own problems; but they often don’t have access to the tools they need to make the change they seek. We are committed to funding access to solutions.

**Dane G. Hansen Foundation**

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation was established in 1965 with a generous estate gift from Dane G. Hansen. Reflecting Mr. Hansen’s lifelong love of Northwest Kansas, the Foundation’s mission is to improve the quality of life for residents and the communities of the 26 countries in the northwest quarter of Kansas.

**Gates Family Foundation**

The Gates Family Foundation makes philanthropic investments statewide that contribute to the quality of life in Colorado, create opportunities for youth, and support stewardship of this extraordinary place, particularly the state’s natural inheritance.