

VELOCITY

NOVEMBER 2024 • OKCCHAMBER.COM

TURKEY'S SEEDS 'N SNACKS SELECTS OKC TO EXPAND TO NORTH AMERICAN MARKET

Seeds 'N Snacks, a sesame seed product leader from Turkey, was a project rooted in tradition. However, co-founders Mohamad Fakhran (originally from Turkey) and Rasim Narin (originally from Lebanon) recognized a unique opportunity to broaden reach of the company, shifting their focus to a larger audience in the North American market.

Seeds 'N Snacks is the sister company of a family-owned brand, Rasagra, renowned in Europe for its exceptional quality and flavor. With its recent expansion to the United States, it now stands as one of the largest tahini producers in North America.

When searching for a location to expand, Fakhran and Narin were particularly drawn to the United States due to its increasing health consciousness among consumers, aligning perfectly with their product offerings of tahini,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



FAME WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STUDENTS ENJOY NEW ADVANCED MANUFACTURING LAB AT OSU-OKC

To meet the manufacturing talent needs in Oklahoma City, the Greater OKC Chamber partnered with Oklahoma State University-OKC to launch the state's first chapter of the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME). This national program combines classroom education with hands-on experience to prepare students for careers in manufacturing.

Through OKC FAME, students can earn an associate degree while working part-time with local manufacturers, including Climate Control Group,



OKC FAME students work in the new OSU-OKC Advanced Manufacturing Lab, designed to mirror the factory floors they will encounter in their careers.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



A New Noninvasive Treatment for Essential Tremor

OU Health is the first and only health system in Oklahoma to offer an incisionless treatment for patients with medical refractory essential tremor that can result in improvement in hand, head and body shaking as well as increased mobility through a same-day treatment. Called “Focused Ultrasound,” the new technology is for essential tremor patients who have not responded to medication, or who cannot take it.

Focused ultrasound for essential tremor is an FDA-approved, non-invasive procedure that’s transforming patient care. The procedure uses ultrasound waves to target the specific areas of the brain responsible for tremors. Guided by MRI, the soundwaves pass safely through the skull and soft tissues to focus heat on only the targeted area, providing relief from symptoms. With no surgical cuts or permanent implants necessary, there is minimal to no risk of infection, and the treatment is often performed on an outpatient basis. Many patients can expect to resume normal activities within days.

OU Health is proud to be the first in Oklahoma to offer this revolutionary treatment.

To make an appointment or for more information, visit us at OUHealth.com/EssentialTremor

OU Health Physicians — Neurosurgery Clinic
1000 N Lincoln Blvd, Suite 4000
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
(405) 271-4912



LEADERSHIP NOTES



CHRISTY GILLENWATER
President & CEO

The Oklahoma City metro area is a shining example of economic resilience and vitality. With an unemployment rate of just 3.1%, we're proud to rank as the 10th lowest among all major U.S. metropolitan areas. This marks the 38th consecutive month our unemployment rate has stayed below 4%, tying the longest streak in modern history. These numbers underscore the strength of our economy while highlighting an ongoing challenge: finding qualified talent to meet the growing needs of our businesses.

For the first three quarters of 2024, Oklahoma City has continued to outperform expectations. Nonfarm employment has grown by 2.4%, with 16,000 new jobs compared to last year. Our 2024 Economic Outlook had forecasted a growth rate of 2%, so exceeding those projections is an encouraging sign of our upward trajectory. This progress reflects the outstanding work of our Chamber's economic development team, who in 2024 partnered with 86 companies to bring 5,700 new jobs to Oklahoma City. These efforts generated \$350 million in payroll and \$630 million in capital investment, reinforcing our region's appeal as a hub for opportunity.

We've seen remarkable contributions from companies like Georg Fischer Central Plastics, Advanced Call Center Technologies, Pratt & Whitney, Love's Travel Shops & Country Stores and more. Collectively, these businesses have committed hundreds of new jobs, ensuring Oklahoma City remains a destination for innovation and growth.

Despite global economic uncertainties and the backdrop of a national election year, the optimism of our business community is unwavering. That optimism is fueled by you — our Chamber members — whose vision, leadership and dedication drive this city forward. Your contributions are the cornerstone of Oklahoma City's success, and together, we are building a thriving, dynamic community. Here's to continuing our momentum and shaping an even brighter future for Oklahoma City!

»» READ CHRISTY'S VELOCITYOKC ONLINE STORY OF THE MONTH

FAME Workforce Development Students Enjoy New OSU-OKC Manufacturing Lab
[VELOCITYOKC.COM/CHRISTYSPICK](https://velocityokc.com/christyspick)



CONTENTS

1 Chamber welcomes Hardy Watkins, SVP Membership & Investor Relations

4 Economic impact of Tribal Nations in OKC to be focus of November Chamber Forum

6 State of the Economy Q&A with Economic Futurist Andrew Busch

8 MAPS 4 Update – Projects in Motion

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UPCOMING EVENTS

CALENDAR

(Events are subject to change. Consult okcchamber.com/events for the most recent updates.)

NOVEMBER 14

State of the Economy

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

1700 NE 63rd St.

OKCChamber.com/Economy

NOVEMBER 20

Chamber Forum

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Petroleum Club

100 N Broadway, 34th Floor

OKCChamber.com/NovemberForum

DECEMBER 6

D.C. Spotlight

8:30 to 10 a.m.

ASM Global-Oklahoma City Convention Center

100 Mick Cornett Drive

OKCChamber.com/Spotlight

DECEMBER 18

Annual Meeting

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

1700 NE 63rd St.

OKCChamber.com/Annual

JANUARY 22

Legislative Kickoff

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

1700 NE 63rd St.

OKCChamber.com/Kickoff



Economic impact of Tribal Nations in OKC to be focus of November Chamber Forum

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's November Forum will explore Tribal Nations' economic impact on central Oklahoma. Scheduled for November 20 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Petroleum Club, the forum will feature a panel of leaders from the Chickasaw, Cherokee and Citizen Potawatomi Nations.

According to the 2019 Oklahoma Native Impact report, Oklahoma tribes generated \$15.6 billion in economic activity, a figure reflecting a significant impact across healthcare, education and entrepreneurship. In the Greater Oklahoma City area, nine Tribal Nations contribute to these sectors, supporting jobs and boosting the local economy.

Panelists include Jim Pollard, economic development director for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation; Bill Lance, Chickasaw Nation's secretary of state; and Kimberly Teehee, congressional delegate and senior vice president of government relations for Cherokee Nation Businesses. Each will share insights into how their nation supports Oklahoma's economy, providing local jobs, wages and new business ventures.

Recent developments by the Chickasaw and Citizen Potawatomi Nations illustrate this ongoing impact. The Chickasaw Nation's OKANA resort near Oklahoma City is set for a Spring 2025 opening, bringing tourism and hospitality opportunities to the area. In Shawnee, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation's Iron Horse Industrial Park spans 700 acres, offering potential for manufacturing and direct access to Union Pacific Railroad, further enhancing regional industrial capacity.

Across Oklahoma, Tribal Nations support more than 113,000 jobs, paying \$5.4 billion in wages and benefits and contributing \$8.3 billion in direct production. These figures highlight the essential role of Tribal Nations in driving the state's economy forward.

The November Chamber Forum will provide a space for discussing the region's economic future and the vital contributions of Tribal Nations. Attendees can expect a close look at ongoing partnerships and the future of Tribal economic initiatives in central Oklahoma.

GREATER OKC CHAMBER CHAIR TERESA ROSE TO HEADLINE CHAMBER'S ANNUAL MEETING

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber will host its Annual Meeting on December 18 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum.

During the event, Teresa Rose, 2024 and 2025 Chair of the Chamber, will outline the organization's accomplishments and set the stage for our work in the coming year.

The event will also feature a fireside chat with one of Oklahoma City's most successful entrepreneurs, David Green, CEO of Hobby Lobby. Green founded Hobby Lobby with a \$600 loan and a vision for crafting miniature picture frames. Today, the company operates more than 1,000 stores, with Green serving as CEO and overseeing all merchandising and buying operations.

A dedicated entrepreneur and philanthropist, Green has received numerous honors, including the World Changer Award and Ernst & Young's National Retail/Consumer Entrepreneur of the Year. He was inducted



into the Entrepreneur of the Year Hall of Fame and is a lifetime member of the Entrepreneur of the Year Academy.

In addition to his work at Hobby Lobby, Green is deeply involved in ministry and philanthropy, crediting the company's success to God's provision. Green also serves on the Board of Reference for Oral Roberts University and remains actively involved in several ministry projects.

Green is also an author, sharing his leadership and business philosophy in *Leadership Not by the Book*, which combines unconventional business insights with Scripture. His other books include *Giving It All Away...* and *Getting It Back Again*, which details his personal journey, and *More Than a Hobby*, which outlines the rise of Hobby Lobby and its foundational principles.

To hear Green's story of entrepreneurship and philanthropy, as well as gain valuable insights into his path to success, register for the Chamber's Annual Meeting on December 18. Tickets are \$80 for members and \$100 for nonmembers, and registration closes on December 11.

GREATER OKC CHAMBER TO HOST KEY LEGISLATIVE PANEL AT 2024 LEGISLATIVE KICKOFF

Members of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber will get the opportunity to hear from several key legislative leaders during the Chamber's annual Legislative Kickoff scheduled for Wednesday, January 22, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum.

A panel of leadership from both the House and Senate will share their thoughts and insights on critical issues state lawmakers will face throughout the next legislative session.

The panel includes Cyndi Munson, House District 85; Speaker of the House Elect Kyle Hilbert; and Senator Julia Kirt. Also invited to speak is Senator Lonnie Paxton.



Tickets are \$65 for Chamber members and \$90 for nonmembers. To register, visit okcchamber.com/legislativekickoff. Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,550.

Contact Suzette Ellison at sellison@okcchamber.com for sponsor inquiries.

STATE OF THE ECONOMY Q&A WITH ECONOMIC FUTURIST ANDREW BUSCH



Top economic strategist Andrew Busch, former chief market intelligence officer for the U.S. government, will keynote the Chamber's upcoming State of the Economy event. Busch has briefed leading government bodies, including the White House, U.S. Senate and Federal Reserve, on

issues like inflation, interest rates and China trade.

At the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), Busch transformed dense market data into practical insights for policymakers. Now, as an economic futurist and consultant, he advises industries ranging from finance to agriculture on adapting to the economy's rapid changes.

In a preview with our VeloCity team, Busch offered a look into his keynote, where he'll explore economic shifts, global trade and how technology is shaping markets.

Here's what he shared with us:

Q. Tell me what audience members can expect to take away from your keynote?

A. In the first section, I'll cover the global macro-outlook for the U.S. economy, touching on inflation, interest rates and the broader economic factors that are creating uncertainty. The second section will focus on the outcome of the election, both for the President and Congress, and what that means for policy and regulations. In the third section, I'll highlight big trends shaping the economy and business, like climate change and demographics — key drivers of transformation. Finally, I'll tie it all together, applying these factors to future growth opportunities. I'll also give the audience a "crystal ball" by examining venture capital investments in areas like AI, talent management, circularity and energy — providing insight into how these trends are evolving

and how they might impact businesses moving forward. The goal is not for the audience to invest in these companies, but to broaden their perspective on AI and its potential impact.

Q. What specific strategies do you recommend for workforce development in OKC to ensure that businesses can attract and retain talent?

A. Oklahoma City has done a great job redeveloping downtown, and the community is a big part of that success. To continue attracting talent, Oklahoma City should look to states benefiting from demographic shifts, like Arizona, Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida. Many of these states have no income taxes, though they still rely on sales and real estate taxes. Drawing talent to Oklahoma requires thoughtful legislation and making the state, particularly Oklahoma City, an attractive place to live. Redeveloping downtown is key, but so is ensuring affordable housing is available. High housing costs can be a barrier, especially for workers in retail, leisure and hospitality, which is a nationwide issue. As Oklahoma City attracts more workers, it must ensure affordable housing options are in place to keep them here.

Q. You mentioned that AI is crucial for business growth. Can you elaborate on the opportunities you see for businesses to leverage AI further?

A. Many people haven't even started with AI yet, and it's important to understand that AI is not just software or magic. The key to success is collecting, cataloging and ensuring the data you're using is clean — whether it's inventory, energy usage or something else. Without good data, your models won't be useful. The most important step when getting started with AI is having conversations across your organization. Identify who is and is not doing well with data, and figure out how to get everyone on board to create a comprehensive model that provides real business insights.

Q. Given that OKC is experiencing full employment, why do you think the Federal Reserve is considering cutting interest rates? What implications do you see this having for local businesses and the economy as a whole?

A. I believe the Fed made a mistake by cutting interest rates 50 basis points. A cut that large should only happen in an emergency. With nearly 3% GDP growth, 2.4% inflation and 4.1% unemployment, this isn't a soft landing — it's no landing. There's no need for further

rate cuts; the Fed can afford to wait. They made a huge mistake when they thought inflation was transitory, and then they rushed to catch up by raising rates 525 basis points over 14 months. After holding rates high for 24 months, cutting 50 basis points wasn't necessary to boost economic growth. The Fed needs to be cautious about cutting rates too quickly, as it could reignite inflation. Next year, consistent cuts might be needed, but for now, they should be careful.

Q. Regardless of the election outcome, what key public policy changes should businesses in OKC be preparing for to capitalize on future growth opportunities?

A. On the Trump side, there are both positives and negatives. The plus is his regulatory approach, while the minus includes tariffs and the potential removal of undocumented workers, which could create chaos. On

the Harris side, raising taxes without cutting spending isn't a good policy, as it could lead to stagnation and slower growth. Her plan to give \$25,000 for housing is also a mistake; the focus should be on increasing housing supply, not demand. The plus for Harris is that she's not all about deficit spending. Continued policies will likely support the development of the EV industry, batteries, CHIPS and science. For Harris, it's more of the same, with really big positives and negatives for Trump. I just want to make it clear; it won't be like 2017 when President Trump had Paul Ryan's growth strategy, which reduced the tax burden, but made it thoughtful in the sense of generating economic growth and deregulation. This time, the easy wins are gone, and Trump's policies may be more disruptive, creating more uncertainty — especially with tariffs. While there are opportunities, it's crucial to be mindful of potential problems.

CHAMBER WELCOMES HARDY WATKINS, SVP MEMBERSHIP & INVESTOR RELATIONS



The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber recently announced Hardy Watkins' as the team's senior vice president of membership and investor relations. Watkins brings extensive leadership experience and deep community ties that will help strengthen relationships with Chamber members and drive the organization's growth.

"We are thrilled to welcome a proven leader with an exceptional track record of achievement," said President and CEO of the Greater OKC Chamber Christy Gillenwater. "Hardy's robust community connections, outstanding executive leadership and commitment to accountability and effective communication uniquely position him as the ideal candidate for this critical role."

Watkins has a long history of success in both public and private sectors. Most recently, Watkins served as chief strategy and innovation officer at Hearts for Hearing.

Prior to his experience at Hearts for Hearing, Watkins spent nearly a decade at INTEGRIS Health, where he was vice president of marketing, government and community relations for approximately nine years. At INTEGRIS, Watkins oversaw strategic marketing, advertising, public relations and digital media for Oklahoma's largest health care system, which includes nine hospitals, four micro-hospitals, 170 clinics and over 10,000 employees.

Also included in Watkins past career experience is his role as president and CEO of the Edmond Chamber of Commerce, as well as deputy director and executive director of the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department.

"Having closely collaborated with the Chamber for many years, I have witnessed firsthand its remarkable ability to drive our city's progress," Watkins said. "I am honored to join this dedicated team and am eager to roll up my sleeves and contribute to our shared vision for a vibrant and prosperous Oklahoma City."

Watkins' extensive experience in strategic leadership, marketing, and public relations will be instrumental in advancing the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's mission to drive economic growth and create new opportunities for its members. As one of the region's largest business organizations, the Chamber is focused on strengthening Oklahoma City's business environment, and Watkins' leadership will help ensure its continued impact on the local community.

MAPS 4 UPDATE – PROJECTS IN MOTION

The city's MAPS 4 projects are progressing swiftly, showcasing exciting developments. Below are some of the latest updates of current ongoing projects in Oklahoma City.



Oklahoma City is set to receive a new animal shelter facility, with construction scheduled to begin before the end of the year and expected to be completed within 18 months.

ANIMAL SHELTER UPGRADE

Oklahoma City's current animal shelter, located on SE 29th Street, has operated since 1966 and is now undersized and outdated, unable to meet the needs of a growing population. To address this, a new state-of-the-art facility will be constructed in two phases on the same site, with an estimated total budget of \$42 million. The new 68,000-square-foot shelter will provide a range of updated features, from dedicated veterinary and surgical areas to larger kennels and welcoming spaces for adoptions and visitors.

The first phase, beginning in late 2024, will see the construction of a new main building with expanded capacity to handle both routine and emergency intakes, while also providing a safer, more comfortable environment for animals and visitors. The second phase includes demolishing the existing shelter and adding a new barn for livestock, along with improved parking and landscaping. The upgraded shelter aims to provide better care, boost adoption rates, and create a more inviting space for the community to connect with adoptable animals.



In October, officials marked the groundbreaking of the new MAPS 4 Diversion Hub building, with construction expected to be completed by 2026.

DIVERSION HUB GROUNDBREAKING

Officials broke ground on the MAPS 4 Diversion Hub project in October, marking the start of construction for a \$19 million, 35,575-square-foot facility on Linwood Boulevard. Designed by Rees Associates and built by Wynn Construction, the new building is set to open in 2026.

Diversion Hub is a multi-agency network established in 2020 that has supported over 10,000 individuals affected by the criminal legal system.

Mayor David Holt expressed how Diversion Hub reflects the quality-of-life projects present in MAPS 4. "About 70% of MAPS 4 dollars are going to human needs and neighborhood needs all across the city, and it's really meeting a different definition of quality of life that more directly reaches a much broader swath of the community," Holt said.

MAPS 4 Advisory Board Chair Teresa Rose described the Hub's work as "lifechanging and lifesaving," noting the need for a larger facility to continue this impact.

The new space will include expanded offices, meeting areas and program rooms for services like case management, justice navigation, recovery support, employment assistance and more. The facility will also feature artwork funded through Oklahoma City's 1% for Arts program, including a glass sculpture titled "Our Words are Wings" by Detroit-based artist April Wegner and two large paintings by Tulsa artist Ebony Iman Dallas and Los Angeles artist Floyd Strickland.

Sue Ann Arnall, Diversion Hub Board of Directors chairperson, noted that Diversion Hub is becoming a national model for support and rehabilitation, with other

organizations already looking to replicate its success. Executive Director Meagan Taylor highlighted the Hub's success in reducing recidivism and providing critical support, stating, "Our programs work. They dramatically reduce recidivism, and we are proving that it is more humane, safer and cheaper to help save lives rather than incarcerate them."

INNOVATION DISTRICT CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

Approved in September, the Innovation District's neighborhood connectivity project will use part of the \$27.8 million set aside for total connectivity improvements in the Innovation District to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in Northeast OKC. Phase 1 of this project will allot \$5.1 million for key connection between N. Lincoln Blvd., N. Lottie Ave. and NE 8th St.

"These improvements will enhance safety for pedestrians and cyclists," said MAPS 4 Program Manager David Todd. "From the shade trees and benches to the safer intersections, every aspect of this project has been designed with the community in mind, to encourage connectivity and walkability."

Phase 1 includes over three miles of sidewalk improvements, ADA-compliant ramps, intersection curb ramps and Tier 1 protected bike lanes that will connect



The Innovation District is home to several upcoming projects, including the current neighborhood connectivity project, which will improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in the area.

NE 8th St. to N. Lottie Ave. Six intersections will receive advanced pedestrian signals and traffic monitoring.

The project will also feature beautification efforts, including 178 new shade trees, 35 benches and new bike racks.

MAPS 4 has allocated \$76.7 million to transform the Innovation District, including renovations to the Henrietta B. Foster Center and the construction of a new Innovation Hall. Phase 1 construction will begin in early 2025.

For more updates and opportunities to engage with these projects, visit okc.gov.

SENATOR LANKFORD TO DISCUSS RECENT ELECTION AT THE CHAMBER'S D.C. SPOTLIGHT

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber will host its D.C. Spotlight on December 6, from 8:30-10 a.m. at the Oklahoma City Convention Center. This year, the event will feature the Senior United States Senator from Oklahoma, James Lankford.

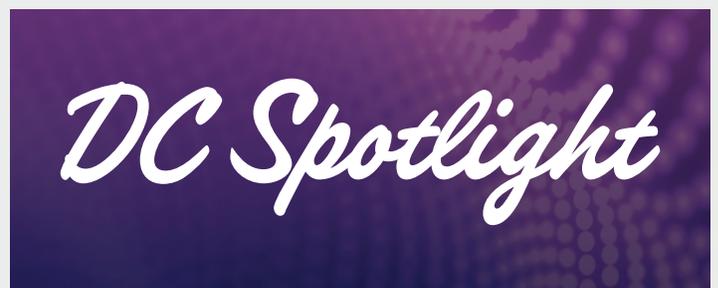
The D.C. Spotlight will cover a high-level update of policy and political outcomes to be expected from the U.S. Senate and Trump Administration. Senator Lankford will share his perspective on the recent election, as well as expectations for policy focus in Washington, D.C., at a consequential time for our nation.

First elected to the U.S. Senate in 2014, Senator Lankford has emerged as a compelling national leader

on various critical issues, such as immigration reform, government spending, national security and the protection of religious freedom.

Senator Lankford currently serves on several important Senate Committees, including Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Finance, Intelligence and Ethics.

The event will offer a fascinating and relevant conversation with Senator Lankford, who will shine a spotlight on the federal government for the business community.



LIFE SCIENCE OKLAHOMA APPOINTS DIRECTOR – A Q&A WITH MICHELLE GREGORY



Life Science Oklahoma, the state's life science association, recently appointed Michelle Gregory as its new director. Gregory has a history of leadership in nonprofit organizations in the healthcare sector.

Gregory sat down with the VeloCity team to discuss her role as director of Life Science Oklahoma.

Q. Tell us a little about what attracted you to Life Science Oklahoma?

A. I have a history in healthcare, as I started out in pharmaceuticals and have worked in nonprofit organizations for several healthcare-focused groups. However, it is more of a personal passion of mine, as my own family has had many healthcare challenges through the years, enabling me to understand the importance of cutting-edge research and access to quality healthcare in your own backyard.

Q. Why do you feel the Life Science industry is important for our state?

A. I believe there are several different reasons that Life Science is important for our state. From an economic development standpoint, it is important to diversify the state, so we are not only reliant upon oil and gas. I came from an oil and gas family, and I can remember the days of anticipating whether my father had made the cut during layoffs or if we had to move across the country so he could keep his job.

Oklahoma is a great place to live, and there needs to be opportunities for other industries so we can keep our citizens here. I have heard countless stories from individuals who have a great idea for a biotech product and must leave the state for the idea to come to fruition. Because of this process, we are losing high-quality talent



in our workforce. It is obvious it is important to the community to grow the Life Science industry in our state.

You can look at two areas – workforce development and access to healthcare. The Life Science workforce does not only include Ph.D.'s, but it also includes the creation of jobs for lab workers who can get certified through the new BioTC in three weeks, as well as creating jobs for nurses, doctors and more.

You can also see the need for this cutting-edge availability of research through the work of those at Stephenson Cancer Center (SCC). Specialists there are creating access to cancer treatments readily available to not only the larger cities in Oklahoma, but also to rural and indigenous communities.

Q. For people not as familiar with the industry, what do you think are the strengths of the industry in Oklahoma?

A. Oklahoma has several state-of-the-art programs creating very promising research for patients. Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation (OMRF) is one of the leaders in many different areas of research, including autoimmune diseases, sickle cell disease and more.

We also have strong biomanufacturing companies poised for growth, as we have created BioTC, which will aid in creating the workforce needed to continue to grow. Coupled with the access to land and a low cost of living, Oklahoma should be positioned to become the next Life Science hub.

Q. What makes Oklahoma such a great place for companies or organizations in the Life Science industry?

A. Oklahoma has all the components the Life Science industry needs, and it is located in one of the fastest growing areas of the country – being in the center of the I-35 Corridor. The talent emerging from the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University is phenomenal, and the interest from Venture capitalists is growing.

For companies looking for a new place to grow, Oklahoma offers all the tools needed to advance from a workforce talent pipeline to the infrastructure needed to be successful.

Q. What do you envision as the overall purpose of the new association?

A. When I came on, I spent a lot of time researching the different parts of the Life Science ecosystem in Oklahoma. What I found was a common theme, we have some amazing work being done in our own backyard, but these groups are not always communicating with one another.

The goal of Life Science Oklahoma is to act as a facilitator to increase the connections and collaboration within this community so the ecosystems can come together and benefit each other.

Through this model, I believe we will be able to grow in density, which will help to advocate for the needs of the industry and better utilize local resources versus out of state.

Q. What has been the response of the industry to the new association?

A. I have met with many different stakeholders within the industry and the excitement for this organization and what we are trying to accomplish in Oklahoma is high. It doesn't feel like just another organization to be a member of, but rather it feels like everyone truly wants to be involved, so, overall, we can accomplish more.

Q. If people want to get involved with Life Science Oklahoma, where should they start?

A. If someone wants to learn more about Life Science Oklahoma or become a member of Life Science Oklahoma, they can reach out to me at mgregory@lifesciok.com. I would love to share more about the exciting work we are planning for the future.



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SEEDS 'N SNACKS (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

dressings, hummus and other Mediterranean cuisines.

Fakhran and Narin prioritized looking for a central hub that would offer access to both the East and West coasts. They sought a welcoming, business-friendly environment characterized by strong community connections and a lower cost of doing business, leading the pair to Oklahoma City.

Upon arrival, the company quickly became active members of the local Greater Oklahoma City Chamber. Erik Williams, manager of talent and business growth at the Chamber, played a pivotal role in facilitating this deal, in which he fostered the partnership between Seeds 'N Snacks and Oklahoma City, offering valuable insights into the business landscape and lifestyle of the city.

After just over a year in operation in Oklahoma City, Seeds 'N Snacks has flourished. Fakhran and Narin actively participate in multiple trade shows each year to enhance their visibility and outreach within the industry. The company has filled its facilities to capacity, leading to the addition of a new warehouse.



Most important, the owner's commitment to healthy, quality products have led to partnerships and contracts with major companies, such as PepsiCo and Costco.

Looking ahead, Seeds 'N Snacks is poised for continued growth. With a current workforce of 25 employees, they aim to double their staff within the next few years.

As the company explores state incentives with the Chamber, the owners remain focused on their mission: to introduce healthy and flavorful recipes to American consumers and establish a staple in kitchens across the country.

GRAND OPENINGS

Congratulations to Chamber members on their recent Grand Openings! To see the schedule of upcoming Grand Openings or subscribe to the Grand Openings calendar, visit okcchamber.com/grandopenings.



Oklahoma Gastro Health
11100 Hefner Point Drive,
Suite B
OKC, OK 73102

800 Riversport Drive
S. Phillips Ave. & SE 5th St.
OKC, OK 73129

**Mustang Run RV Park/
Campground Collective**
11528 I-40 Service Road
Yukon, OK 73099

McDonald's Corp.
1501 SE 29th St.
OKC, OK 73129

Onin Staffing
363 NW 39th St.
OKC, OK 73112

Radix Chiropractic & Wellness
3801 NW 166th St.
OKC, OK 73012

The Capital Grille
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OKC, OK 73116

Pure OKC
3300 S. Mustang Road
Yukon, OK 73099

First Fidelity
424 NW 10th Suite 100
OKC, OK 73103



FAME (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

IDEX Energy – Advanced Flow Solutions and OMADA International. In August, eight students began their placements, gaining valuable skills on the job.

Theo Mauer and Zachary Cothrum, both working at IDEX Energy, are among the first to join OKC FAME. Under the guidance of their team manager, Ian Waite, they are building skills in CNC programming, robotics and technical documentation—areas essential to the industry's growth.

Waite noted the benefits of FAME, explaining, “The program immerses students in real manufacturing environments from day one, teaching both technical skills and business practices. As they rotate through various job functions, they become well-rounded and prepared for the demands of Oklahoma’s manufacturing sector.”

These students’ learning is further supported by OSU-OKC’s new 2,393-square-foot Advanced Manufacturing Lab. Designed to simulate a factory floor, the lab includes an AMTEC system funded by OSU Polytech, allowing students to train in robotics, hydraulics, automation and mechatronics. The Manufacturing Core Exercises (MCEs) within the program focus on job-specific skills, giving students a competitive edge.

“The advanced manufacturing lab provides students with technical, hands-on learning using the same equipment they use in their place of work,” said Dr. Ronna Vanderslice, OSU-OKC interim provost and vice

provost of academic affairs of the OSU System. “OSU-OKC funded equipment for the program to provide students with skills that support a smooth and easy transition into the workforce.”

“Within just a few months, we’ve seen impressive progress,” added Dr. Evan Burkala, vice provost of academic affairs at OSU-OKC. “At a recent safety ceremony, students presented their personal safety commitments, a sign of their technical and personal growth. They’re developing not only expertise but also confidence and discipline.”

The Advanced Manufacturing Lab represents a \$1.4 million investment, partly funded by a \$580,000 Workforce Advancement Initiative grant championed by Rep. Stephanie Bice and former Sen. James Inhofe. The space is flexible, allowing equipment to move freely between instructional areas to support diverse training needs.

“Our lab replicates an actual manufacturing floor,” Dr. Burkala said. “This setup offers students a close match to the environments they’ll encounter in their careers. As industry needs shift, we’ll continue to update our equipment and tools to keep students aligned with current trends.”

OSU-OKC and OKC FAME aim to expand the program, bringing in more students and industry partners to create job opportunities while maintaining access to evolving technology. Dr. Burkala added, “Our goal is to grow the lab and the program, ultimately supporting Oklahoma City’s economic growth by preparing a skilled workforce.”

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Businesses who join the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber are part of the largest coalition of businesses in the state and make the Chamber's work in the community possible. Each member level is identified on the listing below.

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Oklahoma City, OK 73102-7658
oklahoma.gov/aerospace

Shellback General Contracting

Construction Companies
Mr. Matt Richardson.....(405) 406-1499
4401 N. Classen Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73118-5040
www.shellbackgc.com

ADVISOR

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1405 Ashton Place
Oklahoma City, OK 73117-1042
www.carecenter-okc.org

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Schools - Public
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20701 N. MacArthur Blvd.
Edmond, OK 73012-9301
https://www.deercreekschools.org/

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Oklahoma City, OK 73119-1248

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Oklahoma City, OK 73109

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12008 Quail Creek Road
Oklahoma City, OK 73120-5408
www.flipflopshopsokc.com

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Waxahachie, TX 75165-6161
www.mintexteriors.com

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Moore, OK 73160-6114
www.acepartysupplies.com

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Windows
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537 E. Britton Road
P.O. Box 14614
Oklahoma City, OK 73113-0614
www.pellaokc.com

CORE

American Collection Services, Inc.

Collection Agencies
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3100 SW 59th St.
P.O. Box 44069
Oklahoma City, OK 73144-1069
www.americancollectionservices.com

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www.dpao.org

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14002 E. 21st St., Suite 1190
Tulsa, OK 74134-1415
https://ca.kuehne-nagel.com/en/

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Mr. Steve Grigsby.....(405) 724-6238
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Edmond, OK 73013-2117
www.onwardconnected.com

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Entertainers / Speakers / Promoters
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632 SW 37th St.
Moore, OK 73160-7744
www.beanstalkproductions.com

First Fidelity Bank

Banks
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5100 N. Classen Blvd., Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73118-5269
www.ffb.com

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Hotels & Motels
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Oklahoma City, OK 73112-7049
www.legacyhotelsok.com

Siegel Select Oklahoma

Apartments
Ms. Veronica Stevens.....(405) 942-4500
128 E. Exchange Ave., Suite 700
Oklahoma City, OK 73107-6547

Boettcher, Devinney, Ingle & Wicker

Attorneys / Lawyers
Ms. Jessica Sommer.....(580) 765-9660
15401 N. May Ave., Suite 800
115 E. Grand Ave.
Ponca City, OK 74601-5208
www.bdiwlaw.com

4 Star General Contracting

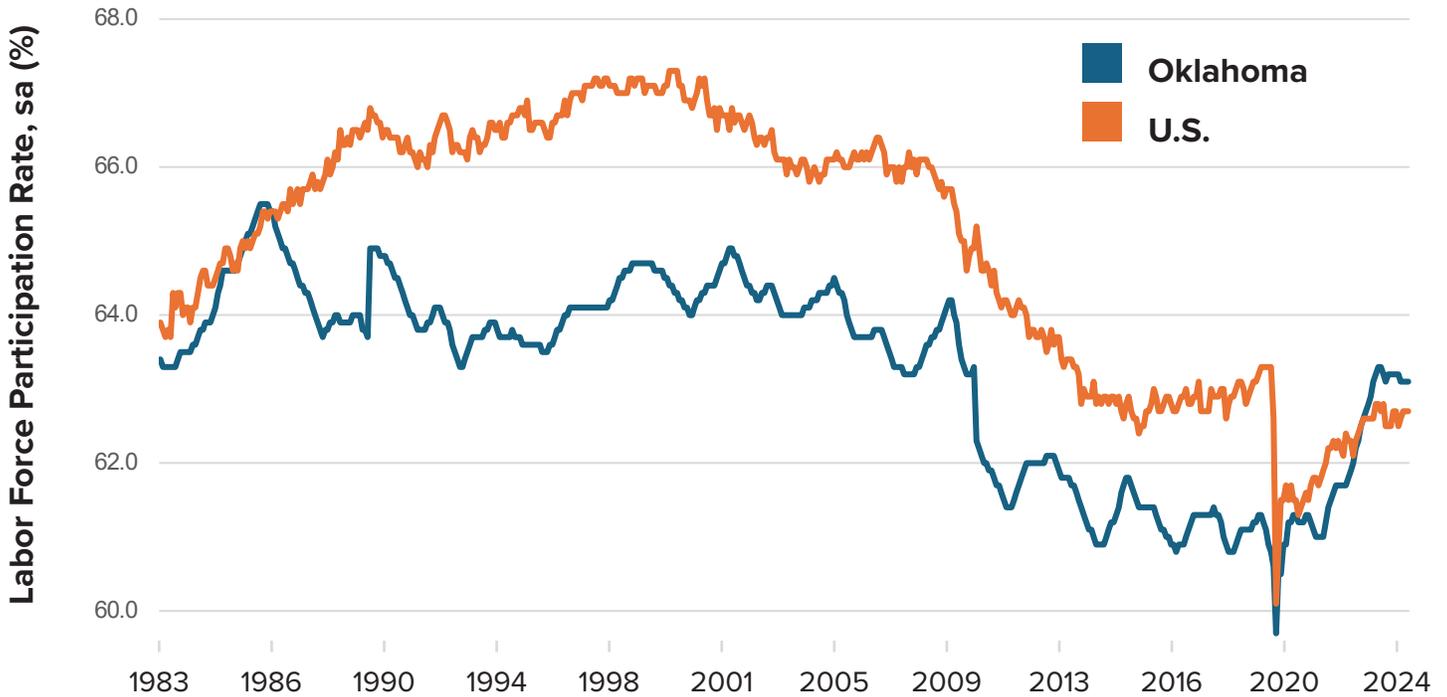
Roofing Contractors
Mr. Peter Hutton.....(405) 928-5780
2805 Broce Drive
Norman, OK 73072-2405
www.4stargc.com

McDaniel Consulting Group, LLC

Management Services / Consultants
Mr. Sean McDaniel, Ed.D.(918) 520-9815
14516 Fossil Creek Lane
Oklahoma City, OK 73134-1843
www.mcdanielconsultinggroup.com

OKLAHOMA'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE SURPASSES THE NATION FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 40 YEARS.

Oklahoma's labor force participation rate has been higher than the U.S. since April 2023



Source: Federal Reserve Banks of Kansas City, "Oklahoma's Rising Labor Force Participation Driven Largely by Native Americans" by Chad Wilkerson and Chase Farha

- **Oklahoma's participation rate** reached 62.7% in April 2023, outpacing the national rate (62.6%) for the first time in nearly 40 years.
- **September 2024 Labor Force Participation Rate:**
OK 63.1% National 62.7%
- **Labor force growth** in Oklahoma has been faster than population growth, peaking at 3% in 2023 versus a 1% rise in the working-age population.
- **Key driver:** Native Americans contributed to 71% of the increase in Oklahoma's labor force participation rate.

Labor Force Participation Rate Explained:

The percentage of people aged 16+ who are either working or actively looking for work.

This rate is crucial as it reflects the availability of workers in the economy, which can drive growth and impact overall economic health.

For comprehensive Economic Indicator and Regional Data, please visit your Greater Oklahoma City Chamber Economic Development Division at www.greateroklahomacity.com/economicindicators or contact Eric Long, Research Economist, at 405-297-8976; elong@okcchamber.com.

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LOOK INSIDE!

- 5** Greater OKC Chamber Chair Teresa Rose to headline Chamber's Annual Meeting
- 7** Turkey's Seeds 'N Snacks selects OKC to expand to North American market
- 10** Life Science Oklahoma appoints Executive Director – a Q&A with Michelle Gregory
- 15** Oklahoma's labor force participation rate surpasses the nation for the First Time in 40 years.

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DC Spotlight

Featuring a conversation with
Senator James Lankford



Join us for a fireside chat with Senator James Lankford for a high-level update of policy and political outcomes to be expected from the U.S. Senate and Trump Administration. Senator Lankford will share his perspective on the recent election, as well as expectations for policy focus in Washington, D.C., at a consequential time for our nation.



Friday, December 6 | 8:30 - 10 a.m.
ASM Global-Oklahoma City Convention Center