

Making Place Matter

Linking Economic and Social Issues

What is it?

Making Place Matter is the name given to a program emphasizing regional stewardship sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (ASSCU). The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education has adopted the program and encouraged statewide participation by all colleges and universities. Originally conceived by the Alliance for Regional Stewardship (ARS) over a decade ago, it is based on the belief that strong and vibrant regional communities are built on an innovative economy, livable communities, social inclusion and collaborative style of governance. MPM is identical to the ARS approach to regional stewardship.

Regional Stewardship

Simply stated, regional stewardship is a concerted, intentional effort of a group of stakeholders to collaboratively solve regionally based problems by working across political, jurisdictional and institutional boundaries.

By any other name

It is called Making *Place* Matter because the commitment is to a place (in our case, Southwest Oklahoma), rather than to a specific issue or cause relative to only one organization or one jurisdiction. The Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition has been involved in a regional stewardship effort since its inception since 2005. *We could, in fact, argue the case that SOIC and MPM is synonymous.*

Mechanics of the Making Place Matter program

Designed as an effort to mobilize the assets at universities and community colleges, MPM program creators believed that these entities were the logical champions of stewards of place. Perhaps due to the intellectual capital and public resources that reside at institutions of higher learning, it may also be attributed to the lack of any other nationwide model for additional entities that could operate outside their traditional boundaries, e.g. chambers of commerce, local development organizations, or other educational or training entities.

SOIC is an existing vehicle that Southwest Oklahoma's institutions of higher education *could* and *should* use for MPM. The foundation already exists through the work and existing partnerships with the two Council of Governments and six Career Techs. It is likely that we would be more effective if we collectively identify common issues and agree to put our resources and emphasis towards developing a plan to resolve regional challenges. SOIC's goals and objectives could be more successfully translated to a regional plan if these goals and objectives are also shared and identified as MPM goals and objectives. From SOIC's viewpoint, to operate otherwise is duplicative.

The model for creating the MPM work plan is similar to a process most commonly called a SWOT analysis. The difference is that the challenges, assets, opportunities and priorities are developed using four different contextual topic or subject areas. They are:

Innovative Economy – Meaning, “Preparing people and places to succeed “

Primarily economically-driven concerns such as industry restructuring, job loss, entrepreneurship, commercialization of new technologies, climate for innovation

Livable Community - Meaning, “Preserving and creating places to live and work”

Primarily quality-of-life driven concerns such as environmental quality, urban neighborhood revitalization, land use, transportation congestion, housing, amenities. Creating a place where people want to live.

Social Inclusion – Meaning, “Ensuring that everyone participates and shares responsibility”

Primarily socially-driven concerns such as poverty, educational preparation, employment opportunity, community health, civic participation

Collaborative Governance – Meaning, “Finding creative ways to govern”

Primarily problem-solving concerns such as the need for regional alliances of local jurisdictions, local/state/federal collaboration, and public-private partnerships to address complex regional challenges.