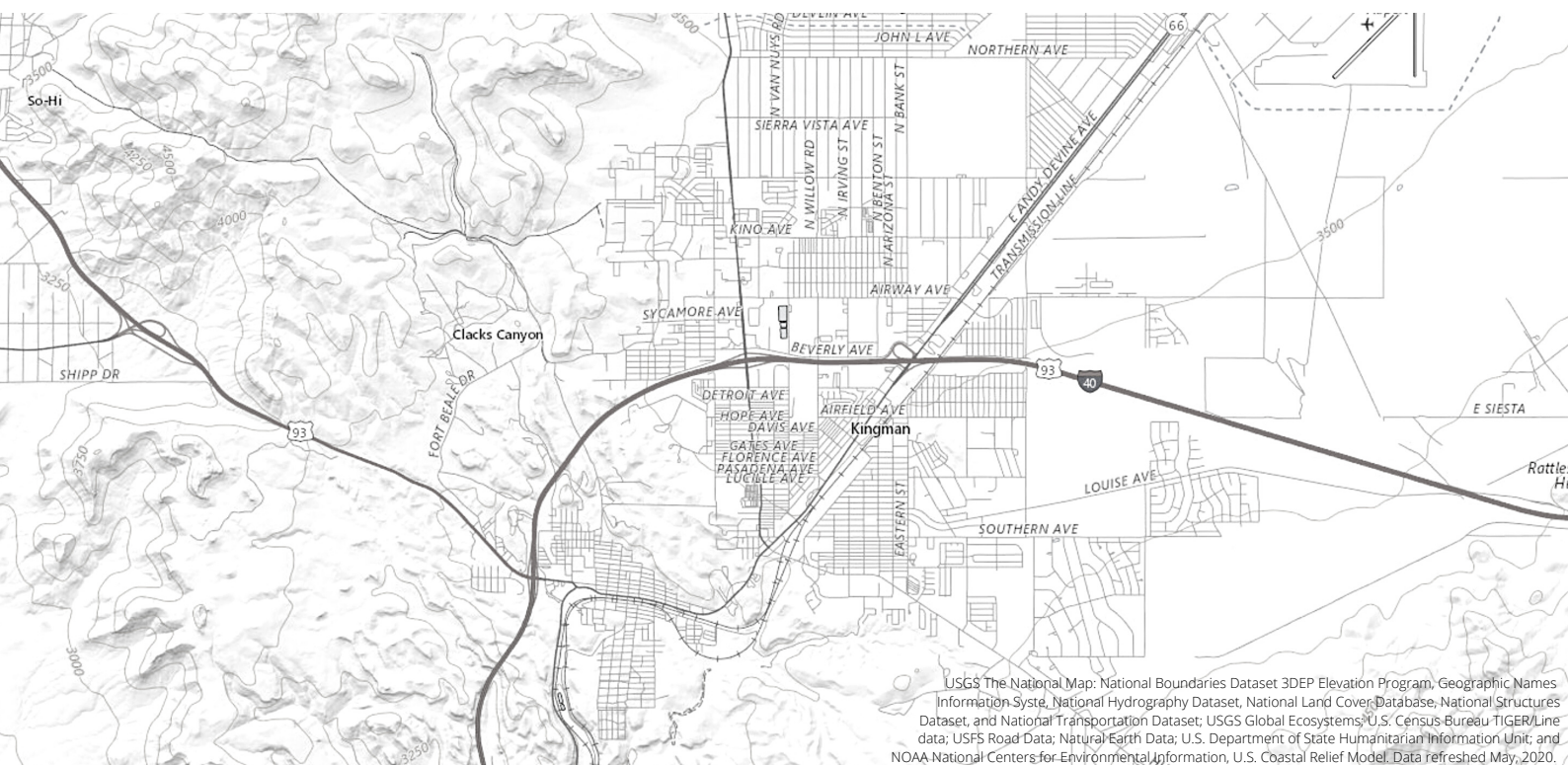


PROFILING THE KINGMAN AND MOHAVE MANUFACTURING ASSOCIATION

A Benchmarking Project of the Institute for Networked Communities (INC)



USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed May, 2020.

KINGMAN AND MOHAVE MANUFACTURING ASSOCIATION

By: John Melville, Editor: Mara Timmeney

This case study is one in a series of profiles of Next Generation Sector Partnerships from across the country. Its primary purpose is to give practitioners insights into the key milestones and critical ingredients for success that have shaped the journey of the Kingman and Mohave Manufacturing Association (KAMMA), at nine years one of the longest-lasting Next Generation Sector Partnerships. Its intended audience is the diverse mix of business, education, workforce development, and economic development leaders who are trying to take their communities to a new level of shared prosperity. The profile is organized into five sections: motivations for launch, mechanisms for change, moments of transformation, measurable results, major ingredients for success, and the future and needed areas for growth.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- *Motivations for Launch*
- *Moments of Transformation*
- *Measurable Results*
- *Ingredients for Success*
- *Future of the Partnership*



MOTIVATIONS FOR LAUNCH: AN OVERLOOKED INDUSTRY, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW APPROACH

Historically, the economy of northwest Arizona's Mohave County had been primarily based on cattle ranching, mining, and tourism. With the addition of an industrial park in the late 1970s, the manufacturing sector began to grow, with the number of companies accelerating rapidly in the first decade of the 2000s. By 2011, more than 200 companies were already having trouble finding sufficient skilled workers, increasingly raiding one another for talent. Although the sector had grown to account for about 20% of the County's jobs, the community at large did not have a good understanding of the industry, impacts, or potential. For their part, manufacturers were not visibly active in community affairs, and while some individuals were engaged in the community, the industry had not developed a collective voice.

At this moment, the State of Arizona adopted the Next Generation Sector Partnership approach, offering regions help to launch their own partnerships, and encouraging local workforce development leaders to learn the methodology and recruit business champions. Jen Miles, a workforce development executive who also had an extensive business background, jumped at the opportunity, and enlisted John Hansen, the Chief Operating Officer of Laron Corporation, as the lead champion. Hansen and other manufacturers had been informally discussing the need to work together, and the time seemed right to launch a partnership.



Above: "Kingman to Las Vegas" by Glysiak is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported.

MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE: INDUSTRY LED, COMMUNITY SUPPORTED, BOTH PRACTICAL AND VISIONARY

Initially, there was skepticism among manufacturers about getting involved in something that they assumed was going to be government driven. Understanding that the Next Gen approach was to be industry led, Hansen, who was well-respected among his peers for his integrity and industry acumen, reassured a core group of business leaders that this partnership would be theirs to drive. As important, Hansen had administrative help largely from Jen Miles and her staff, as well as guidance on how to work with different community institutions. The combination of an industry-led, community-supported approach enabled the partnership to evolve into a unique vehicle for change.

Because it was industry-led, the partnership chose a mission that went beyond a workforce development agenda. From the beginning, it focused on both practical and immediate challenges facing local manufacturers, such as peer support around human resource, environmental health and safety, OSHA compliance, industrial park road improvements, and an on-line freight sharing program. It also embraced a longer-term and ambitious vision: discovering and leveraging the hidden talents of their region, including transformative transportation and educational infrastructure investments that would open up a new era of economic prosperity.

MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION: ESTABLISHING OWNERSHIP, DRIVING SOLUTIONS, BECOMING PART OF THE COMMUNITY

A transformative moment early in the development of the partnership was the decision to formalize ownership. Manufacturers decided to incorporate their fledgling group, forming a non-profit entity with the name of KAMMA: Kingman and Mohave Manufacturing Association. The entity, however, did not look or operate like a traditional industry association: it has never had employees and remains entirely driven by its board officers and members, who have taken over the administrative support tasks once provided by the workforce development system staff.

The Association has been able to get its members to contribute modest dues to help offset operational costs, with membership growing every year between 2011 and 2019. And, when the Association received public funds from the City of Kingman for start-up and incorporation costs, it paid them back in full. To newcomers and long-time contributors alike, through both words and actions, it is clear that the region's manufacturing industry directs its own partnership.

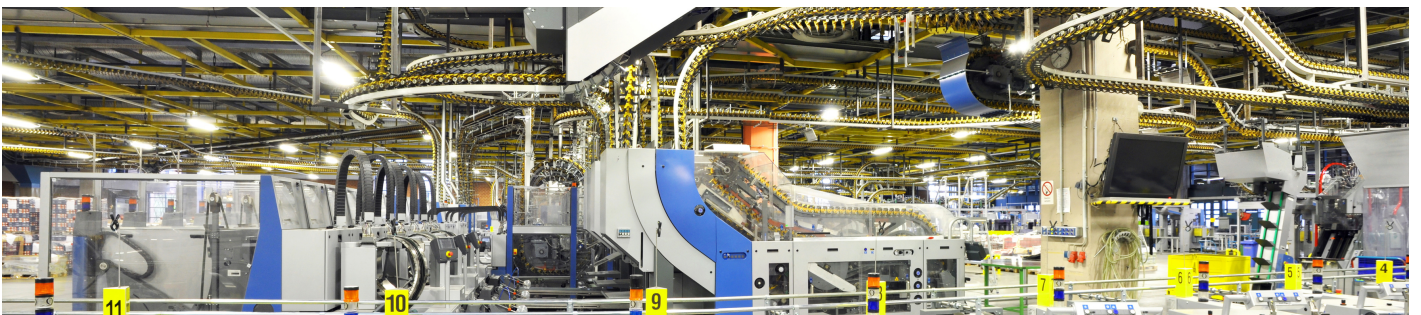
An important turning point early in the operation of the Association was a recognition that members could drive change rather than wait for others to offer solutions. An early example was the adoption of a creative approach to apprenticeships for millwrights, machinists, and welders, with one company (Laron) hosting several apprentices for other companies, a model that was recognized nationally. Another example is the response to a fatality in the industrial park. Rather than accept slow emergency response times, Association members themselves reached out to the local community college, co-designing and sustaining a first-responder training course for designated individuals at local manufacturers that to this day is critical to maintaining a cadre of trained employee first-responders able to administer emergency assistance.

Another turning point early in the operation of the Association was the recognition by education, workforce development, the City of Kingman, and other community leaders that the manufacturing industry could now speak with one voice.

KAMMA meetings became an important venue for community partners to hear the industry's shared priorities and identify specific ways to support the manufacturing sector. This shift also led to manufacturing leaders becoming active advocates with local and state government for major community improvements, such as transportation and educational infrastructure.

Despite a number of successes over the years, it was 2020 that produced perhaps the biggest defining moment for KAMMA. Its founding chair John Hansen retired, and was replaced with another long-time Board member, ensuring continuity. At the same time, major breakthroughs in both transportation and educational infrastructure confirmed the role of KAMMA as part of the fabric of the community. Both breakthroughs were years in the making, with KAMMA members collaborating with other community leaders to work through financial, political, and technical challenges to reach written agreements to move forward:

- The Rancho Santa Fe Parkway Interchange, providing new transportation access to the industrial park along with the acquisition of industrial land for major expansion of the manufacturing sector.
- A new workforce training center at Mohave Community College, which will be housed in either a repurposed 10,800 square foot building or a new facility, and will provide, working closely with KAMMA, a series of rapid training modules for manufacturing workers.



MEASURABLE RESULTS: PLAYING THE LONG GAME WITH TANGIBLE WINS ALONG THE WAY

KAMMA's history has been marked by specific, meaningful achievements that have kept members and their community partners engaged. These results helped establish and grow KAMMA's influence, which members have used to pursue larger, more complex goals.

In the early years, the Association could point to the training and hiring of 18 new apprentices through the Laron Extended Apprenticeship Program (LEAP), as well as reaching more youth with an expansion of Manufacturing Day activities. It was also responsible for transforming how manufacturers prepared for emergency situations by creating a first-responder educational program and ensuring companies designated someone on staff to become trained. The Association provided an ongoing series of learning events for members on business and technical issues, as well as connections to local and state assistance (e.g., a local company received a \$40,000 grant through Arizona's Manufacturing Extension Partnership to implement a LEAN solution).

At the same time, KAMMA was developing relationships, sharing their collective needs, and advocating for solutions in both education and transportation. An early win was the College's acquisition of a Mobile Training Laboratory to provide a focal point for short-term workforce training. KAMMA was instrumental in helping secure funding, which was included in a City of Kingman Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and matched by the College.

However, the College did not sustain its commitment to staffing and otherwise supporting operation of the Mobile Lab, and it fell into disuse.

KAMMA persisted, and when a new college president was appointed in 2019, a renewed discussion of the need for responsive workforce training for manufacturing ensued. Over the past year, KAMMA has weighed in on strengths and weaknesses of curriculum and begun to offer more internships. The College has introduced new classes and tailored the curriculum of others—from basic blueprint reading and mechanics to electronics in a manufacturing environment. The College has also made the bigger commitment to create a new workforce training center in 2021 that will sustain their focus on short-term training modules designed for working adults, enabling current manufacturing company workers to add skills while employed.

KAMMA has also played the long game to improve the local transportation infrastructure. It started in 2011 with a quick assessment of road conditions in the industrial park and requests for specific improvements. It continued in 2014 with a vision for pursuing a foreign trade zone designation, the idea of an "inland port" as a catalyst to drive growth of a local logistics and manufacturing hub with close access to the major Southern California market. Association leaders pursued the idea for two more years without success. However, the need for a major improvement in the highway infrastructure—an interchange that would provide much more access and stimulate growth of manufacturing companies in the industrial park—was clear.

Local efforts to improve highway capacity and access had been pursued off and on for decades. The specific proposal for a new highway interchange was first put together in 1971, but state funding kept being delayed year after year until 2008. Then the community split into growth and no-growth factions, putting forward competing proposals and bringing the process to a halt. By 2017, local government officials had identified a dedicated local funding source, but that source was blocked by a ballot initiative.

Despite this history of setbacks, KAMMA intensified its efforts to secure state funding. John Hansen joined a team of local government officials, including Jen Miles who had become mayor of Kingman, to attend Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) advisory committee meetings, traveling to different locations across the State, often driving several hours to keep presenting their funding proposal during 5-minute speaking slots. Although they ultimately did not get the funding through the ADOT process, they did discover an avenue for going directly to the Legislature. Working with their local state representative Regina Cobb, and with support from the Governor, they successfully secured a \$20 million allocation to move the project forward.

The local team was then able to put together a complete financing package, including local government dollars, commitments from a private developer, and state funding. By the end of 2020, the final piece of a complex set of development agreements were approved to secure the construction of the Rancho Santa Fe Interchange plus additional industrial land development, with the project scheduled to break ground in early 2021.

MAJOR INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: LEADERSHIP, VISION, PERSISTENCE

Those involved with KAMMA, from industry leaders to community partners, uniformly agree that John Hansen provided a distinctive kind of leadership as the founding Chair of the Association. But his leadership had several important dimensions that together opened up avenues and challenged others to be leaders themselves. Those qualities included:

- A reputation for integrity, community mindedness, independence from political agendas, and respected business expertise, creating an atmosphere of trust first among other manufacturers, then among community partners. He provided a model for others, and tended to attract those who shared his guiding principles.
- An inviting and welcoming approach, which opened the door to new people and ideas constantly and extinguished concerns about secret agendas and exclusive groups making decisions for the community. KAMMA became a unique forum for inclusive dialogue among stakeholders, the only place where those conversations took place on a monthly basis.
- A willingness to put in the work, to show up for public meetings and be a reliable partner and inspire others to follow-through on their commitments.



"Kingman Water Towers" by SSRR2030 is licensed under Creative Commons [Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

- A commitment to champion the community, where the community's interests intersected with those of industry, rather than a narrow definition of his or other manufacturers' bottom line. As a result, KAMMA worked to find its distinctive role and contribution to the larger shared effort to improve Mohave County.
- The use of "appreciative inquiry," focusing on assets, leveraging strengths, and realizing untapped potential, as a way to create and sustain a shared, positive vision for what the community and manufacturing industry could become together.
- The ability to articulate the common vision and convince others that they could share ownership of that vision. This was coupled with the ability to help people identify their role and contribute their specific expertise to the cause.

MOVING FORWARD: STAYING FOCUSED ON IMPLEMENTATION, VIGILANT ABOUT SUCCESSION

While KAMMA has become an important part of the fabric of the community, it is at a critical point of transition. Now that major breakthroughs in education and transportation infrastructure have been achieved, KAMMA will need to stay engaged in the implementation phase of each effort. By design, the creation of a workforce training center by Mohave Community College will need the ongoing involvement of manufacturers to weigh in on the focus and curriculum of training modules, provide instructional assistance, and perhaps donate equipment and materials. As the Interchange is built and industrial land developed, KAMMA's continuing advocacy will be important to ensure that local and state government effectively provides the expanded services to support the growth of existing and new companies.

With John Hansen's retirement along with the continuing impacts of COVID-19 on business operations and community stability, KAMMA will need to be vigilant about succession. Fortunately, there is a strong foundation upon which to build: there are now many "co-owners," not just a single champion, as well as an organization with an established role as advocate of a shared community vision, and a tradition of collaboration that continues to widen the circle engagement of business and community partners.

