Kansas Geographic Alliance Strategic Plan

-Winter 2013-
# Kansas Geographic Alliance Strategic Plan

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Introduction

The Kansas Geographic Alliance (KGA) is an organization of volunteers, primarily K-12 teachers and university faculty, who recognize the value of geographic thinking and who are dedicated to advancing geographic literacy in Kansas. With over twenty years of success in helping support K-12 teachers, the KGA is an organization that is well recognized for quality and commitment to teacher and student learning. This strategic plan documents a multi-year process of both reflection and forward thinking by members of the KGA. In our deliberations, we have articulated two visions, a mission, reaffirmed our values, and identified a number of achievable goals to help advance geographic literacy in Kansas. This strategic plan is designed to provide immediate guidance for specific KGA activities within the next few years as well as provide a framework for future reflection and adjusting activities as the times and situation changes. The KGA Executive Committee has agreed to revisit the strategic plan on an annual basis.

Geography is an important scholarly subject with roots that date back to the ancient Greeks. Throughout history, geography has been an important subject that societal leaders have valued and relied upon as they have worked to improve conditions for the citizens within their community. The KGA is strongly committed to the concepts and traditions of geographic thinking that includes: the study of the character of places and regions, cartography and maps, spatial analysis, the connections and movements among different places, an understanding of the natural environment, and the role of humans in reacting to and modifying their environment.

We live on a rapidly changing planet, where knowledge of space, place, and human interactions with the environment are becoming increasingly important. Computer based approaches to data collection, mapping and analysis, such as global positioning systems, remote sensing, and geographic information systems, are valued by the KGA and seen as important ideas and technologies that will benefit all Kansans. The KGA is willing and able to help teachers and students keep pace with new approaches to understanding our changing world.

Our Vision is that the Kansas Geographic Alliance will be...

an organization that is recognized, valued, and respected as a go to source for expertise on geography and the teaching of geography for the citizens of Kansas.

Our Vision for Geographic Knowledge in Kansas is that...

a geographically literate Kansas society will use their spatial and human-environment knowledge to support and maintain a healthy environment as a base for strong
communities and a vibrant economy and to help the population of Kansas citizens to make informed decisions for Kansas, the United States, and the planet.

**Mission of the Kansas Geographic Alliance**

The KGA's mission is to promote and support geographic literacy and geographic education throughout Kansas.

**Values of the KGA**

Like many successful volunteer organizations, the members of the Kansas Geographic Alliance share a number of values that help define and reinforce the success of the organization. These values include, but are not limited to:

- Being an enthusiastic and proactive statewide organization.
- Appreciating and respecting the time and talent that many volunteers have brought to the KGA to support our vision and mission for advancing geographic literacy in Kansas.
- Celebrating a strong partnership between K-12 teachers and higher education, this connection has been the heart and soul of the KGA.
- Valuing other people’s time and talent.
- Recognizing and greatly valuing the knowledge base and expertise found throughout the K-12 teaching community.
- Recognizing the importance of teachers teaching teachers.
- Recognizing effective teaching of geographic concepts at all levels throughout the curriculum.
- Recognizing the synergisms generated by reaching out to other educational organizations and communities.
- Appreciating that a synthesis of ideas from the social studies, natural sciences, and artistic perspectives provides a ‘value added’ that neither of these approaches can contribute by itself.
- Knowing that many people are excited to travel and learn about new places; the KGA respects this foundational knowledge about the planet and places and recognizes that these building blocks provide the foundation for other types of geographic learning, knowledge, and critical thinking.
- Recognizing that integration and synthesis, hallmarks of geographic thinking, involve establishing connections among different facts, ideas, places, and/or clusters of ideas, (e.g., fertile soils, an adequate water supply, and vibrant communities provide the basis for a healthy agricultural community).
- Recognizing that citizens who are geographically literate can apply their knowledge and ways of thinking to new and changing situations.
- Recognizes our rapidly changing planet and the need to move toward sustainability (Figure 1. emphasizes an integral relationship between the environment, society, and the economy).

Figure 1. Diagram illustrating that societies create economies and that a society exists within a geographic environment.


As members of the KGA actively seek ways to leverage available human and economic resources to improve geographic literacy, the organization will remain true to the holistic roots of geography, and respectful of the organization’s heritage, visions, mission, and values.

Goals of the KGA

In order to accomplish our visions and mission, the KGA has established five interrelated goals (G1 – G5). These overarching ideas include:

1. **Advocacy for Geography (G1)** – being an advocate for geographic literacy and geographic education at the local, state, and national levels.

2. **Supporting Kansas Educators (G2)** – supporting the professional growth of Kansas educators, especially with regard to strengthening their abilities to teach geographic content.

3. **Being A Strong Organization (G3)** – being an efficient and financially stable organization with effective outreach that responds to member suggestions and is flexible and responsive as conditions change. The KGA will maintain and grow a network of K-12 teachers, higher education professionals, and geographers who are interested in enhancing the geographic literacy of Kansans.

4. **Recognized as the Kansas Resource for Geography Education (G4)** – develop and/or obtain, store, and disseminate quality educational materials that help enable geographic literacy. The KGA wants to be a trusted and reliable source available to Kansas citizens for geographic information at the local, regional, national and planetary levels.

5. **Being a Constructive Partner (G5)** – an organization working with other professional organizations or interested groups to help improve the quality of geographic education and overall geographic literacy both within Kansas and across the nation.
The KGA has identified a number of strategies and objectives to assist the group in achieving and/or making progress on each of the goals. Specific objectives represent activities that KGA members can immediately work on to make constructive change. These activities/objectives fit with one or more strategies or patterns of behavior. Strategies represent longer-term thinking by the KGA; these strategies will guide the establishment of specific objectives for a medium-term (e.g., 3 to 5 year) time frame.

Before we provide the strategies and detailed objectives, it is important to realize that many of the specific activities of the KGA are designed to help accomplish multiple goals. A specific objective might fit nicely within a strategy and an overarching goal, but we recognize that well selected activities/objectives can produce additional value. For example, an objective to have effective communication activities (related to lesson plans we have developed on teaching history and geography together) will document: a) an efficient organization (G3), b) enable us to work well with other organizations (G5), and c) be a means whereby we send high quality resources (G4) to Kansas teachers (G2). Because all KGA activities relate to geographic advocacy (G1), in the listing that follows we only identified this goal with strategies and objectives that were focused specifically on advocacy.

**Strategies**

In preparing this Strategic Plan, members of the KGA identified the following strategies (S 1 – S 27) or patterns of behavior designed to help us reach our goals:

S 1 – Enlarge Our Advocacy Base (G1)

S 2 – Focus on Advocacy and Enhance KGA Ability to be More Efficient in Advocacy (G1)

S 3 – Assist Pre-Service Teachers (G2, G4)

S 4 – Provide Meaningful Professional Development Activities/Opportunities (G2, G4)

S 5 – Implement a Mentoring Program for In-Service Teachers (G2)

S 6 – Membership Growth (G3)

S 7 – Add New KGA Teacher Consultants (TCs) (G3, G2)

S 8 – Increase KGA Brand Consciousness (G3)

S 9 – Facilitate Increased Communication with Kansas Teachers (G3, G2, G4)

S 10 – Share the Knowledge that KGA Members Have Learned with Other Alliances (G3, G5)

S 11 – Establish Organizational Procedures to Reflect Upon and Update KGA Plans (G3)

S 12 – Enhance the KGA Governing Structure (G3)

S 13 – Develop Strategies and Resources to Assess Effectiveness of KGA Activities (G3)

S 14 – Develop Professional Materials (G4)

S 15 – Distribute Educational Materials (G4)

S 16 – Increase our Emphasis on Cross-Curricular Educational Materials (G4, G2)
S 17 – Provide Statewide Outreach (G4, G2)
S 18 – Enable the Use of Geographic Tools/Technology (G4, G2)
S 19 – Identify Potential Partners (both Organizations and Individuals) (G5)
S 20 – Connect with and Develop Linkages with Organizations and Individuals (G5)
S 21 – Train KGA Members to Work with Other Organizations and Their Materials (G5)
S 22 – Network Expansion to Increase the Number of Nodes with which We Connect (G5)
S 23 – Reciprocal Information Gathering/Dissemination with Partner Organizations (G5)
S 24 – Provide Geography Expertise Related to State Standards (G5)
S 25 – Provide KGA Members to Support Education Related Events (G5)
S 26 – Link to Homeschool, Private School, and Parochial School Networks (G5, G2, G4)
S 27 – Participate as an Active Alliance Representing the State of Kansas in the Network of Alliances for Geographic Education (G5, G3)

Objectives

Specific objectives (Obj 1 – Obj 21) or measureable activities are “where the work gets done” as the organization makes progress toward improved geographic literacy in Kansas. The number and types of objectives that KGA members can implement within a given time frame (e.g., a specific funding cycle) will depend on available resources (both human and financial). Specific objectives undertaken within a given year also depend on mandates associated with the funding made available to the KGA.

Objectives for 2013-2014 include:
Obj 1 – Represent the State of Kansas in the Network of Alliances for Geographic Education
Obj 2 – Attend the meeting of the National Council of Geographic Education to share successful activities within Kansas and learn about other approaches or resources available to advance geographic literacy
Obj 3 – Maintain two KGA offices, one in eastern and one in western Kansas, to serve the teachers and students of the state
Obj 4 – Maintain and frequently update the KGA webpage as one way to share information with Kansas teachers
Obj 5 – Provide pre-service geography educational experiences at multiple colleges and universities within Kansas
Obj 6 – Hold three meetings of the KGA Executive Committee during the year to celebrate accomplishments, reflect on what has been done in relation to the strategic plan, think about near-term objectives, and articulate specific strategies for the next year
Obj 7 – Continue to assist with the Kansas Geographic Bee, assist with the Topeka Water Festival, provide outreach/educational activities at the Kansas State Fair, partner with Main Street USA, and participate in Geography Awareness Week activities

Obj 8 – Organize and hold an annual Kansas Geography Education Conference; this conference can be held with another state geography alliance or Kansas educational organization

Obj 9 – Meet with state-level Kansas senators and representatives to help them better understand the services provided by the KGA and the value we bring to the state

Obj 10 – Identify and meet with foundation representatives to communicate the nature and value of KGA activities and search for possible overlaps in funding goals/needs

Obj 11 – Meet with one or more faculty members at colleges and universities across Kansas to learn more about teacher training and geography instruction on their campuses and to share a desire by KGA to assist with pre-service training

Obj 12 – Communicate with state-level leaders in the Kansas Department of Education related to on-going changes in standards and document how geographic thinking can greatly assist with the on-going transition to more problem-based, cross-curricular, and technology-based learning

Obj 13 – Reassess the governing structure of the KGA, add new members to the Executive Committee as needed, plan for longer-term changes in leadership, and discuss adding an external advisory group

Obj 14 – Resurrect and distribute “Insights,” the KGA Newsletter

Obj 15 – Develop and distribute a flyer with updated information on the KGA – this will enable more efficient communication with state legislators, university faculty, and school district curriculum coordinators

Obj 16 - Identify and train individuals to be advocates for the KGA and geography

Obj 17 - Establish a committee to review strategies and develop draft assessment tools for assessing effectiveness of KGA activities

Obj 18 - Produce a “funding handout”, identifying needs to be met, e.g., specific funding objectives, funding opportunities, and completion timeline, (For example, we could highlight the need for and cost associated with development of a Kansas school atlas).

Obj 19 - Continue to build bridges to community organizations and organizations in the social and natural sciences

Obj 20 - Research and develop a list of home and parochial schools for networking purposes

Obj 21 - Develop an electronic calendar to maintain better communication with members and the public at large.

Rather than designing a table or graphic that illustrates all the linkages from all the specific objectives to multiple underlying strategies and goals, KGA members recognize the overall complexity and interconnections. To illustrate these myriad connections, Objective
20 (developing a listing of home school and parochial schools) helps us with several strategies (S 1, S 2, S 6 to S 9, S 15, S 17, S 19, S 29, S 22, S 24, S 25, and S 26) and connects with all five of our goals (G 1 to G 5).

**KGA History**

Kansans have benefited from over two decades of effort by members of the Kansas Geographic Alliance to advance the teaching and learning of geography in K-12 classrooms across the state. This brief history of the KGA separates the efforts into three phases.

**“Lift Off” Phase: 1991 – 2001**

The Kansas Geographic Alliance’s (KGA) first decade was marked by an exceptional “alignment of the stars,” which produced a period of youthful vigor and rapid growth. If using an analogy of a rocket going to the stars, one would term it the “lift off stage.” The National Geographic Society invested heavily in the Alliance concept, providing many educational experiences in Washington D.C. for a cadre of Kansas teachers who returned as Teacher Consultants (TCs).

Fortuitously, matching funding of the annual $50,000 National Geographic grant was established with the Kansas Water Office. The goal of the Kansas Water Office was to initiate and implement a Natural Resources Curriculum in Kansas Schools. Geography's presence in the K-12 curriculum, the “Five Themes” concept, and NGS funding suggested a natural vehicle for accomplishing this goal. The Kansas Water Office remained the funding partner for the KGA through 1997.

Very early on, the KGA initiated the dual Coordinator concept, with one coordinator serving eastern Kansas and the other serving the western portion of the state. The eastern branch has been housed at Kansas State University and the western at Fort Hays State University. This dual sharing of KGA responsibilities has worked well for the Alliance.

To facilitate the development and dissemination of geographic teaching materials, especially those focusing on the Water Office’s Natural Resources Curriculum, the KGA also established a Publications Coordinator. It was our good fortune to not only find an individual in the College of Education at Kansas State University, who had a degree in geography, a background in marketing and publications, and could provide a vehicle for teachers to obtain advanced coursework and/or degrees in geographic education. During this initial decade the KGA produced the exemplary Geographic Insights, published three times a year and disseminated free of charge to more than 3500 teachers. In addition, all teaching strategies produced via our summer institutes were compiled, published and made available to teachers across Kansas.

Following the model established by the NGS, each summer the Alliance sponsored a two week Summer Institute. The Coordinators and the cadre of Teacher Consultants trained by the NGS facilitated these institutes. The number of teachers graduating from these two week institutes reached more than 117, and through workshops led by these summer graduates, we reached more than 3600 Kansas teachers.
Beginning in 1998 the Alliance chose to change the focus of the Summer Institutes. It became extremely difficult to find teachers willing to give up two weeks of their life to attend these institutes. Also, a number of years had passed since the graduation of the initial group of Summer Institute TCs, and it was felt that the time had arrived to offer our graduates the opportunity to take an Advanced Summer Geography Institute. These advanced institutes were shorter in length, typically a single week. Some reflecting the Kansas Water Office’s funding emphasis, focused on Kansas regions, one focused on technology, another on water, and one on cultural ecology.

The Alliance used many vehicles during this period to promote geographic knowledge and to provide our TCs with additional geographic experiences. Among others, it sponsored the state finals of the National Geographic Bee, gave educational workshops focusing on GIS, sent teachers to Russia, provided professional development to help improve the Kansas Curricular Standards for the Social Studies and the assessments that accompanied this initiative, sponsored a variety of water initiatives for the Kansas Water Office, sent teachers to the Population Reference Bureau’s Demographic Diversity Institute, and took part in NGS initiatives, including Geography Awareness Week, Family Geography Challenge, and Leadership Academies.

Near the end of the first decade, the “winds of change” were overtaking the KGA. The founding coordinators of the KGA began to step down. In 1997, the Kansas Water Office discontinued its funding of the KGA. The loss of this funding, plus the many positives associated with being endowed, empowered the Alliance to seek endowment funding. In 1999, the KGA was the recipient of matching grants of $250,000 each from the Kansas Legislature and the NGS to establish a $500,000 endowment.


If lift-off and a can do attitude marked the first phase of the KGA, the second phase might be seen as a stationary orbit phase. It was during this phase that the KGA changed from a top – down organizational structure to one equally owned by the TCs and the Coordinators. Governance structures were codified, a new Public Engagement Coordinator was established, committees were identified, and regular board meetings occurred. At the same time, leadership was transitory, TCs were retiring, and general membership was decreasing.

Also the Alliance’s educational environment was changing. No Child Left Behind legislation had the effect in Kansas of eliminating geography as a stand-alone discipline in high school, and to some extent, in middle school. To teach a discipline, teachers had to be highly qualified, and highly qualified teachers in geography did not exist in the numbers that would be needed. Therefore, geography became a sub-specialty under History. Without belaboring the point, at the national level, although geography was identified as an essential discipline, no funding existed to promote the effort.

The Alliance’s operational funds were dramatically reduced. The endowment provided various amounts for funding, but never more than $50,000 yearly – a reduction of 50% from earlier funding levels; while it may have been possible to obtain additional
funding, changing leadership and lack of a critical mass of dedicated workers hindered such an initiative.

In spite of these headwinds, the Alliance continued to function and change with the times. Traditional outreach activities such as My Wonderful World, Geography Awareness Week, the state Geographic Bee, continued. Summer institutes were shorter in duration, participation was limited, and went biennial in 2002. Of special note was the first Advanced Summer Geography Institute (ASGI) in 2003, a 10-day fieldtrip to the Northern Plains and Great Lakes; ten teachers participated. In 2005, a similar ASGI to America’s Industrial Heartland failed to attract sufficient participation and was cancelled. In 2006, with new Coordinators, the KGA’s ASGI initiative was a Planning Retreat in Georgetown, Colorado. New coordinators tried to resurrect the long-term summer institute concept in 2009, but with limited interest the venue was changed to a one-day workshop that attracted 13 participants. A re-evaluation of the concept of summer institutes has remained a continuing focus of the Alliance.

The Alliance began to search for more innovative ways to train teachers in the 21st century. The initial effort focused upon innovative technology. Many GIS and GPS workshops were held, and 30 radio advertisements promoting geography were developed. Through an agreement with the Click and Learn Corporation, the KGA developed online drills and lesson plans focusing on state geography standards. Plans to build on these early Click and Learn successes were terminated because of NGS copyright policies. In 2007, a series of online teacher workshops for pre-service teacher courses was to be initiated and a pilot TC led workshop was digitally recorded. Plans were also developed to expand the effort by producing material for in-class teachers and students. A change in coordinators put many of the technology initiatives on hold, but the focus on the pre-service teacher continued. Rather than providing training for geography as a stand-alone discipline, this new initiative focused on teaching good geography in association with other disciplines. Keynote speakers were invited to the annual fall conferences to provide background information and research findings. Workshops focusing on the integration of history and geography via the process of dual-encoding were developed and many successful workshops were presented in university teacher training classrooms.

The Alliance had always made an effort to build bridges with other organizations, but during this period the effort was expanded. An example is our partnership with Main Street USA, to enable social studies/geography programs for Kansas schools. Examples of bridging relationships that existed include the Kansas Council for the Social Studies, the Kansas Council for Environmental Education, Kansas Extension Office and the 4-H initiative, and the Kansas Department of Education. For many years the Alliance hosted a geography education tent at the Nicodemus Black Heritage Festival, and it continued to have a presence at the Topeka Water Festival.

“Reflection and Planning the Next Mission” Phase: 2009-2013

The capacity building and strategic planning initiative will either be remembered as the fuel needed to ignite the next take off stage of the Alliance’s journey to success or just another initiative of the early 21st century. The KGA has been committed to this initiative,
having completed the capacity building Course, and several strategic planning conferences/meetings. Mission and vision statements were developed, assets and liabilities identified and committee tasks assigned. 2013 will probably bring this step in the process of capacity building to a close, but success will be dependent upon overcoming the changing headwinds that brought the Alliance to the orbital stage of its existence.

**Current Situation of the KGA**

The Kansas Geographic Alliance is fortunate to have respected senior leadership as it moves forward. Drs. John Harrington, Jr. (Kansas State University) and Paul Phillips (Fort Hays State University) are Co-Coordinators and each oversees a KGA office housed at their respective universities. An Executive Committee provides guidance for KGA activities and assists with many of the important volunteer activities that keep the Alliance moving forward.

In midst of current strategic planning efforts, the KGA continues to maintain its bridges with outside organizations, including the Kansas Council for the Social Studies, the Kansas Council for Environmental Education, Kansas State Research and Extension Office and 4-H initiative, and the Kansas Department of Education. The KGA is continually seeking to build more relationships and initiatives are being taken to strengthen bonds with state and private universities within the state, especially to offer more geography professional development opportunities for in-service teachers, as well as pre-service teachers. The KGA has a sustained presence at the annual Topeka Water Festival and at the Kansas State Fair. Additionally the annual fall conference tradition has also been maintained, with aspirations of offering a multi-disciplinary conference through our relationships with history-organizations in the near future. There has been an increase in the recent number of Geo-Powers being offered as professional development for in-service and pre-service teachers, which are being cultivated in local school districts of our dedicated volunteers, TCs, and Executive Board. An increase in membership can be seen over the last few years through the maintenance of the activities described above. The increase in membership can also be attributed to the hard work of an increased organizational effort to streamline the membership process and update records, as part of the strategic planning process. Furthermore, the KGA is working to upgrade its website for enhanced information sharing.

**Public Engagement**

The formal KGA Public Engagement initiative to spread the word on the importance of geography in our schools began in 2006. Outreach programs to communities, coalition partners, educators and state legislators were implemented. Community Outreach began with sharing NGS *My Wonderful World* (MWW) Public Service Announcements (PSA) through media outlets throughout the state. The KGA created radio PSAs for Geography Awareness Week and generated media coverage for the Kansas Geographic Bee. The KGA created a linkage with the National Park Service Nicodemus National Historic Site and participated in annual events. Located in Nicodemus, Kansas, the site is the only remaining...
African American town established during Reconstruction after the American Civil War. Working in cooperation with Kansas 4-H, the KGA hosts an annual booth at the Kansas State Fair. Outreach with 4-H also included presentations at 4-H leadership meetings, serving as a judge for Community Atlas Projects at a county fair, and attending a regional ESRI meeting with a 4-H representative. MWW presentations and informative teacher sessions have been added to the program of activities associated with the Kansas Geographic Bee. We directly reach out to educators at the Kansas Council for the Social Studies conference, KGA Fall Conference, Summer Institutes, KGA Workshops, district in-service meetings, and teacher enrichment programs at Kansas State University and Fort Hays State University. The KGA reaches out to pre-service teachers at colleges and universities with presentations. “Kansas Family Geography Night” kits for teachers (adapted from the Michigan Geographic Alliance model) have been distributed to teachers in public and private schools and to PTAs. In addition to the MWW promotional materials, the KGA creates bookmarks, note pads, pens and ball caps with the KGA logo to help establish our brand. State legislators have been contacted with mailings and personal meetings. In order to increase outreach, we plan to expand our use of technology and types of communication. Programs developed on the theme of “Kids Doing Geography in the Community” will help bring relevance to our message that Teaching Geography Is Fundamental and is vital to prepare our students for their future in the 21st Century.

Opportunities

The Kansas Geographic Alliance is in a position to use ‘teachable moments’ and other evolving opportunities to advance geographic education in Kansas. The KGA has worked since its beginning to make connections with other groups. When the KGA was first formed, members established relationships with many different entities across the state. Teacher consultants sought out opportunities to introduce and reinforce the importance of geographic literacy. The Kansas Geographic Alliance now has new opportunities to again make connections with a variety of stakeholders.

For example, the state of Kansas is in the process of re-writing its social studies standards. Previously, members of the KGA have worked directly on these standards. Our members helped guide the process in the past. During this cycle, the KGA has committed itself to being both a support organization and a resource for this cycle’s committee. Members of the KGA have already discussed the importance of geography standards with the Kansas State Department of Education interim social studies coordinator. Executive committee members have been in contact with the current committee to make personal contact and offer materials and data to support the selection of geography-oriented standards. Additionally, KGA members are also assisting with the review and re-writing of the state science standards.

An on-going and growing opportunity for the KGA involves GIS and increasing identification of the need for more STEM education. The Kansas State Board of Education now has a state-wide ESRI site license and there is a need to help enable teachers to take advantage of this resource. In addition, on-going evaluation of the Next Generation Science
Standards will potentially enable the KGA to work with science teachers to integrate geography and GIS into new lessons developed to accommodate the new science standards.

For several years, KGA members have discussed the need for a student atlas of Kansas. Some planning has been done to identify the types of maps that KGA members think are needed. Working in an online environment and using GIS to develop a map based student resource is clearly one opportunity.

KGA teacher consultants have remained a vital connection to current teachers and the schools as we consider new opportunities. Several of our teacher consultants have presented at teacher training events across the state and this approach has allowed geography content to be presented as in-service to teachers during the summer months as well as during the school year. The consortiums have been very welcoming to the Kansas Geographic Alliance. In conjunction with school districts, teacher consultants have also found opportunities to reach social studies teachers during regular in-service days, allowing coaches of fall and spring sports to attend. These in-services were designed to reach middle and high school teachers in school districts.

The Kansas State Historical Society has also proven to be an important stakeholder. This group has welcomed our efforts using dual-encoding of geography and history to build new curriculum to support Kansas history. Several members of the Kansas Geographic Alliance have been working with the education department to support the programs with geographic connections. This mutual work to help teachers support learning has proven beneficial. The KGA has worked to help provide dual-encoded lessons for Kansas teachers, using materials documented and supported by the historical society.

Another opportunity for the KGA exists through geocaching programs in partnership with Parks and Recreation of Topeka. Teacher consultants provided geocaching programs during the summer to teen summer camps. Family geocaching opportunities, including the connection with GIS, have also been presented. These programs were an outreach outside the classroom. Participants used global positioning system units provided by the KGA to learn about location, GPS technology, and explore Geographic Information Systems. Success with these activities suggests additional events will be planned and implemented.

Over the past five years, the KGA has worked with several 4-H clubs to give children support on projects in community GIS. Club members have worked on several projects using GPS units provided by the KGA. Projects have included mapping of one room school houses in Northeastern Kansas, geocaching, and development of different GIS map layers. The GPS units supplied by the Kansas Geographic Alliance were an important in the exposing of these children to geography activities, technology, and possible career opportunities.

This partnership with 4-H has allowed the KGA to travel to the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson, where KGA members provided opportunities for the general public to see what the Alliance can offer to schools. The KGA will continue to travel to the state fair to continue to support 4-H and geographic knowledge, as it does with the Topeka Water Festival.
Membership

A membership committee was formed in 2010 to help the KGA executive committee work on revitalizing and expanding our membership base. Membership growth is an important strategy for the Alliance (S 6). A first task was to revise a very outdated membership list. Several different membership lists were in existence from the Kansas Geographic Alliance’s earliest years to present. The updated list consists of active and interested members and is complete with current personal contact information as well as current school contact information. All members were contacted in order to confirm their interest in active participation and continued volunteering as part of the KGA.

The membership committee formed a plan to seek new members through several strategic approaches.

1 - Increase the number of in-service events, which the KGA calls: GeoPower workshops. This corresponds with our strategy to host professional development events (S 4). These will be targeted to cover the state in broad regions during the upcoming years. GeoPower workshops disseminate content lessons, NGS information and website tools, Geography Awareness Week information and other KGA activities. These workshops serve as a strategy for gaining new members, as well as assisting current KGA teachers by illustrating the teaching of geography cross-curricula, and through different teaching styles such as dual-encoding, co-operative learning, etc.

2 - Increased contact with the state universities and their pre-service teachers, which matches up with our strategy to expand our network (S 22) and to increase pre-service activity (S 3). Current activities involve Kansas State University, Fort Hays State University, Pittsburg State University, and Washburn University. Presentations concerning approaches to teaching geography are being made in pre-service classes at the above named universities. These presentations are modified to fit the time made available at each university. Topics covered vary in number and depth, but the five themes categorization provides an anchor for most presentations. Information about NGS Education, the KGA, and Geography Awareness Week is also presented and membership information is distributed. The KGA hopes to expand the number of teacher training universities and colleges that it works with on an annual basis. (Obj 5)

3 - Further our relationships with state social studies organizations and their annual conferences, such as the Kansas Council of Social Studies, the Kansas Historical Society, and the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education. Representatives from KGA typically attend and usually can make presentations regarding the KGA, and they often have the opportunity to distribute membership information (S 19).

4 - Maintenance of an enhanced and updated KGA webpage, which contains links to NGS, to State Conferences, and easy access to becoming a member (S 9).

Financial Plan

Developing a sound financial plan for the Alliance fits well within our goals (G 3), strategies (S 19), and current year objectives (Obj 10). In order to accomplish the vision
and mission of the Kansas Geographic Alliance as identified in this Strategic Plan, we will first continue to rely on known and secure sources of basic funding. KGA has a small endowment with the National Geographic Education Foundation that includes both a $250,000.00 one-time investment from the State of Kansas and a match by National Geographic. Revenue from that foundation account provides approximately $30,000.00 each year and these funds are used primarily for basic operating expenses of the KGA, educational materials development, and a small number of professional development activities for teachers.

When the KGA was first organized, stronger support was available both from State of Kansas sources and from National Geographic. With an annual budget of approximately $100,000.00, the KGA was able to provide teachers with two-week intensive training in aspects of geography and geographic education. These past activities helped build a strong, core group of trained geography teacher-consultants.

Current KGA leaders recognize the need to find new funding to enable the development of a new group of active teachers who can be trained as geography teacher consultants. In order to search out potential funding support, the current co-coordinators will use faculty release time in the Spring or Summer 2013 semester to discuss the KGA with foundations linked to the oil and gas sector, the agribusiness sector, the aviation sector, and other possibilities. Dr. Paul Phillips will concentrate on possibilities throughout western Kansas whereas Dr. John Harrington, Jr. will address the Kansas City area and eastern Kansas.

The leadership of the KGA is also active in looking for grant and contract funding opportunities. Proposals by KGA members have been submitted to national funding agencies with some success. KGA members are very interested in partnering with other alliances to develop funding proposals.

Evaluation Plan

As part of our strategic plan the Alliance has developed several strategies related to improved evaluation (S11, S12, and S 13), the KGA will continue to use different forms of evaluation for the activities and programs we develop and implement. These forms may range from simple paper-pencil methods when we ask teachers/students to evaluate a program or activity to more complex assessment tools for in-service teachers. We plan to use pre-designed programs that are web-based, such as Survey Monkey and Google docs, to have workshop participants’ record feedback. The rationale behind this transition to digital documents is to allow for ease of access as well as the ability to electronically gather data. These evaluations have questions that reflect the program or training presented as well areas for teachers to provide their ideas on how we can best assist them. Evaluations are typically worded to be results-oriented. Finally, the Alliance uses these evaluations to make contact with participants for both follow-up support, as well as planning for future programs and activities.

The KGA collects data and compiles the information to help make informed decisions about programming. Evaluations will be a key piece for the annual review of
activities and progress toward our strategic plan. Formative and summative reports of data will be compiled and discussed by the executive committee annually (Obj 6). In order to assist with the annual review, an annual table of objective and related accomplishments will be developed.

The Alliance will also work to develop an online calendar (Obj 21) to monitor progress of program development, contact of participants and members, as well as future planning. An electronic calendar will become part of the website in order to maintain better communication with members and the public at large.

**Implementation Plan**

**Immediate Plan Utilizing Existing Resources**

The implementation plan for 2013 is a combination of scheduled programs and activities. In chronological order, the scheduled programs and activities:

- January 2013
  - Executive committee meeting and review of the strategic plan
- Winter/Spring 2013
  - The co-coordinators visit with potential funding sources
  - Meetings with Kansas legislators
  - Pre-service activities at several universities
- April 5, 2013
  - Kansas Geographic Bee
- June 2013
  - Executive committee meeting
- September/October 2013
  - Fall Conference with executive committee meeting
  - Kansas State Fair
  - Topeka Water Festival

General ideas for 2013 are to increase membership, reactivate/revitalize past teachers, create ad hoc committee to work on specified tasks, grow the organization relationship network with additional K-12 districts, community colleges, universities, and professional and community organizations, and develop marketing/branding materials (e.g., generic business cards and QR scan).

**Priorities to Expand Plan If Budget Allowed**

If the KGA budget was expanded to be ten times what it currently is, we have determined directional priorities for the new income. There are a variety of existing opportunities where KGA members could provide teachers with new training and resource to improve student education. With new standards, a common core, and other on-going
changes, the KGA recognizes a large variety of ways that geography can greatly help with the design of new curricula and related lessons. As needed, we would use expanded funding to hire professional staff to assist with running the organization. Specific needs would exist to cover office management and grant writing, technology, and program evaluation. The projects we aspire to undertake are a web-based atlas of Kansas and a scale-up of our professional development to match our existing resources.

Organizational Design

Alliance Organization

The Kansas Geographic Alliance is led by two collaborating co-coordinators, one at a university in eastern Kansas and the other from an institution in western Kansas. One of the two co-coordinators will be responsible for submitting required forms, proposals for new funding, and reports to the National Geographic Education Foundation; it will be at this co-coordinators home institution where the primary budgetary responsibilities will be housed. As funding allows, both co-coordinators will hire students to help with the work of the KGA and to assist in maintaining the two KGA Offices.

The executive committee, the governing body of the alliance, consists of the two co-coordinators, a public engagement director, and up to 9 teachers. Existing members of the executive committee will make decisions on adding new members to their committee at the annual fall meeting. In selecting new members for service on the executive committee, the group will seek a balance among active and retired teachers as well as expertise in teaching across a number of K-12 grade levels.

The KGA executive committee can develop special committees as needed to carry out the work of the Alliance.

KGA tradition has been to designate a past co-coordinator, as desired by a majority vote of the executive committee, as a coordinator emeritus.

Duties and Selection Process of the Co-coordinators

The primary responsibility of the co-coordinators is to provide administration of the Alliance including:

- Managing of Alliance funds including all reporting procedures and formal communication with our liaison to the National Geographic Society,
- Working with the public engagement director to manage outreach efforts,
- Working with student office managers to maintain Alliance offices, keep the KGA webpage and listserv current,
- Working with KGA members who are managing the member data base,
- Working with executive committee members to develop an agenda as well as determining location and time of meetings,
- Notifying members of important dates and topics, and ensuring that proper procedure is followed,
- Working with special committees as needed, and
- Working to make sure that activities associated with specific strategies are implemented.

An emeritus coordinator’s responsibilities shall be that of advisor. Emeritus coordinators for the KGA include: Judy Dollard, John Heinrichs, Rich Lisichenko, M. Duane Nellis, and Ben Smith

In the event a KGA coordinator wishes to resign the position, at least a six-month, but preferably a one-year notice should be given. When no advance notice is possible, the remaining coordinator assumes all coordinator responsibilities. The executive committee and the coordinator may decide not to seek an immediate replacement coordinator. When a replacement is deemed desirable, the executive committee will appoint a Coordinator Search Committee. The search committee will be responsible for consulting with National Geographic Society Geography Education Program to plan the search and selection process and be sure to work within the established policies and procedures. In order to maintain fiscal and institutional continuity, the search committee should give priority to a suitable candidate at the previous coordinator’s institution. If no suitable candidate is found at that institution, the search committee will conduct a wider search. The final selections of the coordinator will be recommended to the National Geographic Society on a two-thirds vote of the executive committee.

The public engagement director shall be appointed by the coordinators, with the approval of the executive committee.

**Executive Committee Composition and Processes**

The executive committee serves as the primary decision making body of the KGA. The executive committee members are voting members.

The committee consists of:

- Two co-coordinators,
- One public engagement director,
- Nine teachers (ideally including at least one in each of grades K-4, 5-8, & 9-12) and a broad geographic distribution of representation from across Kansas.

Selection of the teacher members involves:

- The co-coordinators will present a list of nominees to the remainder of the executive committee.
- Any executive committee member who resigns or misses two consecutive meetings without justifiable cause may be replaced.
• The co-coordinators, with the approval of the executive committee, may appoint a replacement member to serve until the fall meeting.

Duties of the executive committee:

• Executive members
  o The co-coordinators will determine location and time of meetings, and ensuring that proper procedure is followed during executive committee sessions.
  o A recorder shall be selected by the executive committee to take official minutes of the executive committee and any executive session meetings.
  o Review annual operations budget.
  o Establish program priorities.
  o Assist the alliance in building a network of teachers and geography professionals who are interested in advancing geographic literacy in Kansas
  o Assist in planning, facilitation, and coordination of the Alliance projects or appoint committees to do the same.
  o Reflect on alliance activities in relation to the existing strategic plan and make recommendations related to possible new or expanded activities

• Frequency of meetings of the executive committee
  o The executive committee must meet at least two times per year, including a fall meetings that will be open to all members of the KGA and interested parties.

• Amending the by-laws
  o The by-laws shall be reviewed periodically. Amendments shall be proposed to the executive committee by a formal motion in writing and approval of changes or additions to the by-laws requires a two-thirds vote of the voting members of the executive committee.

**Resources Available**

The Kansas Geographic Alliance maintains two libraries, which are located on the campuses of Kansas State University and Fort Hays State University, where each co-coordinators works. Each library is neatly organized so that material(s) can be easily located and accessed for use. There is information available for a teacher who requests assistance.

Much of the material available dates from early days of the Alliance. For maximum value for today’s classroom teachers there is a need to update this material for use with modern technology and classroom settings. Some work has and is being done to update each library, but there is clearly an opportunity to reassess the lessons from the past and revitalize them for today’s classroom.
Examples of available resources in the libraries include:

- NGS maps (the KGA recently restocked world maps and maps of the US)
- Usable GPS units and lesson plans
- Workbooks, atlases and 3D globes
- National Geographic materials including Took Kits, Map Packs, and Picture Packs
- Labeled binders of information such as past alliance meetings, institutes, Click and Learn Software, Jason, and Argus
- Miscellaneous maps, activities and games, posters
- USB drives with KGA lesson plans saved on the drives
- Eight well-packed trunks of primary source artifacts for geographic areas such as Kansas, Asia, India, etc.
- Office supplies and miscellaneous items to support occasional KGA meetings/functions
- Office equipment such as desks, chairs, older computers
- Labeled files and ledgers containing KGA financial and administrative records

**Geography Related Educational Structures in Kansas**

Formal geography education training for teachers in Kansas occurs in three main ways. It is through, 1) pre-service required education courses and their content (i.e. teacher emphasis, guest speakers, volunteer activities, conference presentations, etc.), 2) in-school professional development arranged by school and/or district during built-in professional development calendar days, and 3) various evening and/or weekend seminars, workshops, and conference attended during personal time from independent organizations (i.e. Kansas Geographic Alliance Annual Conference, Kansas Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference, etc.). To stay current in geography, the pre-service and in-service teacher must invest her or his personal time. It is variable as to whether or not university teacher education programs require geography courses for their students and how much time is devoted to geography content knowledge and pedagogy within required courses, as well as most in-school professional development offerings revolve around state tested standards and teaching methods and strategies, which have very little focus on geography.

There are many concerns for geography education in Kansas. The four primary concerns are: 1) social studies teacher licensure in Kansas does not require that a student have taken a geography course, 2) each university in the state has different teacher education requirements, meaning that not all schools require a geography course, 3) there is little emphasis on geography in the state standards, particularly the tested standards, and 4) there is little money to support geography education in Kansas at the state level. These issues are working against geography education in Kansas. Difference among state university teacher education requirements regarding geography is listed in Appendix 1.
The KGA recognizes the barriers to geography education in Kansas and are working hard to better the situation. We currently have working relationships with many of the state universities to provide geography-related professional development for both pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. Similarly we work directly with school districts to offer Geo-Power workshops as part of in-school professional development. We have two offices, one in the eastern and one in the western part of the state for greater ease of access to resources and teacher support. Our organization has strong participation in interdisciplinary events, such as teaching 4-H workshops during summer camps, communicating our message at the Kansas State Fair, and assisting with other events sponsored by related organizations, like the Kansas Council for the Social Studies. We have been able to participate in revisions to the state social studies standards and have an established a strong relationship with the state social studies representative. And finally, we also host a free annual conference which is open to the public.

This strategic plan has enabled the Alliance to fit our ideas for constructive change in geography education structure within Kansas. Three of our goals (G 1, G 4, and G 5), at least nine of our strategies (S 2, S 9, S 13, S 17, S 19, S 20, S 22, S 23, and S 26) and seven current year objectives (Obj 5, Obj 9, Obj 11, Obj 12, Obj 15, Obj 19, and Obj 20) incorporate the ideas that we have discussed related to improving educational structures:

1. Establish and maintain working relationships with all state universities and as many private colleges as possible in order to reach the highest number of pre-service and in-service teachers through our professional development activities (i.e. in-class lecture, Geo-Powers, annual conference, etc.).
2. Continue to promote geography education in public forums (i.e. state fair, education conferences, etc.)
3. Continue to actively participate in revisions to the social studies standards.
4. Maintain a positive relationship with the social studies representatives within the state department of education.
5. Establish and maintain greater interdisciplinary connections with history, environmental science, and agricultural education at all grade levels.
## Appendix 1

Current educational structures involving geography education differ from school to school in Kansas. Below is a short synthesis of geography requirements per university in the state. Both the Elementary and Secondary Education Geography Requirement categories are based on a social studies emphasis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Elementary Education (BS) Geography Requirements</th>
<th>Absolute Geography Requirement</th>
<th>Secondary Education (BS) Geography Requirements</th>
<th>Absolute Geography Requirement</th>
<th>University General Education Requirement for a Geography Course</th>
<th>Absolute Geography Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Emporia State University   | - Have to select one course (3 hours) from five teaching fields (anthropology, geography, foreign language, ethnic/gender studies, and political science)  
- Geography classes to select from include: world regional geography and cultural geography | No | - To be a high school teacher when upon graduation, one must have a double major. In order to teach social studies, must have the second degree in Social Sciences, which includes one geography class requirement of World Regional Geography (3 credit hours) | Yes | - Students must take university general education credits  
- World Regional Geography is an option under the Cultural Diversity heading | No |
| Fort Hays State University | - Have to select two courses (6 credit hours) from three teaching fields (history, international studies, and geography) and at least one from two of the three fields  
- Geography classes to select from include: world regional geography and human geography | No | - To be a high school teacher when upon graduation, one must have a double major. In order to teach social studies, must have the second degree in Geosciences (which significantly teaches geography) or history (which does not include any geography) | Depends/No | - Students must take university general education credits  
- Geography is not an option and is not required | No |
<p>| Kansas State University    | - Have to select four courses (12 credit hours) from five | No | - Must take world regional geography, human | Yes | - Students must take university general | No |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>education</th>
<th>-Geography is an option but is not required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburg State University</td>
<td>- Must take one course (3 credit hours) of geography</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Geography options: world regional geography or elements of geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washburn University</td>
<td>- Must take one geography course (3 credit hours)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Geography classes to select from include: introduction to geography and world regional geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wichita State University</td>
<td>- Have to select one course (3 credit hours) from five teaching fields (criminal justice, political science, geography, economics, and minority studies)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>- Students must take university general education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Any geography course will count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Geography is an option and is not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have to select one course (3 credit hours) from five teaching fields (criminal justice, political science, geography, economics, and minority studies)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Any geography course will</td>
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</table>

Teaching fields (history, political science, geography, economics, and anthropology/women's studies/ethnic studies) and at least one from four of the five fields.

- Geography classes to select from include: world regional geography, human geography, and environmental geography.

- Have to select three upper-level courses (9 credit hours) from five teaching fields (history, political science, geography, economics, and anthropology) and at least one class from three of the five fields.

- Geography is an option but is not required.
| University of Kansas | -Must take one course (3 credit hours): World Regional Geography  
-For elective social sciences courses, Principles of Physical Geography is optional | Yes | -Must take one course (3 credit hours): World Regional Geography plus more two courses (6 credit hours)  
-Geography options: Principles of Physical Geography, Maps and Mapping, or a selection of regional geography courses | Yes | -Students must take university general education  
-Geography is not an option and is not required | No |