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Hello,

Below is an op-ed piece written by Brent Kisling, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, and his perspective on what the new Oklahoma brand means for economic development efforts in the state.

We would appreciate you running this piece in your publication.

Thank you for your consideration.

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How Oklahoma is Setting Itself Apart

Successful economic development requires a strong approach. Too often, state messaging is bland and interchangeable. But whether it's marketing a community or the state, the value proposition of your place, culture and environment is unique.

I've been in economic development long enough to know that branding a community or state is a common conundrum. How do you put a place with all of its diverse people and industries, varying regions and opportunities into a box? So we didn't. Here in Oklahoma, we imagined something different – both the unique process we took and the exciting outcome – and the results speak for themselves. And as Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, I am confident that this new brand offers us vast opportunities to showcase our state in a way that's never been done before.

The new logo for the State of Oklahoma represents the many benefits our state has to offer while also conveying what makes Oklahoma so unique – the inward energy of our state and how we work together to get the job done and dramatizing Oklahoma as the center of the U.S.

And then there's our new tagline: Imagine that. This bold statement lets us share the unique and surprising aspects that people don't know about our state while also emphasizing Oklahoma as a place to thrive. This extends to Oklahoma communities looking to find new ways to thrive and the confidence we have in our state's business environment.



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But why are a logo and a tagline important to economic development? Here's where we come to a key component of this: our brand creates a singular identity for the state, for every state agency – unifying us under one look and message.

At Commerce, our job is to create an environment where economic growth can occur –that's jobs, investment, and economic prosperity for all Oklahomans. The cohesiveness of our new brand is another way for us to highlight the dynamic partnerships and innovative collaborations we foster with companies, universities, not-for-profit organizations, and government leaders. When working to increase jobs and investment in the state, Commerce provides a single point of contact for the company or site selection group we're working with – it's one of the things that sets us apart and something we're often complimented on. Whether its tackling workforce and training concerns with our partners at CareerTech and Higher Education, coordinating permit assistance with the Department of Environmental Quality or connecting a CEO directly to Governor Stitt for a one-on-one conversation, Commerce brings the right parties to the table to ensure that a company is set up for success in our state. With the new Oklahoma brand, we can send a better, more cohesive message to our clients – letting them know that when you work with Oklahoma, all of Oklahoma works with you.

As we move forward and implement the brand across every aspect of our business and activities, we do so knowing that every day, people and companies from all over the world are considering moving to our state. The success of one, whether that's an individual or a global corporation, comes in part from the success of others who have come before. The next chapter of your great idea starts right here in Oklahoma. Whether your dream is to start a new business or simply run yours in a more efficient, affordable, pro-business environment, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce is here to help you build it, grow it, support it and sustain it in our state. Our state is filled with visionaries, entrepreneurs, risk-takers and pioneers. If you identify as one of those, you are our kind of people. And we hope you will not just imagine what that can look like in Oklahoma, but discover it and live that opportunity for yourself.

Imagine that.