

When Dorothy Gale famously reflects “there’s no place like home,” at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, virtually the entire world knows that the “home” she is referring to is Kansas. But beyond Dorothy’s dreary, Dust Bowl era plains brought to life on a Hollywood soundstage, what does the world truly know about the state of Kansas?

Like other states with film incentives, Kansas is in reality rich in unique offerings for productions, like its historic downtowns, sprawling farmland, badlands, hills, and lakes, or the meticulously preserved Victorian architecture of Lawrence or historical landmarks like the Carroll Mansion. Its variety of geographical terrain and urban areas can also easily double for other, costlier or hard to shoot locations.

Bringing large-scale film and television production to the state through an incentive program not only offers immediate revenue and jobs for those currently working within the film industry, but the process of elevating Kansas on screen fosters an emotional relationship with audiences that could boost tourism and its related industries long after a show has wrapped. CW juggernaut *Supernatural*, for example, the 12th longest-running scripted series in the US and consistently one of the top 100 shows on IMDb, whose main characters famously come from Lawrence, was filmed largely in Canada and Los Angeles without a crew ever setting foot in Kansas over 15 seasons. Imagine the enduring impact a production like that could have on Kansas if a frame of footage had actually been filmed in state.

Other long term economic benefits include the retention of young film workers; KU alone graduates dozens of students from its film department each year, an increasing number of whom are the first from their families to attend college. Film incentives could keep this diverse and specialized emerging workforce and their skill set in-state, instead of necessitating aspiring film crew relocate to other metro areas in order to sustain a living, which has been the case for over 30 years. Having trained local crew in the environment not only bolsters the ability for productions to choose Kansas over other potential shooting locations, but makes KU and other academic programs a more competitive training ground for future homegrown filmmakers. KU already has acclaimed and Oscar-winning faculty who make films in Kansas today, showing what can be done without the resources available to filmmakers in other states. But what could filmmakers of this caliber bring if they had a robust infrastructure available to them?

Unknown to many, Kansas was once home to a thriving film industry; Centron Corporation, an educational producer based for more than 40 years in Lawrence and during most of its life the largest film studio in the Midwest, created roughly 2000 films with an entirely Kansas-based crew, including an Oscar nominated documentary. Their success was made possible due to governmental investment in educational materials during the middle of the 20th century that created a booming film industry outside of Hollywood, with its own crews and its own artists. 1956 short *Star 34*, one of Centron’s many tourism films created to extol the virtues of Kansas, implores the skeptical uninitiated that “you’ll see things out there you never expected to find.” I am certain that with a film incentive program, the larger film industry will find many beautiful, compelling, and competitive things in Kansas they never expected to find, both to their benefit and the people of Kansas.