



PUBLIC HEARING



KANSAS
COMMERCE

Sara Bloom

Quality Places Director

Katelynn Kolterman

Quality Places Specialist
KCE Administrative Lead

KANSAS
COMMERCE



TODAY'S AGENDA

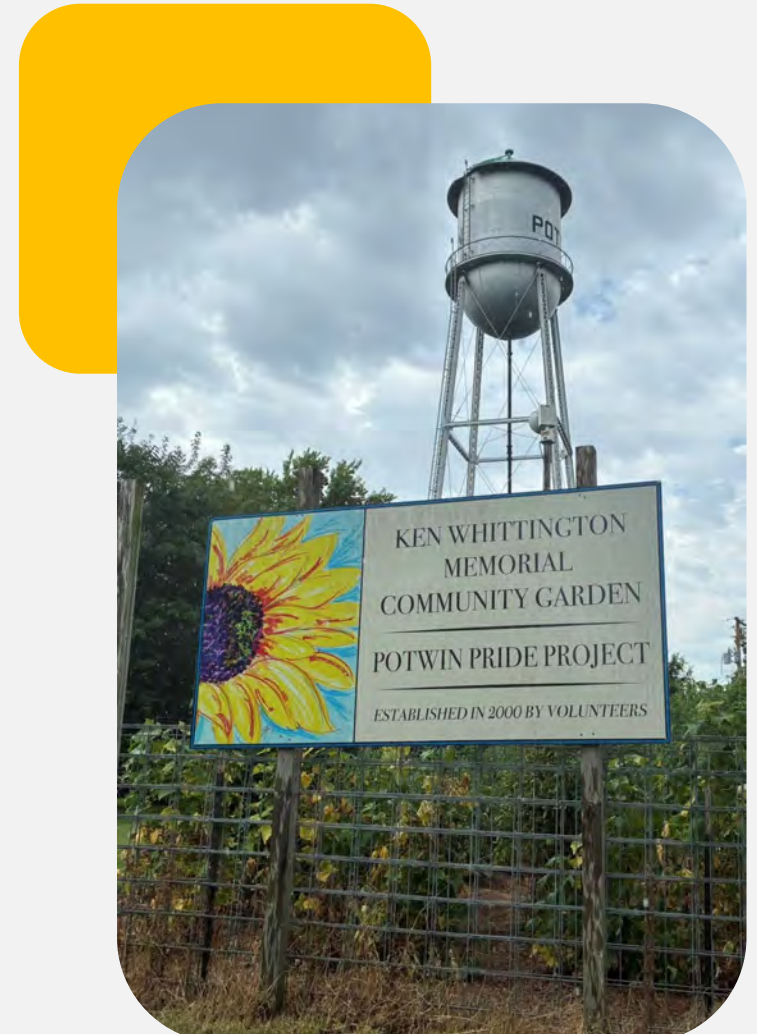
- Introduction
- KCE Listening Tour Recap
- Draft Certification Process Overview
- Public Comment



KANSAS COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (KCE)

On July 1, 2025, Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of Commerce David Toland announced that the Kansas Department of Commerce officially assumed administration of the Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) program.

Previously managed by K-State Extension, KCE has long stood as a cornerstone of grassroots community development in Kansas.





KCE Listening Tour

(July – September)

65 communities visited in 49 days

Main Takeaways

- More communication and in-person support
- Clearly defined structure and expectations
- More trainings
- Simpler reporting
- Access to larger grants
- Desire for connection, networking, and peer learning
- Need for visibility and recognition
- Branding confusion and desire for name refinement





DRAFT CERTIFICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW



KANSAS
COMMERCE



Program Requirements

(Applies to All Communities)

- Operates separately from the city/county government but may be associated. The program is designed to support volunteer efforts, not government efforts.
 - If a program is associated with a city or county government, external members are highly encouraged. They are required for Communities of Excellence.
- Each community group must have a mission and vision statement.
- All communities must submit a report twice per calendar year, plus required grant-specific reports.
- Annual Enrollment period: July 1 – August 31 each year.
- Commerce will evaluate participation levels on an annual basis. Communities that do not fulfill each requirement may have their requested level adjusted.



COMMUNITIES OF GROWTH

- Minimum of 3 dedicated volunteers.
- At least 1 annual goal.
- At least 1 annual meeting.
- Community Assessment Tool:
Recommended every 3-5 years, not required.
- Reporting twice per calendar year.



COMMUNITIES OF GROWTH

Participation Benefits:

- Eligible for Spark Grants.
- Invited to KCE Summit – day activities.
- Invited to Pop-up events.
- Access to resources and trainings.



COMMUNITIES OF ACTION

- Minimum of 5 dedicated volunteers.
- At least 3 annual goals.
- At least 2 annual meetings.
- Community Assessment Tool: Must be completed within 6 months and updated every 5 years.
- Continuously evaluate community needs and implement projects.
 - At least 1 annual project with a minimum value of \$500. KCE grants cannot fund the project, but other grants can be utilized and in-kind donations and services can cover 100% of the project.
- Reporting twice per calendar year.



COMMUNITIES OF ACTION

Participation Benefits:

- Eligible for Spark Grants.
- Eligible to host board meetings and pop-ups.
- Invited to KCE Summit – day activities).
- Access to resources and trainings.



COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE

- Minimum of 5 dedicated volunteers for communities smaller than 1,500.
- Minimum of 10 dedicated volunteers for communities larger than 1,500.
- If the group is associated with a government entity, at least 2 external members not associated with the government are required.
- Have at least 5 annual goals and quarterly meetings.
- Community Assessment Tool: Must be completed within 6 months and updated every 3 years.
- Continuously evaluate community needs and implement projects.
 - At least 1 annual project with a minimum value of \$1,000 . KCE grants cannot fund the project, but other grants can be utilized and in-kind donations and services can cover 100% of the project.
- Reporting twice per calendar year.



COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE

Participation Benefits:

- Eligible for Spark and Impact Grants.
- Invited to KCE Summit + evening reception.
- Eligible to host board meetings and pop-ups.
- Eligible to be featured in a Community Impact Tour.
- Access to resources and trainings.



KCE GRANTS

\$125,000 Total Funding Available in 2026

COMMUNITY SPARK GRANTS

\$500 – \$5,000 (All levels eligible)

COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANTS

\$5,000 – \$15,000 (Excellence only)

Grant Cycles (2 Rounds)

Round 1: January 1 – February 28, 2026

Round 2: September 1 – October 31, 2026



TIER COMPARISON

	COMMUNITY OF GROWTH	COMMUNITY OF ACTION	COMMUNITY OF EXCELLENCE
Volunteers	Minimum (3)	Minimum (5)	Communities < 1,500: Minimum (5) Communities > 1,500: Minimum (10) (+ 2 external if tied to government)
Annual Goals	Minimum (1)	Minimum (3)	Minimum (5)
Annual Meetings	Minimum (1)	Minimum (2)	Minimum (4)
Community Assessment	Recommended every 3 – 5 years, not required.	Required within 6 months and updated every 5 years	Required within 6 months and updated every 3 years
Annual Project	—	Minimum (1) project valued \$500+	Minimum (1) project valued \$1,000+
Reporting	Twice per year	Twice per year	Twice per year
Grants Eligibility	Spark Grants (Up to \$2,000)	Spark Grants (Up to \$5,000)	Spark + Impact Grants (\$2,000 - \$15,000)
KCE Summit Access	Day sessions	Day sessions	Day sessions + Evening Reception
Events & Hosting	Invited to Pop-ups	Invited to Pop-ups + Eligible to Host board meetings / pop-ups	Invited to Pop-ups + Eligible to Host board meetings / pop-ups
Special Recognition	Annual Awards	Annual Awards	Annual Awards + Opportunity to be featured in Community Impact Tour
Resources & Training	✓	✓	✓

Things to be Excited About!

Upcoming and Potential Events

- KCE Summit/Day on the Hill – April 2, 2026
- 6 annual trainings, topics will vary
- Annual Community Check-in
- Annual Empowerment Tour
- Annual Statewide Block Party

Potential Awards

- Community of the Year
- Rising Star Award
- Other potential awards: Innovation Award, Collaboration Award, Resilience Award, Youth Engagement Award, Community Impact Project Award.

Sister City Program and/or Mentorship Program





PUBLIC HEARING



KANSAS
COMMERCE

Public Hearing Format

Purpose

This hearing is for **public comments only** on the draft KCE Certification Process.

We will not be taking questions or providing program clarification during this session. Questions may be directed to KDC.KCE@ks.gov.

How to Provide Comments

- Please **raise your virtual hand** to be called on.
- When recognized, state your **name** and **community/organization**.
- Each speaker will have **up to 2 minutes** to provide comments.
- Written comments may be submitted to **KDC.KCE@ks.gov** through **Nov 23**.



What's Next?

Continue Public Comment Period

- Written comments accepted through **November 23**
- Email comments to **KDC.KCE@ks.gov**

Finalize Certification Process

- Commerce team will review all feedback.
- Final version will be released **December 1**.

Special Enrollment Period: December 1 – 31

- Communities may enroll or update their level for 2026

Program Implementation Begins – January 2026

- Updated reporting, training calendar, and support materials will be provided.
- Regular Enrollment Period: July 1 – August 31, 2026



Sara Bloom

Quality Places Director

Sara.Bloom@ks.gov

(785) 506-9278

Katelynn Kolterman

Quality Places Specialist

Katelynn.Kolterman@ks.gov

(785) 559-1640

KANSAS

C O M M E R C E