



The Kansas Community Empowerment Program supports volunteer-led efforts to revitalize, inspire, strengthen, and elevate communities across Kansas. Backed by the Kansas Department of Commerce, this program provides tools, training, and funding that help local leaders turn great ideas into lasting impact. Whether it's downtown beautification, civic engagement, or leadership development, we're here to help your community move from intention to action—and from action to transformation.

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KANSAS COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ENROLLMENT PROCESS

The Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) program, formerly the Kansas PRIDE program, is a volunteer, grassroots effort to improve the quality of place in local communities.

Vision: Vibrant Communities with a Positive Future

Mission: To promote an enhanced quality of place for citizens of Kansas communities through education, leadership development and recognition.

PROGRAM HISTORY

The history of Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) is long - over 50 years! KCE was originally established in 1970 and has served communities in every corner of the state, ranging from unincorporated to large municipalities. While the program has gone through many transitions in its time, its mission has remained the same: promoting an enhanced quality of place for citizens of Kansas communities through education, leadership development, and recognition.

BENEFITS FOR A PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY

KCE offers many benefits, but perhaps the most important is that the program is flexible and community-driven. Rather than prescribing a one-size-fits-all model, KCE empowers each community to focus on its unique needs, priorities, and strengths. The program is designed to meet your community where it is today, while providing the tools, resources, and support to help you grow and thrive.

We believe we’ve created a program that all communities can be a part of, no matter the size, location, or history.

ANNUAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD

Beginning in 2026, communities will complete their annual enrollment during the designated open enrollment period each year, which runs from *July 1 through August 31*. Changes to tier selection may also only be made during this annual window.

A special enrollment period will be offered from *December 1–31, 2025* for communities participating in KCE during the 2025 calendar year. New communities may also enroll at this time. Those who enroll during this special period will be fully enrolled for the 2026–2027 program year and will not need to reenroll until the summer of 2027, unless they choose to make a tier change.

MINIMUM PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR 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.
- Commerce will evaluate participation levels on an annual basis. Communities that do not fulfill each requirement may have their requested level adjusted.

SPECIFIC TIER REQUIREMENTS AND BENEFITS

There are three participation tiers to choose from, each offering different requirements and benefits. Communities have complete flexibility in selecting the tier that feels like the best fit for their goals, capacity, and preferred level of involvement. Each one provides a valuable way to participate, and communities are encouraged to choose the option that aligns with what works best for them. While our team is available to answer questions or offer guidance, the decision is entirely yours, and you are empowered to participate at the level that makes the most sense for your community.

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.

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.

Participation Benefits:

- Eligible ONLY 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 3,000.
- Minimum of 10 dedicated volunteers for communities larger than 3,000.
- If the group is associated with a government entity, at least 2 external members not associated with the government are required.
- At least 5 annual goals.
- 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.

Participation Benefits:

- Eligible for 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.
- +5 points on all Kansas Commerce Grants

All communities may request assistance at any time by contacting us at kdc.kce@ks.gov.

DEFINITIONS

Annual Goals:

- Any project, fundraiser, activity, or initiative that aligns with KCE's mission and address a local need or opportunity.
- They must be achievable within the calendar year (or have measurable progress within the year).
- They must be supported by a plan of action and identified volunteers or partners.

Dedicated Volunteer / Volunteer Hours:

- Anyone who volunteers on behalf of your KCE group working toward your mission and vision

Project Value:

- This amount is calculated based on the funds spent on a project or event, plus the value of volunteer hours contributed. Volunteer time is valued at \$27 per hour, the average median wage in Kansas.

Community Assessment Tool:

- This tool can be found at www.kansascommerce.gov/community-assessment-toolkit/

CONTACT US

Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) is administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce through its Quality Places Division. Our team is here to support your community with information, guidance, and resources. If you have questions about enrollment, requirements, or program activities, please reach out. Someone from our staff will be happy to help.



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KANSAS
COMMERCE

SAMPLE APPLICATION

This application is for information purposes only. To enroll for the program, this form must be completed online at www.kansascommerce.gov/kce.

KCE Enrollment Application

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in enrolling in the Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) program. Enrollment is open to all Kansas communities committed to strengthening local leadership, volunteerism, collaboration, and quality of place.

Completion of this form serves as your community's agreement to participate in KCE for the 2026–2027 program year, pending review and approval by Kansas Commerce.

Beginning in 2026, this form must be completed annually during the open enrollment period, which runs from **July 1 through August 31** each year. Tier changes can only be made during this enrollment window.

Communities enrolling now during the **Special Enrollment Period (December 1–31, 2025)** will be considered enrolled for the 2026–2027 program year and will not need to reapply until the summer of 2027, unless they choose to update their tier selection.

For details on tier requirements and benefits, please visit www.kansascommerce.gov/kce (<http://www.kansascommerce.gov/kce>).

SECTION 1: COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Community Name (required)

Limit: 300 characters

County (required)

Is your community an incorporated city/town, or an unincorporated community with no formal local government? (required)

- ☐ Incorporated
- ☐ Unincorporated

Population (required)

Select...



SECTION 2: CONTACT INFORMATION

Primary Mailing Address for Group (required)

Country (required)

Select...



Address (required)

Address Line 2 (optional)

City (required)

State, Province, or Region (required)

Zip or Postal Code (required)

Primary Group Contact (required)

First Name (required)

Last Name (required)

Role/Title of the Primary Contact in the Group (required)

Email of Primary Contact (required)

email@example.com

Phone Number of Primary Contact (required)



Secondary Group Contact

First Name

Last Name

Role/Title of the Secondary Contact in the Group

Email of Secondary Contact

Phone Number of Secondary Contact



SECTION 3: COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION DETAILS

Community Program Name (required)

What does your group call itself? For example, Towanda Hometown Action Commission, Iola CITF/PRIDE, Grainfield Community Development Committee, etc.

Type of Organization (required)

- ☐ Nonprofit (501c3, 501c6, etc.)
- ☐ City-led
- ☐ Volunteer-led

☐ Other, please describe below

If "other", please describe:

Program Vision Statement: (required)

Program Mission Statement: (required)

When was your group founded? (required)

Has your group been active the whole time, or did it recently reorganize? (required)

How many active/dedicated volunteers does your group have? (required)

- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ More than 10

An active/dedicated volunteer is anyone who serves on behalf of your KCE group working toward your mission and vision

When, where, and how often does your group meet? (required)

For example, our group meets at the VFW on the 3rd Monday of each month.

When is the last time your community completed a self-assessment (community assessment)? (required)

Please describe a past accomplishment(s) your group is most proud of: (required)

Does this group have a Board of Directors? (required)

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please attach a list of your board members. (Name and title, no biographies.)

Choose File

Upload a file. No files have been attached yet.

Acceptable file types: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .tif, .tiff

Does this group have a current strategic plan, work plan, or priority list? (required)

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please attach your plan.

Choose File

Upload a file. No files have been attached yet.

Acceptable file types: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .tif, .tiff

List at least 1-5 projects or goals your community plans to accomplish in 2026.
(required)

Annual projects and goals can include any fundraisers, events, community improvements, or initiatives that align with KCE's mission and address a local need or opportunity. Please feel free to list more than 5!

If you'd prefer to upload your organization's goals for 2026, please do so.

Choose File

Upload a file. No files have been attached yet.

Acceptable file types: .csv, .doc, .docx, .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .tif, .tiff

What support does your community need most in this upcoming year? Select all that apply. (required)

- ☐ Volunteer Recruitment
- ☐ Project Planning
- ☐ Grant Writing Support
- ☐ Community Assessments/Strategic Planning
- ☐ Leadership Development
- ☐ Connecting with other KCE Communities
- ☐ Trainings or Workshops (please specify below)

What trainings or workshops would you like to see provided in 2026?

Any other needs or suggestions for KCE in 2026?

SECTION 4: ENROLLMENT TIER SELECTION

Please select the tier at which your community would like to participate in 2026.

Annual renewal will occur each year from **July 1 through August 31**. Tier changes may only be made during this open enrollment period.

For details on tier requirements and benefits, please visit www.kansascommerce.gov/kce (<http://www.kansascommerce.gov/kce>).

Enrollment Tier for 2026

Select...



SECTION 5: AGREEMENT AND MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

By enrolling in Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE), both KCE and your community agree to the following expectations and responsibilities:

KCE Will Provide:

- Regular communication, networking opportunities, and resource-sharing
- Access to trainings, workshops, and technical assistance
- Opportunities to apply for grants and recognition programs
- Connections to statewide partners and peer communities
- At least one in-person community visit per year
- A minimum of two annual statewide events

The Community Will:

- Meet the annual requirements for its selected membership tier
- Maintain an active local volunteer leadership group
- Submit reports twice per year
- Actively participate in the program through strong communication, engagement on social media and involvement in KCE activities

☐ **Yes, our community agrees to the KCE MOU.** (required)

By checking this box, you acknowledge that you have read and agree to the 2026 KCE Memorandum of Understanding.

Signature of Board President, CEO, Director, Mayor, etc. (required)

First Name (required)

Last Name (required)

By entering my full legal name here, I warrant that I have read and support this application.

Title of Board President, CEO, Director, Mayor, etc. (required)

Save Draft

Submit Form

Drafts may be visible to the administrators of this program.