

Downtown Revive & Thrive: Rehabilitation for Innovation and Incubator Spaces

Application Guidelines

Opening Date: January 22

Webinar Date: January 29 at 3:00 p.m.

Office Hours: Thursdays at 10 a.m. from February 5 to March 5

Deadline: March 10 at 5:00 p.m.

Downtown Revive & Thrive: Rehabilitation for Innovation and Incubator Spaces

Overview

Rural downtown corridors across Kansas face increasing numbers of vacant and underutilized properties, many of them historic buildings in need of rehabilitation. At the same time, demand is rising for flexible spaces that allow entrepreneurs to test products, develop commercial concepts, and pilot new retail or restaurant ventures.

The Kansas Department of Commerce seeks proposals to revitalize underutilized or historic buildings by transforming them into accessible, modern and sustainable workspaces. These projects will attract entrepreneurs, freelancers and small businesses to rural areas in the state to drive economic growth and foster a resilient local innovation system.

Purpose

This grant supports projects that repurpose existing downtown infrastructure to create spaces and provide equipment for pop-up retail and restaurants that contribute to livable, vibrant communities. This initiative aims to create high-quality workspaces that blend technology, collaboration and historic preservation. The goal is to repurpose existing downtown buildings to create spaces and provide equipment for pop-up retail, restaurants, workspaces, and innovation centers that contribute to livable, vibrant communities.

Goals

- Strengthen the local economy
- Strengthen local partnerships to ensure sustainability of new businesses
- Support small businesses and entrepreneurs by creating flexible spaces that can be used to test products, develop commercial concepts, and pilot new retail or restaurant ventures
- Increase downtown vibrancy and foot traffic
- Create incubator areas or facilities designed for temporary retail or restaurant operations

Eligible Applicants

A private building owner must have an eligible local partnering support organization collaborate on the grant to complete the administration of the grant award. This organization will commit to supporting the project through the fiscal administration of the grant funds (distributing the payments to the building owner), tracking the quarterly financial reports, and ensuring that the building owner is on track with program deadlines. The applicant will also designate a primary point of contact that Commerce will be working with throughout the grant award, who will be responsible for managing communications between the building owners and Commerce as needed. A signed letter from the supporting organization must be included as a required attachment to be eligible.

Eligible supporting and fiscal organizations include designated Kansas Main Street programs, economic development corporations or chambers of commerce, cities, counties, schools, 501(c)3 or 501(c)6 organizations, local community foundations, or tribal nations.

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Timeline

Grant Announcement: January 20

Application Period: January 22 – March 10

Submission Deadline: March 10 at 5:00 p.m.

Award Notification: April 2026

Virtual Office Hour Dates: Thursdays at 10 a.m. from February 5 to March 5

Grant Application Webinar: Thursday, January 29 at 3:00 p.m. – [REGISTER HERE](#)

Application Procedures

- Online application link can be found here:
<https://kansasdepartmentofcommerce.submittable.com/submit>
- Questions and submission of additional documentation should be directed to Maren Lagaly at Maren.Lagaly@ks.gov
- Applications that are incomplete or missing documentation will not be reviewed for rating or considered for funding.

Estimated Time to Complete Application: 2 hours

Funding Availability

- Total Funding Available: \$500,000
- Minimum Award Amount: No minimum
- Maximum Award Amount: \$100,000
- Expected Number of Awards: 5-7
- Period of Performance: May 2026 – November 2028 (30 months)

The Kansas Department of Commerce expects to announce selected grantees in April 2026. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed, and the period of performance date has started.

Eligible Projects

- Buildings must be in the downtown or primary corridor of a rural community.
- Properties must be in cities with a population of less than 5,000.
- Renovates interior space to create a functional incubator or a facility that is designed for temporary retail, workspaces, innovation centers, or restaurant operations.
- Create a space that would increase downtown foot traffic.
- Building must be currently under-utilized or vacant to be eligible.
- Buildings should be older than approximately 30 years. Buildings do not need to be on the historic registry. Buildings made of plain cinder block, metal or another modern building

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material lacking any significant architectural details will not be strong candidates for this grant.

- Projects must show potential for reuse and revitalization as economic drivers in the community.
- The awarded project can include funding from any local, state or federal source, as long as there is no duplication of benefit. Examples include Community Development Block Grant, Community Service Tax Credit Program, USDA Rural Development, State Historic Preservation Office programs or Network Kansas programs.
- Projects must incorporate Main Street Design Guidelines and follow local ordinances and code for rehab/construction/façade improvements.
- The supporting organization and building owners are required to sign a contract agreeing to the conditions of the program.
- Construction must be complete in 24 months with a tenant/incubator in place in 30 months. Building must be occupied and pass any local occupancy permit or local permitting inspection requirements.
- A maximum of \$100,000 per city per year

Business and Building Use

- The intent of this program is to bring the building into use by the end of the grant term, which is 30 months.
- The use of the building must be for one of the following: entrepreneurial flexible spacing, product prototyping or testing commercial concepts spaces, temporary retail, flexible workspaces, innovation centers, or restaurant operations.
- In the application, the final intent of use of the building must be identified, however, this is allowed to change based on community need.
- Building must be currently underutilized or vacant to be eligible.

Ineligible Projects

- Projects that are in communities with a population greater than 5,000 people.
- Renovating buildings that are less than 30 years old.
- Buildings that are already fully occupied with an existing business.

Eligible Program Costs

Masonry, insulation, foundations, roofs and guttering, fire stairs, windows, doors, chimneys, walls, ceilings, floors, interior stairs, elevators, lighting and fixtures, electrical wiring, data and communication, wiring (not including equipment), HVAC systems and components, plumbing systems, fire suppression sprinkler systems, and ADA accessibility solutions. Architecture fees up to 15% project costs. Equipment that supports the business use of the building.

This list is not exhaustive. Project expenses not listed here are at the discretion of the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Commerce for eligibility under the grant. Up to 5% of the grant award may be retained by the support organization for project administration expenses.

Ineligible Program Costs

Acquisition costs or leasing contracts, one-time programming such as speaker feeds, event fees or salaries; consumable products such as food, paper goods, cleaning supplies, etc. This list is not exhaustive. Grant funds are to be utilized for the physical construction of the project or for equipment needed to make the space successful for the business.

Match Requirement

Encouraged but not required; in-kind match allowed

Funding Priorities

Projects will be awarded based upon the following:

- How well the project addresses the challenge of underutilized rural properties and the evolving needs of the livable community
- The feasibility of the project timeline and budget
- The project's potential to strengthen the local economy, support small businesses and entrepreneurs and increase downtown vibrancy
- The strength of partnership and long-term impact
- The project demonstrates that it can operate and thrive beyond the grant period

Authority

The Downtown Revive & Thrive program is funded through state legislatively directed funding. The program is administered by the Office of Rural Prosperity in the Kansas Department of Commerce.

Definitions

KHRI: Kansas Historic Resources Inventory – <https://khri.kansasgis.org/>

SHPO: State Historic Preservation Office

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Project contact: The main person that would be able to answer questions regarding the status of the project and who the internal team would call if there were questions or issues with the project.

Building owner: The owner of the building that is being rehabilitated with these grant funds.

Grant agreement: Also known as the contractual document that Grantees and Building Owners sign with the Department of Commerce at the beginning of their grant period. This document is sent via Legal through DocuSign.

Signee: The official person that has the authority to bind the grantee to the contract issued by the Department of Commerce.

Quarterly report: Narrative of progress including important dates that correspond with their submitted timeline, photos to show progress, roadblocks grantee has faced or are dealing with, and any amendment requests the grantee may have (see amendment definition).

Closeout form: A form to be filled out by the Grantee once the project has been verified as complete by KDC through a final site visit and all reporting completed.

Release of Information: Information submitted to the Kansas Department of Commerce relating to the application may be subject to the Open Records Law (K.S.A. 45-215 et seq.).

Application and Submission Instructions

Application Content

Applications will be accepted online through the Submittable platform and a sample application is available on the program webpage.

Required Attachments

Attachments and support materials must be uploaded into the application through Submittable. Attachments and support materials will not be accepted by any other method. Required attachments are required for eligibility. The required attachments are:

- A letter **signed by both the supporting organization and the building owner** that confirms commitment by both parties to the project. This is required, and projects that are submitted without this information will not be considered.
- Project photos
- A complete and signed copy of the supporting organization's W-9 Form. Blank form [here](#).
- A signed copy of the State Policy Regarding Sexual Harassment Acknowledgment Form signed by the supporting organization. Blank form [here](#).
- A signed copy of the Office of Procurement and Contracts – Certification of Company – signed by the supporting organization. Blank form [here](#).

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- If applying for \$100,000 grant request, a signed Israeli Anti-Boycott Form is required. This form is to be signed by the supporting organization. Blank form [here](#).
- Required for Businesses and Non-Profit Organizations: Screenshot Submission of Kansas Secretary of State Good Standing Status. Link to Business Entity Search [here](#).
 - a. You are not required to pay for a Certificate of Good Standing; a screenshot of the webpage listing for your organization will suffice.
- Required for Individuals, Businesses, and Non-Profit Organizations: Submission Tax Clearance Certificate. Link to apply for a tax clearance certificate [here](#).

Supporting Materials (Optional)

Written estimates by a licensed contractor are encouraged but not required. Quotes that also demonstrate that the project will be completed by the grant deadline are also preferred.

Submission Instructions

Applications are to be submitted through the Submittable online platform. Applicants will need to create an account or log into an existing account prior to completing the application itself. If there are any technical questions, please contact Maren.Lagaly@ks.gov.

Late Applications

To maintain a fair application process, the Kansas Department of Commerce will not accept late grant applications.

For emergency circumstances please contact Trisha Purdon at Trisha.Purdon@ks.gov or 785-289-3763 to discuss any extenuating circumstances that led to late submission.

Application Review Information

Kansas Commerce strives to review grants through an objective and unbiased process. Grants will be reviewed based on rubric criteria by a panel.

VALUE	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
EXEMPLARY	Clearly explains the project and its significant public value, justifying the allocation of financial support from the State of Kansas.	92-100
EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	Satisfactorily explains the project and its public value, justifying the allocation of financial support from the State of Kansas.	80-91
MEETS EXPECTATIONS	Sufficiently explains the project and its public value and may justify the allocation of financial support from the State of Kansas.	68-79
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	Does not sufficiently explain the project or its public value; does not warrant the allocation of financial support from the State of Kansas.	56-67
INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE	Provides an incomplete and/or inadequate explanation of the project or its public value. The information is confusing, not very clear, and/or doesn't give enough details. Does not warrant funding from the State of Kansas.	0-55

Rubric

Grants will be reviewed and scored based on the provided rubric available in the application package.

Scoring

The maximum number of points an application can earn is 100. Reviewers will individually score each application or each section that is assigned to them. A scoring rubric will be published with the grant opportunity and on the grant webpage. Funding priority criteria may be allocated a higher percentage of the total score or weighted more.

Applications must earn enough points for their application to fall under “Meets Expectations”, “Exceeds Expectations”, or “Exemplary” to be recommended for funding. Meeting one of these values does not guarantee funding for a project.

Selection Criteria

Kansas Commerce has \$500,000 available for the Downtown Revive & Thrive program. All grant applications approved by the Department of Commerce will be funded according to the process set forth in the following:

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All applications received by the deadline will be reviewed for eligibility and threshold criteria, as outlined in the guidelines. Eligible applications will then be reviewed and rated according to the established rubric and scoring matrix.

Kansas Department of Commerce may determine which grant applicants will receive state grant funds based on a number of factors, including:

- Grant reviewer scores
- Geographic distribution of grant applicants
- Services to specified populations
- History of grant applicant as a state grantee
- Applicant's capacity to perform the work
- Pre-award capacity assessment of applicant

All awards must be approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

Award Notification

Kansas Commerce strives to notify applicants of awards in a timely manner. Award notification and declination letters will be sent via email mid-April 2026.

Grant Provisions

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses. Kansas will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.

Grant Performance Expectations

In addition to Applicant Eligibility, all grantees are expected to:

- Complete all proposal activities within the grant period
- Include only allowable expenses in the proposal budget
- Comply with all grant administration requirements:
 - Provide the required information for grant award agreement
 - Sign and return the grant award agreement to Commerce within 7 calendar days of receipt.
 - Request approval for any changes to the grant award agreement.
 - Complete a final report no later than December 31, 2028.

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- Maintain complete and accurate grant records, including all documentation, for a minimum of three years after the end of the grant period.
- Comply with the requirements of the State of Kansas Policy Against Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation established by Executive Order 18-04.
- Use the appropriate credit line or approved logo to acknowledge grant funding in all publications. See grant contract for credit requirements.

Accountability and Reporting

- Completion of the quarterly grant reporting form at the following deadlines March 31, June 30, September 30, December 31st.
- Completion of closeout form once the project is completed and building is operational.

Grant Payments

Payments will be distributed in two installments:

- 1st Payment – 75% of award amount – Upon fully executed grant agreement
- 2nd Payment – 25% of award amount – Upon expending 50% of the grant award amount

Release of information

Information submitted to the Kansas Department of Commerce relating to the application may be subject to the Open Records Law (K.S.A. 45-215 et seq.). Confidentiality will not be guaranteed.

Contact Information

For more information about this grant, please contact:

Trisha Purdon
Director, Office of Rural Prosperity
107 ½ N. Pennsylvania Ave, Suite 2C
Independence, KS 67301
Email: Trisha.Purdon@ks.gov
Phone: 785-289-3763

Or

Maren Lagaly
Program Manager, Office of Rural Prosperity
Maren.Lagaly@ks.gov
Phone: 785-289-3436