



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.

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 Kickstart 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 for Kickstart 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 Kickstart 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.
- +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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