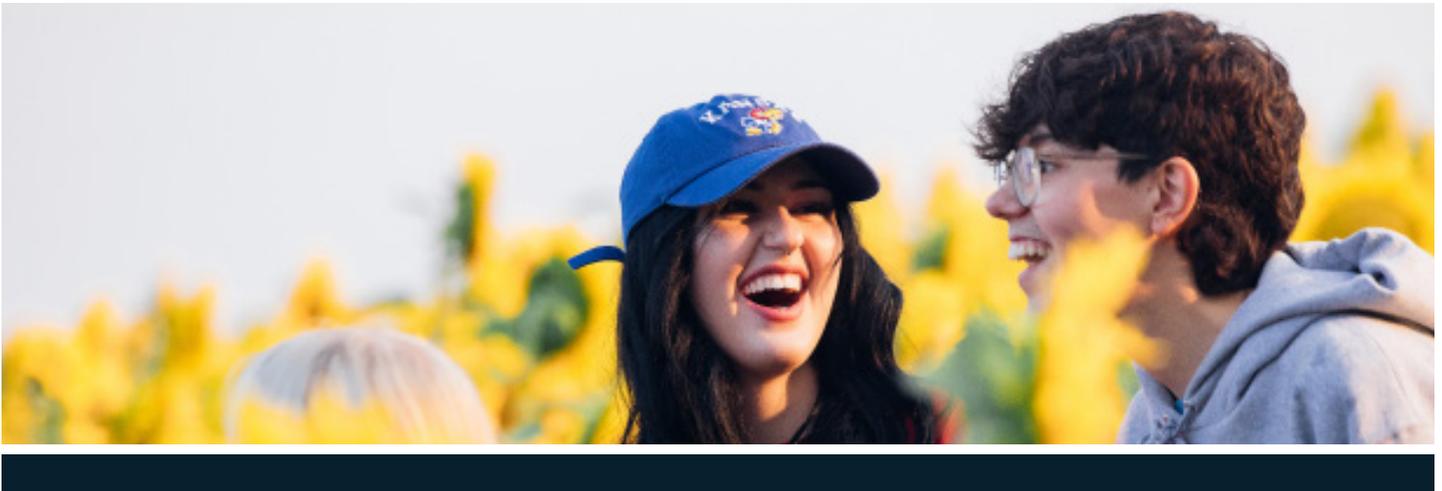




KICKSTART GRANTS



The Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) Grants support locally driven projects that enhance quality of place, strengthen volunteer-led efforts, and promote long-term vibrancy in Kansas communities. The **KICKSTART GRANT** is designed to build engagement, capacity, and community momentum. Projects should kickstart excitement and action!

If you are considering an application and have questions, please contact us.

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KANSAS
COMMERCE

Updated February 2026

PURPOSE

To empower Kansas communities to plan, implement, and sustain quality of place projects that foster engagement, pride, volunteerism, and long-term community vitality. The goals of these grants are to:

- Support community-identified priorities that strengthen quality of place and enhance local pride.
- Empower volunteer-led groups by providing resources that build capacity, momentum, and long-term sustainability.
- Improve public spaces and community assets through visible, meaningful, and locally driven projects.
- Increase community engagement and participation, particularly by involving diverse groups (youth, seniors, civic groups, etc.).
- Foster equitable investment in communities of all sizes, especially small rural communities with limited access to funding.
- Promote long-term community vitality through projects that create lasting benefits and strengthen community identity.

AVAILABLE FUNDING

The total amount of available funding in 2026 is \$40,000. These grants are funded in part by a 2025 grant from The Patterson Family Foundation, the Kansas Health Foundation, the Sunflower Foundation, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas.

This is a rolling deadline grant, meaning Kansas Commerce will review submitted grants every month until all funds have been awarded. The review team will review grant applications on the 15th of each month. Grant funds are limited and are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Applications are open February 1 through December 4, 2026, or until funds are depleted.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Any currently enrolled KCE Community that meets the tier requirements for the grant. All projects must occur in a registered Kansas Community Empowerment city.

Eligible entities:

- County or municipal governments
- Economic Development Organizations
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(6) non-profit organizations
- Community foundations

Organizations that do not fall under one of these eligible entity types, or are unable to work with an eligible entity to apply on their behalf, may still apply by working with a contracted fiscal agent. A contracted fiscal agent is an eligible organization that has a formal, written agreement to sponsor the applicant, receive and manage grant funds on their behalf, and assume legal and financial responsibility for the grant.

Applications submitted using this method must include a Letter of Intent describing the relationship between the applicant and the fiscal agent, and must be submitted using the fiscal agent's account type.

ELIGIBILITY BY COMMUNITY TIER

Organizations participating in the Kansas Community Empowerment City program are classified into one of three registration tiers based on their structure, activity level, and community engagement. Each tier carries specific requirements and corresponds to eligibility for different grant types and funding levels.

Community of Growth:

Eligible for Kickstart Grants up to \$2,000

Requirements:

- Maintain a minimum of three active volunteers
- Establish at least one annual community goal
- Hold a minimum of one meeting per year
- Submit regular reporting twice per year

Community of Action:

Eligible for Kickstart Grants up to \$5,000

Requirements:

- Maintain a minimum of five active volunteers
- Establish at least three annual goals
- Hold a minimum of two meetings per year
- Complete a community assessment within six months of enrollment and update every five years
- Complete at least one annual project valued at \$500 or more
- Submit regular reporting twice per year

Community of Empowerment:

Eligible for Kickstart Grants up to \$5,000

Requirements:

- Maintain a minimum of five active volunteers
- Establish at least three annual community goals
- Hold a minimum of two meetings per year
- Complete a community assessment within six months of enrollment and update every five years
- Complete at least one annual project valued at \$1,000 or more
- Submit regular reporting twice per year

Ineligible Applicants

The following entities are not eligible to apply for KCE grant funding:

- Communities that are not currently enrolled in the Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) program
- Communities that are not in good standing or do not meet the tier requirements for the grant being applied for
- Individuals

- For-profit businesses
- Private companies or corporations
- Political organizations or campaigns
- Organizations applying on behalf of a KCE community that is not in good standing or does not meet the tier requirements

APPLICATION TIMELINE

- February 1, 2026 – Grant application period opens
- February 18, 2026 at Noon – Informational Grant Application Webinar:
- 15th of each month – Applications submitted are reviewed by the Kansas Commerce review team
- Rolling deadline – Applications are accepted and reviewed monthly until funds are fully awarded
- December 4, 2026 – Final day to submit applications (unless funds are depleted earlier)
- Within six months of application approval – Approved projects must be completed

PROGRAM TIMELINE

The KCE Kickstart Grant follows a seven-month timeline beginning upon grant approval, with defined implementation and reporting requirements.

Months 1 – 6: Project startup, implementation, and completion (must be completed within six months of approval)

Month 7: Final Report due by the end of Month 7

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Kickstart Grants support projects that advance a participating KCE community's mission, vision, and locally identified priorities. Projects should be community-driven, feasible in scope, and designed to strengthen local capacity, engagement, or momentum toward community goals.

Eligible projects may include a wide range of activities, provided they are:

- Clearly aligned with the community's adopted mission and vision
- Responsive to a demonstrated community need or opportunity
- Designed to produce a meaningful community benefit within the grant period
- Appropriate in scale and scope for a Kickstart Grant award

Examples include:

- Trash bags for a community cleanup day
- Chalk for a kidfest
- Markers and pens for a community engagement/strategic planning event
- Community vibrancy projects

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects are not eligible for funding if they:

- Do not directly support or advance the KCE community's adopted mission or vision
- Are primarily promotional or marketing-focused rather than community-driven
- Consist solely of advertising or promotional activities, including but not limited to:
 - Website development or maintenance
 - Social media advertising or boosted posts
 - Radio, television, or digital advertisements
 - Print advertising, banners, billboards, or similar marketing materials
- Do not demonstrate a clear public or community benefit

MATCH REQUIREMENTS

1:1 match. Match may be 100% in kind, including volunteer hours valued at a rate of \$28/hour, which is the average hourly wage for Topeka, Kansas, according to [The US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- Online application link can be found here: www.kansascommerce.gov/kce.
- Estimated time to complete an application is 1-2 hours.
- Questions and submission of additional documentation should be directed to Sara Bloom at KDC.KCE@ks.gov.
- Applications that are incomplete or missing documentation will not be reviewed for rating or considered for funding.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be submitted electronically through the Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) online application system through Salesforce. Applications submitted by email, mail, or any method outside the system will not be accepted.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Applications may be saved and returned to prior to submission.
- Changes cannot be made after the application deadline.
- All grant requests should be new projects. Only one application per project may be submitted during a grant cycle unless otherwise noted. Multiple projects may be submitted for consideration, but only one grant may be awarded to a KCE community per grant cycle.
- Each community may receive only one award within a 12-month period. A community awarded funding in 2026 is not eligible to receive another award until 12 months from the date of that award.

AUTHORITY

The Kansas Community Empowerment (KCE) program is administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce and governed by the Kansas PRIDE Incorporated Board.

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.).

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

Attachments and support materials must be uploaded into the application through Salesforce at <https://www.kansascommerce.gov/kce/>.

Attachments and support materials will not be accepted by any other method. Required attachments are required for eligibility. The required attachments are:

1. Bids and Estimates
2. Proof of Matching Funds
3. Updated W-9. Blank form [here](#).
4. A signed copy of the State Policy Regarding Sexual Harassment Acknowledgment Form. Blank form [here](#).
5. Tax Clearance Certificate: Request online at <https://www.kdor.ks.gov/apps/taxclearance/>
6. Covered Technologies Form
7. Proof of Good Standing with the Secretary of State. Request online by creating an account at: https://www.sos.ks.gov/eForms/user_login.aspx?frm=BS (Please note, only a screenshot is needed. Do not purchase a certificate.)
8. If using a Fiscal Agent, a Letter of Intent is required, but not a Tax Clearance Certificate or Proof of Good Standing with the Secretary of State.

Supporting Materials (Optional, but encouraged)

9. Photos
10. Letters of Support

APPLICATION REVIEW

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

APPLICATION CRITERIA

All applications must include:

- Project Description
- Scope of Work
- Total Project Funding Need
- Project Goals
- How will this project be executed?
- Proposed Timeline
- Project Readiness

Application Questions:

1. Describe how volunteers and community members will be involved in planning, implementation, and/or ongoing stewardship of the project, both in the short term and long term.
2. Provide a detailed budget narrative. Explain how each budget item supports the proposed project, why the cost is necessary, and how the overall budget is realistic, reasonable, and aligned with project goals.
3. How does this project support your KCE community's mission and vision?

The Department of Commerce may request any additional information it determines necessary to evaluate an application.

REVIEW CRITERIA

The Kansas Department of Commerce will evaluate all applications based on the following criteria:

- Project Need (20 Points)
- Purpose and Narrative (20 Points)
- Community and Volunteer Involvement (20 Points)
- Project Readiness and Timeline (10 Points)
- Community Benefit (20 Points)
- Feasibility and Budget (10 Points)

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.

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

AWARD NOTIFICATION

Kansas Commerce strives to notify applicants of awards in a timely manner. Awards will be announced at the beginning of each month via email.

GRANT PROVISIONS

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Advertising including website and social media expenses, radio ads, banners, tv ads, etc.
- 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

GRANT PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

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

1. Complete all proposal activities within the grant period
2. Include only allowable expenses in the proposal budget
3. Comply with all grant administration requirements:
 - Provide the required information for grant award agreement
 - Sign and return the grant award agreement to Commerce within 30 calendar days of receipt.
 - Request approval for any changes to the grant award agreement.

- Complete a final report within 30 days of project completion and no later than seven (7) months after the contract start date, whichever occurs first
- 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

Final reports are due within 30 days of project completion and no later than seven (7) months after the contract start date, whichever occurs first.

Reporting Schedule Example:

Project Period: April 1 – September 30, 2026

Final Report Due: No later than October 30, 2026

GRANT PAYMENTS

Grant Payments will be made via check or ACH within 30 days of award announcement.

DEFINITIONS

Annual Goals: Any project, fundraiser, activity, or initiative that aligns with KCE’s mission and addresses a local need or opportunity.

- Goals must be achievable within the calendar year (or have measurable progress within the year).
- Goals 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 \$28 per hour which is the average hourly wage for Topeka, Kansas, according to [The US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

Fiscal Agent: A contracted fiscal agent is an eligible organization that has a formal, written agreement to sponsor the applicant, receive and manage grant funds on their behalf, and assume legal and financial responsibility for the grant.

Fiscal agents may be:

- County or municipal governments
- Economic Development Organizations
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(6) non-profit organizations
- Community Foundations
- Bank, lawyer, accountant, or other financial firm

If the Grantee utilizes a fiscal agent, the Grantee shall designate a fiscal agent acceptable to Commerce. The fiscal agent shall be responsible for entering into a contract with the KCE community, receiving funds, tracking all income and expenses, writing checks for all invoices, providing a detailed income and expense report at the completion of the project, and communicating with Commerce as needed for the project in accordance with the grant agreement.

The Grantee remains fully responsible for compliance with all terms of the grant agreement, including reporting, record keeping, and allowable use of funds, regardless of the use of a fiscal agent. Any change in fiscal agent must receive prior written approval from Commerce. Fiscal agents should be good stewards of the funds and ensure they are used in compliance with this contract. The fiscal agent is only required to manage state funds related to the project.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Kansas Commerce will announce the amount of funds available for the KCE Kickstart and Impact grants, subject to funding availability. All grant applications approved by the Department of Commerce will be funded according to the process set forth in the following:

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.

KANSAS

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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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