

Towns Grant

Application Guidelines

Opening Date: Friday, October 23, 2026

Webinar Date: Friday, October 30th at 10:00 AM Central Time

Office Hour Dates: 10:00 AM on the following Fridays during the application window – November 13th and 20th, December 4, and December 18th. In addition, a final office hours will be held on December 23rd at 10:00 AM.

Deadline: Wednesday, December 23, 2026, at 5PM

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Overview

Recognizing the similar challenges of the smallest communities and distressed urban neighborhoods in creating welcoming and compelling places, Commerce launched this new grant program to support small-scale quality of place projects that create quick, meaningful results in rural communities and distressed urban zip codes.

Purpose

The Towns Grant Program helps communities tackle local challenges through small-scale projects that deliver quick, visible results. By increasing access to state resources, it aims to boost community engagement, build local capacity, and encourage more small towns and distressed urban areas to apply for funding.

Goals

- Increase local capacity
- Grow community and youth engagement
- Mobilize volunteers
- Increase investment in community and businesses
- Increase the number of new communities applying for and winning Commerce grant awards

Eligible Applicants

- Applicants must represent a community with a population of 5,000 or less
- OR a distressed urban zip code as defined by the US Census Bureau Distressed communities index report.
- One applicant submission per community
- A single entity must be selected to serve as the primary applicant; however, the project could include collaboration between partners
- Applicant must be one of the following:
 - County or municipal government
 - Community or economic development organization
 - Local Chamber of Commerce
 - Community foundations
 - 501(c)3 or 501(c)6 nonprofit organization
 - Tribal organization

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Ineligible Applicants

- Towns with a population of more than 5,000, unless the zip code is considered a distressed urban zip code as defined by the US Census Bureau DCI Report.
- Urban zip codes not defined as distressed by the US Census Bureau DCI report.

Timeline

Grant Announcement: October

Application Period: October 23- December 23, 2026

Submission Deadline: December 23 at 5:00 PM Central Time

Award Notification: February 2027

Virtual Office Hours: 10:00 AM on the following Fridays during the application window – November 13th and 20th, December 4, and December 18th and Wednesday December 23 at 10:00AM

Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89905546328?pwd=7sanuVVuw70wGBORgxTs7EaFmsIb2a.1>

Informational/Grant Application Webinar:

Date: Friday, October 30th

Time: 10:00 AM Central Time

Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83668335286?pwd=r4HNrbeaRjJS0n040Mx3OQaXMxUy61.1>

Application Procedures

- Online application link can be found here: www.kansascommerce.gov/towns/
- Questions and submission of additional documentation should be directed to the Towns team at Towns@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: \$1,000

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- Maximum Award Amount: \$25,000
- Maximum Award Amount for projects across multiple zip codes: \$50,000
- Expected Number of Awards: 10-20
- Period of Performance: April 1, 2027, to April 1, 2028

The Kansas Department of Commerce expects to announce selected grantees in February 2027. This timeline is contingent upon the completion and processing of grant contracts. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed.

Eligible Projects

Projects should bring people together, spark community pride, and create visible momentum in communities. Eligible projects should focus on community development and revitalization efforts that improve quality of life, strengthen community vibrancy, and make neighborhoods more welcoming, engaging, and attractive. Projects may include art installations, murals, signage, beautification efforts, and other creative improvements that inspire community participation, build local momentum, and help open the door to future opportunities. Projects spanning multiple zip codes require genuine multi-community or multi-zip code projects with substantive eligible activities and costs in each zip code. Projects must be completed within twelve months of the date of the award agreement.

Eligible Program Costs Examples

- Funds must be used for tangible projects
- Community placemaking improvements such as downtown seating, equipment for main street sound systems, gathering places, renovations to a public community building, and park and recreation equipment
- Signage for communities, including welcome signs, downtown light pole banners (including brackets and hardware), and wayfinding signs (not signage for a business)
- Benches, beautification, pocket parks, or permanent public art or murals
- Equipment that will be used to improve the overall look and feel of the community, the downtown, or amenities that help community members gather together.
- Trash receptacles, planters and plants, bike racks, etc.
- Downtown building window cleanup and paint, including cleaning supplies (paint, curtains, lighting, brooms, etc. to help clean storefronts of vacant properties or downtown cleanup)

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- Small downtown infrastructure needs, such as sidewalks, curbs, accessibility improvements, or pedestrian lighting (not full streetscape)

Ineligible Projects

New building construction, programming, speaker or event fees, salaries, LED or electric signs, strategic planning, consultant reviews, and architect or engineering reports. This list is not exhaustive. If you have questions on eligibility, please contact Towns@ks.gov.

Match Requirement

Applicants are required to demonstrate investment in the projects by providing a minimum match of 10% cash match for communities of 1001 – 5000 population. If a community has a population of less than or equal to 1,000 people, the match can be fully in-kind match for the 10% requirement. However, cash match is still encouraged for communities of 1,000 or less population. Match must come from private sources or non-state-funded grants.

Funding Priorities

Communities that have not received funding from the Kansas Department of Commerce since 2019 will receive additional points in the scoring and review process.

Authority

The Towns grant 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

50% Complete: When looking at the original scope of work outlined in the application, the project is halfway completed.

100% Complete: Grant and matching funds have been spent, a final visit has taken place (for construction-related projects), reporting is completed, and a closeout form has been submitted.

Amendment Request: Form to complete if scope of work needs to be change, a change in budget that is more than 10% of the overall budget, and/or timeline changes. This form is available in Salesforce, please email Towns@ks.gov to access this form.

Distressed urban zip code: Urban communities that are shown with a dark orange color as listed on the US Census Bureau's Distressed Communities Index Report that is found [here](#):

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<https://eig.org/distressed-communities-interactive/?regions%5B0%5D=20&geo=states&lat=38.51&lon=-98.32&z=6.96>

Grantee: Organization that will serve as the primary point person for the project. This organization will be responsible for checking that all documentation (receipts, pictures, financial statements, invoices, etc.) is uploaded to Salesforce.

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

Multi-Zip Code Project: Projects spanning multiple zip codes require genuine multi-community project with substantive eligible activities and costs in each zip code. Projects should be similar in grant award amounts in both zip codes or a reasonably equitable split between the projects to be considered for the maximum award of \$50,000.

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

Quarterly Report: Narrative of progress, including important dates that correspond with their submitted timeline, photos to show progress, roadblocks that they have faced or are dealing with, as well as receipts for project expenses.

SHPO: State Historic Preservation Office

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

Towns Review Team: the number of reviewers needed is based on the sections of the application and are assigned based on the reviewer's area of expertise.

Urban Community: An urban community is a town of 50,000 population or higher

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.).

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Application and Submission Instructions

Application Content

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

Required Attachments

Attachments and support materials must be uploaded into the application through Salesforce. Attachments and support materials will not be accepted by any other method.

Required attachments are required for eligibility. The required attachments are:

1. Bids & Estimates – Provide bids &/or estimates for the proposed project costs.
2. Proof of Matching Funds – Provide proof of a 10% match from private or non-state sources (in-kind allowed for communities under 1,000), such as a signed bank letter or grant award letter.
3. Letters of support – Provide at least 1 letter of support; applicants may include up to 3.
4. Completed and signed W-9 form for the applicant organization. Blank form is on the Towns website.
5. Signed copy of the State Policy Regarding Sexual Harassment Acknowledgment Form. Blank form [here](#).
6. Signed copy of the Covered Technologies Form. Blank form [here](#).

Supporting Materials (Optional)

- Project Photos – Maximum of 10 photos
- Screenshot Submission of Kansas Secretary of State Good Standing Status – Commerce requires that businesses and non-profit applicants be in good standing with the Kansas Secretary of State (SOS) at time of submission and throughout duration of the grant to receive funds. Please provide a screenshot of organization's current status using the Business Entity Search linked [here](#).
- Submission of Tax Clearance Certificate – All applicants, except hospitals, libraries and government entities must provide a Tax Clearance Certificate from the Kansas Department of Revenue (KDOR). Request Tax Clearance Certificate [here](#). *Note: It could take up to 48 hours to receive the certificate so plan ahead! Certificates are good for 90 days.

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Submission Instructions

Applications are to be submitted through the Salesforce 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 Towns@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@ks.gov 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.

Rubric

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

VALUE	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
EXEMPLARY	Clearly explains the project and its significant public value, justifying the allocation of financial support from the State of Kansas.	80-100
MEETS EXPECTATIONS	Sufficiently explains the project and its public value, and may justify the allocation of financial support from the State of Kansas.	50-79
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.	0-49

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 score an average of 50 or higher to be recommended for funding. Meeting one of these values does not guarantee funding for a project.

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Selection Criteria

There is \$500,000 in available funding for this round of the Towns grant. All grant applications approved by the Department of Commerce will be considered, subject to available funding and final approval, according to the process outlined 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. Commerce reserves the right to determine final awards based on the following factors, including but not limited to:

- 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
- Other programmatic considerations

In addition, all awards must be approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

Award Notification

Kansas Commerce strives to notify applicants of awards in a timely manner. All applicants will be notified via email of the funding determination for their application.

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.

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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 no later than April 1, 2028.
 - 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 in Salesforce at the following deadlines June 30, September 30, December 31, March 31.
- Completion of closeout form in Salesforce once the project is complete and all reporting requirements have been met.

Grant Payments

Awarded projects will be funded on the following schedule with the corresponding project milestones and deadlines:

- Payment 1 – 50% of the grant is processed once contract is signed
- Payment 2 – 50% of the grant is processed once project(s) is 50% complete

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.

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Contact Information

For more information about this grant, please contact:

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