Towns Grant Informational Webinar

Thursday, October 30th at 10:00 AM Central Time

What we'll cover:

- Purpose
- Grant Guidelines
- Timeline
- Application Components
- Rubric & Funding Priorities
- Office Hours
- Q & A

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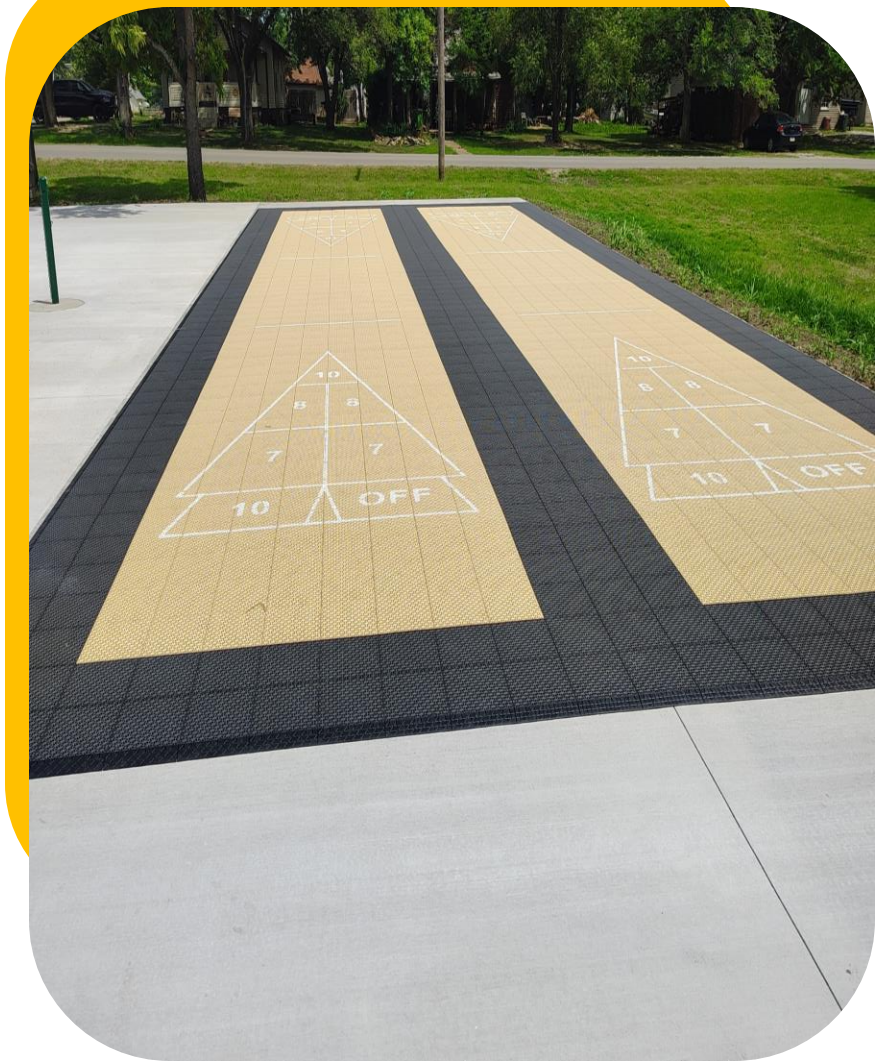
Purpose

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 towns to apply for future funding.



Towns Grant Guidelines

Applicants are required to demonstrate investment in the projects by providing a minimum match of 10%, which can be a combination or all in-kind if the population is 1,000 or less.

$1,000

Minimum Request

$25,000

Maximum Award Amount (single zip code)

$50,000

Maximum Award Amount (multiple zip codes)

Match must come from private sources or non-state-funded grants.

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Towns Grant Award Timeline

Application Opens

The Salesforce application portal opens on Friday, October 23.

Office Hours

10:00 – 11:00 AM on these Fridays: November 13 & 20, December 4 and 18th and December 23rd.

Application Closes

The Salesforce application portal closes at 5:00 PM on Wednesday, December 23rd, 2026.

Awards Announced

Awards announced in February 2027

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Towns Grant Project Timeline

Project Start

Construction must begin with 4 months of a fully executed grant agreement.

Project Complete

Project must be completed by April 1, 2028, or 12 months from date of grant agreement.

Eligible Applicants

- Applicants must represent a community with a population of 5,000 or less
- OR distressed urban zip codes as defined by the US Census Bureau DCI 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

Project Eligibility

- Funds must be used for tangible projects
- Community placemaking improvements such as downtown seating, equipment for main street sound systems, gathering places, 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
- 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)
- Small downtown infrastructure needs, such as sidewalks, curbs, accessibility improvements, or pedestrian lighting (not full streetscape)

Ineligible Expenses

New construction costs, 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.

Application Components

- Application Narrative
- Timeline(s) – can submit up to 3 projects
- Budget(s) – can submit up to 3 projects
- Bid & Estimates
- Proof of Matching Funds
- Letters of Support
- Fiscal Forms – W9, Sexual Harassment Policy, Covered Technologies Form, Screenshot of Good Standing, Tax Clearance
- Photos

Scoring Rubric

	Exemplary	Meets Expectations	Insufficient Evidence
Community Engagement & Impact – 30 Points Possible	Strong evidence of community involvement, clear plan for engagement, and well-defined positive impact on community pride, participation, and long-term benefit. (22 - 30 Points)	Some community involvement is demonstrated, and impact is generally clear, but engagement strategy or long-term benefit is limited. (12-21 Points)	Minimal or unclear community involvement and weak or unsupported community impact. (1-11 Points)
Funding Need & Addressing Community Challenge – 25 Points Possible	The project clearly articulates the community challenge or problem being addressed. The project scope, purpose, and rationale are well-defined, and the need for funding is clearly justified. The proposed approach demonstrates a strong understanding of the issue and how the project will address it. (16-25 Points)	The application identifies the community challenge or problem being addressed, but the project plan, rationale, or execution strategy lacks full clarity or detail. (7-15 Points)	The project description is unclear, incomplete, or lacks sufficient detail to understand the project scope, purpose, relevance, or community need. (1-6 Points)
Timeline – 20 Points Possible	Timeline is clear, detailed, realistic, and includes defined monthly milestones. The project demonstrates strong readiness to begin upon award ("shovel-ready") and shows a high likelihood of completion before the required 12-month timeframe. (15-20 Points)	Timeline is generally clear and includes basic milestones with reasonable expectations for completion. Minor concerns may exist regarding feasibility, weather impacts, scheduling, or the ability to complete the project within 12 months.(7-14 Points)	Timeline is vague, incomplete, or lacks sufficient detail to assess feasibility. Project start date is dependent on other corresponding projects or contractors that are not confirmed. (1-6 Points)
Continued			

Scoring Rubric

	Exemplary	Meets Expectations	Insufficient Evidence
Past Commerce Awards – 10 Points Possible	Community hasn't received any funding from the Kansas Department of Commerce since 2019 or has received less than $10,000. (8-10 Points)	Community has received 1-2 grants from the Kansas Department of Commerce since 2019 or funding less than $200,000. (4-7 Points)	Community has grants from the Kansas Department of Commerce since 2019 exceeding $200,000. (1-3 Points)
Budget – 10 Points Possible	Budget is complete, realistic, and well-aligned with the project scope. Costs are clearly justified and supported by detailed bids, contractor quotes, estimates, or pricing documentation that directly correspond to the proposed work. (8-10 Points)	Budget is generally complete and reasonable, though minor gaps may exist in cost detail, alignment to the project scope, or supporting documentation such as bids and estimates. (4-7 Points)	Budget is incomplete, unclear, unrealistic, or poorly aligned with the project scope. Supporting bids, estimates, or justification are insufficient or missing. (1-3 Points)
Supporting Documentation – 5 Points Possible	Application includes strong supporting documentation, such as letters of support, detailed project materials, contractor quotes, estimates, and/or specific project plans that clearly align with the proposed scope and partner roles. (4-5 Points)	Application includes required letters of support and some supporting materials; however, documentation, partner roles, project plans, or estimates may lack detail or specificity. (2-3 Points)	Required letters of support or supporting materials are missing, incomplete, or not aligned with the proposed project. (1 Point)
Total: 100 Points			

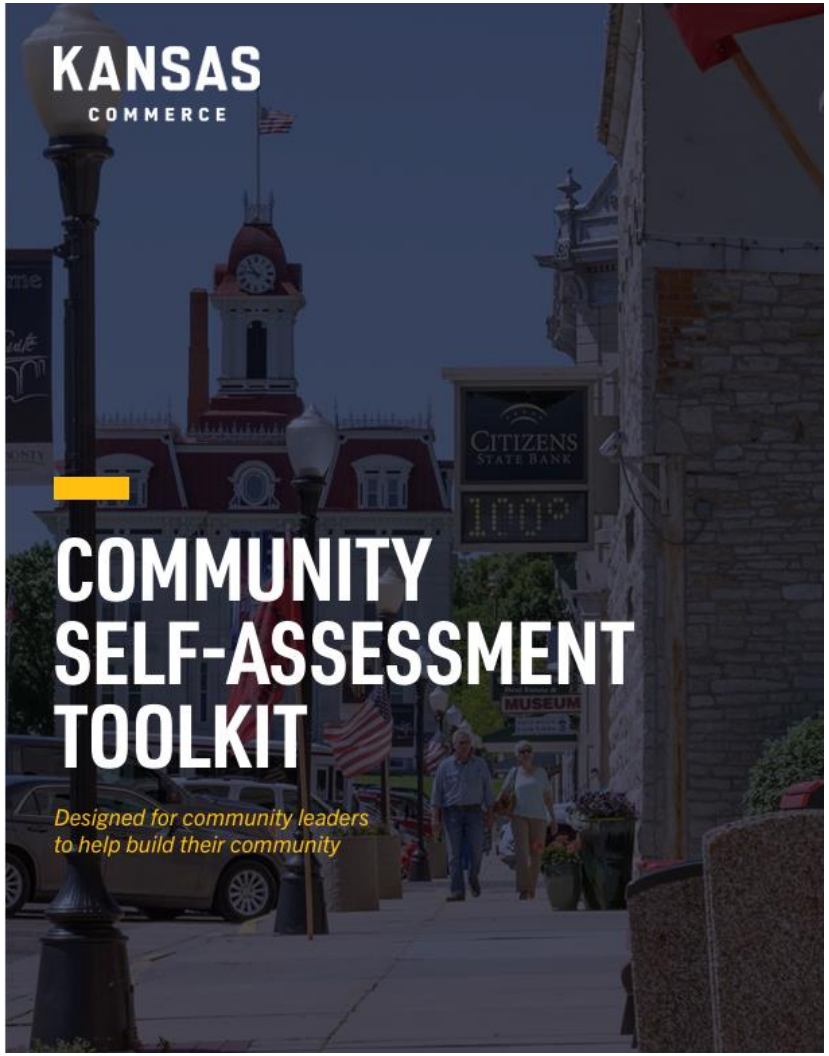
Selection Criteria

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

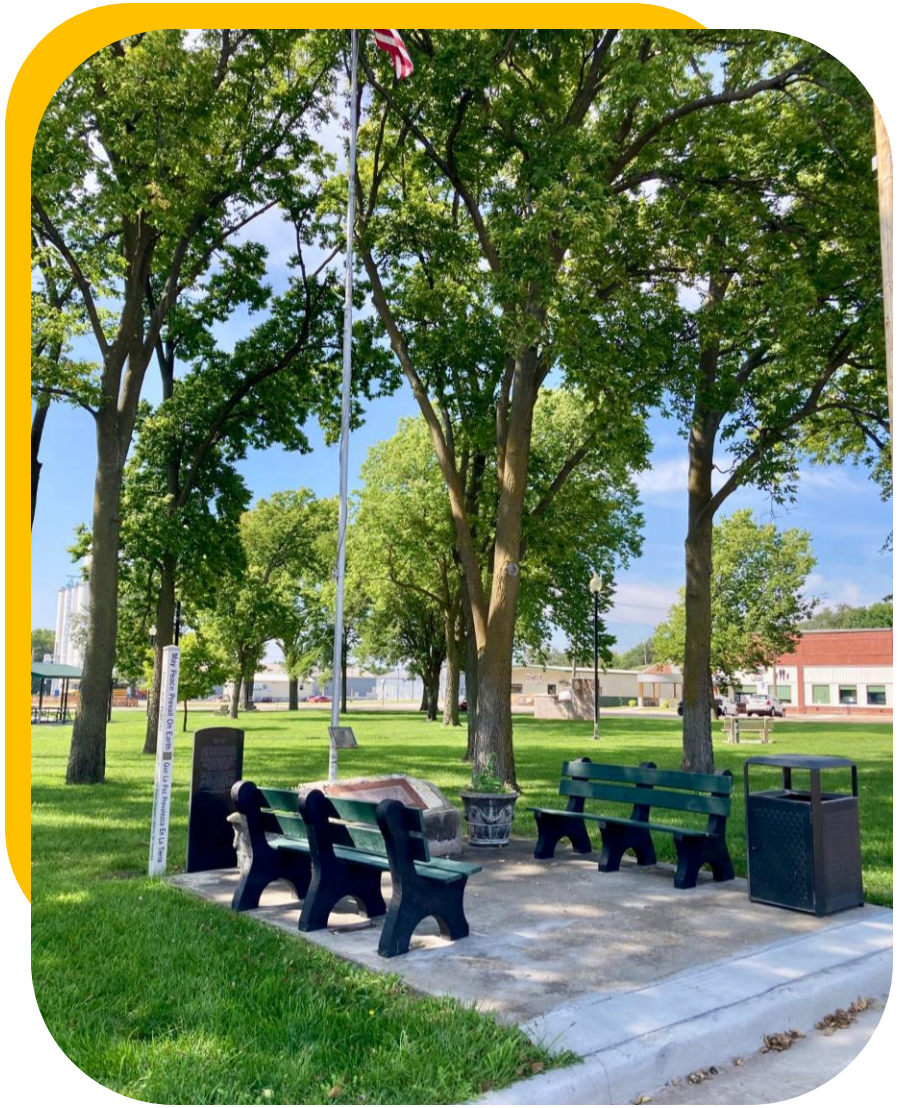
- Grant reviewer scores
- Geographic distribution of grant applicants
- Services to specified populations
- History of grant applicant as a state grantee
- Applicant's capacity to perform the work
- Pre-award capacity assessment of applicant

All awards must be approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

Community Self-Assessment Toolkit



Available on the Towns program webpage!
www.kansascommerce.gov/towns/



Office Hours

10:00 – 11:00 AM Central Time on the following Thursdays:

- November 13
- November 20
- December 4
- December 18
- December 23

Registering in advance to attend these Zoom sessions. The link to register for each session is available on the program webpage.

Questions?
Join virtual office hours or contact us at Towns@ks.gov!

Let’s Talk

www.kansascommerce.gov

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