



Building Local Opportunity through Coordinated Kansas-Investment (BLOCK) Application Guidelines

Opening Date: September 7, 2026
Webinar Date: September 11, 2026

Deadline: September 30, 2026

Overview

The Building Local Opportunity through Coordinated Kansas-Investment (BLOCK) Program is a competitive placemaking initiative designed to create a dramatic, highly visible transformation of one Kansas downtown block through coordinated public and private investment. BLOCK will provide up to \$500,000 to one eligible community to bring multiple properties, projects, partners and investments together around a single block-level transformation. While exterior improvements are expected to be the primary focus, strategic interior improvements may also be eligible when they contribute to the overall transformation and can be completed within the required timeline. The winning community will be expected to move quickly, make big changes, create a visible “wow” factor and demonstrate how the investment will contribute to long-term economic impact.

Purpose

The purpose of BLOCK is to demonstrate what can happen when a community stops looking at downtown projects one building at a time and instead coordinates investment across an entire block. Inspired by the rapid, collaborative transformations popularized by “extreme makeover” programs, BLOCK brings community partners, property owners, businesses, contractors and resources together to create a visible, concentrated transformation in a short period of time. **Communities will be expected to begin and finish all construction and rehabilitation efforts within a 14-day window.** The program is intended to leverage existing, current and future public and

private investments and other public and private resources to address deteriorated, vacant or underutilized properties; improve the appearance and functionality of downtown; support businesses and housing; strengthen community identity; and catalyze additional private investment. BLOCK is designed as a rapid implementation initiative. The award will be made in late September or early October 2026, and the funded transformation must be complete before December 15, 2026.

Goals

- Address deteriorated, vacant, blighted or underutilized properties.
- Create a dramatic and highly visible “before and after” transformation.
- Transform one complete downtown block containing at least three structures.
- Once construction and rehabilitation efforts are ready to begin, the transformation must be complete within 10-14 days.
- Coordinate multiple properties, property owners, businesses and community partners.
- Leverage past, current and future public/private investments.
- Stimulate additional private investment.
- Strengthen existing businesses and create opportunities for new businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Support housing opportunities where feasible.
- Improve downtown aesthetics, functionality, activity and quality of place.
- Demonstrate the economic impact that can result from concentrated, coordinated investment.
- Create a project that can serve as a model for other Kansas communities.

Eligible Applicants

- Kansas nonprofit organizations.
- Kansas units of local government, including cities, counties and other eligible governmental entities.
- Tribal Nations located in Kansas.

Ineligible Applicants

- Individuals.
- For-profit businesses applying independently.
- Applicants that cannot demonstrate control, participation or documented cooperation from the property owners necessary to complete the proposed project.
- Applicants that cannot demonstrate the ability to complete the proposed improvements within the required project period.
- Applicants that do not have the required matching funds available at the time of application.

Timeline

Grant Announcement: September 9, 2026

Application Period: September 11-30, 2026

Submission Deadline: September 30, 2026

Award Notification: October 9, 2026

Block Completion and Reveal: No later than December 15, 2026

Informational/Grant Application Webinar:

Date: September 11, 2026

Time: 1:00pm

Link: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

Application Procedures

- Online application link can be found here: [Grant Application](#)
- Questions and submission of additional documentation should be directed to Sara Bloom at Sara.Bloom@ks.gov
- Applications that are incomplete or missing documentation will not be reviewed for rating or considered for funding.

Estimated Time to Complete Application: Approximately 20–30 hours, excluding time required to obtain contractor quotes, property-owner commitments, matching-fund documentation and other supporting materials.

Funding Availability

BLOCK is a competitive grant program funded through state resources.

- **Total Funding Available:** \$500,000
- **Minimum Award Amount:** No minimum
- **Maximum Award Amount:** \$500,000
- **Expected Number of Awards:** One
- **Period of Performance:** Award date through December 15, 2026

The Kansas Department of Commerce expects to announce the selected grantee in late September or early October 2026.

If selected, the grantee may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed and the period of performance has started.

Important: Due to the accelerated implementation schedule, applicants should be prepared to begin work immediately upon execution of the grant agreement.

Eligible Projects

BLOCK is intended to support **rapid, highly visible improvements that collectively transform an entire downtown block.**

The primary focus is expected to be exterior improvements. However, strategic interior improvements may be eligible when they support the larger block transformation, provide a clear economic or community benefit and can reasonably be completed before December 15, 2026

Examples include:

Exterior Improvements

- Facade improvements
- Exterior painting
- Tuckpointing and masonry repair
- Building stabilization
- Awnings
- Signage
- Windows and doors
- Exterior lighting
- Architectural details and trim
- Landscaping
- Planters
- Pocket parks
- Outdoor gathering spaces
- Wayfinding signage
- Sidewalk and small-scale streetscape improvements

Interior Improvements

- Electrical improvements
- Interior lighting improvements
- Accessibility improvements

Other Eligible Improvements

Other improvements may be considered if they:

1. Are directly connected to the proposed BLOCK transformation;
2. Are reasonable and necessary for the project;
3. Are allowable under the applicable funding source;
4. Can reasonably be completed within the project period; and
5. Contribute to the overall economic vitality, appearance, functionality or quality of place of the block.

Ineligible Projects

BLOCK funds may not be used for:

- Any project that cannot reasonably be completed within the project period.
- Major construction projects requiring a multi-year implementation schedule.
- Improvements that primarily benefit a single property without contributing to the overall block transformation.
- Projects that are not located within the designated project block.
- Projects that do not demonstrate participation by the affected property owner(s).
- Routine maintenance that does not contribute to a meaningful transformation.

The purpose of BLOCK is not to completely renovate one building. The purpose is to create a coordinated transformation of an entire block.

Eligible Program Costs

Eligible costs may include reasonable and necessary costs directly associated with approved project activities, including:

- Construction labor
- Contractor labor
- Skilled trades
- Exterior painting
- Masonry and tuckpointing
- Building stabilization
- Construction and improvement materials
- Sign fabrication and installation
- Awning fabrication and installation
- Windows and doors
- Lighting
- Landscaping
- Streetscape materials and improvements
- Electrical improvements

- Accessibility improvements
- Design and professional services directly related to eligible project activities
- Other costs approved by Kansas Commerce

Ineligible Program Costs

Ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- HVAC and Plumbing improvements
- Public Art and Murals
- Flooring
- Interior painting
- Interior stabilization
- Fundraising expenses
- Political contributions or lobbying expenses
- Entertainment
- Fines or penalties
- Bad debts
- Late fees or finance charges
- Contingency funds
- Costs incurred before the grant period begins
- Costs unrelated to the approved project
- Costs associated with projects outside the designated BLOCK area
- Routine maintenance that does not contribute to the approved transformation
- Unapproved equipment purchases
- Costs that are prohibited by the applicable funding source

Unless specifically approved by Kansas Commerce, ineligible project costs may not be counted toward the required match.

Match Requirement

BLOCK requires a 1:1 match, with matching funds and contributions committed and available at the time of application. Of the required match, at least 75% must be provided through cash or grant funds, while up to 25% may be provided through documented in-kind contributions.

For example, an applicant requesting the maximum \$500,000 BLOCK award must provide:

- At least \$375,000 in cash match, and
- Up to \$125,000 in eligible in-kind contributions,
- For a total minimum match of \$500,000.

Eligible match may include cash contributions, grants, documented in-kind contributions, and public or private investments made in the proposed block after July 1, 2024.

Examples may include:

- Cash contributions from the applicant, property owners, businesses, local government, nonprofits, foundations, or other partners;

- Grants or other committed funding from public or private sources;
- Public or private investments made in the proposed block within the previous 24 months;
- Donated professional labor or professional services;
- Donated or discounted construction materials, supplies, equipment, or furnishings;
- Donated design, architecture, landscaping, marketing, signage, or other professional services; and
- Other documented contributions that directly support completion of the BLOCK transformation.

In-kind contributions must be necessary, reasonable, directly related to the approved project and documented. Applicants may be required to provide documentation establishing the value of donated goods, equipment, labor or services.

Volunteer labor that is not directly related to eligible project activities is not eligible as match.

Match Documentation

Applicants must provide documentation demonstrating that all matching funds and contributions are committed and available at the time of application. For previously completed public or private investments, applicants must provide documentation demonstrating that the investment was made after July 1, 2024 and directly supports the proposed BLOCK transformation.

Acceptable documentation may include bank statements, committed cash reserves, executed funding agreements, grant award documentation, letters of commitment, invoices or receipts for prior investments, contractor estimates identifying donated or discounted labor or services, material donation commitments, volunteer commitments, or other documentation acceptable to Commerce.

Applicants are encouraged to leverage private-sector contributions whenever possible. Communities demonstrating match above the required 1:1 ratio and/or significant private-sector participation may receive additional consideration during scoring.

Funding Priorities

BLOCK funding will prioritize projects that:

- Demonstrate exceptional readiness to begin immediately following award.
- Can realistically be completed before December 15, 2026
- Create a dramatic and highly visible transformation.
- Address multiple buildings and properties across the block.
- Coordinate the efforts of multiple property owners and businesses.
- Leverage multiple public/private programs and investments. Examples include:
 - CDBG, Community Development Block Grant
 - HEAL/E-HEAL, Historic Economic Asset Lifeline
 - Downtown Revive and Thrive
 - ROOMS, Residential Opportunities on Main Street

- SIGNS, Supporting Innovative Growth through New Signage
- The Heritage Trust Fund
- Historic Preservation Fund
- Kansas State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit
- Generate significant private investment.
- Address vacant, deteriorated or underutilized properties.
- Improve downtown business recruitment, retention and expansion opportunities.
- Support housing opportunities.
- Strengthen community identity and quality of place.
- Demonstrate strong public-private partnerships.
- Have measurable long-term economic impact.
- Can serve as a model for other Kansas communities.

Definitions

BLOCK: The Building Local Opportunity through Coordinated Kansas-Investment Program, a competitive placemaking initiative designed to coordinate investment across an entire downtown block.

BLOCK Area: A single downtown block containing at least three structures identified by the applicant and approved by Kansas Commerce.

Transformation: A coordinated set of improvements that collectively creates a substantial and visible change in the appearance, functionality, activity or economic potential of the BLOCK area.

Eligible Applicant: A Kansas nonprofit organization, eligible unit of local government or Tribal Nation that meets all program requirements.

Nonprofit Organization: An organization organized and operating for purposes other than making a profit for its owners or members and recognized as tax-exempt under applicable federal law, where required.

Unit of Government: An eligible Kansas city, county or other governmental entity authorized to participate in the program.

Tribal Nation: A federally recognized Indian Tribe or Tribal Nation eligible to participate in state programs under applicable law.

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

Applicants must provide sufficient information for reviewers to understand:

1. The location and condition of the proposed BLOCK.
2. The vision for the completed transformation.
3. Specific improvements proposed for each property.
4. How the improvements will create a cohesive block-wide transformation.
5. The contractors, vendors and partners responsible for completing the work.
6. The ability to complete the work before December 15, 2026
7. Existing and proposed public/private investments.
8. Matching funds and additional leveraged investment.
9. Long-term economic impact.
10. Community and property-owner participation.

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:

1. A signed copy of the State Policy Regarding Sexual Harassment Acknowledgment Form. Blank form [here](#).
2. Project area map
3. Parcel/property map
4. Current photographs of the entire block
5. Property inventory
6. Detailed project budget
7. Contractor/vendor list
8. Contractor quotes or commitments for major work
9. Letters of support/agreement to participate from property owners
10. Project timeline
11. Weather/contingency plan
12. Documentation of required matching funds
13. Property owner participation documentation
14. Letters of commitment/support from key partners
15. Documentation of existing or proposed public/private investments
16. SHPO approval or clearance, when applicable, for proposed improvements to properties subject to historic preservation review.

Supporting Materials (Optional)

Applicants are also encouraged to provide:

- Before-and-after renderings.
- Design concepts.
- Color or material boards.
- Letters from businesses or property owners.
- Documentation of additional private investment.
- Additional community support documentation.
- Other materials demonstrating the potential impact of the project.

Late Applications

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

For emergency circumstances, please contact Matt Godinez, Assistant Secretary of Commerce, or Sara Bloom, Quality Places Director, to discuss any extenuating circumstances that led to late submission.

Matt Godinez: Matt.Godinez@ks.gov | Sara Bloom: Sara.Bloom@ks.gov

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 will announce the amount of funds available for the BLOCK Grant 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.

Award Notification

Kansas Commerce strives to notify applicants of awards in a timely manner. Kansas Commerce anticipates notifying applicants of the funding decision by October 9, 2026. The selected grantee will be notified using the contact information provided in the application.

The grant award will be subject to execution of a grant agreement and completion of all required pre-award documentation.

Grant Provisions

The selected grantee will be required to comply with all applicable Kansas laws, regulations, policies, grant agreement provisions and requirements associated with the funding source. Grant funds may only be used for eligible activities approved by Kansas Commerce.

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.
- Costs incurred outside the grant period.
- Costs not included in or approved under the grant budget.
- Costs that do not directly support the approved BLOCK project.
- Costs associated with projects outside the approved BLOCK area.
- Costs that cannot reasonably be completed within the grant period.
- Other expenses prohibited by the applicable funding source.

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. Applicants are expected to partner with private property owners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, contractors, developers and other public or private entities to implement the project.
4. 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 December 31, 2026
 - 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

Because BLOCK is a rapid implementation program, grantees will not be required to provide written reports, but will be expected to give regular updates during the project period. A final report at the completion of the BLOCK Area will be required by December 31, 2026.

The final report will include:

- Description of completed activities.
- Final project expenditures.
- Documentation of matching funds.
- Before-and-after photographs.
- Description of businesses/properties impacted.
- Private investment leveraged.
- Other measurable outcomes.
- Lessons learned and potential for replication.

Grant Payments

BLOCK grant funds will be disbursed in **two payments**:

- **50% upon award and execution of the grant agreement.** The first payment will be issued after the grant agreement is fully executed and all required pre-award documentation has been received and approved by Kansas Commerce.
- **50% upon completion of the approved project.** The final payment will be issued after Kansas Commerce has received and approved required completion documentation, including a final report, final project budget/expenditures, documentation of matching funds, and before-and-after photographs demonstrating completion of the approved BLOCK improvements.

The grantee is responsible for ensuring that sufficient funds are available to complete the project if final costs exceed the initial payment or if the final payment is withheld pending completion or documentation.

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.

Other

The BLOCK Test

Before submitting an application, applicants should be able to answer **YES** to each of the following questions:

- Once we begin construction and rehabilitation efforts, can we complete the transformation within 14 days?

- Do we know exactly which block we're transforming?
- Do we know exactly what we're going to change?
- Are the property owners on board?
- Are the contractors, vendors and partners ready to go?
- Do we have our 1:1 match secured?
- Can we begin immediately following the award?
- Can we complete the transformation before December 15, 2026?
- Will the investment create impact beyond the initial transformation?

The BLOCK award will be made in late September or early October 2026.

The work must be completed before December 15, 2026.

Kansas winter weather won't wait and neither will BLOCK.

Applicants should be prepared to move the BLOCK the moment the award is made.

Contact Information

For more information about this grant, please contact:

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