Entrepreneurial Blueprint Initiative

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

For community-based projects focused on entrepreneurship and small business development

Introduction

NetWork Kansas, in partnership with K-State 105, announces a one-time funding opportunity for the Entrepreneurial Blueprint Initiative. We are looking for community-based projects focused on entrepreneurship and small business development.

K-State 105 is Kansas State University's answer to the call for a comprehensive economic growth and advancement solution for Kansas. The initiative leverages the statewide K-State Research and Extension network to deliver the full breadth of the university's collective knowledge and solution-driven innovation to every Kansan, right where they live and work. Additionally, K-State 105 forges the connections and partnerships that create access to additional expertise within other state institutions and agencies, nonprofits and organizations — all part of an effort to build additional capacities and strengths in each of the 105 counties in the state. Learn more at k-state.edu/105.

This funding opportunity aims to identify and fund innovative community-based projects that focus on entrepreneurship and small business development. It also aims to address identified K-State 105 metrics, including but not limited to creating direct jobs, attracting and leveraging private and public capital and equity investment, establishing or expanding new businesses, and securing funding or substantive technical assistance for businesses, entrepreneurs, communities and municipalities.

The Entrepreneurial Blueprint Initiative is supported by K-State 105 funding and focuses on collaborative projects that involve NetWork Kansas and K–State Research and Extension. Together, we aim to leverage resources to foster economic growth and community development in Kansas.

Funding opportunity overview

Program goal: The goal of this funding opportunity is to support new and/or early-stage projects that focus on entrepreneurship and small business development. Projects will support identified K-State 105 metrics, including: creating direct jobs, attracting and leveraging private and public capital and/or equity investment, establishing or expanding new businesses, and securing funding or substantive technical assistance for businesses, entrepreneurs, communities and municipalities.

Available funding: Each project application can have a funding request of no greater than $125,000, subject to approval, with a minimum 25% match required. Funding is intended as one-time support for projects that demonstrate substantial community impact. There is no guarantee that an application will receive funding. Additionally, there is no expectation that a project will receive follow-on funding.

Match requirements: Applicants must provide a minimum of 25% matching funds or in-kind support relative to the amount requested. Matching funds can be hard costs, including loans and/or investment. In addition, matching funds can include local, state or federal grants, subject to verification with a three-month lookback from the application submission date. The match must be clearly linked to the project proposed for funding through the K-State 105 grant.

Project scope: The primary goal of this funding opportunity is to support projects that:

• Establish or expand local small businesses.

• Provide technical assistance and business mentorship.

• Leverage local capital investments to stimulate economic growth.

• Can see measurable and meaningful impacts before June 30, 2025.

• Collaborate with multiple local, regional or statewide partners, as applicable.

Projects must be centered on entrepreneurship/small business development. Exclusions include projects related to child care, housing, health care and the general workforce.

Expected connectivity: K-State 105 is building connections and partnerships across the state. Selected projects will emphasize collaborating with multiple local, regional or statewide partners as applicable. Examples of partners include NetWork Kansas, K-State Research and Extension, and one or more of the following: Kansas Small Business Development Center; Kansas State University resources, such as the Technology Development Institute, the Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship, the Office of Engagement, or other K-State entities; Northwest Kansas Economic Innovation Center; GO Topeka; and other statewide resource partners or higher education institutions.

Project timeline and reporting requirements: It is expected that the project will begin/break ground/roll out within 90 days of funding and that the applicant will provide quarterly milestone updates to NetWork Kansas, K-State Research and Extension and K-State 105. (Note: The quarterly update template will be provided by NetWork Kansas.)

The main goal of this initiative is to see measurable progress and meaningful impacts before June 30, 2025. While some projects might not be fully completed by that date, projects must show *significant* progress and impacts within that timeframe. Projects should set a solid foundation for continued development.

Participant communities should also be committed to obtaining the following metrics for their projects: industry/business type, number of full-time and part-time employees, race/ethnicity, gender, country of origin and veteran status.

Who can apply: This funding opportunity is intended for community initiatives that focus on entrepreneurship and small business development.

Organizations eligible to complete the application include nonprofits (chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, community foundations, etc.), community organizations/groups, municipalities and other groups that work closely in the entrepreneurship and small business space. For-profit businesses

can be involved in the application if they are part of the project/initiative but they are not eligible to complete the application and have oversight of it.

Applications should be coordinated with the NetWork E-Community regional manager in your area. View a map and find contact information for the E-Community regional managers across Kansas at https://www.k-state.edu/105/documents/entrepreneurial-blueprint-initiative/network-kansas-e-communities.pdf.

Restrictions: Projects involving child care, housing and health care will not be allowed because other K-State 105 funds and statewide organizations focus on those initiatives.

Salaries: While the funds are not explicitly excluded from being used for salaries, it is important to note that projects centered on entrepreneurship, building or strengthening partnerships and small business development are the primary focus. Proposals that align more closely with creating direct jobs, leveraging capital investments and establishing or expanding businesses are likely to score higher in our evaluation process.

If salary expenses are included, the applicant must clearly demonstrate how the project will sustain itself once the grant funds are exhausted. This could involve identifying additional funding sources, generating revenue or using other strategies to ensure ongoing financial support.

Promotion: Participant communities are expected to work with K-State 105 and NetWork Kansas to promote the project. Any news releases, media promotions, marketing materials or other forms of publicity should be coordinated with and approved by the K-State 105 communications director.

Funding conditions: Selected projects will receive funding as a one-time grant with specific terms detailed in the award letter.

Additional information: View the K-State 105 website to learn more about the K-State 105 Entrepreneurial Blueprint Initiative at https://www.k-state.edu/105/projects/network-kansas-entrepreneurial-blueprint-initiative.html

Questions and clarifications: For any questions or further clarifications, please contact your NetWork Kansas E-Community regional manager.

Application guidelines

Required information: Applications must include complete answers to all questions, providing a detailed description of the project, detailed usage of funds, intended outcomes and how the project aligns with the program goals.

Optional information: Applications may include attachments such as drawings, artist renderings, equipment lists and other pertinent supporting details. Up to three letters of support are optional.

Submission requirements: Applications must be submitted online at https://networkkansas.submittable.com/submit/a18d44ab-2ee6-4947-9183-66ac2f6e25be/entrepreneurial-blueprint-initiative-k-state-105/eligibility

Application resources: While developing the application, feel free to use All Things Kansas to gather data-driven maps and reports to use in the application. All Things Kansas is a free interactive tool that K-State

105 developed to help understand all 105 counties of the Sunflower State. Access All Things Kansas at k-state.edu/allthingskansas.

Evaluation criteria and review process

Selection criteria: Projects will be evaluated based on their potential impact, creativity, feasibility and alignment with the goals of the funding organizations.

Pre-screening process: Before submitting the application for review, the project concept should be pre-screened through the E-Community regional manager in your area. [View a map and find contact information for the E-Community regional managers across Kansas. (PDF)](#) NetWork Kansas E-Community regional managers will do their best to provide a quick turnaround on the review of applications, and they may desire to meet with the applicant to learn more. It is important to note that E-Community regional managers must be aware of the proposed project, but they are not final decision-makers.

Review process: Following the pre-screening review from the E-Community regional manager, applications should be submitted online at https://networkkansas.submittable.com/submit/a18d44ab-2ee6-4947-9183-66ac2f6e25be/entrepreneurial-blueprint-initiative-k-state-105/eligibility. The K-State 105 leadership team will review applications and choose projects to fund. The deadline for applications is October 1, 2024.

Scoring: Applications will be evaluated based on a scoring matrix (page 5) as well as the K-State 105 leadership team's assessment of project feasibility and general impact on local business development.

Application instructions

Application format and components:

1. Applying organization
    a. Please list the nonprofit organization that is acting as the lead organization to submit this application and will be responsible for communication and quarterly status updates.
    b. Clearly identify the county, community(ies) or region being supported by the proposed project.
    c. Please submit a W9 as an attachment.
2. Point of contact
    a. Name
    b. Title
    c. Email address
    d. Phone number
3. Project summary
    a. Please provide as much detail as necessary to explain the project vision, scope of work, location and how the K-State 105 funds would be utilized.
    b. Provide a timeline including projected start and end dates.
4. Connectivity
    a. Please list the local, regional and/or state governmental and nonprofit organizations that will be a part of the planning, execution and sustainability of the project. (Examples

could include city/county economic development agencies, small business development centers, chambers of commerce, etc.)

5. Kansas State University engagement
    a. Please list the K-State organizations that will be a part of the planning, execution and sustainability of the project. (Examples could include K-State Research and Extension, Technology Development Institute, Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship, Office of Engagement, etc.)
6. Amount of funding requested
    a. Provide a detailed budget breakdown of the project.
7. Matching funds
    a. Please list the amount of matching funds as well as the source of the funds.
8. Project objectives and expected outcomes
    a. Clear and measurable goals and outcomes.
9. Metrics and demographics report
    a. Participant communities should also be committed to obtaining the following metrics for their projects: industry/business type, number of full-time and part-time employees, race/ethnicity, gender, country of origin and veteran status.
10. Sustainability
    a. Explain (if applicable) how the community(ies) plan for the project to be sustained after K-State 105 funds are exhausted.

RFP Scoring Matrix for Community-Based Entrepreneurship Support Funding

Criteria	Description	Max Points	Score
Project Scope and Impact	Fully executed scope of work for project, including all necessary details, and clearly identified impact.	20	
Community Involvement and Partnerships	Clear plan to incorporate local, regional and/or statewide partners, especially those involved in K-State 105.	15	
E-Community Engagement	Is community already in the E-Community partnership, or in the process of applying for selection?	15	
Budget	Defined budget, quantifiable commitment to a 25% match, and clear explanation for usage of funds.	15	
Measurable Outcomes	Demonstrated path and commitment to collect measurable outcomes and required demographics	15	
Sustainability	How is this project sustained after 105 dollars are exhausted?	10	
Alignment with RFP Objectives	How well the proposal aligns with RFP objectives	10	