

A statewide ecosystem

K-State 105 partnership

July-December 2023

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

K-State 105 is Kansas State University's answer to the call for a comprehensive economic growth and advancement solution for Kansas.

In the heart of the Sunflower State, where our roots run deep and our dreams reach high, we are shaping the future of Kansas. Planted as a pillar within Kansas State University's Economic Prosperity Plan, K-State 105 springs to life as a key driver of the Next-Gen K-State strategic plan.

K-State 105 is not just an initiative — it's a commitment to co-invest and co-create an ecosystem of business and community support. An ode to the spirit that defines our great state and its 105 counties.

What makes K-State uniquely equipped for this journey is our deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities woven into the fabric of Kansas. Since our founding in 1863, K-State has always been present in every Kansas county. K-State 105 takes this legacy further, embracing innovation to serve and connect with the diverse communities that make the Sunflower State home.

Leveraging our statewide K-State Research and Extension network, the initiative delivers the university's collective knowledge and solution-driven innovation to every Kansan. We are forging connections and partnerships, creating access to expertise in other higher education institutions and state agencies, nonprofits and organizations — all to build additional capacities across Kansas.

As we look ahead, I invite you to delve into this report, which captures the essence of our first six months. Join us in this transformative journey, where K-State 105 is a testament to the enduring spirit of Kansas.

Jessica Gnad
Director of K-State 105



Learn more
about K-State 105.
k-state.edu/105

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K-State 105 is all about partnerships.

We're a university built on engagement.

As the nation's first operational land-grant university, Kansas State University has always been in every Kansas county. But as a next-generation land-grant university, we're embracing innovative ways to serve and connect with the people who call the Sunflower State home.

We're connecting the dots. Bringing people and partners together. Building the economic prosperity of all 105 Kansas counties.

We call it K-State 105.



Our metrics

The work of K-State 105 is guided by a set of meaningful metrics to judge our progress over time. These metrics are consistent with factors known to facilitate economic growth. We are measuring progress in each of these areas and tracking geography and demographics involved.



By the numbers

105

Number of counties that have a K-State Research and Extension presence.

26

Number of counties in northwest Kansas that the Innovation Center serves.

73

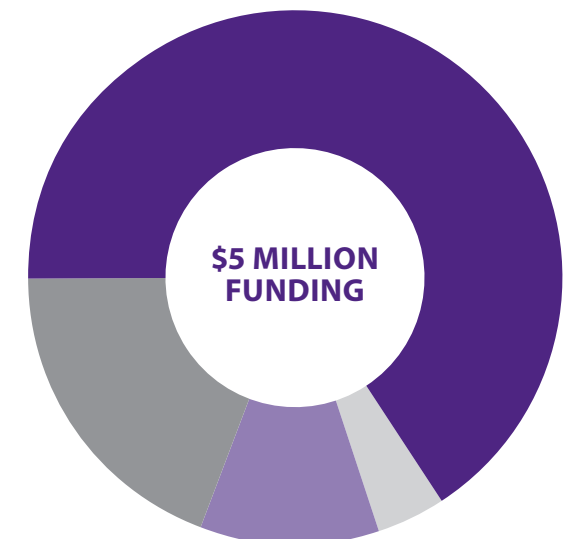
Number of NetWork Kansas Entrepreneurship (E)-Community locations across the state.

\$5 million

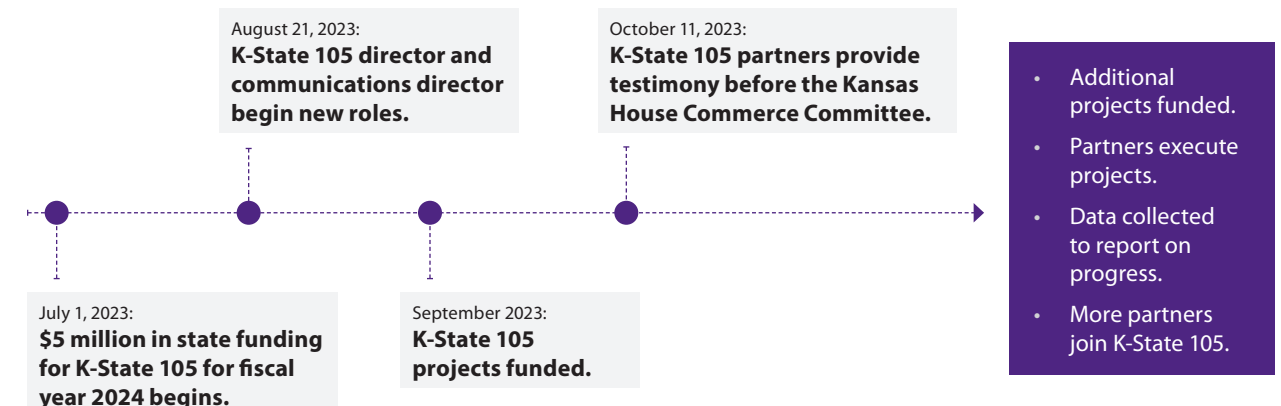
The amount of state funding that the K-State 105 initiative received for fiscal year 2024.

How the funding is being deployed:

- 66% BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT
- 19% COMMUNITY SUPPORT
- 11% PROGRAM SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT
- 4% OUTREACH AND IMPACT

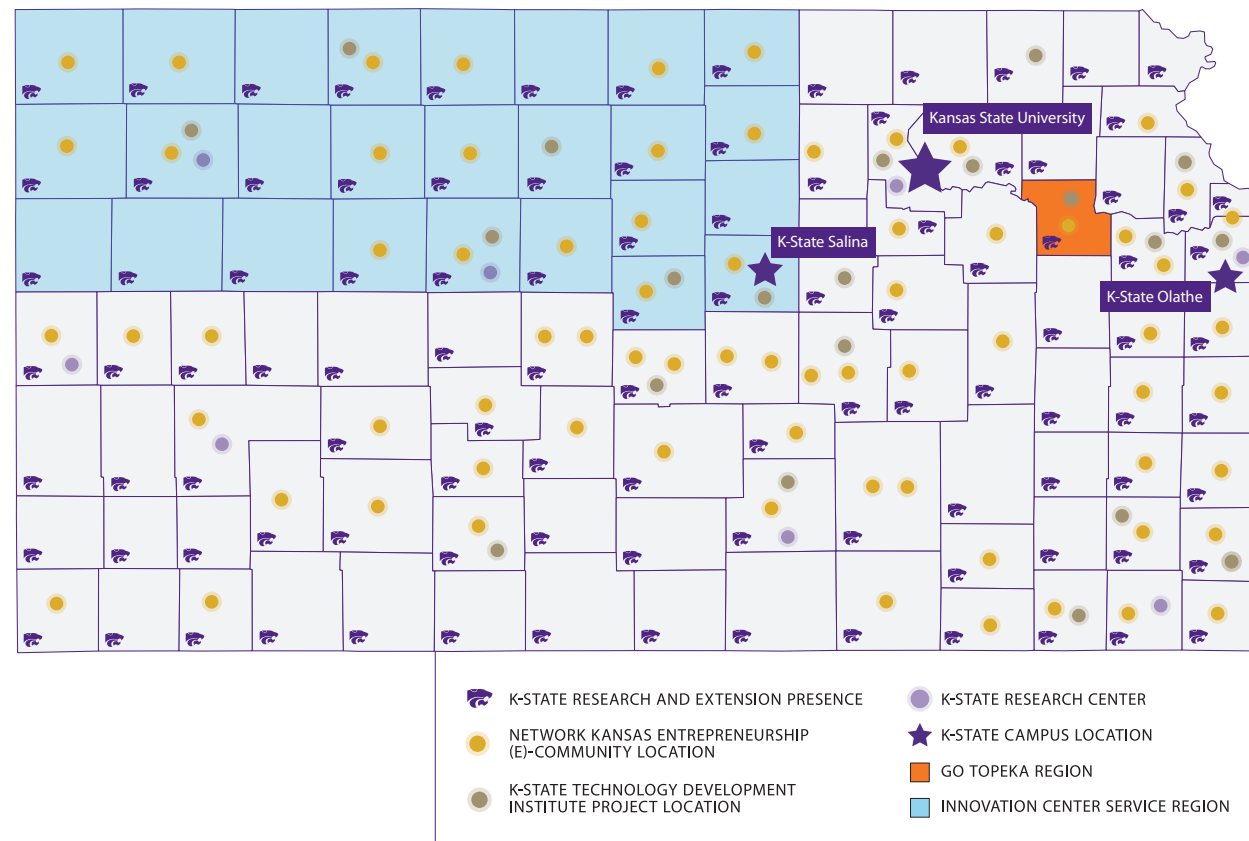


Milestones of the first six months



An ecosystem in progress

Through collaborative work with K-State 105 partners, we are strengthening existing relationships and building a peer-to-peer network across all 105 counties in Kansas. We are looking for additional partners. **Join us.**



Our partners

We're building a network of committed, creative partners to advance the economic prosperity of Kansas. Learn more about our founding partners.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Several Kansas State University units are involved in K-State 105 and serve Kansans across the state.

K-State Research and Extension
K-State Research and Extension provides Kansans with research-based educational opportunities to improve their lives, livelihoods and communities.

K-State Technology Development Institute
The Technology Development Institute in the K-State Carl R. Ice College of Engineering serves entrepreneurs, innovators and manufacturers across Kansas to develop new technologies/products and implement advanced manufacturing technologies.

Other K-State units involved in K-State 105 projects include:

- Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship
- Net Positive Studio
- Office of Engagement

REGIONAL PARTNERS

Our regional partners specialize in programming that serves a specific region or area of Kansas.



Innovation Center
The Innovation Center provides economic and entrepreneurial assistance to businesses in rural northwest Kansas.



NetWork Kansas
NetWork Kansas is a statewide network of nonprofit resources that help entrepreneurs and small business owners start up and grow.



GO Topeka
GO Topeka creates countywide economic success for companies and citizens through economic development strategy.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Our project partners include organizations with expertise in a specific topic or subject area.



From our partners

“This initiative will work to integrate the resources on campus, as well as statewide, with Kansas small businesses in a way that will strengthen communities, create jobs and increase capital investment. In addition, intentional engagement will happen in critical-issue areas such as workforce, housing and child care.”

— Erik Pedersen, president and chief operating officer of NetWork Kansas

“Partnerships in economic development are vital to success. We are engaging with the K-State 105 program to help entrepreneurs, existing businesses and communities in northwest and north central Kansas achieve economic growth.”

— Scott Sproul, president and CEO of the Innovation Center

“We believe that as we continue to expand our Small Business Incentives Program, the number of new Topeka-based businesses will also continue to grow.”

— Stephanie Moran, senior vice president of innovation with GO Topeka

“The businesses and communities of northwest Kansas will benefit greatly from this investment in professional expertise and better access to essential resources. This initiative will ensure our best business and economic development experts are working every day to advance economic prosperity throughout the High Plains.”

— Tisa Mason, president of Fort Hays State University

Our partnership strengths and capacities

Through the collaboration of our K-State 105 partners, we are building on our collective strengths and capacities. We are looking for additional partners to help us expand these capacities and create new service areas.



Turn to page 14 to read stories that show K-State 105 partnership work in these different areas. ▶



K-State capacities for economic prosperity

K-State 105 illustrates how higher education can be a catalyst for economic prosperity. Our faculty members, researchers, educators, laboratories and institutes have expertise, skills and knowledge that can serve people and businesses in all 105 Kansas counties.

Business and industry assistance

- Advanced manufacturing
- Automation and control systems
- Business consulting
- Commercialization planning
- Digital twin creation
- Fabrication and prototyping
- Farm management services
- Food innovation
- Grain research and technical services
- GIS, data and mapping
- Product design and engineering
- Technology innovation
- Veterinary diagnostic testing

Entrepreneurship

- Business start-up training and consulting
- Business accelerator programming
- Youth entrepreneurship development

Leadership development

- Board leader training
- Facilitator training
- Leadership training

Child care

- Career training for early childhood education professionals
- Child care needs assessments

Community support

- Community assessments
- Grant database searches
- Grant writing training
- Health care programming
- Local food systems support
- Quantitative skill training
- Rural grocery support
- Senior health insurance counseling
- SNAP-Ed outreach
- Strategic planning
- Teacher workforce development
- Volunteer training

Infrastructure

- Architecture design services for small towns
- Broadband support
- Brownfield site revitalization
- Design and prototype energy efficient homes
- Design services for brownfield sites
- Housing research
- Small business environmental assistance
- Pollution prevention
- Radon services
- Wind energy consulting

Connect with us. Want to access these K-State capacities? Contact us. kstate105@k-state.edu | 785-532-6221



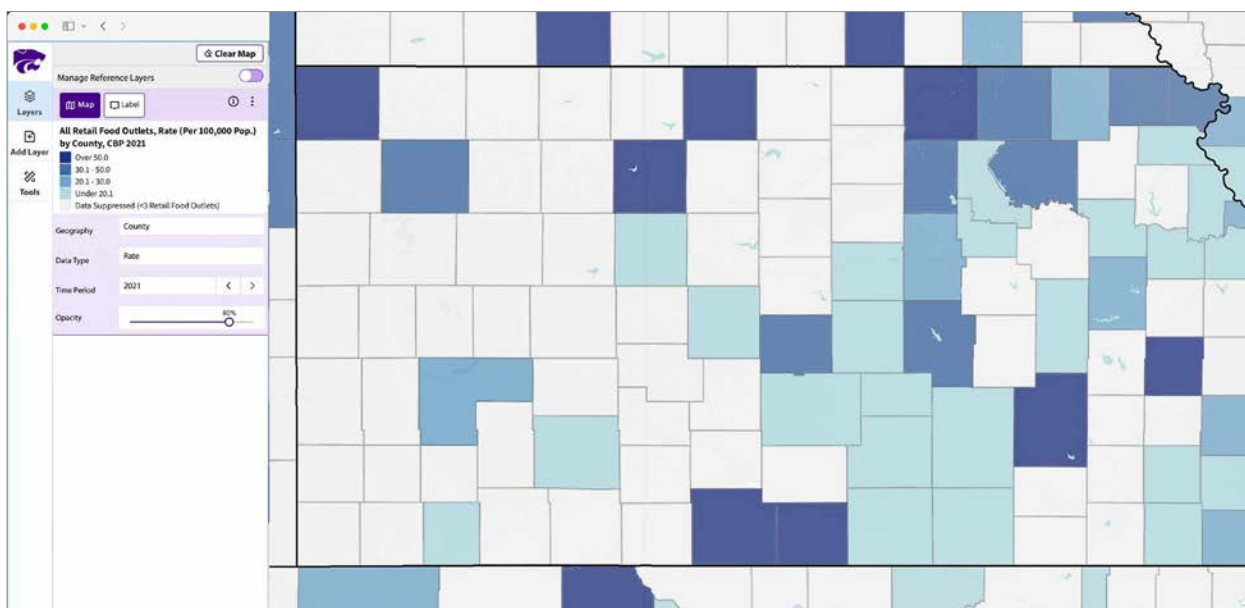
Building the K-State 105 team

Two lifelong Kansans — Jessica Gnad and Jennifer Tidball — began their roles leading the K-State 105 initiative in August 2023.

Gnad serves as K-State 105 director. She is a small business owner and entrepreneurial-minded program manager who previously served as a director of marketing and government affairs. She has additional experience as a co-owner of a Kansas crop consulting business and farming operation. She also has operated her own marketing, events and digital media consulting venture. Gnad is a K-State graduate and was named a NexStar Media Remarkable Women award winner in 2023.



Tidball is the K-State 105 communications director. She previously served as a public information officer for Kansas State University's Division of Communications and Marketing. Tidball joined K-State in 2010 and has experience in all aspects of communications, including writing, editing, strategic planning, public and media relations, project management and marketing. She served as editor-in-chief of Seek magazine, the university's award-winning research magazine, for five years.



K-State 105 launches All Things Kansas

Want to better understand all 105 counties of the Sunflower State? Try All Things Kansas.

K-State 105 has launched All Things Kansas, which is a website and free interactive tool with data-driven mapping, reports and insights for all 105 counties in Kansas. The website uses more than 120 national, state and local data sources to help analyze and visualize data across Kansas communities.



Learn more: All Things Kansas is in discovery phase. Take a look around, explore the tool's features and help make the website useful to people, businesses and organizations. k-state.edu/allthingskansas

By the numbers: All Things Kansas

- **30,000**
The number of data layers in the All Things Kansas map room
- **More than 120**
The number of national, state and local data sources used in All Things Kansas



K-State community visits engage partners, people across Kansas

Kansas State University continued traveling the state in the fall 2023 semester and engaging with Kansans as part of the regional community visit initiative. President Richard Linton began the community visit initiative in fall 2022 as a way to carry out the university's land-grant mission and engage with people in the communities they call home.

K-State leaders and Connected 'Cats students visited Allen County in October 2023 and visited five county regions in November 2023: Barton County, Ellis County, Norton County, Phillips County and Smith County.

The visits included important K-State 105 conversations to listen to and learn from Kansans across the state. These conversations included topics such as community development, water management, child care and housing. Community and economic development leaders as well as NetWork Kansas and the Innovation Center participated in many of the discussions.

Several community visits are planned for 2024. See the full schedule and learn more at k-state.edu/community-visits.

By the numbers: Fall 2023 community visits

- **6**
Number of county regions that K-State visited
- **610**
Number of Kansans who engaged with K-State
- **17**
Number of events held



We believe all
Kansas communities —
urban and rural —
can experience **economic
growth through locally
driven entrepreneurial
small business growth
strategies.**

Turn the page to read stories that show how
the K-State 105 ecosystem is helping Kansas.



K-State 105 partners build up statewide youth entrepreneurship program

Partners involved: NetWork Kansas, Kansas State University

Two K-State 105 partners — NetWork Kansas and K-State Research and Extension — are collaborating to bring the Kansas Entrepreneurship Challenge to new heights as one of the leading youth entrepreneurship competitions in Kansas.

A first-of-its-kind commitment from K-State Research and Extension and Kansas 4-H will fully fund the Kansas Entrepreneurship Challenge, or KEC, which is a program of the NetWork Kansas Entrepreneurship (E)-Community Partnership. The contribution involves nearly \$100,000 in program support for KEC per year for three consecutive years, beginning with the current 2023-24 competition year.

The Kansas Entrepreneurship Challenge represents the culmination of a sequence of community-based entrepreneurship competitions for students in grades 6-12, known as the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, or YEC, series. NetWork Kansas coordinates the YEC series and KEC in partnership with the Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship in the K-State College of Business Administration. The 2023-24 competition year marks the 11th annual YEC season.

**By the numbers:
Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge**

- **61** Number of local-level Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge competitions in 2023-24

NXTSTAGE Enterprise Engagement Series serves entrepreneurs across Kansas

Partners involved: NetWork Kansas, NXTUS

Counties involved: Sedgwick, Johnson, Marion, Douglas, Ellsworth, Butler, Leavenworth, Linn, Finney

The NXTSTAGE Enterprise Engagement Series, launched by NXTUS, bridges the knowledge and access gaps between early stage companies and established enterprises. The program drives innovation, accelerates startup growth and promotes supplier diversity in Kansas.

NXTUS and NetWork Kansas collaborated to expand the 2023 program and involve entrepreneurs from NetWork Kansas Entrepreneurship (E)-Communities across the state. NetWork Kansas, through the support of K-State 105 funding, helped the 2023 program gain additional Enterprise Partners and serve 19 new entrepreneurs with a broader reach throughout Kansas.

The 2023 cohort included diverse, growth-minded entrepreneurs offering innovative tech solutions; traditional services such as branded swag and commercial cleaning services; and enhancements to employee experiences, benefits, human resources and team culture.

**By the numbers:
NXTSTAGE Enterprise Engagement Series**

- **19** Number of entrepreneurs who participated in the 2023 cohort
- **90%** Percentage of 2023 participating startups that have minority and/or female founders
- **40%** Percentage of 2023 participating startups that operate in rural or urban distressed areas in Kansas



GO Topeka engages with animal health startups through Plug and Play

Partners involved: GO Topeka, Kansas State University

As part of the Plug and Play program, GO Topeka brought 5 animal health startups to tour the Kansas State University Technology Development Institute, tour the Edge Collaboration District at K-State and meet with university researchers in December 2023.

Plug and Play brings global innovation to the heartland by facilitating opportunities for business development and mentorship. The program pairs Silicon Valley tech with the region's industry-leading research and development, skilled workforce and animal health companies to cultivate a world-class animal health system in Topeka and the surrounding region.



NetWork Kansas offers Kansas Ice House Entrepreneurship Program

Partner involved: NetWork Kansas
Counties involved: Ellis, Harvey

Every year, NetWork Kansas offers multiple sessions of the Kansas Ice House Entrepreneurship Program, which is an eight-week certificate program that develops entrepreneurial skills such as critical thinking, communication, problem-solving and other key assets.

In fall 2023, NetWork Kansas offered two eight-week sessions — one in Hays and one in Newton — with K-State 105 support.

Inspired by the life story of Pulitzer nominee Clifton Taulbert, the Ice House Entrepreneurship Program was created by the Kauffman Foundation as a powerful learning program designed to educate and engage participants in the fundamental aspects of an entrepreneurial mindset.



K-State 105 collaboration expands small business development in northwest Kansas

Partners involved: Kansas State University, NetWork Kansas, Innovation Center, Fort Hays State University, Kansas Small Business Development Center

Two universities — Kansas State University and Fort Hays State University — as well as two K-State 105 partners — NetWork Kansas and the Innovation Center — are working together to expand the service offerings of the FHSU-led Small Business Development Center in northwest Kansas.

Through the partnership, announced in September 2023, K-State 105 is providing NetWork Kansas with funding that will go to resource partners and support entrepreneurship programming and technical assistance for small businesses in all 105 counties. In this instance in northwest Kansas, NetWork Kansas will work with the Innovation Center to enhance the Kansas Small Business Development Center, or KSBDC.

The FHSU-led KSBDC operates as a network of eight regional economic development and business consulting centers that currently serve all 105 counties in the state.

In October 2023, Joe Leroux was named the KSBDC business support program director for the 26 county region covered by the Innovation Center. Housing the KSBDC in the Innovation Center will enhance accessibility to resources in order to help develop, sustain and strengthen new and existing businesses in northwest Kansas.

By the numbers:
Kansas Small Business Development Center partnership

- **432**
Number of clients the partnership will serve
- **16**
Number of new businesses the partnership will help start
- **60**
Number of capital transactions the partnership will conduct in fiscal year 2024



Bloomfield Physical Therapy helps patients across the state

Partners involved: Kansas State University, GO Topeka
County involved: Shawnee

Bloomfield Physical Therapy helps patients work with insurance providers and assistive technology professionals to navigate the process of obtaining wheelchairs and other mobility devices to assist in recovery. With K-State 105 funding, the K-State Technology Development Institute worked with Bloomfield Physical Therapy to obtain proof of concept funding from GO Topeka to develop a software tool that streamlines the process of submitting claims to insurance companies for recovery equipment. The new software ensures that patients have the correct information and can obtain needed equipment in a timely manner.



Through student learning, Wildcat Consulting provides business support

Partner involved: Kansas State University
Counties involved: Ford, Johnson, McPherson, Montgomery, Pawnee, Riley, Sedgwick, Shawnee, Wyandotte

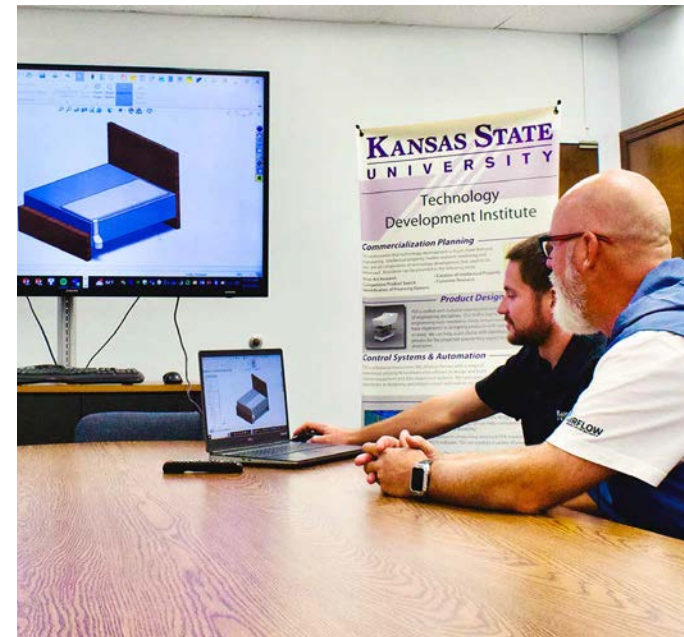
The K-State Technology Development Institute and the Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship have partnered to offer Wildcat Consulting, which provides business support activities and gives students hands-on learning opportunities. Through the partnership, students solve business challenges by consulting on a variety of projects for Kansas businesses. Some of the services offered include revenue growth strategy development, customer expansion proposals, marketing support, operations management and online strategy development. The fall 2023 semester included 14 students working on 22 projects for Kansas companies.



PlainsCraft expands international market reach

Partners involved: Kansas State University, GO Topeka
County involved: Shawnee

PlainsCraft, a manufacturing company in Topeka, produces high-end covered wagons for the glamping industry. The size of the wagons prevented exporting outside of North America and left a large untapped international market. PlainsCraft worked with the K-State Technology Development Institute to apply for and obtain proof of concept funding. They applied and obtained proof of concept funding from GO Topeka and the Kansas Department of Commerce to design a kit that could cost effectively be shipped internationally. The kits were completed and launched at the Glamping Show Americas.



Rairflow improves sleep comfort

Partner involved: Kansas State University
County involved: Johnson

Rairflow contacted the K-State Technology Development Institute, or TDI, for help developing the final pieces for a new reverse airflow technology to improve sleep comfort. TDI used K-State 105 funding to provide both technical assistance on several part designs and also worked with the company to apply for a Kansas Innovation Technology Enterprise proof of concept grant to work on the next-generation system.

TDI designed transition pieces to help connect Rairflow system parts together and then 3D-printed prototypes so the company could test and optimize the products before final production and commercialization.



Research team constructs technology to help produce industry

Partner involved: Kansas State University

The K-State Technology Development Institute, or TDI, worked with a research team from five universities across the country to develop and construct a new technology to address organic-compliant food safety concerns in the produce industry. The overall goal was to control Listeria biofilms on food-contact surfaces and equipment. Other K-State units involved included the K-State Olathe Food Safety Lab and the Food Science Institute.

With K-State 105 support, TDI designed and built a custom conveyor system with separate and controllable treatment zones. Each zone had a combination of UV-C lights as well as an aqueous spray system to study the effectiveness of a wide range of treatment scenarios to determine what is most effective at improving surface contact sanitation. The conveyor is expected to be deployed during the 2024 growing season.

U.S. Department of Agriculture funding, as part of the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension initiative, helped with the equipment and provided workshops on cleaning and sanitizing practices for organic growers across the nation.



Casita project builds innovation and sustainability in housing

Partners involved: Kansas State University, NetWork Kansas

County involved: Butler

A K-State 105 research collaboration is exploring the use of hemp materials in home construction.

Students in the Kansas State University Net Positive Studio recently worked with Augusta-based Midwest Hemp Technology to build a hemp casita, or small house.

The hemp casita included hempwood flooring, hempwool insulation in the walls and hempcrete that is made with hurd from Midwest Hemp Technology. The group displayed the finished hemp casita at the Kansas State Fair in September 2023.

The ultimate goal of the research project was to explore ways to build homes and buildings with a crop that can grow in Kansas, said Sarah Stephens, CEO of Midwest Hemp Technology.

Midwest Hemp Technology has received support from Entrepreneurial Growth Ventures and GROWKS, which is a loan and equity program that is facilitated by NetWork Kansas and the Kansas Department of Commerce.

The Net Positive Studio is led by Michael Gibson, associate professor of architecture in the K-State College of Architecture, Planning & Design.



Learn more
Watch a video to learn more about the hemp casita.

Extension professionals lead community development and child care discussions in southeast Kansas

Partner involved: Kansas State University

K-State Research and Extension professionals around the state are helping community residents identify their strengths and opportunities, then apply for grants or other funding opportunities to improve their towns' capital. Capital includes the resources and characteristics associated with successful and sustainable communities.

The work on community development and child care continued to make progress in fall 2023. In the K-State Research and Extension Southwind District, Tara Smith, family and community wellness professional, and Amanda Clasen, community vitality professional, are hosting community conversations in several southeast Kansas towns where residents are interested in learning how to build capital.

Cassidy Lutz, family and consumer science professional, has been working with several communities in southeast Kansas to identify opportunities for improving child care opportunities.



Innovation Center enhances housing opportunities in northwest Kansas

Partner involved: Innovation Center

The Innovation Center is helping communities complete self-assessments using the Kansas Department of Commerce’s Housing Assessment Tool to determine the type of housing desired in each locality. Randy Speaker, regional housing specialist, is instructing communities on the benefits of forming Rural Housing Incentive Districts and educating them on the funding opportunities through the state of Kansas and the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation.

A significant facet of Speaker’s work involves cataloging and repurposing underutilized buildings across the region. His focus is on transforming structures such as old school buildings, nursing homes and outdated motels into viable workforce housing units.

Collaborating with economic development personnel across 26 counties, Speaker has identified potential buildings for redevelopment. His goal is to create partnerships between local owners and investors and developers who specialize in repurposing older structures.



First Maker Space Summit draws more than 100 attendees

Partners involved: NetWork Kansas, Kansas State University

County involved: Lyon

NetWork Kansas hosted its first Maker Space Summit in Emporia in September 2023. The event featured a variety of speakers and resource partners interested in starting and advancing maker spaces in Kansas. More than 100 attendees from across Kansas participated in a day of learning and sharing ideas and best practices.

Guest speakers included Casey Woods, executive director of Emporia Main Street; Christy Davis, Kansas director for USDA Rural Development; Jeff Sheldon, associate director of the Kansas State University Sunderland Foundation Innovation Lab; Jim Correll, retired director of Fab Lab ICC and owner of Correll Coaching; and Melissa Roberts Chapman, regional entrepreneurship director of the Federation of American Scientists.



Digital twin technology brings new life to old buildings

Partners involved: Kansas State University, Innovation Center

Counties involved: Graham, Riley

The K-State Technology Development, or TDI, is using its state-of-the-art NavVis scanning system to quickly and accurately scan a wide range of structures to create a 3D digital twin model. This technology captures dimensions within a 5 mm accuracy and then allows those files to either be viewed in the cloud or downloaded for further processing. This digital twin provides engineers, architects, developers and contractors with building information without having to be on-site. It helps manufacturers virtually plan layouts for new equipment and enables training and other facility-based information to be easily conveyed.

TDI is working with the Innovation Center to create digital twins of underutilized buildings to provide developers with dimensionally accurate 3D models of the buildings. This aids in redevelopment plans and cost estimates to put the buildings back into use.



Statewide educational series encourages product development

Partners involved: Kansas State University, NetWork Kansas

Counties involved: Ellis, Kiowa, Pottawatomie, Thomas

The K-State University Technology Development Institute, or TDI, and NetWork Kansas are collaborating to introduce a new educational program to schools and communities on the process of evaluating, protecting and developing new products. The fall 2023 program included presentations for both community members and school students in Greensburg, Colby and Hays as well as Rock Creek High School in St. George.

The school series focuses on various engineering careers that are available to students and provides details on TDI mechanical engineering work, including how new technologies, such as 3D printers, can be used for design and development of new products.

The community series takes a broader approach of the product development process and the network of state resources to support the creation of new products and technologies. This includes market research, the patenting process, designing and prototyping, and commercialization.



Nomi Smith is the founder of PMI Rate Pro in Overland Park.



Sisters Deborah Gladney and Angela Muhwezi-Hall founded WorkTorch.



Green Dot Bioplastics has collaborated with Kansas State University and the Kansas Polymer Research Center at Pittsburg State University.

Keeping Kansas open for business

Partner involved: NetWork Kansas

Through the GROWKS program, NetWork Kansas and the Kansas Department of Commerce are supporting small business growth across the state.

Kansas received \$69 million in State Small Business Credit Initiative dollars from the U.S. Department of the Treasury in 2022. That allocation helped create GROWKS, which is a loan and equity program that is facilitated by NetWork Kansas and the Kansas Department of Commerce.

GROWKS helps promote the mission of connecting small businesses and entrepreneurs with expertise, education and economic resources throughout the state.

Read some recent success stories from the GROWKS program.

PMI Rate Pro: Technology firm saves time for mortgage lenders and money for homebuyers

County involved: Johnson

PMI Rate Pro is an Overland Park-based mortgage technology firm solving problems in the mortgage insurance space. Founder Nomi Smith developed a model that enables mortgage lenders to easily get side-by-side comparisons for mortgage insurance and choose the best deal for homebuyers. Through GROWKS support, Smith got needed funding and has continued to hire more people and invest back in the company.

WorkTorch: Sisters make Kansas history with service industry career platform

County involved: Sedgwick

GROWKS is among the investors for WorkTorch, a career discovery platform for the service economy workforce. The company provides tools for employers to retain employees and find career fulfillment through engagement and internal mobility tools. Sisters Deborah Gladney and Angela Muhwezi-Hall founded WorkTorch, which is based in Wichita and is the first Black women-run company in Kansas to raise \$1 million in seed funding for their startup.

Green Dot Bioplastics: Company builds better bioplastics

County involved: Franklin, Lyon, Pottawatomie

Green Dot Bioplastics is making resin that is more sustainable, compostable and eco-friendly. The company, which has received GROWKS support, is based in Emporia, but has a product development lab in Ottawa and a manufacturing plant in Onaga. The company has collaborated with Kansas State University and the Kansas Polymer Research Center at Pittsburg State University.

By building and leveraging networks of support, technical solutions, business creation and workforce development, **K-State 105 is poised to achieve great things for Kansas.**





We're connecting the dots.
Bringing people and partners together.
Building the economic prosperity
of all 105 Kansas counties.
We call it K-State 105.

Join us.

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