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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **New research on grassroots pandemic activism finds personal connections, shared purpose empowered Kansans to take action**

Wichita, Kan. – Third Floor Research—the research partnership between the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) and Kansas State University’s Staley School of Leadership Studies—has released a new report that evaluates the grassroots efforts and networks mobilized in response to KLC’s call to take action to slow the spread of COVID-19.

In partnership with the State of Kansas, KLC launched [Kansas Beats the Virus \(KBTV\)](#) in November 2020. The civic action campaign was designed to improve public health practices in communities across the state. Over five weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day, 4,596 Kansans participated in 851 community meetings and created 827 action projects that would help slow the spread of the virus in Kansas communities.

The result: Kansans from all walks of life rallied around a common cause and proved that:

- A network of motivated individuals with a shared purpose can mobilize the masses
- People are more connected to an individual than a cause
- When Kansans take action, they feel more confident, connected and responsible
- A clear and established process led to better community-specific outcomes
- Leveraging relationships + incentivizing action projects enabled thousands of Kansans to work together and develop unique approaches specific to their community’s needs

“To better understand the impact of Kansas Beats the Virus, we set out to learn more about the process of engaging communities and implementing action projects specific to those Kansas communities. To do this, we took a multimethod approach. First, Third Floor Research at KLC surveyed everyone who participated in the initiative. Then, Kansas Business Services conducted an analysis of the KBTV action projects,” said Roberta Maldonado Franzen, lead researcher and instructor at the Staley School of Leadership Studies.

An online survey was sent to all participants within two months of their KBTV meeting and action project occurred. The survey found that the top two indicators motivating community members to take part in KBTV are “invitation by an organization I feel connected to” and “invitation by an individual I respect.”

“This suggests that slowing the spread of the virus is a relational activity. Experts play a part, but leveraging relationships is key,” said Maldonado Franzen.

The survey also found that two-thirds of participants felt more confident to make a difference in their community, more connected to others with a shared purpose, a better sense of

responsibility for the health of their community and a willingness to engage in public health initiatives after participating in KBTV.

“These results indicate that by starting where individuals are and empowering them to exercise leadership in this way, we are mobilizing an ever-expanding network of Kansans that are committed to leveraging their relationships and using their own leadership to combat the virus. This is an opportunity to continue to build on civic engagement activities,” said Maldonado Franzen.

A slide deck summary of the report, as well as the full report featuring case studies of Kansans working to beat the virus in their communities, can be [downloaded here](#).

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### **About the Kansas Leadership Center**

The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) is a first-of-its-kind nonprofit educational organization with a civic mission, national reputation and global reach. Founded in 2007 to foster leadership for stronger, healthier and more prosperous Kansas communities, KLC receives core funding from the Kansas Health Foundation (a private, philanthropic organization). It partners with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, businesses and communities to build cultures that are healthy, productive and well-positioned to make measurable progress on daunting challenges and emergent opportunities. KLC Press publishes leadership books and *The Journal*, a nationally recognized, award-winning civic issues magazine. Over the past 12 years, KLC has built a strong and respected institution in Kansas designed to deliver leadership development and culture change at unparalleled scale. Now, organizations across the country and around the world look to us to provide resources and consultation to support their own aspirations for mission-driven leadership education. Learn more at [www.kansasleadershipcenter.org](http://www.kansasleadershipcenter.org).

### **About KLC Leadership Curriculum**

The KLC curriculum is accessible to people at all levels in organizations, businesses, and communities – and has proven effective for audiences on 5 continents – even as it disrupts existing models that equate leadership with positional authority. Recognizing that traditional definitions of leadership, which conflate *leadership* and *authority*, are insufficient to address complex 21st century challenges in civic, business or public spheres, KLC defines leadership as *mobilizing people to do tough, adaptive work*. KLC’s leadership curriculum, which features 5 principles and 4 competencies, evolved from intense listening. It has been honed through our work with thousands of people – in Kansas and as far afield as Myanmar, Australia, Lithuania and sub-Saharan Africa – who use our curriculum and robust set of applications materials to mobilize positive change. KLC’s curriculum builds on the Adaptive Leadership Framework pioneered at Harvard University’s Kennedy School and integrates collaborative and process tools from the field of civic engagement and community development.

### **About Third Floor Research**

Third Floor Research is an applied research center operated through a partnership between the Kansas Leadership Center and Kansas State University’s Staley School of Leadership Studies. Research focuses on the impact of leadership training and contributes to global learnings in the field of leadership and adaptive change processes. Research findings address individual development, organizational impact, and community capacity. Learn more at <https://kansasleadershipcenter.org/third-floor-research/>.

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