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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Kansas Leadership Center Receives \$450,000 Grant from Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation to Advance Local Entrepreneurship in the Heartland**

Wichita, Kan. – The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC), a Wichita-based nonprofit, has been awarded a \$450,000 grant from the [Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation](#) to launch a program that will generate leadership and civic engagement to support local entrepreneurship in four communities in the Heartland region.

The grant will fund a regional pilot program in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas that will equip community members and entrepreneurs to support organizations that implement economic development strategies centered on local entrepreneurship.

“We developed this pilot program to strengthen the support systems that uphold and depend on entrepreneurship in the heartland region. This grant will enable us to promote local entrepreneurship by equipping a broad range of community members to see themselves in the context of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, to exercise leadership in that system, and to more effectively connect with their network and resources. We are grateful to the Kauffman Foundation for their continued collaboration,” said Lucy Petroucheva, civic engagement manager at the Kansas Leadership Center.

In 2021, KLC and the Kauffman Foundation collaborated to launch [“Heartland Together,”](#) a project focused on addressing systemic challenges that affect entrepreneurs’ ability to start and grow businesses in the Heartland region. In 2022, KLC launched a two-week [listening tour](#) with stops in Kansas, Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska. KLC teams facilitated listening sessions in both English and Spanish in 22 communities. These sessions were designed to diagnose the state of local entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Following the tour, KLC developed a pilot program to address the economic development concerns, priorities and cultural barriers of these communities. The design will leverage KLC’s approach to collective leadership on [adaptive challenges](#) – which has shown progress on other civic issues – to help these communities adopt economic development practices that focus on local entrepreneurs and community support for entrepreneurship.

For the first phase of the program, KLC representatives are conducting interviews with a diverse set of community partners to further diagnose the needs in that community and surface unknown barriers to progress. Participants will then receive training based on [KLC's leadership framework](#), key pillars in ecosystem building, and civic engagement, as they develop action projects that community members would implement to begin transitioning their community to an entrepreneurship-led economic development model.

“We can’t build healthy ecosystems without deepening the collaboration between common and less common voices in each community, so we’ll make intentional efforts to ensure that we have participants from a diverse range of backgrounds that reflect the communities we work with, and that our participants are engaged in ways that meet them where they are,” said Shaun Rojas, senior director of civic engagement.

Communities selected for the pilot program will be announced in early 2023.

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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 15 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).

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