



October 11, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kansas Leadership Center Selects Reno County as Third Community to Participate in Local Entrepreneurship Pilot Program

Wichita, Kan. – The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC), a Wichita-based nonprofit, has selected Reno County as the third of four communities in the Heartland region to participate in a pilot program that will generate leadership and civic engagement to support local entrepreneurship.

Earlier this year, Liberal, Kan. and Marshalltown, Iowa were selected as the first two communities for the pilot program. The final community will be announced later this year.

“We’re excited to work with, and learn from, people in Reno County who have already done such interesting work in the entrepreneurial ecosystem building space. Hopefully our program can explore some of the less frequently discussed dynamics and patterns in the community,” said Lucy Petroucheva, civic engagement manager at the Kansas Leadership Center.

In 2021, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation funded KLC to launch “[Heartland Together](#),” a project focused on addressing systemic challenges that affect entrepreneurs’ ability to start and grow local businesses in the Heartland region. In 2022, KLC launched a two-week listening tour with stops in Kansas, Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska where teams facilitated listening sessions in both English and Spanish in 22 communities. These sessions were designed to diagnose the state of local entrepreneurship and the environments that support it – their ecosystems. KLC thoroughly considered population size, population diversity and engagement potential when determining community selection for the pilot program.

KLC developed the pilot program to engage key local stakeholders who support entrepreneurs and make it easier for them to diagnose their challenges and work together differently to make their community more welcoming to entrepreneurs. 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.

The program will promote local entrepreneurship by equipping a broad range of community members to lead in their communities and design experiments that make progress on the barriers to thriving entrepreneurship. Local champions have been recruited to tailor the programming to the specific needs of the community and recruit program participants that reflect the community.

On September 19, KLC conducted two Diagnosis sessions in Reno County to discuss the community's adaptive challenges, begin mapping their entrepreneurial ecosystem, and consider who should be a participant in the program. KLC is returning to Reno County November 14-16 for the Flagship Experience – a program for up to 25 participants, in which KLC will teach core principles in leadership, inclusive ecosystem building, and civic engagement. The program welcomes participants from various backgrounds, including community leaders, aspiring entrepreneurs, business professionals, and anyone passionate about driving change in the entrepreneurial landscape of Reno County.

Reno County residents can apply for the Flagship Experience November 14-16 [here](#). The deadline to apply is October 20.

“Ultimately, we hope to help build on the momentum already happening here in Reno County to condition the civic environment so that more community members can exercise leadership on the toughest challenges that serve as barriers to being stronger, healthier, and more inclusively prosperous. The immediate challenge we work on will be about helping communities be more inviting to entrepreneurs, but participants will walk away with skills and capacity that will help them make progress on any difficult civic challenges in the community,” said Shaun Rojas, KLC’s senior director of civic engagement.

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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 16 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.

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