

What is the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant?

The Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP) of South Central Kansas has received a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to create a long-term regional plan for ensuring the health and productivity of our local economy. The grant will support community engagement to identify common values and goals, followed by local and regional efforts to enhance economic development, connect people with jobs, reduce housing and transportation costs, ensure public safety, and use of limited public funds efficiently in the years ahead.

The grant supports planning only; it does not mandate the creation of new policies/procedures by any participating jurisdiction. It does not create new governing entities or new powers for existing entities.

Key elements of the grant

REAP, the project leader, will assemble a Consortium Leadership Team with members representing private business, the non-profit sector, local governments, and citizens at large to oversee five work teams that will focus on:

1. Business Development
2. Built Environment
3. Work Force Development
4. Transportation
5. Natural Resources

Each team will help communities review existing planning efforts, identify opportunities, and develop strategies to become more economically competitive, both locally and regionally. The goal is to ensure our region's economic viability in the 21st century. Every work team will be open and accessible to the public.

Core purposes of the grant

1. Identify shared values to address challenging issues
2. Use limited public funds more efficiently by building partnerships and identifying best practices to address challenges
3. Align regional housing, transportation, and infrastructure investments
4. Maximize housing and transportation choices through coordinated planning
5. Connect people with quality jobs through coordinated workforce development
6. Maximize public safety by working together for clean air and water
7. Improve our energy independence, locally and regionally through identifying best practices of efficiencies and ways to utilize regional energy assets
8. Create lasting value so our local communities and economies are stronger by working together

Budget

The total budget for developing the South Central Kansas Regional Plan for Sustainable Development is \$2,322,804, which will fund a three-year plan development process. The proposed cost share is approximately 65 percent grant funds (\$1,500,000) from HUD and approximately 35 percent leveraged local resources. All local resources are in-kind (non-cash) contributions with the exception of a \$50,000 cash match from the Kansas Health Foundation.

Funds will be used for project management staff, technical consultation and assistance, and activities to engage underrepresented populations.

Identified Partners

- The Regional Economic Area Partnership of South Central Kansas
- The Cities of:
 - Wichita
 - El Dorado
 - Newton
 - Hutchinson
 - Wellington
- The Counties of:
 - Sedgwick
 - Butler
 - Harvey
 - Reno
 - Sumner
- Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO)
- Wichita State University's Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs and Center for Community Support and Research
- Visioneering Wichita
- Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas
- Workforce One
- Kansas Small Business Development Center
- Wichita Downtown Development Corporation
- United Way
- Independent Living Resource Center
- University of Kansas School of Medicine - Wichita campus
- Wichita Independent Neighborhoods
- Urban League of Kansas
- Wichita Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Healthy Reno County Coalition
- Kansas Department of Transportation
- Our Local Foods
- Sumner County Economic Development Commission
- The Cowley County Housing Authority
- Central Plains Area Agency on Aging

Outcomes

The planning process funded by the grant and partners will identify opportunities to make our communities stronger and the region more economically competitive. The regional plan will provide a framework for participating cities and counties to utilize as a resource for future partnerships.