

First Impressions

Ulysses, KS

K-State Research and Extension



- Goodland asked for First Impressions, Ulysses agreed to be its partner; about a 2.5 hour drive.
- Volunteer visitors in both communities were trained and photos were taken of Ulysses in June.
- 8 Goodland visitors visited mid June through late August.
- Results presented by Zoom.
- Ulysses uses the results for further discussion and action plans.

- **Feedback:**

How does a first-time visitor view my town?

- Evaluate successes.
- Set goals and priorities for next steps.

- **If you don't agree with the observation:**

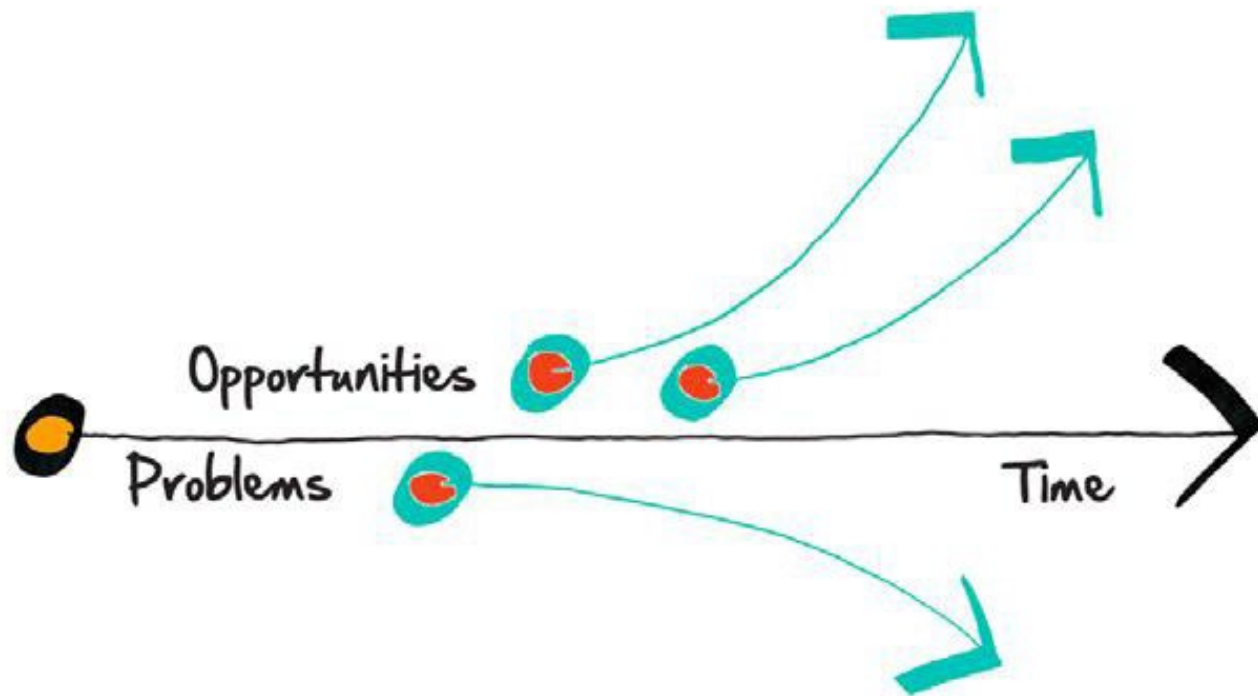
- ***Be curious:*** Why does the visitor see it this way?
- Is the observation worth considering?
- What can we do to change it– or the perception?

Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.

-Oxford Living Dictionary

Asset Based Community Development

People move in the direction of their conversations



Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, U of MN

We need to change the narrative about rural.

- Rural is *changing*, not dying.
- Brain Gain (30-49 year olds moving to rural) is a “new trend” that has been happening since the 70’s.
- People research a number of places before they move to a rural town.
- Rural is in the middle of ***everywhere***. You live one place, work another and play another. With transportation and internet, it’s all accessible to you.

Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, U of MN

- In a survey of newcomers to rural areas, the reasons people move to a rural community are:
 - Simpler pace of life,
 - Safety and security,
 - Affordable housing,
 - Outdoor recreation,
 - Quality schools
 - ***“A job” isn’t in the top 10 reasons.***
- Communities can work together to attract newcomers and create quality of life for everyone.

- “In small towns everyone knows each other.” **False!**
- *Get to know each other*, invite them to a newcomers’ meal.
- If you bring 7 people to a 700-citizen town every year in 10 years, you’ll have a 10% increase. It matters! It is a challenge with housing, but it is achievable.
- We are our own worst enemies. We must monitor our customer service and what we say. It matters.
- Don’t say, “You have to live here twenty years to be an insider.” And don’t act like it either.

- 75% of rural homeowners are Baby Boomers and older. 30% are over 75.
- Housing will be freed up as the Baby Boomers retire and move closer to medical services.
- Rural communities need retirement housing (not nursing facilities, but maintenance free) to retain seniors.- *Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, University of Minnesota*



*Ben Winchester was our guest on the
First Friday Call.*

See the recording at:

<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship/>

- 2020 Census: 5,788 ↓ 6.05% 2010 Census: 6,161
- Median household income: \$54,723 **\$61,091**
- High school or GED 77.2% **91.4%**
- At least a BS 20% **33.9%**
- Median Age: 32.6 years **37.3 years**
- Persons 65 and Over 13.9% **16.7%**

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

(Source: American Community Survey 2021 estimates and 2020 Census data from census.gov)

- Moved since Last Year (2021): 7.7% 15.1%
+/- 10% margin of error
- Poverty rate 9.2% 11.7%
(% of people below poverty line)

Race/Ethnicity

White: 47.6%

American Indian: 0%

Black: 0.1%

Hispanic: 51.1%

Asian: 0%

Two or more races: 1.3%

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

Website cityofulysses.com

- City of Ulysses official site was the first to come up in a Google search for most.
- The site is colorful, has a nice banner, and has a city directory making it easy to find information.
- Search box in top right of page was tested with no search results found. Might be a useful feature, but not sure if it is working.
- Events and meetings calendars also might be a useful feature, but they were all blank.



Meetings Calendar

October						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

- There was a lot of information found about Ulysses online and it reflected what was seen during in person visits.
- The Ulysses Chamber/Grant County Chamber website seems to be one in the same. Found a link to the site on the city's web page.
- Chamber site was a bit plain and could use some graphics.



Facebook facebook.com/cityofulysseskansas/

- City of Ulysses Facebook page was on the first page of search results when looking for online information about the city. 1.4k likes and 1.5k followers.
- A Facebook-generated page about Things to do in Ulysses was also found by some visitors.



<https://www.facebook.com> › places

Things to do in Ulysses, Kansas - Facebook

Long Branch Lagoon Water Park. Just For Fun. 4.7 ; Black Mesa State Park. State Park. 5 ; Cedar Bluff State Park. Park. 884 likes ; Dodge City Raceway Park. Race ...

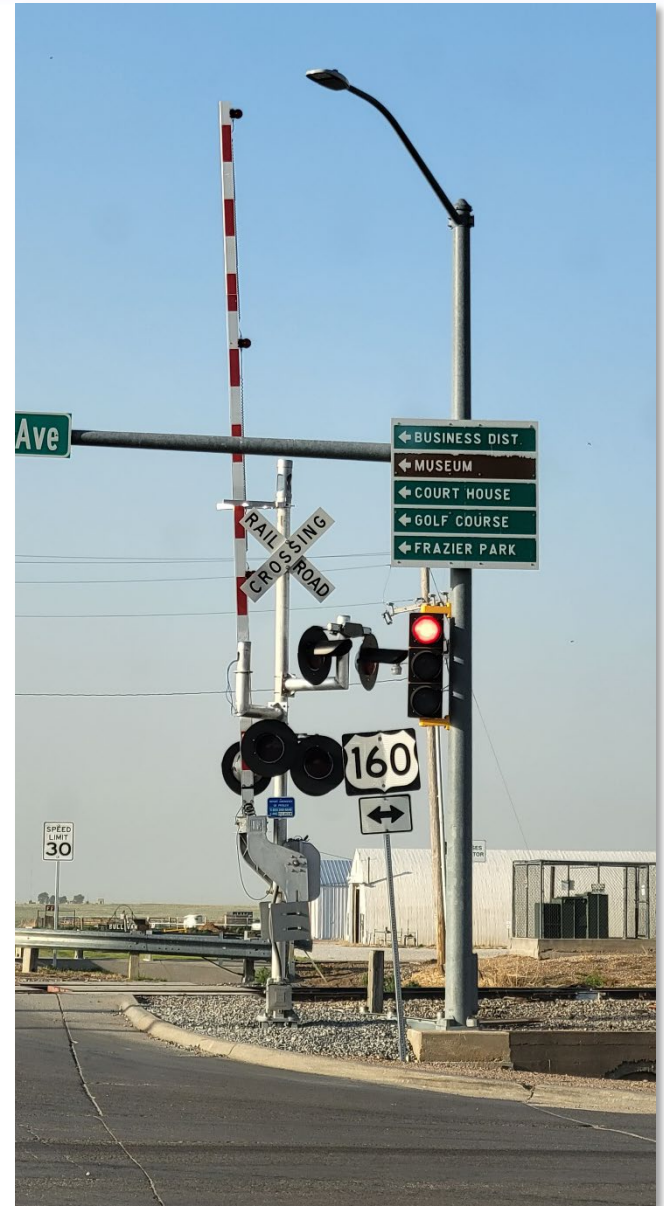
“Five-Minute” Impression

- Visitors loved the view from the south coming into town.
- The Ulysses/Grant county billboard was easily noticed.
- “Clean and attractive community.”
- Appears there is a lot of community pride in town.
- Pioneer Electric was a positive observation by some coming through town.
- Houses and lots were well-kept and the city was fairly organized.
- Flowers at 160 and Main were very nice. The corners at Missouri and Oklahoma were also nice.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Civic Center had nice signs.
- Directional signage was good to see and commented on by some.
- Westbound and northbound signage is great.
- Stone signs were well done at major entrances and veterans signs were also observed.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Some felt the entrance from the south was a bit rough.
- Not a specific “flow” with how businesses were located outside of downtown.
- The quick drive through gave the impression that the city was developed around the two highways and was kind of broken up.
- Some of the smaller homes added an industrial feel to the city.
- It was noted that the “Tiger Country” signs were faded.

“Five-Minute” Impression

- Many signs indicating various attractions however, maybe too many as it was difficult to read them all at driving speed.
- Digital stone Ulysses sign was nice for those at the stop light but may be too small for people to read when driving.
- Eastbound signage is lacking.
- While some noted they saw directional signage, others indicated there wasn't a lot, or it was hard to see/read.
- Felt “lost trying to find the football field and high school” coming from the west. Coming from the east there was adequate signage.

Downtown Business Area

- Good quality, helpful directional signage downtown.
- Good pedestrian routes. “Enjoyed walking downtown.”
- Nice variety of stores with most being only one story high for a cleaner/dressier appearance.
- Stores had appropriate signage and nice storefronts.
- Some work happening on Main street with the lighting.



- No countdown lights for crosswalks on signs or poles.
- Main Street seemed a bit narrow in spots for some who indicated there was congestion but acknowledged there was some power pole maintenance which would have contributed to that.
- For some it was an ordinary main street with nothing that popped out.
- Several businesses closed during one visit (Wednesday afternoon).
- Some felt there wasn't much merchandise variety in shops.



Downtown Business Area

- Observed were clothing stores, a movie theater, drug store, financial services, insurance, an art collective, and real estate office.
- The art/antique store had a very nice setup and friendly staff.
- Quite a few Mexican restaurants.
- Business district reflects community's Hispanic culture.
- Coffee shop, Eco-Devo office and consignment shop were also noted.



Downtown Business Area

- Customer service at the Eco-Devo/Chamber was good. Greeted nicely, fair and museum were mentioned when asking about things to do, and a brochure for the Lower Cimarron Springs was given out.
- Friendly staff and easy to talk to at Tiger Nutrition.
- Friendly customer service at Main Artery.
- Everyone was welcoming – no negative interactions.
- La Estrella service was great!
- Consignment store staff very helpful.



Public Amenities Downtown

- There were benches on either side of the street.
- Some trash cans observed, some near the benches.
- Multiple people mentioned they did not see any public wi-fi availability.
- Parks had restrooms if people needed them.



Downtown Parking and More

- Brick areas between some buildings was nice though some lots between buildings were a little neglected looking.
- There was an interesting area observed with a fancy street light and some type of cauldron or fire pit.



Downtown Parking and More

- Visitors were glad to see concrete work being done to maintain areas.
- Parking was good and it was easy to walk to several businesses from parking spots.
- Some indicated landscaping was nice, others noted there weren't really any live plants downtown to contribute to the landscaping.
- Ulysses banners on poles were a nice touch.



- Additional shopping areas were noted along Hwy 160. Buildings and grounds looked nice.
- Ace Hardware and another lumberyard observed off Main.
- Gas stations on Colorado.



- Visitors felt the area off Stubbs Rd. out east was an industrial area, though not well marked so they weren't sure if it was officially that.
- Area on west side of town that could accommodate building or expansion. Some felt industrial areas were tightly packed with little room for potential expansion.
- Hwy 160 has a majority of the commercial areas with a variety of businesses from agriculture to electric and hardware.
- Community had an industrial feel.



- *A drive-by is not how industry will find you, check with your local Eco Devo director to make sure your site is listed on LocationOne @ Kansas Department of Commerce.*

Observation:

- “Entrepreneurs who choose to start their small businesses are responsible for 63 percent of net new jobs created in the United States every year.”
- *Global marketing makes your town accessible to purchases all over the world.*

- Hospital was observed by all visitors.
- Hospital was well marked, building and grounds maintained, central location, modern, and large.
- ER was at the front of the complex for easy access.
- Health Department was also noted but not as well marked.



- Other health facilities found: dentist, dermatologist, hearing specialist.
- Good variety and availability of different medical services.
- Variety and number – a real asset to the community.
- Signage for other health services didn't really stand out for some visitors but was seen.



- Fairly new assisted living and nursing facilities were noted on the east side of town along Missouri.
- Appear to have many residents.
- Nice, well-kept and close to the elementary school.
- The layout of the buildings at the assisted living facility was appreciated.



- Homes and properties in good condition.
- Quite a bit of the housing is on the small size.
- Not much for sale in the community, though what was found online seemed to be affordable and appeals to all income levels.
- Some houses built in the last several years on the outskirts of the community and some vacant lots may be available west of the high school area.



- Some mobile homes and lower income housing on the south side of town not as well-kept.
- Code enforcement is evident in the city due to run down properties being not that prevalent as in other communities.



- Apartments and lots of duplexes noted by visitors.
- Housing Authority was found.
- Some noted rental signs at the apartment complexes, others did not see rental signs.
- Felt there were a lot of rental properties for the size of the community.
- Rental properties all over town.



Housing data

KANSAS

- Occupied Housing Units 1,896
- Owner Occupied 60.8% 66%
- Vacant Houses 12.3%
- Average Household size 2.9
 - Households without a computer*: 6.6%
 - Households without Broadband Internet: 10.2%
- Travel Time to jobs: 23.4 min 19.6 min
Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

*Includes Smartphones, tablets, other wireless devices.

Data source: Census.gov Quick Facts; Census.gov 2020 data

- Kansas Housing Corporation is a resource to find out about housing grants and other tools for homeowners and renters.
- Also has some resources to address homelessness.

<https://kshousingcorp.org/>



- School buildings and grounds were well maintained.
- High school and Sullivan entrances were attractive.
- Playgrounds adequate.
- Another locker room was being added at the football field.
- Appeared to be some work on structures happening at the high school and middle school.
- Older appearance to some buildings, but work was being done.



- High school could use a larger sign or a better positioned sign for the sake of visitors trying to find it.



- District website was found during search.
- Could not determine the quality of education from the site; other sites also unclear on quality of education.
- Some found UNIV/STATS information showing 1,668 students in K-12 with 15:1 student/teacher ratio.
- Math proficiency 15%, reading 16%.



Comments:

- Visitors noted they did not see facilities or find any information about available childcare while in town.
- Some daycares were listed in a Google search but pricing information was not available to determine affordability.

Grant County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need** **22%**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343

Source <https://ks.childcareaware.org/data-research/> Retrieved from internet 10/26/22

- Community appears to be very faith-based. One restaurant offered prayer cards to visitors.
- Several church buildings were observed, especially in the middle of town.
- Properties well maintained which shows they are regularly attended and parishioners care about the churches.
- Multiple visitors noted the Episcopal Church was up for sale.
- Nice architecture of the churches with the Catholic Church having an interesting shape.
- No mention of any faith-based community services associated with the churches (examples: food bank, clothes closet, community meals or events).



- Various club signage at the entrance to town.
- Rotary's public space downtown and elsewhere in the community.
- Loved the “Civic Center” at the fairground, also noticed K-State Research and Extension building there.



- Some didn't see the American Legion building and others did.
- Buildings for the Masons, Scouts, and Farm Bureau also were seen.
- Restaurant flyer listed different events put on by various organizations in the city.



- Multiple visitors noted no evidence of civic organization activity other than having signs at the city's entrances.
- Others pointed out that some of the parks were club sponsored, that the fair was going on at the Civic Center and that Extension was involved.

- Streets were in decent shape overall – good job maintaining them.
- Signs were easy to read and streets were well marked according to some visitors.
- 4-Way stop signs were nicely marked with red and white posts making them easy to see.



- It would've helped visitors if there was a sign showing the direction to the fairgrounds and high school on the eastbound side of the road on N. Joyce St.
- Joyce Street was a nice street with few stop signs and no dips. Great to get to the northern parts of town – great asset!
- Not much in the way of landscaping or beautification projects in town, but it's a dry climate which could account for lack of plants.
- It looked like the street lights downtown were being improved during some of the visits.

- Some felt it was difficult finding city hall.
- Others found city hall but didn't go in.
- The building was pleasant enough but the barriers put up made it seem unfriendly and that there's an implied separation. More of a reflection on the world at large rather than the city itself.
- Some found information about the city in an Experience Grant County magazine at Bear Creek Coffee.
- It was noted that the courthouse and other county government buildings were found as well.



- Visitors found law enforcement one block off Main.
- Fire and EMS has easy, quick access to roads on Hwy 160.
- Fire station building was very appealing.
- One visitor was not able to identify where fire or police stations were while touring the city.



Welcome to Kansas Insurance Department

Home Contact Us search GO

Kansas Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt



Kansas Insurance Department
420 SW 9th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1678
Consumer Hotline: 800-432-2484 (KS only)
[Email Us](#) | Phone: 785-296-3071

- > The Department
- > Auto/Home
- > Health/Life
- > Insurance Fraud & Education
- > Producer/Agency Services
- > Company Services
- > Other Services

HOME : ISO

ISO Public Protection Classification

Most U.S. insurers of home and business properties use Insurance Services Office's (ISO) Property Protection Classification (PPC) in calculating premiums. In general, the price of insurance in a community with a good PPC is lower than in a community with a poor PPC, assuming all other factors are equal.

PPC Program: <https://www.isomitigation.com/program-works/how-the-ppc-program-works.html>

A community's PPC depends on:

1. Emergency communications systems, including facilities for the public to report fires, staffing, training, certification of telecommunicators, and facilities for dispatching fire departments
2. The fire department, including equipment, staffing, training, and geographic deployment of fire companies
3. The water supply system, including the inspection and flow testing of hydrants and a careful evaluation of



- Library was also just one block off Main.
- Large building, well-kept structure and grounds.
- Kids observed parking bikes and going inside – all friendly and waved to visitors.
- Easy to find in town.



- Multiple praises for the Frazier Park complex.
- Russ Binney Park was beautiful – a real gem.
- Great outdoor recreation area on the north end of town.
- Rec Center and pool were very nice.
- Great that the ballparks are part of the sports complex at the fairgrounds.
- Parks had benches, public restrooms, and trash cans – all nice.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

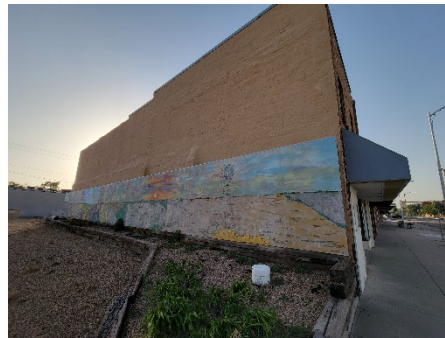
- The Home Products Dinner.
- Some couldn't tell but did mention the city utilizes school colors (orange and black) throughout town.
- Named after Ulysses S. Grant.
- Found a "Get Ulysses" section on the Chamber/Tourism Facebook page.
- Easily found news about the county fair.



- During some visits the county fair was happening.
- A restaurant had the weekly fair events listed at each table.
- Fair was well attended.
- There was a poster promoting a date night with the Bear Creek Coffee shop.



- Significant features that have the potential of drawing people to the community: Frazier Park was again mentioned multiple times for its camping areas, fishing, and trail. The golf course was also nice.
- The historic museum would be a draw for the curious.
- The large mural on Main.



Visitor's Center or Chamber

- Eco-Devo/Chamber office in one location.
- Friendly staff, good signage.
- Some felt Chamber office was not obvious or that the window display could be reworked to be more inviting.



What would bring you back?

- Tiger Nutrition was a neat place to visit.
- Civic Center complex.
- Frazier Park for sure. Would be a great place to hold a large event like a family reunion.
- Authentic Mexican restaurants.
- Bear Creek Coffee, especially to purchase beans, cups, stickers, and shirts.
- La Estrella – would definitely stop in again if in the area.



Most Positive Observations

- Housing kept up better than other communities that visitors have experienced in the west.
- Schools were attractive and people were using the facilities even during summer months.
- Felt very much like a hometown.
- Concrete streets made a real difference.
- A lot of community pride. A “true community.”
- Clean city, great yards.
- Frazier Park complex.
- Rec Center and swimming pool.
- Friendly people.
- Retail options and restaurants.
- Murals and the embracing of different cultures, sharing that throughout the community and to visitors.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- There could be more retail downtown.
- Lack of rental housing.
- If you're coming from the west, getting to the high school is challenging.
- Joyce Street should be utilized as the major north/south street giving easier access to the fairgrounds and high school rather than going through the center of town.
- Not much of a variety of eating places.
- Some felt the city lacked charm because of the layout being more scattered and needed a more centralized area to have the feel of community.
- Tightly packed industrial feel made it hard for some to feel like it might be home.
- Marketing the community as a place to move – felt older and not lively in some areas.

What will you remember?

- “Ulysses left me with a more positive impression than I was expecting.”
- Climate differences between Goodland and Ulysses and how landscaping is planned with grasses instead of trees because of how much drier it is.
- How clean the community was.
- The even housing levels.
- The golf course and nearby park – such a great family-oriented space!
- One visitor was looking for a bit more charm.
- Digital signage as you turn into the main business district.
- People were kind and retail was good.
- Bear Creek Coffee and La Estrella.
- A community of hard-working people.

- Remember that potential new residents are researching before they come. Use your City and School websites to highlight your many assets.
- What are you proud of? Show us online.
- Tell your positive stories. Make your residents want to contribute to a positive story.

N o o n e c a n d o e v e r y t h i n g ,
b u t e v e r y o n e c a n d o s o m e t h i n g .

Thank you to our volunteer visitors.

Set Next Steps:

- Start talking! Find ways to discuss what you heard in small groups of every kind.

Contact me if you need resources or have questions:

Jan Steen

Community Vitality Specialist

Kansas PRIDE Program Co-Coordinator, K-State Research and Extension

785.532.5840

jmsteen@ksu.edu

Kansas PRIDE: <http://kansasprideprogram.k-state.edu/>

- Local communities identify what they would like to preserve, create, or improve for their future and volunteers pull together to create their ideal community future.



Youth Community Perceptions

- Youth-Based Community Assessment.
- Gives communities insights on how youth see their community.
- Creates opportunities for youth voices in the community.
- Allows youth to become involved in local government and community process



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Grant Writing Classes and Support

Contact

KSRECV@ksu.edu

to participate.



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5 GRANT WRITING RESOURCES

K-State Research and Extension provides resources to help you write and submit successful grant proposals to improve lives, livelihoods and communities across Kansas.

- 1 ONLINE GRANT WRITING CLASSES**
Class alum reported receiving \$28 million in successful grants. 
- 2 A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL GRANT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT COURSE**
An 8-week course dedicated to helping you complete a fundable proposal. 
- 3 A LIST OF CONTRACT GRANT WRITERS**
Professionals willing and ready to write grants on a contract basis.
- 4 SUPPORT FOR KANSAS PRIDE COMMUNITIES**
Excellent resources for those wanting to bring more to their communities.
- 5 ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT BY K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS**
Our professionals are prepared to help you find grants and review your grant proposals.

Small Business and Community Development

- **First Friday e-Calls 9:30-10:30 am**

Connecting small businesses and communities with the resources to make them successful.

- [Register here](#)

- Previous calls are recorded at

<http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship/>

- Now people have a choice, and millions of them are planning to move.
- **“The pivot to remote work is the biggest, fastest transformation of the labor market since the World War II mobilization.”**
- **Major cities will see the biggest out-migration:** 20.6% of those planning to move are currently based in a major city.
- **People are seeking less expensive housing:** Altogether, **more than half** (52.5%) are planning to move to a house that is significantly more affordable than their current home.
- **People are moving beyond regular commute distances:** 54.7% of people are moving over two hours away or more from their current location, which is beyond daily or even weekly commuting distances for most.

[UpWork October, 2020 <https://www.upwork.com/press/releases/economist-report-remote-workers-on-the-move>, retrieved from Internet 12-12-20, UpWork October, 2020](https://www.upwork.com/press/releases/economist-report-remote-workers-on-the-move)

- Kansas Remote Online Initiative
 - Certified Remote Work Professional
 - Certified Remote Work Leader
- *Certification in 4-weeks*
- kansasremotework.com



Rural Grocery/KS Healthy Food Initiative

- **Goal:** Increase access to healthy food and to improve the health and economic development of Kansans and their communities.
- Technical assistance and financing to develop new or renovate fresh food retail in underserved communities throughout Kansas.

<http://kansashealthyfood.org/>

