

# Rural Grocery Initiative

## Heartland Regional Food Business Center with Kansas Incubator Kitchen Overview

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& Jenny Doty**

*Food Systems  
Entrepreneurial  
Resource Navigators*

Rural Grocery Initiative - <https://www.ruralgrocery.org/>

The National Rural Grocery Summit - [www.ruralgrocery.org/summit](http://www.ruralgrocery.org/summit)

Kansas Healthy Food Initiative <https://kansashealthyfood.org/programdetails/assistance/index.html>

### ***Connect with us:***

Heartland Center website [www.heartlandfoodbusiness.org](http://www.heartlandfoodbusiness.org)

Sign up for the newsletter [www.heartlandfoodbusiness.org/contact](http://www.heartlandfoodbusiness.org/contact)

K-State team related to Heartland Regional Food Business Center [heartlandrfbc@ksu.edu](mailto:heartlandrfbc@ksu.edu)

- **Kansas Incubator Kitchen Overview**- Many of the resources we will share today will be at this website.  
<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/kansaslocalfoods/learn-more/resources.html>
- **Foods Sold Directly to Consumers** - [https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/foods-sold-directly-to-consumers-in-kansas-farmers-markets-regulations-and-food-safety-best-practices\\_MF3138.pdf](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/foods-sold-directly-to-consumers-in-kansas-farmers-markets-regulations-and-food-safety-best-practices_MF3138.pdf)
- **Locating an Existing Kitchen** - <https://www.agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/food-safety-and-lodging/incubator-kitchen-resource-guide>
- **Designing and Building a Kitchen** - <https://www.agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/food-safety-and-lodging/starting-a-food-business>
- **K-State Food Innovation...** - <https://olathe.k-state.edu/research/food-programs/food-innovation-accelerator/>
- **The Shared Kitchen** - <https://thesharedkitchenict.com/>
- **Emerald City Foods** - <https://www.facebook.com/EmeraldCityFoods/>
- **The Culinary Incubator at Elk Plaza, Hanston** - <https://www.facebook.com/EmeraldCityFoods/>
- **Bushton Plaza Incubator Kitchen** - <https://shopkansasfarms.com/bushton-plaza-incubator-kitchen>
- **Incubator Kitchen Resources** - <https://www.thefoodcorridor.com/>



# Rural Grocery Initiative

The Rural Grocery Initiative aims to sustain locally-owned rural grocery stores to enhance community vitality and improve access to healthy foods by identifying, developing, and sharing resources that support grocers and rural communities.



# What does RGI do?

- Provides individual, one on one **technical assistance** to grocers and communities related to rural grocery stores and/or healthy food access
- Conducts **research** on relevant rural grocery and food access issues
- Develops and maintains **informational resources**
- Hosts **educational events** including the biennial **National Rural Grocery Summit**
- Serves as Food Access Organization for **Kansas Healthy Food Initiative**



# The National Rural Grocery Summit

## Save the Date

- May 5-7, 2026 Fargo, ND
- Last summit had over **240 registered attendees** from **35 states** + D.C., more than **50 presentations**
- Presented by
  - K-State Research and Extension
  - North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives
  - University of Minnesota Extension

Find more information online at  
[www.ruralgrocery.org/summit](http://www.ruralgrocery.org/summit)



# Kansas Healthy Food Initiative

The Kansas Healthy Food Initiative is a public-private partnership that aims to increase access to affordable healthy food to improve the health and economic development of Kansans and their communities.

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

Rural Grocery  
Initiative



KANSAS HEALTH  
FOUNDATION

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension



**NetWork  
Kansas**



Strengthening  
nonprofits and  
the communities  
they serve.



The Food Trust

Learn more by emailing [khfi@ksu.edu](mailto:khfi@ksu.edu)



**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

Douglas County

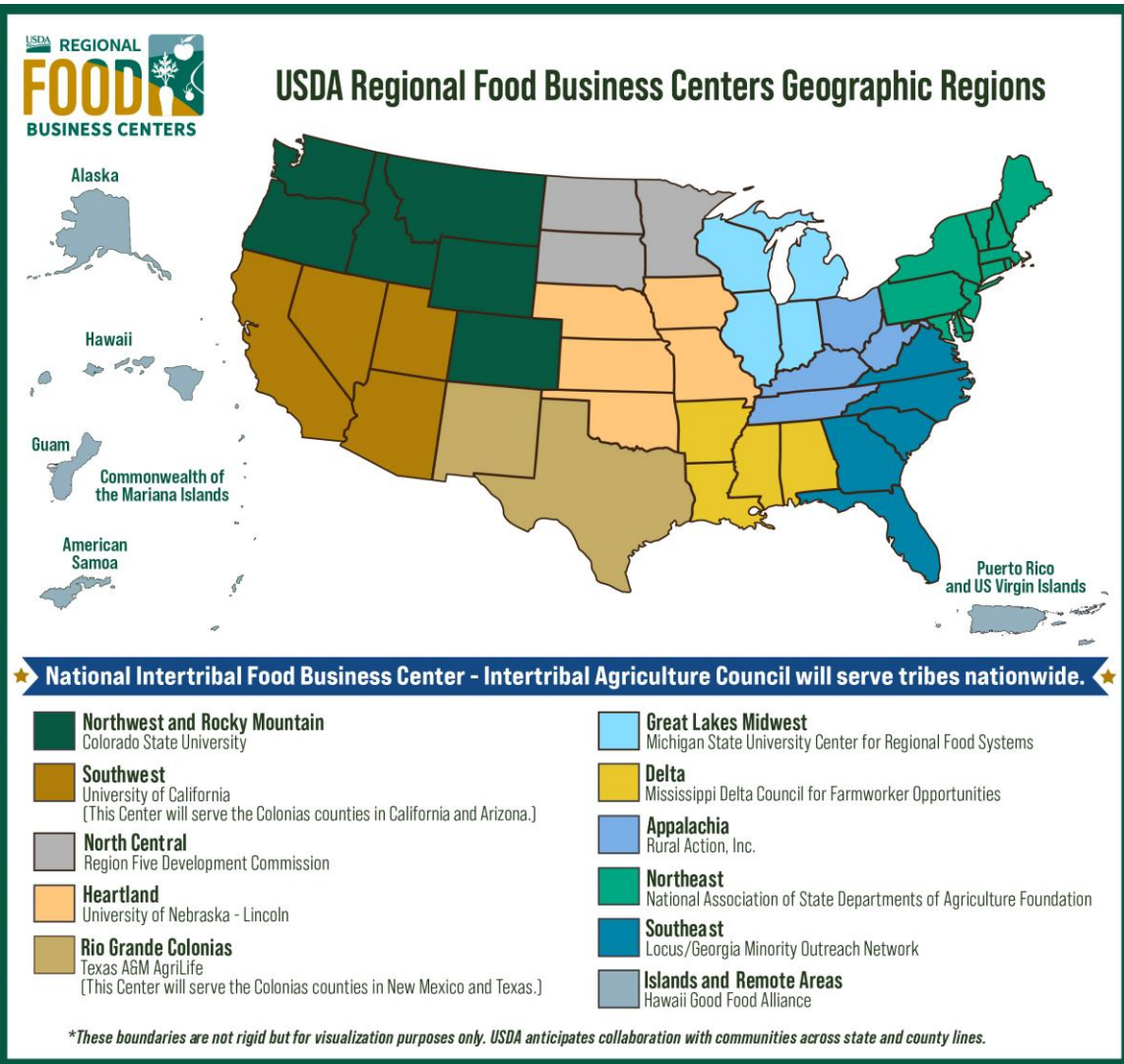
**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

Rural Grocery  
Initiative





# Overview of Centers



- Heartland is one of 12 USDA Regional Food Business Centers
- 13 Key Partners across our 5-state region + 20 Collaborator organizations
- Purpose
  - Technical Assistance (TA)
  - Coordination
  - Capacity Building (Business Builder Grants, among others)

**HeartlandFoodBusiness.org**

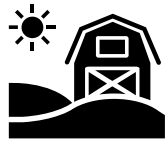
# Businesses we support



## ***Food entrepreneurs from harvest to fork***

- Retail food sales outlets
- Producers/farmers/ranchers
- Food/Farm cooperatives
- Value-added processors, meat processing
- Businesses involved in aggregation, distribution
- Food hubs
- Farmers' markets
- Non-profits

# Kansas funded resources



**KS Dept of Agriculture** – through From the Land of Kansas (FLOK) program, client can receive up to \$200 of FLOK member services



**KS Value Added Foods Lab** – Assists businesses in processing foods safely. (Two food testing and labeling up to \$400).



**KS Small Business Development Center** - Provide workshops and 1-1 business technical assistance



**Shop KS Farms** - Support food-based business operators to develop consultant businesses.

To receive funded resources, client must be referred by K-State Research and Extension

# KSRE-HRFBC Projects



**Kansas Food First magazine** – showcases successes stories and hardworking food businesses



**Professional Development Scholarship** – available to assist with trainings and conferences related to food businesses



**Food Business Start-up Summit** – for food entrepreneurs to set aside time to work on their business, receive technical from key informants to focus on business projects







# Business Builder Subaward

**No match required**

**Reimbursement grant**

**Funding is currently on hold pending U.S. Secretary of Agriculture review of the program.**

**Available:** \$11.1M total; \$3.72M in Round 1; \$7.38M in Round 2

**Award Amounts:** \$5K - \$50K

**Length of projects:** 12 months

(option for one 6 month no cost extension)

## Business Builder Subaward Timeline

RFP Release	Aug. 15, 2024	TBD
Applications Due	Oct. 15, 2024	2 months after RFP Release
Award Notification	TBD	4 months after applications are due



# Examples of Projects



- **Business planning**

Feasibility studies - Loan applications - Legal support for risk management and growth

- **Marketing**

Branding and marketing materials – Websites - Market analysis - Customer outreach – Social media coordination

- **Developing new products and expanding existing products**

Equipment to improve efficiency - Product labels and packaging - Food testing

- **Improving processing and distribution**

Food hub development – Incubator kitchen equipment - Transportation vehicles - Food safety training - Compliance with worker safety equipment.

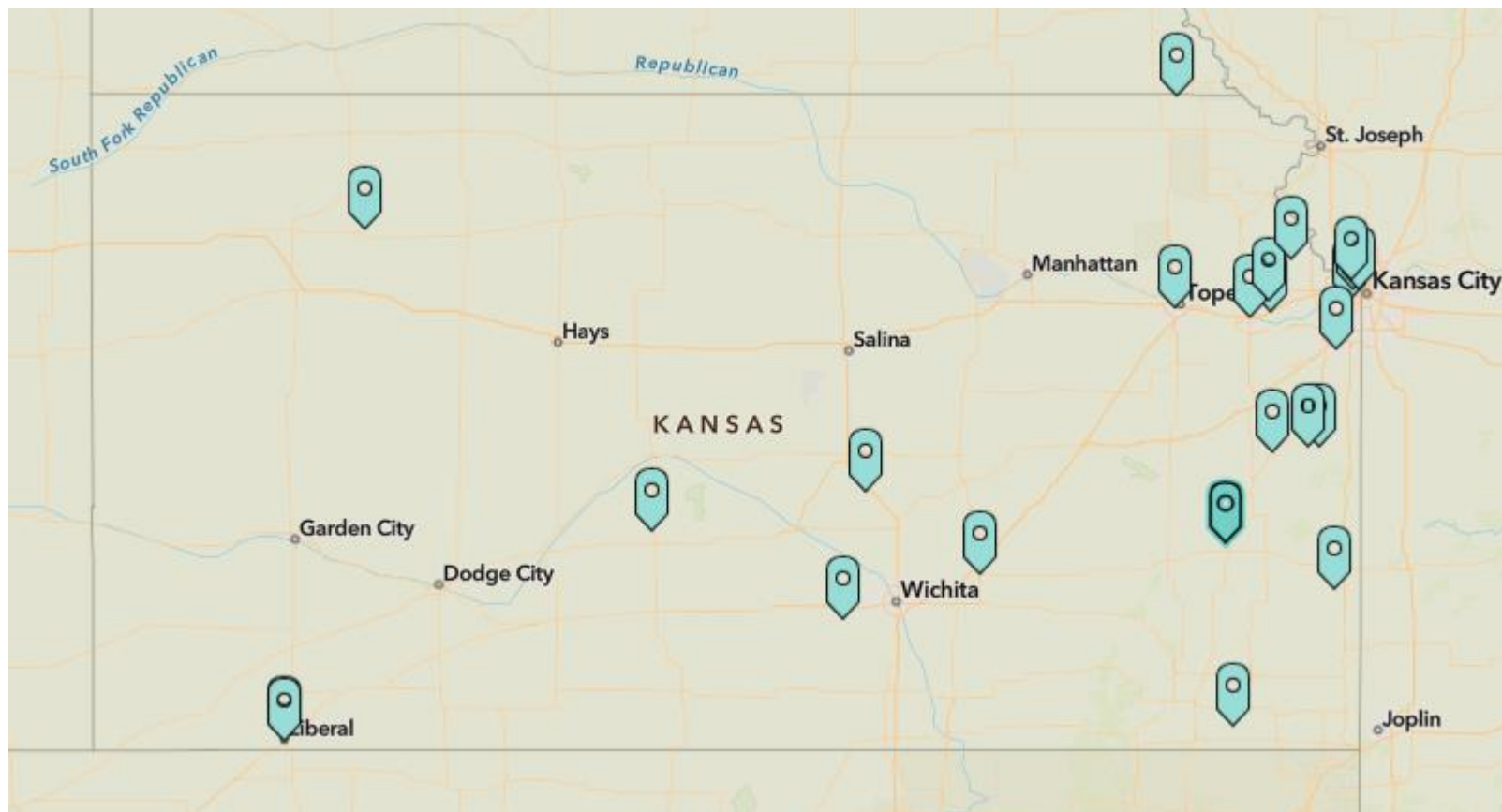
- **Create or expand markets**

Farm stands - U-Pick - CSA - Farmers Markets - Food Hubs - Online

# Kansas Finalists

## Business Builder Awards

- **25 Kansas Businesses** awarded out of 89 projects across 5 state Heartland Region
- **\$1,044,267** awarded to Kansas projects out of \$3.7 M for entire Heartland Region



*Finalization of these grant awards is currently on hold pending U.S. Secretary of Agriculture review of the program. The Heartland Center will also hold opening its final Round 2 of the Business Builder Subaward grant program pending the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture review.*

# Connect with us



[heartlandfoodbusiness.org](http://heartlandfoodbusiness.org)



[heartlandfoodbusiness.org/contact](http://heartlandfoodbusiness.org/contact)



[heartlandrfbc@ksu.edu](mailto:heartlandrfbc@ksu.edu)





# Kansas Incubator Kitchen Overview

# Incubator Kitchens: Overview

- Shared-use kitchen: licensed commercial space certified for food production
  - Often rented hourly or daily
- Kitchen incubators are likely to be used by:
  - Start-up food businesses in need of their first facility
  - Home-based businesses that wish to legalize and grow their operation
  - Established businesses looking to grow or reach a new market

So *why* use an incubator kitchen?







# Benefits of Using Incubator Kitchens



## Lower Barriers To Access

Shared resources and reduced overhead for starting a food business.



## Guidance on Regulations

Gain valuable guidance from experienced entrepreneurs and industry professionals.



## Collaboration and Networking

Connect with other food producers, share resources, and learn from one another.

A food business in your community comes to you with questions about food production and regulations:

# How to determine if they need to use a licensed kitchen

License requirements are based on what type of food product they're making, their process, and how they're selling their product.

- Direct to Consumer
  - Refer them to *Foods Sold Directly to Consumers in Kansas: Regulations and Food Safety Best Practices*
  - Consider the requirements of the location of selling (e.g., farmers' market)
- Wholesale
  - All foods must be made in a licensed kitchen, without exception

# Foods Sold Directly to Consumers in Kansas: *Regulations and Food Safety Best Practices*

Revised January 2025



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You've determined a commercial kitchen is needed. Now what?

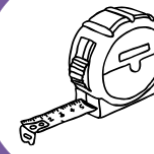
## One of three possibilities:



### Locate Existing Kitchen

Find an approved kitchen in or nearby your community using the Kansas Department of Agriculture Incubator Kitchen Guide.

01



### Design & Build a Kitchen

Design a commercial kitchen from scratch and build it to your own specifications.

02



### Convert Existing Location

Find a location that lends itself well to being converted to a licensed kitchen, especially those already containing commercial equipment.

03

# Locating an Existing Kitchen

 **Kansas** Department of Agriculture

CareersContact Us

I Want To...Search...

About UsKansas AgricultureDivisions & ProgramsPublic ResourcesLicenses

Food Safety and Lodging

Starting a Food Business

Application Forms - Food Safety, Egg, & Lodging

License Information - Food Safety

License Information - Lodging Safety

Online License Renewal Instructions

Educational Materials - Food Safety

Educational Materials - Lodging

Food Safety Complaint

Lodging Safety Complaint

Inspection Results

Farmers' Markets & Similar Locations

Consumer Information

Food Defense

Industry Information

Wild Harvested Mushrooms

Divisions & Programs » Food Safety and Lodging »

## Incubator Kitchen Resource Guide

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In an effort to provide support to small food-business startups, the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) has developed an Incubator Kitchen Resource Guide to provide critical information about incubator resources throughout the state of Kansas.

Incubator kitchens, often called shared kitchens, are food facilities that can be rented for short periods of time to allow individuals starting a food business to access commercial kitchen equipment in a cost effective manner. In recent years, multiple incubator kitchens have been established across the state. As KDA works to provide support and assistance to help promote success for Kansas businesses, the Incubator Kitchen Resource Guide helps make this information more accessible.

- Incubator Kitchen Resource Guide 2025

If your commercial kitchen is available for use by another person and you would like to be included in the Kansas Department of Agriculture Incubator Kitchen Registry, please complete and submit this form.





# Kansas Incubator Kitchens: Present & Future

## LEGEND

■ Existing

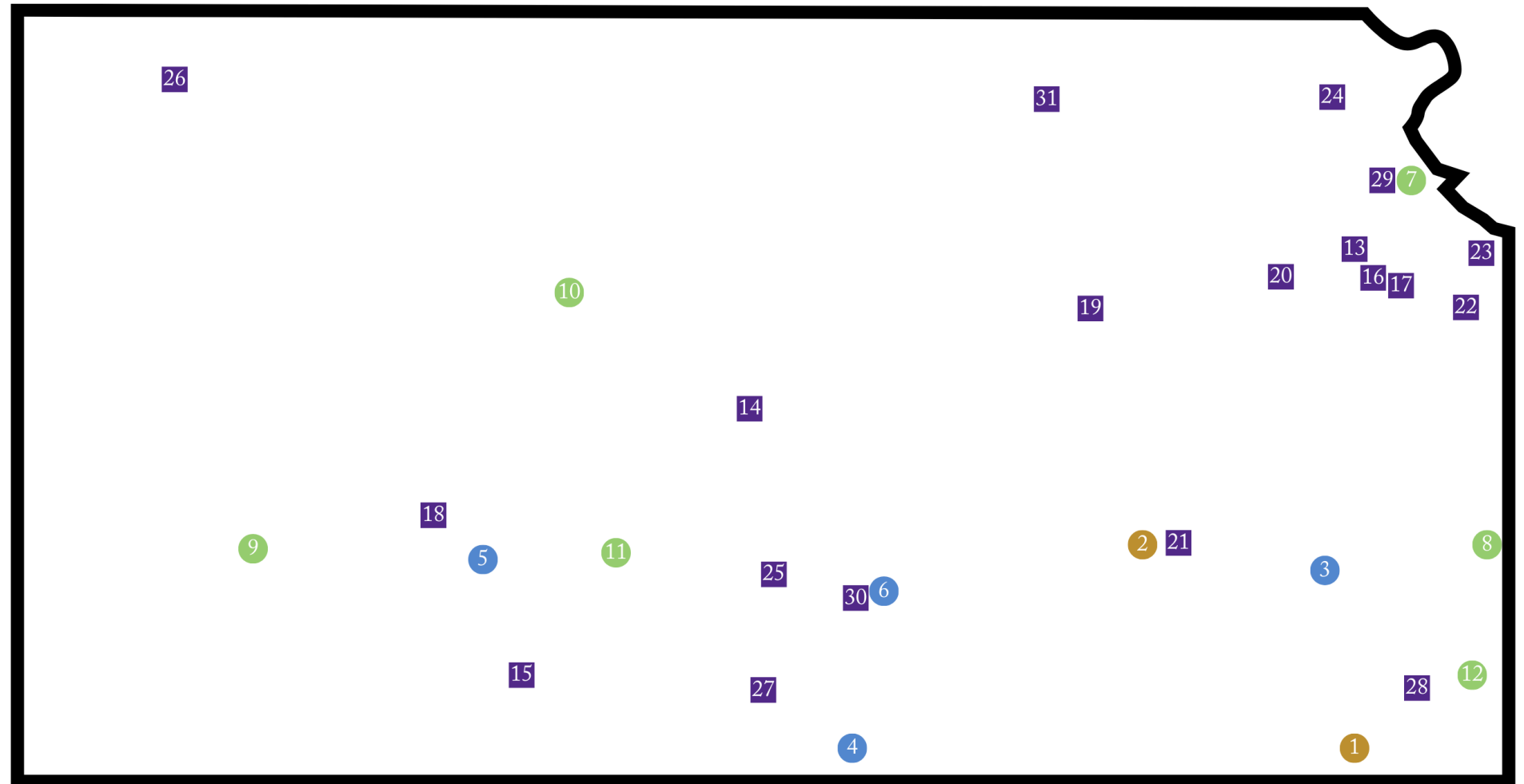
○ Forthcoming

● Business Builder funded

● K-State 105 funded

● RFSI funded

1. Kitchen 101: Edna
2. Salt Creek Farm, Eureka
3. Neosho Valley Event Center Incubator, Chanute
4. Border Queen Harvest Hub, Caldwell
5. Edwards County Commercial Kitchen, Kinsley
6. A La Carte Kitchen, Wichita
7. Jet Produce and Meats Incubator, Leavenworth
8. The Kitchen Collective, Fort Scott
9. Prairiewind Farms Kitchen, Garden City
10. Idea Incubator Kitchen, Russell
11. Stafford Commercial Kitchen, St. John
12. Toast Kitchen, Pittsburgh
13. 305 LLC, Topeka
14. Bushton Plaza Incubator, Bushton
15. The Blonde Grill Kitchen, Coldwater
16. Just Food Chop Shop, Lawrence
17. Culinary Commons Incubator, Lawrence
18. Culinary Incubator Elk Plaza, Hanston
19. Dealership Building Kitchen, Council Grove
20. Dover Community Kitchen, Dover
21. Emerald City Foods, Toronto
22. K-State Food Innovation Accelerator, Olathe
23. Food Truck Central KC, Kansas City
24. Glacial Hills Food Center, Horton
25. Graber Mercantile Prairie Kitchen, Pretty Prairie
26. Grass Roots Institute Community Kitchen, Atwood
27. Harper County Education Center, Harper
28. McCune Farm to Market, McCune
29. Next to Nature Farm, Leavenworth
30. The Shared Kitchen, Wichita
31. Waterville Community Kitchen, Waterville



# Evaluate potential shared kitchen spaces in your community

## Main necessary kitchen components:

- Three compartment sink
- Handwashing sink
- Accessible bathroom
- Food safety compliance

## Nice-to-haves:

- Refrigerators, freezers, stovetops, counter space
- Specialized equipment related to specific process (e.g., an ice cream machine)
- *Recommended:* as much storage space and electric outlets as possible

# Designing and Building a Kitchen

 **Kansas** Department of Agriculture

Careers Contact Us

I Want To... Search... 

About Us Kansas Agriculture **Divisions & Programs** Public Resources Licenses

- Food Safety and Lodging

Starting a Food Business

Application Forms - Food Safety, Egg, & Lodging

License Information - Food Safety

License Information - Lodging Safety

Online License Renewal Instructions

Educational Materials - Food Safety

Educational Materials - Lodging

Food Safety Complaint

Lodging Safety Complaint

[Divisions & Programs](#) » [Food Safety and Lodging](#) »

## Starting a Food Business

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**STEP 1. WHAT TYPE OF BUSINESS DO YOU WANT TO START?** +

**STEP 2. SUBMIT PLANS** +

**STEP 3. COMPLETE APPLICATION AND SUBMIT FEES** +

**STEP 4. SCHEDULE A LICENSING INSPECTION** +



# Regional Kitchen Spotlight: Northeast Kansas

## K-State Food Innovation Accelerator, Olathe

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- Custom built kitchen
- Facilities consist of multiple work areas in five kitchens that match space and equipment to the variable needs of specialty food product producers.
- Services include quality, nutritional and microbial testing, product consulting and help with regulatory and food safety issues.



Forthcoming NE Kansas Kitchen:  
**JET Produce & Meats Incubator Kitchen, Leavenworth**  
(RFSI Grant Funded)





# Regional Kitchen Spotlight: South Central Kansas

## The Shared Kitchen, Wichita

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- Custom built kitchen
- Kitchen includes: hot line, separate baking area; access to commercial equipment, including mixers, convection ovens, broiler, fryer, flat top; storage for dry goods, freezer and cooler space.
- Technical assistance and mentorship.
- Outside gated/fenced food truck parking area for overnight or long-term parking. Can be rented with or without access to the kitchen.



Forthcoming SC Kansas Kitchen:

**Edwards County Commercial Kitchen, Kinsley**  
(Funded by K-State 105 Blueprint Initiative)



Sharing a Kitchen:

What could be used as a shared kitchen, based on existing amenities?

The following lend themselves well to being shared:

- Places of worship, community centers, and schools: many already have a kitchen
- *Consider inquiring:* Another restaurants' kitchen, during days/times they're closed



# Regional Kitchen Spotlight: Southeast Kansas

## Emerald City Foods Incubator Kitchen, Toronto

- Existing restaurant, converted into incubator and soon-to-be grocery store
- In addition to commercial kitchen facilities and equipment available for rent, also offers technical support and collaboration
- Attached grocery store will open in May 2025, with hopes to carry packaged products made in incubator
- CSA pick-up site and soon-to-be 60+ dining program for seniors



Forthcoming SE Kansas Kitchen:  
**Kitchen 101, Edna** (Business Builder Grant Finalist)





# Regional Kitchen Spotlight: Southwest Kansas

## The Culinary Incubator at Elk Plaza, Hanston

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- Converted kitchen: housed in the former Hanston High School after school closed in 2010
- Overseen by Hodgeman county's Economic Development office
- Special rates for low-energy users, such as cake decorating or honey bottling
- Offers technical assistance, including marketing and retail bar-coding for products



Forthcoming SW Kansas Kitchen:  
**Prairiewind Farms Incubator Kitchen, Garden City**  
(RFSI Grant Funded)





Converting a  
(non-kitchen) Space:

**What could  
be converted  
into a licensed  
kitchen, based  
on existing  
amenities?**

**The following non-kitchen  
spaces lend themselves well to  
being converted:**

- Basement / Garage (likely single business)
- Warehouse unit
- Former barbershop or laundromat, for example, or another space once outfitted for significant electrical power
- *Note:* Consult the Department of Agriculture and municipality for bringing building up to code (fire suppression, food safety, etc.)

# Regional Kitchen Spotlight: North Central Kansas

## Bushton Plaza Incubator Kitchen, Bushton

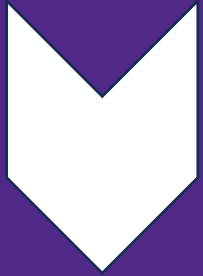
- Converted space inside of City Hall
- Joint operated by the City of Bushton and the Bushton Recreation Commission
- Dry storage and refrigerated storage available for producers to rent in addition to the kitchen facility and equipment
- Equipment includes six burner stove and oven, electric convection oven, electric tilt skillet, and more



Forthcoming NC Kansas Kitchen:  
**Idea Incubator Kitchen, Russell**  
(RFSI Grant Funded)

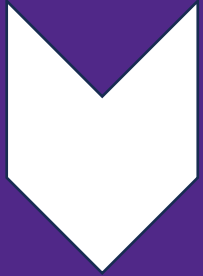


# Navigating the KDA Inspection Process



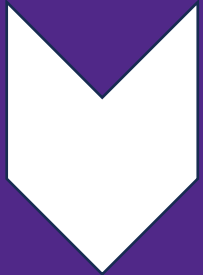
## Schedule Appointment

Contact the KDA to arrange a food safety inspection for your kitchen.



## Inspection

The KDA inspector will assess your kitchen's compliance with food safety regulations.



## Food Safety Procedures

Discuss your food handling practices, sanitation procedures, and documentation requirements.



# Incubator Kitchen Resources

## The Food Corridor

- Kitchen Management Software
- Shared Kitchen Toolkit



A screenshot of the 'The Food Corridor' website. The header features the logo and navigation links: PRICING, REQUEST DEMO, SHARED KITCHEN TOOLKIT, RESOURCES, FIND A KITCHEN, LOGIN, and a Sign Up button. The main heading reads 'The Shared Kitchen Management Software for Commissaries', followed by the tagline 'The Only Software Designed Exclusively for Shared Kitchen Management'. A paragraph asks if it's time to stop juggling calendars and chasing payments. Below are 'Setup a Demo' and 'Create My Account' buttons. A section titled 'Used by the nation's top shared kitchens' displays logos for NIMBUS, crafted KITCHEN, SAE KITCHEN, FINDLAY KITCHEN, and COHO. The footer shows the K-STATE Research and Extension logo.



# Shared Kitchen Toolkit

## 1 Industry Overview and Models

### Shared Kitchen Industry

### Trends Propelling the Growth of Shared Kitchens

### Diversity of Shared Kitchen Models

### The Shared Kitchen / Incubator Spectrum

### Facility Models

Shared Commercial Kitchens

Incubator Kitchens / Food Business Incubators

Community Kitchens

Tribal-led Kitchens / Traditional Food Incubators

Ghost Kitchens

Dedicated Kitchens or Rental Pods in Shared Facilities

Food Truck Commissaries

## 2 Business Model Design

### Clarifying Your Goals

Personal Goals

Tips for Clarifying Goals

### Crafting Your Vision and Mission

### Articulating Your Values

### Creating a Strategy Screen

### Developing Outcomes

Measuring Economic Impact

### Engaging Your Community

Outreach Approaches

Inclusive Outreach

Gathering Feedback



# Shared Kitchen Operator Survey



- Run by The Food Corridor; most comprehensive survey of its kind
- Gathering data on the shared kitchen industry from 200+ US kitchens
- Intended participants are operators and managers of shared-use commercial kitchen facilities (if you are *or plan to* operate a kitchen in 2025)
- By participating in the survey gain access to final report: a snapshot of where the industry is headed and what it takes to run a kitchen today

# How do we help from here?

**Businesses – 1:1 call, resource sharing**

**Community Leaders – Team call to understand your community needs and projects, resource sharing**

# Questions?

Quinlan Carttar – [qcarttar@ksu.edu](mailto:qcarttar@ksu.edu)

Jenny Doty – [jdoty8@ksu.edu](mailto:jdoty8@ksu.edu)