

We Know...

Kansas Communities



Every Kansas community is unique, but the state's residents share a common bond: a rich heritage based on self-reliance and community pride. Preserving those virtues includes working today to improve Kansas' communities for tomorrow.

The Kansas PRIDE Program suggests these ideas for developing effective community groups:

- ***Include participants with many backgrounds.*** Sharing leadership means a wide variety of people are involved in contributing to project ideas, direction and responsibility. Include people and groups who know the local resources and economy.
- ***Communicate, communicate, communicate.*** Effective communication improves understanding of issues, clarifies needs and concerns, and helps reduce conflict. Begin by listening.
- ***Create a vision all members can support.*** A clearly shared vision can motivate and unify community members. By developing a shared vision, partnerships build long-term support that can improve project implementation.
- ***Invite ownership in the project.*** When people are involved in selecting priority projects and making decisions, they are more likely to invest in the project's success.
- ***Build on small successes.*** Demonstrate success before working on a larger scale. Smaller – but visible – projects are often good choices in beginning community partnership work.
- ***Sustain the change.*** Community leaders must involve themselves in evaluation, continuous learning, and accounting for progress.

Pull the Community Together

Partnerships involve people who share a common interest and goodwill. They spend time tackling problems instead of disagreeing.

Help residents pull together to take on community projects:

- Start with manageable tasks that are likely to succeed and can be completed soon.
- Document and celebrate successes.
- Use locally visible projects to show participants they are making a difference.
- For continued participation, recognize volunteers and leaders. Provide positive feedback and acknowledgement.
- Maintain an open structure to emphasize accountability.
- Offer opportunities to participate at different time intervals and involvement levels.
- Build on sources of community pride.
- Communicate the benefits of being part of a community effort.
- Make it fun. Provide refreshments or weave social events into the project structure.

Getting all potentially affected groups and individuals to participate requires more than simply announcing meetings.

Ideas include:

- Use person-to-person networking. Have participants call or visit neighbors, colleagues and others who may have an interest or be affected by activities.
- Use site visits to make issues tangible and build enthusiasm.
- Work with media to announce events and publicize activities.
- Use newsletters and brochures to advertise and attract others.
- Work through local schools to educate the public.
- Appeal to people's sense of stewardship, citizenship or service.

For more information on community development, contact your local K-State Research and Extension office or visit us online at www.oznet.ksu.edu/WeKnow



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