

Youth Civic Engagement Mini-Grant Guidelines

PURPOSE

Research shows that youth civic engagement is critical for a variety of reasons. Youth engagement can lead to increased academic performance and improved social-emotional well-being. It builds safe and inclusive school and community cultures and decreases dropout rates. When young people develop healthy civic habits, skills, and commitments, they become more active in community decision-making which leads to broader representation and beneficial to communities.

Young people have unique perspectives on local issues, they often bring innovative ideas to the table, and they can be an unlimited source of energy and passion for social change. There are troubling opportunity gaps and inequities—by race, gender, education, socioeconomic status, and many other factors—that prevent individuals and communities from thriving. One source of this inequality is underrepresentation in civic and political life as a result of marginalization or oppression. Too often voices go unheard, problems go unaddressed, and a circle of disengagement and neglect perpetuates injustice. Focusing on youth civic engagement is a critical task in the work to promote a more just and equitable society. In addition, by starting participation early (grades K-12), individuals and communities can yield long-term benefits by creating a habit of civic engagement that lasts a lifetime (*Adapted from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement*).

To support this purpose, the Kansas Volunteer Commission, a program of the Kansas State Department of Education, announces the availability of grant funds to support the civic engagement of youth in grades K-12. **For this grant, applicants must engage youth in the planning and implementation of grant activities.** Priority will be given to applications that include youth-led and youth-initiated projects.

Examples of such projects include, but are not limited to:

- Develop service-learning activities or lead a community service project.
- Start or support a program to help youth placement in advisory roles on local boards.
- Develop opportunities for underrepresented youth to share their voice.
- Encourage a governance shadowing project where youth are paired with local community representatives.
- Start or support a program that encourages youth to attend and participate in regular public commission and school district meetings.

Supported projects and training must be nonpartisan and must encourage an informed and vibrant democracy without promoting particular political parties or policies. Voter registration activities are NOT allowed.

ELIGIBLE ENTITIES

The following entities are eligible to apply: public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; school districts, institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and Native American tribes. *All projects must take place in the state of Kansas.*

All entities must have an Employer Identification Number (EIN), Unique Entity Identification (UEI) Number AND must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to applying.

GRANT PROJECT PERIOD

Projects under this proposal should occur from **April 1 – September 30, 2026**. Mini-grant award recipients will be notified on or around **March 23, 2026**.

FUNDING INFORMATION

The Kansas Volunteer Commission will make available up to \$30,000 in grants and expects to award up to **\$5,000.00** per eligible entity. Applicants will be reimbursed 100% (not to exceed the approved amount) of their costs by **November 16, 2026**. This is a cost-reimbursement grant funding opportunity that will be paid upon submission of the project report and documentation of expenditures. Only those expenses incurred after the grant starts will be eligible for reimbursement.

There is a dollar-for-dollar cost match requirement. This means if an applicant requests \$4,500 for this grant, they must include a \$4,500 match. See [Mini-Grant FAQ](#) for more information.

- Grantees will be required to include documentation for match expenses in final reports.
- Matching funds may be a combination of cash or in-kind match and must be non-federal funds. *The value of volunteer hours is not considered an acceptable source of match.*

The Commission will select recipients based on the quality of application, the need and impact of the proposed activities, and meaningful engagement of youth in the planning and implementation. Priority funding will go to projects that address youth civic engagement of underrepresented populations as well as those that are youth led and youth initiated.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS

Mini-grant recipients will be required to:

- Complete *Understanding Match Documentation* training.
- Report on how the project enhanced youth civic engagement within the community, including:
 - Number of youths who participated; and
 - Benefit to the individual(s) and community.
- Submit a final report by **October 12, 2026**. *A form will be provided.*
- Include the KSDE and Kansas Volunteer Commission logos on program materials and publicity.

FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

- Funds may not be used for staffing, gift cards, subawards, or indirect costs.
- Match funds must be incurred during the project period.
- Grant funds are intended to supplement, not supplant.
 - Supplement means to add to; to enhance; to expand; to increase; to extend; to create something new. Supplant means to take the place of; to replace by something else.
- Grant funds under this program are federal funds from AmeriCorps, [CFDA No. 94.003](#), therefore the Commission will not fund projects that engage in:
 - Political activity and advocacy.
 - Religious activity.
 - Benefiting for-profit entities.
 - Voter registration.
 - Abortion services.
- Grants under this program are subject to applicable Cost Principles under the [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) Circulars](#) A-21 (2 CFR part 220), A-87 (CFR part 225), or A-122 (2 CFR part 230), and the Uniform 6 Administrative Requirements for grants under A-102 (45 CFR part 2541) or A-110 (45 CFR 2543 or 2 CFR part 21).

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Guidelines release by or around	Friday, February 13, 2026
Application due by	Monday, March 16, 2026
Award announcement by or around	Monday, March 23, 2026
Grant award period start date	Wednesday, April 1, 2026
Grant award period end date	Wednesday, September 30, 2026
Final report due by	Monday, October 12, 2026
Reimbursement by or around	Monday, November 16, 2026

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- Grantees should email a completed application to volunteer@ksde.gov.
 - Include your organization's name and the phrase "Youth Civic Engagement Mini-Grant Application" in the subject line (Ex. *ABC Youth Civic Engagement Mini Grant Application*).
- All new applicants must submit a signed W-9 form with their application.
- The grant application can be found at <https://kanserve.ksde.gov/>.
- All applicants will receive confirmation of receipt of their application within one business day. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt, please email tierney.kirtdoll@ksde.gov.

KANSAS VOLUNTEER COMMISSION CONTACT INFORMATION

For technical assistance and/or questions about this grant opportunity, please contact Tierney Kirtdoll at tierney.kirtdoll@ksde.gov or (785) 368-6211.

RESOURCES

- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement: <https://circle.tufts.edu/>
- Civics Unplugged: <https://www.civicsunplugged.org/>
- Community Toolbox: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en>
- Generation Citizen: <https://generationcitizen.org/>
- National Youth Leadership Council: <https://www.nylc.org/>
- Youth.gov: <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/civic-engagement-and-volunteering>
- Youth Uprising: <https://www.youthuprising.org/programs/civic-engagement>

An Equal Employment/Educational Opportunity Agency:

The Kansas State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:
KSDE General Counsel, 900 SW Jackson Ave., Topeka, KS 66612; 785-296-3201