



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 29, 2023

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Grow Ellsworth County is among NetWork Kansas grant winners in \$95,000 funding round for collaborative, community-building projects

Ellsworth, KS) – Grow Ellsworth County is one of 10 project teams across the state of Kansas that is being awarded funding to launch a full-scale marketing campaign for #BecauseWeCare as NetWorked for Change Community Solutions Grant Winner. NetWork Kansas, a Kansas-based nonprofit dedicated to the growth of entrepreneurship and small businesses, approved the awards this month in a grant effort that focuses on projects' abilities to make "bold" changes in communities.

The current Ellsworth County mental health coalition, known as "BecauseWeCare" was born out of the necessity for better cross communication during the pandemic. What began as a way to break down silos and share pertinent information, resources, and efforts, morphed into a coalition of community leaders, stakeholders, and "do-ers" recognizing the need to make progress on daunting issues related to the community's mental health and forging new paths into action.

BecauseWeCare's efforts have created many successes in the community and garnered attention of other communities in what it looks like to bring like-minded people together to exercise leadership and action. A few of the successes include mental health art therapy classes, mental health training courses, a calendar of ideas for community members to improve their own mental health, a resource guide, and the coordination of information for the 2-1-1 hotline. Today, efforts continue through the development of a cohesive marketing effort of social media, print, and website campaigns. Ellsworth County is setting an example of unity and the power of shared purpose through collaboration.

NetWork Kansas opened the grant in May with funding support from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, the Kansas Health Foundation, and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. The purpose of the grant is to encourage cross-sector collaboration among participants of the NetWorked Partnership for Community

Investment. The partnership focuses on connecting unconnected networks and closing gaps between people, information, and assets to develop pathways that boldly solve community challenges.

This is the second grant round with awards totaling \$95,000 disbursed in \$5,000 and \$10,000 allocations. The current funding round topped 2022's grant disbursements, which amounted to \$65,000.

“The community’s mental wellness is a direct reflection of our ability to grow, collaborate, and generate vitality and vibrancy throughout the region. Having a dedicated marketing effort to bring awareness to our efforts will elevate our county and foster inclusion and connections,” said Stacie Schmidt, Executive Director of Grow Ellsworth County and the project lead for the grant funding.

Grant beneficiaries for this round of funding were:

RISE Elk County. Project Impact Area: Community Development. Project Type: Community Input. Lead Applicant County: Elk. Funding amount: \$5,000.

Leadership Graham County. Project Impact Area: Entrepreneurship Support. Project Type: Community Service. Lead Applicant County: Graham. Funding amount: \$10,000.

#BecauseWeCare Ellsworth County. Project Impact Area: Health/Health Equity. Project Type: Marketing. Lead Applicant County: Ellsworth. Funding amount: \$10,000.

Coffeyville Innovation Lab for Youth-Robotics & Drones. Project Impact Area: Community Development. Project Type: Community Outreach. Lead Applicant County: Montgomery. Funding amount: \$10,000.

Future Community Conversation Update - Thrive Allen County. Project Impact Area: Community Development. Project Type: Community Outreach. Lead Applicant County: Allen. Funding amount: \$10,000.

Rooks County Speaker Series. Project Impact Area: Community Development. Project Type: Community Outreach. Lead Applicant County: Rooks. Funding amount: \$10,000.

Building Remote Work in North Central Kansas. Project Impact Area: Entrepreneurship Support. Project Type: Community Outreach. Lead Applicant County: Mitchell. Funding amount: \$10,000.

13 Ways to Kill Your Community Book Club - Healthy Harvey County Coalition. Project Impact Area: Community Development. Project Type: Community Outreach. Lead Applicant County: Harvey. Funding amount: \$10,000.

Altamont Landsdowne Placemaking Project. Project Impact Area: Community Development. Project Type: Community Outreach. Lead Applicant County: Labette. Funding amount: \$10,000.

Equity in Literacy Coalition - Storytime Village. Project Impact Area: Health/Health Equity. Project Type: Community Outreach. Lead Applicant County: Sedgwick. Funding amount: \$10,000.

“We commend the applicants for presenting such a wide range of projects that will have great impact on Kansas counties,” said NetWorked’s Director, Christina Long. “These grants offer an opportunity to show Kansans working with Kansans to make tremendous changes.”

For more information about NetWorked, please visit: www.networkedforchange.com.

Grow Ellsworth County serves as the lead agency to drive economic health and prosperity to Ellsworth County. We do this through creating and implementing a plan to increase population, business growth, jobs, and opportunity to Ellsworth County. We source information and develop tools for incentives,

referrals, and information on matters relating to community and economic development. We believe in the progressive spirit of Ellsworth County as the community of choice, and welcome new residents, businesses, and partners to join our community.

The NetWorked Partnership for Community Investment connects unconnected networks and closes gaps between people, information and assets to develop pathways that boldly solve community challenges. NetWorked is an initiative of NetWork Kansas. Visit: www.networkedforchange.com.

NetWork Kansas, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, is dedicated to making entrepreneurship a priority for economic and community development in the State of Kansas. NetWork Kansas connects aspiring entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses, to a deep network of business-building and community development resource organizations across the state. NetWork Kansas facilitates the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem within participating communities through the E-Community Partnership. Contributing factors to successful development include the availability of financial capital, support by local leadership, and development of educational resources. All of these factors combine to increase entrepreneurial activity in participating towns, leading to increased startup activity, business expansion, job creation, and more. NetWork Kansas is also the home of e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (e2) and Entrepreneurial Growth Ventures. Visit: www.networkkansas.com.

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