



ELEVATE
KANSAS
A Health Coalition Community

Power in Partnership

**Engaging Community Decision
Makers in the Right Way**

August 20, 2025



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KANSAS

A Health Coalition Community

Uniting Coalitions to Advance Health

elevatekansas.org



Sunflower Foundation



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
INSTITUTE**



Kansas



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Community Development Forums

Register Today!



DATES & LOCATIONS

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

- **Chanute**, September 9, 2025
- **Dodge City**, September 30, 2025
- **Topeka**, October 7, 2025
- **Colby**, October 21, 2025
- **Newton**, October 27, 2025

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration opens on July 21, 2025

COST: \$25.00 per person (lunch included)

To Register, Scan Here



BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



QUESTIONS? CONTACT:

ElevateKansas@wichita.edu

<https://elevatekansas.org/>



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- All microphones have been muted. Please enter your questions/comments into the chat.
- Handouts will be shared via the Zoom chat during the presentation.
- Slides and resources will be shared via email after the session.
- Presentation recording and resources will be housed on elevatekansas.org
- Application Lab immediately following this presentation



Lisse Regehr is the President and CEO of Thrive Allen County and Thrive Kansas. Thrive Allen County is a nonprofit organization that works to improve quality of life and economic conditions in Allen County, Kansas. As a countywide organization, Thrive has been instrumental in the development of more than 60 miles of new trails and routes within the past decade; lowering the uninsured rate in Allen County from 21% in 2013 to 9% in 2018; the implementation of public and safety-net transportation for Allen County residents; the creation of a free, rural bike-share program replicated throughout the nation; creating Allen County's first Recovery House; leading local efforts to create Kansas' newest state park: Lehigh Portland State Park; and writing and being awarded more than \$16.5 million in grants for community organizations and governmental entities within Allen County since 2019. During Regehr's leadership, Thrive has served as the administrator for Allen County's SPARK and ARPA funds.

Regehr co-created Thrive Kansas, which exists to build capacity and advocacy in rural Kansas communities to better quality of life and bring about rural revitalization efforts. Through Thrive Kansas, Regehr oversees the statewide Kansas CARES program that assists residents throughout Kansas apply for affordable health insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, food assistance and utility assistance. Thrive Kansas also works on policy issues at local, state and federal levels addressing rural communities needs.



**Lisse Regehr,
President and
CEO**

Engaging Community Decision Makers

Coalition Compass

August 20, 2025

THRIVE ALLEN COUNTY




- Began as a 25-30 member coalition in 2003
- 501(c)(3) organization established 2007
- 22 team members and 2 interns
- Health/Wellness, Recreation, Education, Advocacy and Economic Development
- VISION: Allen County (pop. 12,500) will be the healthiest rural county in Kansas.

KANSAS



POPULATED PLACES

- 100,000 – 499,999 • Kansas City
- 25,000 – 99,999 • Dodge City
- 24,999 and less • Liberal
- State capital ★ Topeka

TRANSPORTATION

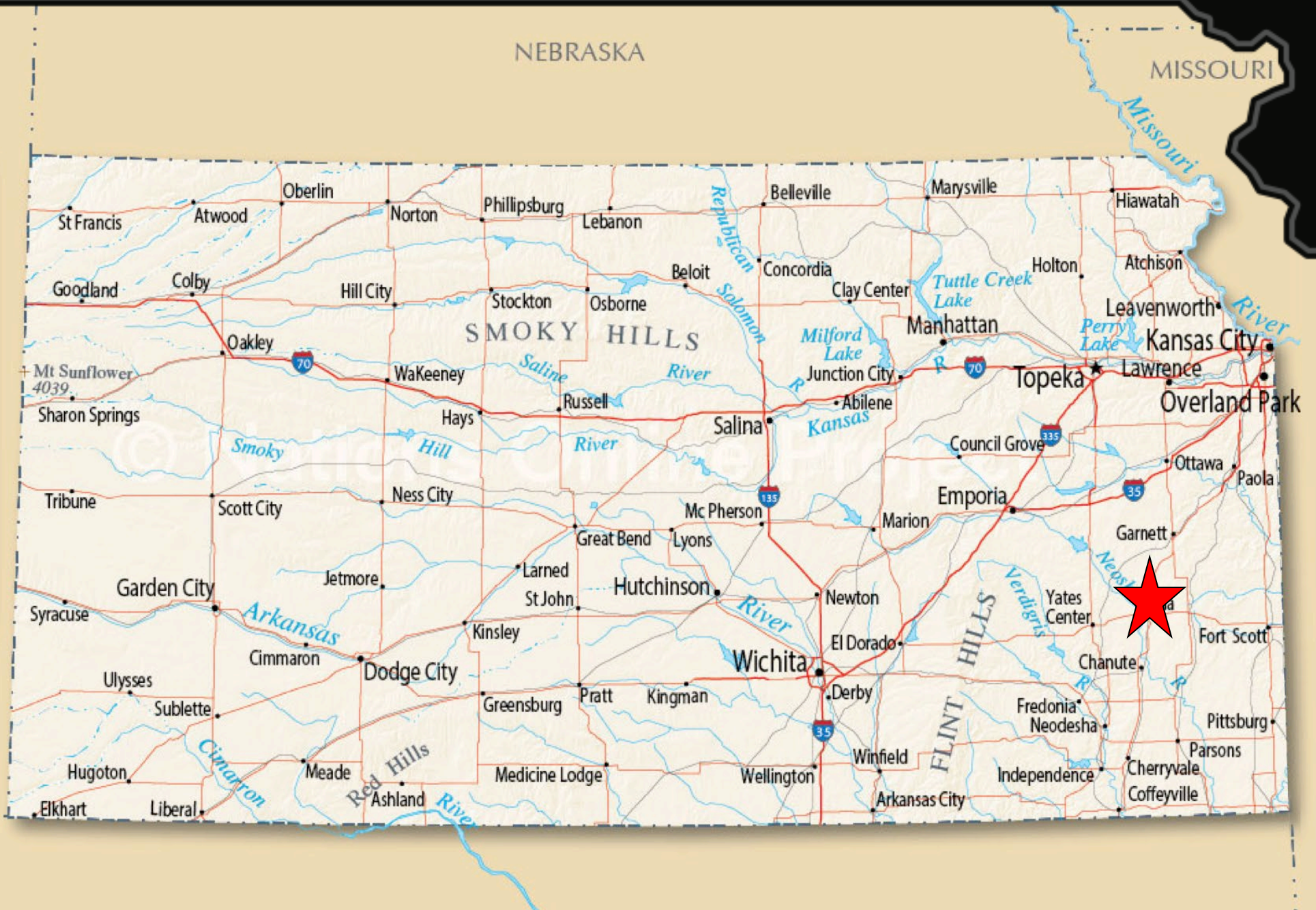
- Interstate; limited access highway 
- Other principal highway 
- Railroad 

PHYSICAL FEATURES

- Streams: perennial; intermittent 
- Lakes 

Highest elevation in state (feet) +4039

The lowest elevation in Kansas is 679 feet above sea level (Verdigris River).



A Glimpse at Some of Our Major Successes

- Voters approve new hospital (2010)
- Creation of Southwind Rail Trail (2012-2013)
- Creation of Lehigh Portland Trails (2014-2016)
- Eastgate Lofts become the first market-rate apartments built in Allen County in 20 years (2016)
- Lowered the uninsured rate in Allen County from 21% in 2013 to less than 9% in 2017: the second largest drop in the state of Kansas
- Allen County wins Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize in 2017
- G&W Foods built and opened in Iola (2018), after 9 years without a standalone grocery store
- The successful conversion of Stub's Market to Marmaton Market Co-op in Moran, saving the grocery store in a town of 500 (2018)
- Creation of Allen County Bike Share: replicated not only across the state, but across the United States (2017)
- More than 60+ miles of trails and routes created in under a decade (2020)
- Creation of public and safety net transportation in Allen County (2020)
- Kansas CARES program grows statewide (2021)
- Brought in more than \$5 million to Allen County entities and governments in grant funds from 2019-2022
- Opened a Recovery House in Iola for people in active recovery needing a safe place to live while working to better their lives (2022)
- Creation of Lehigh Portland State Park (2023)
- Allen Regional Transit rolled off from Thrive Allen County into its own nonprofit organization (2024)
- Thrive brings in more than \$16.5 million to nonprofits and governmental entities from 2019 – present (2025)

3 Areas of Focus for Today:



**Rethink Engagement:
It's More Than Just
Checking A Box**



**Communicate Coalition
Goals Effectively**



**Best Practices for
Building Productive
Relationships**

Rethinking Engagement



1. Learn About the Elected Official and their Passion Points

Rethinking Engagement



2. Invite Them to Join Your Meetings or Activities

Rethinking Engagement



3. Thank Them

Rethinking Engagement



4. Show Up and Follow Up

Rethinking Engagement



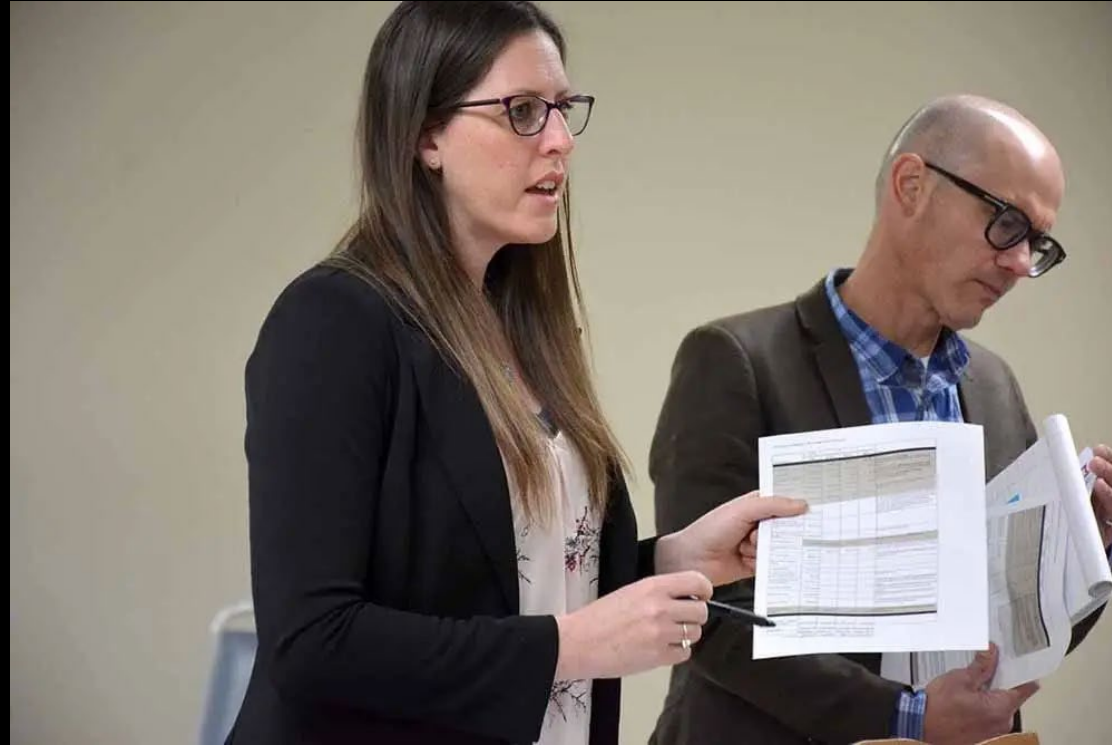
5. Don't Focus Solely on Those with Voting Powers

Rethinking Engagement



6. Meet Them Wherever They Are

Communicate Coalition Goals Effectively



1. Data, Stories, and Numbers

Communicate Coalition Goals Effectively



2. Understand Time Constraints and Schedules

Communicate Coalition Goals Effectively



3. Don't Blame or Shame

Communicate Coalition Goals Effectively



4. Have the Correct Messenger

Best Practices for Building Ongoing, Productive Relationships with Decision Makers



1. Show Up

Best Practices for Building Ongoing, Productive Relationships with Decision Makers



2. Say Thank You

Best Practices for Building Ongoing, Productive Relationships with Decision Makers



3. Don't Be Transactional: Two-Way Street

Best Practices for Building Ongoing, Productive Relationships with Decision Makers



4. Be Proactive

Best Practices for Building Ongoing, Productive Relationships with Decision Makers



5. Be The Subject Matter Expert

Best Practices for Building Ongoing, Productive Relationships with Decision Makers



6. Funding/Impact

Best Practices for Building Ongoing, Productive Relationships with Decision Makers



7. Do the Math

Thank You!



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