



Pathways to a Healthy  
**Kansas**

## **Request for Applications**



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A Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Initiative  
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**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas**  
Pathways to a Healthy Kansas: Request for Applications  
Phase 3: Jan. 1, 2025, through Dec. 31, 2026

## Introduction

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS) is requesting applications for Phase 3 of our Pathways to a Healthy Kansas (Pathways) initiative. The two-year grants are aimed at improving healthy lifestyles and creating healthy places using a community-wide approach through a health equity lens and will run from Jan. 1, 2025, through Dec. 31, 2026.

Funded communities will work with a wide array of partners to create Kansas communities where people can be active, live well, come together, and ultimately improve quality of life now and for future generations.

The funding opportunity is offering a maximum of 20 communities across the BCBSKS service area a Coordination Grant of \$100,000, distributed as \$50,000 per year for two-years. In addition, communities that are awarded the Coordination Grant will be eligible to apply for non-competitive Implementation Grants as they meet the goals of the initiative.

## Why the Focus on Healthy Communities?

Living an active lifestyle, eating a healthy diet, and staying free of commercial tobacco are three behaviors critical to reducing risk for serious health conditions. Data show us that too many Kansans do not routinely practice these healthy behaviors, which puts them at risk for developing one or more chronic diseases. Currently, eight of the 10 leading causes of death in Kansas are from chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. These factors also impact behavioral and mental health. Behavioral health, which includes both mental health and substance use, is deeply intertwined with these three focus areas. Poor mental health can lead to unhealthy eating habits, sedentary lifestyles, and increased tobacco use, creating a vicious cycle that exacerbates chronic diseases. Conversely, maintaining physical health through active living, healthy eating, and avoiding commercial tobacco can reduce stress, may help prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, and improve overall mental well-being. For Pathways Phase 3, we are happy to have four focus areas: healthy eating, active living, behavioral health and commercial tobacco use prevention.

**Why Commercial Tobacco?** Throughout the Pathways initiative Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas uses the term “commercial tobacco” to differentiate from the traditional, sacred and ceremonial uses of tobacco by indigenous communities and tribes for centuries. In making this distinction, we recognize that traditional and commercial tobacco are different in the ways they are planted, grown, harvested and used. Commercial tobacco is manufactured with chemical additives for recreational use and profit, resulting in disease and death. For more information visit: <https://keepitsacred.itcmi.org/tobacco-and-tradition/traditional-v-commercial/>

Pathways provides community coalitions with the tools and resources needed to remove barriers and engage their communities to address and emphasize the importance of whole person health and seamlessly integrate healthy lifestyle for all community members into community social norms. Meaningfully addressing the social determinants of health that cause health disparities and advancing health equity will be central to these efforts, ensuring that all individuals can achieve optimal health. Addressing physical, mental and social health holistically is critical to reducing the risk of chronic disease and promoting overall well-being in Kansas.

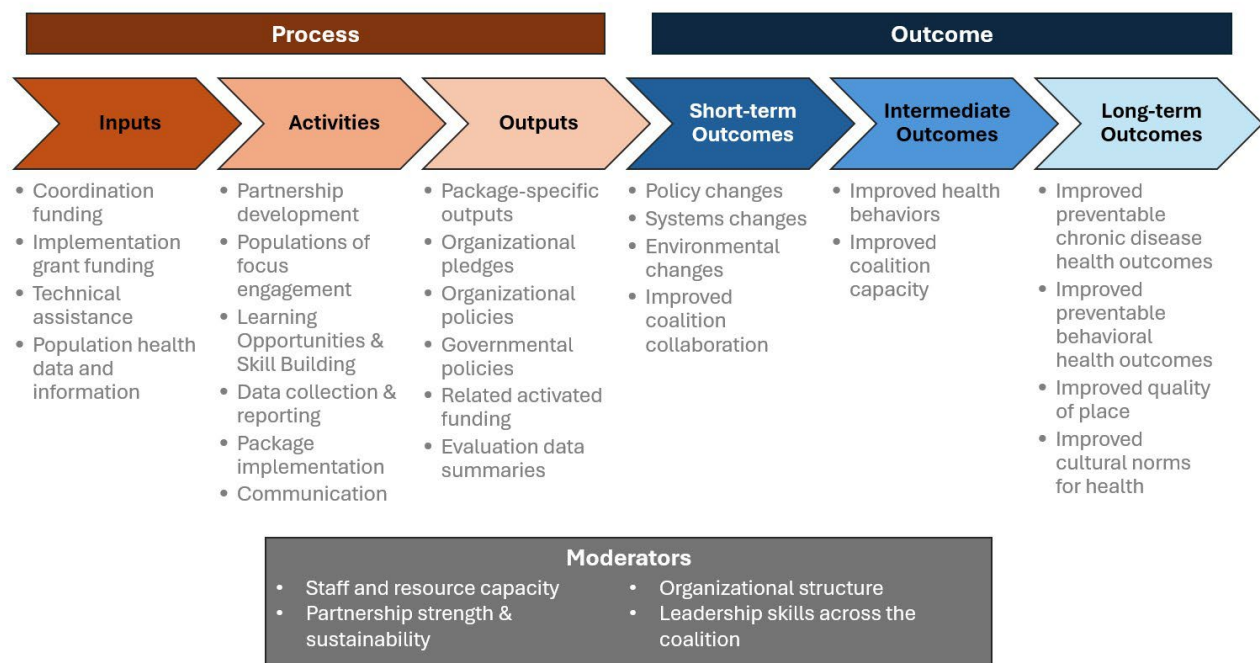
Pathways is designed to support coalitions as they take a holistic, community-wide approach to improving health outcomes by addressing the social determinants of health (SDOH) and advancing health equity. SDOH are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks (Healthy People 2030). Pathways is structured around five pathways that align with the Healthy People 2030 framework for the social determinants of health: Economic Stability, Education Access and Quality, Health Care Access and Quality, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Social and Community Context. By using this framework, the initiative will strive to improve conditions that are the drivers of health in a community. Within these pathways are packages, or projects, that represent evidence-supported strategies for improving community health. The Pathways initiative provides communities with robust technical assistance to implement these packages in a way that maximizes the positive impact on healthy eating, active living, commercial tobacco-use prevention and behavioral health in Kansas communities.

**The Big Idea**

<b>Why?</b>	<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>
<p>Too many Kansans are not able to eat healthy, be physically active, avoid commercial tobacco products, and maintain their behavioral health. This puts them at risk for developing chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and cancers. Chronic diseases are 8 out of the 10 leading causes of death in Kansas. Additionally, chronic diseases contribute substantially to high healthcare costs.</p>	<p>The work of the Pathways grant is to address the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). These are broad community conditions that drive health outcomes. For example, if fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean protein are not readily accessible and affordable in a community, there will be an increased number of people experiencing obesity, diabetes, and other metabolic diseases. Doing work to address SDOH attempts to change these community conditions and the policies and norms that created them.</p>	<p>Pathways technical assistance team supports coalitions in making transformational community changes. We believe there are a couple of key components of a transformational community change. First, the packages, or projects, within Pathways prompt coalitions and their partners to make policy, systems, and environmental changes. These changes will exist long after this Pathways grant has ended. Secondly, the packages prompt communities to address health equity by engaging community members to</p>

		shape the work. Pathways is done through a health equity lens because we are committed to helping everyone reach their full health potential.
<b>Focus Areas: healthy eating, active living, commercial tobacco use prevention, and behavioral health.</b>	<b>Social Determinants of Health: Economic Stability, Education Access and Quality, Healthcare Access and Quality, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Social and Community Context.</b>	<b>Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) changes and Health Equity.</b>

The Pathway logic model illustrates the relationship between the inputs, or process, and the outcomes that will be evaluated to understand the effectiveness of this initiatives.



## Who Can Apply?

Eligible community applicants must meet all the following criteria:

- Be within the 103-county service area of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas. This is all Kansas counties except Johnson and Wyandotte.
- Have an active coalition. An active coalition is defined as a group that consistently meets to pursue defined health goals through collaborative efforts. This coalition

engages its members and community in ongoing projects, allocates necessary resources, maintains clear leadership, and tracks measurable outcomes to ensure continuous progress.

- Coalitions that can show multi-sector membership and authentic engagement with a diverse group of community stakeholders will be given priority consideration in the review process.
- Either the coalition or a coalition member organization on behalf of the coalition may apply to be the fiduciary agent.
  - Eligible organizations include but are not limited to community-based organization or non-profit organization, community foundation, chamber of commerce, hospital or hospital foundation, local health department, economic development or tourism, city or municipality, American Indian tribe or Tribal entity recognized by the US federal government or by the state of Kansas.
- For this funding, a community is defined as:
  - A neighborhood or zip code
  - A town or city
  - A group of towns and cities in one county,
  - An entire county
  - An American Indian tribe or Tribal entity recognized by the US federal government or by the state of Kansas.
  - A group of contiguous counties. If contiguous counties apply, they are required to work together as one coalition, not multiple coalitions.

## Available Funding

This initiative is structured to provide a balance of funding, technical assistance and evaluation in a manner that will allow communities to reach their full potential. This Request for Applications is for Coordination Grants of up to \$100,000 over two years from Jan. 1, 2025, through Dec. 31, 2026, for a maximum of 20 communities.

In addition, communities that are awarded the Coordination Grant will be eligible to apply for non-competitive Implementation Grants. Implementation Grants will be awarded through a non-competitive application process when specific goals as set forth in the pathways are met. More information on the Implementation Grants will be provided in the application packet. The application packet will be provided to all eligible coalitions that submit a Letter of Intent by the specified date.

Pathways to a Healthy Kansas represents the long-term commitment of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas to thriving Kansas communities. We plan to offer additional cycles of Pathways funding at the end of this two-year period.

## Coordination Grant Requirements

Communities must commit to partnering with the BCBSKS Pathways team for two years to receive funding. Funded communities will be expected to work on all the outlined focus areas – healthy eating, active living, behavioral health and commercial tobacco control – using the strategies and packages outlined under the Coordination and Community Pathways throughout

those two years. A package is defined as a set of activities, resources, partnerships, and implementation grant opportunities that the coalition can select to work on to meet the goals of the Pathways initiative.

### **Coordination Pathway**

1. Establish or assign a community Pathways coordinator.
  - To be successful on this initiative, a coordinator position is typically full-time. Funding in the coordination grant is intended to be support approximately half of a full-time position with match by a local organization to support the Pathways work. Match may be provided as office space, benefits, equipment or other forms of support if coordination funds support more than half of the coordinator position.
  - The Pathways coordinator should live in the community they are serving, fostering a deeper understanding of local needs and facilitating more effective engagement with community members.
2. Commit to conducting the work through an equity lens. Actively connect with key stakeholders and members of the community beyond the existing coalition to engage them in the decision-making for any work that they may be impacted by.
3. Garner commitment of key policymakers, business leaders, health and human service organizations, schools, and civic leaders when implementing Pathways packages.
4. Select one package from each pathway described in the addendum below to work on throughout the grant period.
5. Host at least one community event per year to support active engagement between the coalition and broader community.
6. Complete and maintain an Action Plan to identify activities, action steps and measure the short-term outputs and long-term outcomes of each strategy. Technical assistance will be provided to communities to ensure success.
7. Send a team (three to five people) of coalition members to a minimum of one annual grantee event each year. Send the grant coordinator to a minimum of one regional grantee learning event per year.
8. Actively participate in technical assistance and learning opportunities associated with Pathways. Technical assistance and learning opportunities will include, but are not limited to, conference calls, webinars and in-person opportunities.
9. Participate in all grant evaluation activities. These include, but are not limited to, data collection and reporting, surveys, key informant interview and qualitative data collection.
10. Submit annual progress report each January, including a final report in January 2027.

## **Community Pathways**

Community pathways are designed to help the coalition take a holistic, community-wide approach to improving health outcomes. Pathways align with the [Healthy People 2030 framework](#) for the social determinants of health, and focus on areas that impact community health across multiple factors: Economic Stability, Education Access and Quality, Health Care Access and Quality, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Social and Community Context. By using this framework for each pathway, this initiative will strive to improve conditions that are the drivers of health in a community. Coalitions will select one package from each pathway below to work on throughout the two-year grant period.

Packages describe activities that address the four focus areas - physical activity, healthy eating, behavioral health, and commercial tobacco prevention. While some of the packages are activities that could be used to address other risk factors, for the purpose of this grant communities must focus on these four areas. Most selected packages will require collaboration with additional partner organizations in the community.

If selected for a Pathways Coordination Grant, the coalition will complete an action plan, then they will take the following steps to access implementation grant funding.

- **Get a pledge signed by community partners.** Pledges are a tool to set clear expectations with community partners as to what the work will entail. Pledges are also a way for the organization to demonstrate a commitment to the work. Pledges are non-binding.
- **Work with technical assistance team.** Each package has minimum requirements, or expectations that must be met to qualify for implementation grant funding. The technical assistance team will help the coalition and community partners navigate these expectations.
- **Pass a policy.** Each package will have a corresponding policy to institutionalize the work and determine an implementation strategy. Technical assistance providers will support the development of these organizational (e.g., handbook, MOU) or community policies (e.g., resolution, ordinance).
- **Apply for Implementation Grant.** The community organization will then apply for an Implementation Grant to accomplish the work of the selected package.

The five community pathways and the available packages are listed. Funded communities will select one package from each pathway. Additional packages may be added throughout the initiative as new partners, resources and evidence emerge. More information about each package will be available in the application materials. Application materials will be sent to all organizations that submit a Letter of Intent:

- a. **Economic Stability Pathway** – This social determinant represents an individual’s ability to access resources such as food, housing or health care, as well as creating a healthy business culture to help an employer attract and retain talent, reduce absenteeism and turnover, and improve productivity. For certain packages, Pathways grantees will be required to engage health care providers to sign the **Pathways Pledge**. Potential packages under this pathway include:





## Pathways to a Healthy Kansas

- i. Food Panty/Food Reclamation, Healthier Food Retail, Healthier Restaurants, Kansas Power of the Positive - Family Friendly Workplaces, and Social Entrepreneurship Supports.
- b. **Education Access and Quality Pathway** – This social determinant creates connections between education and health and well-being by promoting healthy lifestyles; educational attainment; language and literacy skills; and early childhood education and development. Pathways grantees will be required to engage early childhood centers, school districts, and/or higher education organizations to sign the **Pathways to a Healthy Education Pledge**. Potential packages under this pathway include:
  - i. Farm to School or Child Care, Healthier Higher Education Food Environment, Healthier Child Care Facilities, Substance Use Prevention in Schools, and Youth Physical Activity.
- c. **Health Care Access and Quality Pathway** – This social determinant focuses on connecting access to health care and people understanding how health services impact their own health. Pathways grantees will be required to engage health care and/or community mental health providers to sign the **Pathways Pledge**. Potential packages under this pathway include:
  - i. Community-Engaged Quality Improvement, Community Health Needs Assessment/Health Improvement Plan Support (CHNA/CHIP), Food Is Medicine, Health Related Social Needs, Healthier Hospital Food environment, Physical Activity Prescription Program, and Placemaking in Healthcare Setting.
- d. **Neighborhood and Built Environment Pathway** – This social determinant focuses on building connections between where a person lives (e.g., housing, neighborhood, and environment) and their health and well-being. Pathways grantees will be required to engage partners to sign the **Pathways Pledge**. Potential packages under this pathway include:
  - i. Community Planning, Gardens and Community Farms, Healthier Affordable Housing, and Multimodal Transportation and Recreational Trails.
- e. **Social and Community Context Pathway** – This social determinant focuses on work at the community level to improve social integration, support systems, and community engagement, and reduce stress and discrimination. Pathways grantees will be required to engage partners to sign the **Pathways Pledge**. Potential packages under this pathway include:
  - i. Community Resilience and Behavioral Health, Healthy Communal Meals, Health in All Policies, Incubator Kitchen and Food Hub, and Placemaking.

### Letter of Intent (Required)



If your coalition is interested in completing an application, please submit a **Letter of Intent to apply by 4 p.m. (CDT), Friday, Aug. 23.** You must submit a letter of intent to receive an application packet. ***Application packets will not be sent to any organization that does not submit a letter of intent by the deadline.***

Please visit <https://www.bcbsks.com/blue-health-initiatives/grants> to complete the Letter of Intent form. You will be asked to submit the following information:

- Name of coalition/workgroup
  - Coalition/workgroup contact name, email and telephone number
  - Date (mm/yyyy) coalition/work group formed
  - Dates (mm/dd/yyyy) of last four coalition meetings
  - Coalition roster – *Please include only members that have been active in past year.*
  - Brief description of coalition
- Organization applying (fiscal agent):
  - Primary contact name, email and telephone number
  - Mailing address for organization
  - Brief description of organization
- Community to be served (per Who Can Apply section)
- Approximate population of community to be served
- Paragraph explaining why the coalition wants to apply for this grant
- Identify three half-day timeslots between Oct. 28 and Nov. 22, during which your team and community leaders could be available for a community site visit. Please list the timeslots in order of preference (best day listed first). See the Site Visit and Funding Announcement section below for further information.

### **How can I learn more?**

Informational webinars will be conducted at 10 a.m. (CDT), Thursday, Aug. 8, and 2 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 15, to provide additional information on this grant. There will be an opportunity to ask questions during the webinar. The webinars will be recorded and posted along with Frequently Asked Questions on [www.bcbsks.com/Pathways](http://www.bcbsks.com/Pathways). Please click one of the links below to register:

- [Thursday, August 8 at 10 a.m.](#)
- [Wednesday, August 14 at 2 p.m.](#)

### **Application for Coordination Grant**

Application packets will be sent to the primary contact for the organization applying as indicated in the Letter of Intent. Packets will be emailed by Aug. 28, 2024. Only organizations that submit a Letter of Intent by the deadline will receive application materials.

The application should be completed in the grant management system no later than **4 p.m. (CDT), Friday, Sept. 27.** **Late applications will not be considered.**

The application will include a community narrative, selection of pathway packets with package

narratives, budget, an example of previous coalition work, and letters of commitment from key community stakeholders. Additional information on these requirements will be provided in the application materials.

### **Site Visits and Funding Announcement**

A site visit will be scheduled for communities being considered for grant awards between Oct. 28 and Nov. 22. Please identify three half-day timeslots during this time frame when coalition members and community stakeholders can convene. Meetings will not necessarily take the entire half day. The list of dates for possible site visits should be submitted with your Letter of Intent. Applicants will be notified by BCBSKS no later than Oct. 25, as to whether their community has been selected for a site visit. The site visit team will do its best to match communities with preferred times when scheduling site visits.

BCBSKS will notify in writing those communities selected for funding by Dec. 6. BCBSKS intends to make a statewide announcement regarding the selected Pathways to a Healthy Kansas communities in Jan. 2025. Selected communities will be asked to send up to five representatives to a grant kick-off meeting in Spring 2025, date TBD.

### **Important Dates**

**Informational Webinars:** 10 a.m. (CDT), Thursday, Aug. 8, and 2 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 14

**LOI Due:** 4 p.m. (CDT), Friday, Aug. 23

**Application Packets Distributed:** No later than Aug. 28

**Applications Due:** no later than 4 p.m. (CDT), Friday, Sept. 27

**Site Visit Notification:** no later than Oct. 25

**Site Visits:** Oct. 28 through Nov. 22

**Funding Notification:** Dec. 6

**Kick-Off Event:** Spring 2025

**Funding Period:** Jan. 1, 2025 – Dec. 31, 2026

**If you have questions or need more information, please contact Virginia Barnes via the email address or telephone number provided on the cover page.**