

Kansas PRIDE Program

The Situation

It's normally not a simple task to plan an event, hold a fundraiser, or launch a major community improvement campaign. To volunteer-based community action groups, adding a pandemic into the mix can make it seem like an insurmountable feat.

With the arrival of the COVID-19 situation, community volunteers saw their improvement efforts come to a standstill and they required information on how to navigate the new reality, as well as how to minimize impact on their local economies, projects, events, and daily life.

What We Did

The vision of the Kansas PRIDE Program is “Vibrant Communities, with a Positive Future.” At this point in time the viability of Kansas communities was uncertain, and our program took steps to assist them in navigating this chaotic time through education and ready resources. Our first action was to create fact-based bulletins on the situation for distribution to our audience¹. Home-schooling, working from home, unemployment and health/wellness issues were addressed. To gauge community and individual stress levels and needs, a survey of Kansas PRIDE communities was conducted with follow-ups via e-mail and telephone containing university and government sourced information. Additional state and federal resources were collected and vetted for inclusion in K-State Research and Extension’s COVID-19 Business and Community resources site² and monthly Kansas PRIDE newsletter³. In our effort to continue targeting community needs statewide, we worked together with Northwest Kansas Community Vitality Specialist Nadine Sigle to create a survey for local small businesses, focusing on needs and their reopening processes. Kansas Extension agents and directors utilized this survey tool to evaluate the business environment in their counties and districts so they could better address needs and concerns.

Social distancing and travel restrictions made it necessary to adapt traditional programming and develop new programs to continue serving our 74 enrolled communities and other communities in the state interested in Kansas PRIDE. To help alleviate the loss of local fundraising events and sources, staff researched and shared external grant announcements and partnered with a professor at the College of Health and Human Services to present a webinar on crowdfunding⁴. New modules were developed and delivered via Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook Live covering the issues of: How to Get Work Done from Home; Continuing to Work and Share Remotely; Considerations for Adult Learners (for Extension Agents Moving Programming Online); Volunteer Recruitment and Retention, Introduction to the Kansas PRIDE Program, Using Zoom and Avoiding Zoom Bombing; and individual components of the Community Capitals Framework⁵. Through our social media and newsletter outreach efforts, guidelines from the League of Kansas Municipalities on how to properly hold

meetings online were shared, as well as guidance to follow local health department recommendations for holding events.

Outcomes

Our COVID-19 fact-based email bulletin was utilized by communities and Extension agents/directors and was requested by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. Building on previous remote work, and new experience gained during the pandemic, new programming was developed that resulted in new partnerships for facilitating online meetings, events and conferences. Traditional programming was converted to online delivery methods.

Communities utilizing educational modules on meetings gained confidence in using online platforms for their meetings. There have also been grants and online fundraising campaigns identified by several communities for use in funding community projects, while others have been working with their health departments to evaluate some of those projects and events to cancel or postpone them until a safer time.

Success Stories

Community Confidence in Extension

Through our participating communities' social media traffic and e-mails, we can see they are exercising the remote work, meeting, and fundraising tactics we've researched, developed, delivered, and promoted. On being a research/fact-based source of information, one of our contacts stated: "It is such a relief getting your emails, especially the one about the COVID-19 resources. I know it is all fact based and I'm not going to be sold something."

Impact of the Ask

Concerning the COVID-19 Economic Impact Survey created jointly between NWKS Community Vitality Specialist Nadine Sigle and Kansas PRIDE Program Staff:

From Cade Resnick, Director of Central Kansas District: "The Executive Director of the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce caught wind of the effort and asked for my help in writing and submitting a CDBG-CV application. We used direct data from the KSRE-CKD survey in preparing the application. We were notified that Saline County and the City of Salina, together, was allocated \$301,200 for economic development and meal programs!!!"

New Business Speculation

Another individual, from the River Valley District, reached out to Kansas PRIDE staff to learn how they might grow and promote their local beef cattle business. Using guidance from staff they worked on their branding, reached out to River Valley District Extension educators to learn how to price their product. After creating an online presence, they were quickly invited to join the Shop Kansas Farms Facebook page. Now their business is booming! Quote: "We are sold out through the end of August...and the phone won't stop ringing!"

Contact

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¹ Kansas PRIDE Updates and Resources for COVID-19: <https://conta.cc/33vF0Y9>

² K-State Research and Extension COVID-19: Business and Community Resources site: <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/about-us/business-community-resources.html>

³ Kansas PRIDE program monthly newsletter: <https://kansasprideprogram.k-state.edu/news/newsletter.html>

⁴ Kansas PRIDE, K-State Research and Extension, and Amber Vennum, College of Health and Human Services presentation on "Crowdfunding – When Traditional Fundraising is Limited": <https://kansasprideprogram.k-state.edu/education/index.html>

⁵ Announcements and educational sessions can be accessed through the Kansas PRIDE Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/KansasPRIDE/>

⁶ Shop Kansas Farms on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/shopkansasfarms/>