

GRANT PROFILE

COMMUNITIES OF FOCUS

University of Kansas Center for Research, Inc., Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities is implementing their Community Collaborations for Employment (CCE) grant in diverse communities across the state. In the first half of their grant, the Kansas CCE team established three pilot communities in Garden City, Parsons, and Kansas City. Garden City is a rural and agricultural community located on the southwestern side of the state, Parsons is a rural community in southeastern Kansas, and Kansas City is a large urban area. Within these communities, the Kansas CCE team aims to reach marginalized racial and ethnic groups; for example, in Garden City, they are focusing on rural and Hispanic youth, and in Kansas City they are focusing on urban and Black youth. The Kansas CCE team is also considering an additional pilot community in Topeka, the state capital.

GRANT RECIPIENT

University of Kansas Center for Research, Inc. (Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities)

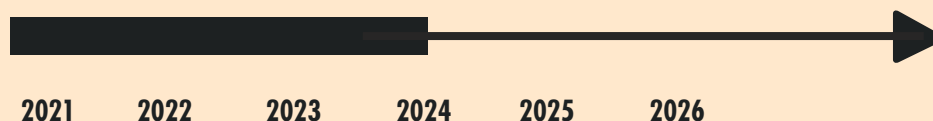
PROJECT TITLE

My Transition, My Career

ABOUT THE CCE GRANTS

Among transition age youth with disabilities, employment is associated with improved health outcomes, increased quality of life, greater opportunities for socialization and relationship development, and a greater sense of belonging.¹ Yet, many students and youth with disabilities do not have the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities to pursue higher education, training, and careers. To address these disparities, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) issued CCE grants to increase and enhance collaborations across existing local systems in one or more communities. CCE grants aim to maximize a seamless experience and outcome of youth intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) as they transition between school and post-secondary education or competitive integrated employment (CIE) in the community. ACL awarded seven five-year CCE grants starting September 30, 2021, and ending September 29, 2026, through its [Projects of National Significance program](#). This mid-term report summarizes grant activity through February 2024.

CCE Mid-Term Report and Grant Timeline



¹ Castruita Rios, Y., Park, S., Chen, X., & Tansey, T. N. (2023). Collaborations to Support Employment Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities. *Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Journal*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.52017/001c.72655>



KANSAS CCE PILOTS/COMMUNITIES (as of December 2023)

Community Name	Garden City	Parsons	Kansas City
Estimated Total Population ²	City population approximately 28,000, with 7,000 students	City population approximately 9,400, with 1,300 students	City population approximately 155,000, with 22,000 students

OBJECTIVES AND FRAMEWORKS

The *My Transition, My Career* project objectives are to facilitate youth-led systems change focused on building the capacity of communities to expand and enhance transition service systems in Kansas using a participatory, multidimensional approach. The Kansas CCE team aims to accomplish this by:

1. Establishing statewide partnerships;
2. Establishing local community partnerships in four communities;
3. Supporting communities to develop transition plans for enhancing CCE; and
4. Supporting communities to implement transition plans and plan for sustainability.

To guide their project work, the Kansas CCE grant leverages a [public health framework for systems change](#) and [Community Tool Box](#), both developed by staff at the Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. The staff developed the framework to promote healthy youth development through supporting and evaluating community mobilization efforts.

² As reported by the Kansas CCE Team.



STATE AND LOCAL CONTEXT

Variations in youth transition outcomes occur, in part, due to varying demographic, economic, political, and historical factors in each state. The following factors provide valuable context for the external conditions in which the Kansas CCE team implements their grant.

Across Kansas, the long waiting list for state ID/DD Medicaid waiver services means that many students who are participants in special education programs leave the school system without access to formal supports and services. Like many states across the country, Kansas also experiences a workforce crisis, including among personal care attendants who support individuals on the waiting list to obtain and maintain employment. The Kansas CCE team, led by the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities, also leads and participates in other complementary grants. These grants expand the partnerships and potential impact of the CCE grant, though sometimes pose an administrative challenge. The complementary grants include a project that addresses the long waiting list, another that advances Employment First work, and a collaboration with the state on a Pathways to Partnership grant.

Local factors within each community also impact the Kansas CCE team's work. For example, there is a larger proportion of youth in foster care in southeast Kansas compared to the rest of the state, which the Parsons community team considers in their approaches to grant work. Recent court cases will likely impact Kansas' foster care system and youth with ID/DD in foster care, who are a population of focus for the Kansas CCE team. In Kansas City, families face challenges accessing services, which are often siloed and require significant effort to access. While service providers in Topeka are less siloed than in Kansas City, youth who have behavioral or medical complexities may experience additional barriers to accessing services for their specific needs.

GRANT ACTIVITIES BY STAGE



COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE PILOT

Each CCE grant established a community collaborative pilot – a broad range of diverse community partners involved in all aspects of the grant and representing stakeholders across developmental disabilities, education, advocacy, and employment settings.



Community Collaborative Structure

The Kansas CCE grant's community collaborative includes full collaborative meetings representing stakeholders across the state, specific community teams for each pilot community, workgroups, and a steering committee.

▶ Full Collaborative

The Kansas CCE team's full collaborative meets virtually quarterly to gather feedback on project work and discuss transition and employment initiatives in Kansas. Self-advocates, family members, Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act partners, and representatives from state agencies attend these meetings.

▶ Community Teams

Each of the Kansas CCE team's three communities also meet separately monthly. The Kansas CCE team established the Garden City community team in December 2021. This team is currently implementing their transition plan ("community team plan"). The Kansas City community team began in October 2022 and is completing their landscape analysis and developing their transition plan. The Parsons community team also began in October 2022. Monthly meetings focus on understanding the transition and employment services available to support youth with ID/DD. The Parsons community team is conducting their landscape analysis and creating their transition plan.

▶ Workgroups

The Kansas CCE grant also includes workgroups focused on specific policy and practice issues, such as developing materials for families and self-advocates about Employment First, alternatives to guardianship, and transition.

▶ Steering Committee

The Kansas CCE team's steering committee initially advised the CCE team as the project began and the committee supported outreach to communities. The steering committee now meets as part of the full collaborative, and many members attend the local community team monthly meetings.

Community Collaborative Members, Roles, and Diversity

Each of the three community teams engage different collaborative partners. The Garden City community team consists of fifteen team members, including self-advocates, family members, and representatives from Garden City Public Schools, the local area workforce board, a representative from a home and community-based services provider, and vocational rehabilitation. The Kansas City community team includes family members, self-advocates, a transition coordinator, and a representative from a home and community-based services provider. The Parsons community team includes eight youth with disabilities and representatives



from Southeast Kansas Independent Living (a Center for Independent Living), vocational rehabilitation, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the local area workforce board, among others.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The Kansas CCE team centers youth with ID/DD and self-advocates in their work. Collaborative members value self-advocates as integral members of the Kansas CCE team, and they enjoy learning, working, and partnering with CCE team members who have transition experience. Self-advocates lead the Kansas City and Parsons community efforts, including setting the agendas through identifying the goals important to them. In Parsons, the community team intentionally meets at the local Center for Independent Living offices, a place familiar to youth and self-advocates, bringing provider partners into an advocate-led space. The Parsons community team also leverages their monthly meetings to offer opportunities for different service providers to present about their services and resources to increase awareness. As a result, providers are now able to connect family members with resources and contact information for services that they learned about during collaborative meetings.

A different type of coordinating organization leads each community team, which increases the community-specificity of each pilot, but also means that the Kansas CCE team must balance different processes, goals, and timelines for each group. With a flexible approach, the Kansas CCE team supports each group to move at an organic pace determined by the community team's needs.



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Landscape analyses for the CCE grants aim to assess community resources, strengths, needs, and gaps related to providing consistent and seamless services for youth with ID/DD and their families that promote opportunities for CIE, post-secondary education, and independent living.

Landscape Analysis Approach

The Kansas CCE team's landscape analysis consists of statewide surveys and individual landscape analysis activities within each of their three pilot communities. Garden City completed the majority of their landscape analysis activities, while Parsons and Kansas City recently began their activities.

▶ Statewide Focus Groups

The Kansas CCE team conducted three statewide focus groups of families, self-advocates, and advocates. They will also use data from statewide surveys from other related projects to inform their CCE project.



► Focus Groups, Surveys, and Interviews

Garden City completed a review of local state policies, conducted focus groups with the local community, and is engaging a cultural broker to interview Spanish-speaking families. The Parsons and Kansas City community teams are currently conducting their landscape analysis activities. The Parsons community team conducted focus groups of team members during collaborative meetings, and they are analyzing recordings of self-advocates' interviews. The Parsons community team also disseminated a survey to learn about the experiences of individuals with disabilities, family members, and professionals in the county. Kansas City plans to disseminate surveys and facilitate focus groups.

Landscape Analysis Findings

The Kansas CCE team analyzed data from their statewide focus groups and completed community-specific landscape analysis activities in Garden City. Initial data revealed needs for enhanced communication and collaboration across the state, higher expectations for students with ID/DD through their transition, and greater input from families and advocates on transition services. In focus groups, families in Garden City expressed high expectations for youth with ID/DD and want them to finish school and obtain employment. However, many youth with ID/DD are hesitant to apply for local jobs, believing that jobs do not want to hire youth with disabilities. Garden City families also emphasized that youth with ID/DD need support in both getting a job and staying employed. Self-advocates and families shared about the impact of the workforce crisis in Kansas, which negatively impacts access to programs supporting individuals with ID/DD in maintaining employment.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The Garden City community team planned to hold two focus groups in Spanish to better understand the experiences and needs of Hispanic and Latino families, but they cancelled the groups due to low registration. Instead, they met with families and students at parent teacher conferences. The Garden City team partners with a bilingual "cultural broker" who, through her role at Kansas State University assisting low-income families with nutrition, has strong relationships with many local families with children with ID/DD. She conducted additional interviews to supplement focus group data.

The Parsons community team recorded interviews of youth with ID/DD who shared their goals for employment, which they found to be a valuable way to gather information. The community team created a structured, iterative interview process with questions written in plain language to give youth the opportunity to express their specific goals and preferences. The Kansas CCE team also built strong relationships with the youth in this process.



TRANSITION PLAN

Transition Plan Development and Implementation

Informed by landscape analysis findings, CCE grant recipients must develop and implement transition plans to address the needs of youth with ID/DD and their families. Each grant recipient develops and implements a unique transition plan approach, tailored to their community or communities' needs, to achieve their intended outcomes.

Transition Plan Development Approach

The Kansas CCE team is assisting each community team to develop a written transition plan. Each community's written transition plan will include hosting three events and implementing an evidence-based practice.

Transition Plan Characteristics and Activities

Transition plan activities for the Kansas CCE team vary by community:

▶ **Garden City**

The community team began implementing transition plan activities in early 2023. The community held a breakfast with the Chamber of Commerce in February 2023 and a reverse job fair in March 2023 to engage with employers. The community is planning a second reverse job fair for Spring 2024 and created a reverse job fair planning guide. The planning guide includes key decisions and timelines related to determining locations, preparing job seekers, recruiting employers, and logistics. The community team in partnership with local schools will host "Pastries with Parents" events throughout 2024. Starting with an elementary school, these events aim to reach more families to share about the transition process, connect them directly with transition resources, and encourage them to begin thinking about transition early.

▶ **Kansas City**

The community team is in the process of developing their transition plan. They plan to focus on connecting families with resources through family engagement events and coordinating with schools to support the process.

▶ **Parsons**

The community team is still in the process of developing their transition plan and goals.



SETTING GOALS

Each community set specific goals to guide their transition plan, drawing on results from the landscape analysis. For example, the Garden City community team selected three goals for their transition plan activities:

1. Engage Hispanic and Latino families to learn more about their experiences with transition and employment;
2. Enhance opportunities for employment; and
3. Increase expectations of service providers for CIE outcomes.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The Garden City team's reverse job fair in Spring 2023 was successful. Representatives from 15 businesses attended and 20 youth with ID/DD hosted their own booths. Five youth with ID/DD who participated received job offers because of the job fair. The contributions from the collaborative members and their respective organizations were key to the reverse job fair's success. One partner paid for an off-school campus venue while another catered lunch for the reverse job fair. A local Goodwill donated clothing so that participating youth could choose professional attire to wear during the event. To aid in recruiting more employers to the Spring 2024 event, the Garden City team created promotional flyers that highlight the outcomes from the first reverse job fair.



EVALUATION

Each grant recipient will use process and summative evaluation techniques to analyze the delivery of project activities and determine the project's success in meeting intended outcomes.

Methodology and Approach

As part of the evaluation, the Kansas CCE team will track the progress made to reach the goals and objectives set for each phase of the project and conduct a series of surveys and interviews with participants to measure key outcomes. For example, the Kansas CCE team collected feedback through interviews after the Spring 2023 reverse job fair from participating youth with ID/DD and employers and will continue to collect data for evaluation after future events. The Kansas CCE team's internal evaluators also plan to code transcripts from the focus groups, including inductive and deductive coding, to identify process themes, outcome themes, facilitators, and barriers that allowed the community teams to succeed or obstacles they overcame or still face. As they obtain and analyze data, the evaluators will share findings with the full Kansas CCE team and each community team.



Intended Outcomes

The Kansas CCE team is tracking progress toward their intended outcomes in multiple ways, including surveys, key informant interviews, and tracking policy changes through larger stakeholder engagement on the project. They began collecting surveys after events and will begin collecting additional survey and interview data in the near future and through the end of the grant.

LOOKING AHEAD

- After the success of Garden City’s reverse job fair in Spring 2023, the community team is planning a second reverse job fair for the spring of 2024.
- The Garden City community team, in partnership with local schools, will be hosting “Pastries with Parents” events throughout 2024 to connect families directly with resources and information.
- The Parson community team’s recorded interviews with the youth leading the community work informed the development of an interview protocol that will be used at an upcoming conference to develop a social media campaign focused on youth employment for people with disabilities.