

JEANS: Rural Revitalization Policy Slate

1. **Protect Our Beautiful Downtowns**

(Unlock private investment for small towns)

→ “When a good rural project comes up short on financing, Kansas helps banks say yes, without picking winners or lending taxpayer money.”

2. **Rural Permit Shot Clock**

(clear permit timelines for rural projects)

→ “Clear timelines, coordinated review for small rural projects, and standardized templates mean projects don’t have to wait on permits, without weakening any standards.”

3. **Grow It Here**

(Kansas Agriculture Manufacturing Investment)

→ “Kansas grows the food, this plan helps process it here at home, creating rural jobs and stronger local economies instead of shipping opportunities out of state.”

4. **Retool Kansas Commerce to Small Business First**

(Faster help for rural employers)

→ “Retool Kansas Commerce away from large out-of-state firms towards helping Kansas small businesses grow; faster service, local contacts, and real results for rural job-makers.”

5. **Pathway From Classroom to Kansas Jobs**

(Show students what leads to real jobs and prioritize Kansas community colleges)

→ “PrepareKS shows students which classes and credentials lead to real jobs in Kansas, and works with Kansas community colleges so student athletes have the best access to scholarships and education. “

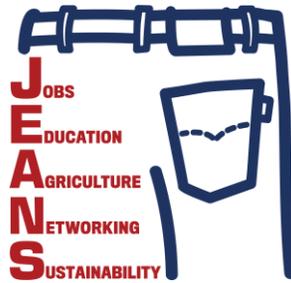
6. **Finish the Highway. Connect Southwest Kansas**

(Prioritize US-54 into a Four Lane Highway & Build a US-83 Freight Corridor)

→ “A safer four-lane highway from the West to Wichita and a freight corridor to I-70 lowers shipping costs and connects southwest Kansas to opportunity.”

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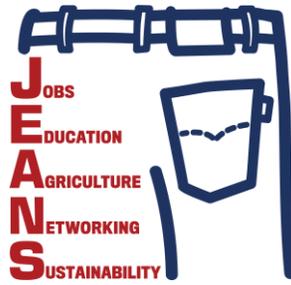


1. Protect Our Beautiful Downtowns

- a. *What it does:* Creates a state-backed loan guarantee that helps private banks finance rural commercial and downtown redevelopment projects, funded by modest guaranteed fees, not general tax dollars.
- b. *How it differs from Kansas:* Kansas has housing loans, incentives, and small local revolving funds, but no statewide, bank-first guarantee for rural commercial redevelopment. This policy fills that gap without creating a state lending program.
- c. *Why consider it:* Many rural projects fail not because of bad ideas, but because banks can't justify the full loan due to thin appraisals and perceived risk. A limited guarantee reduces downside risk, allowing banks to lend more confidently, while keeping underwriting and decision-making in private hands.
- d. *How the program works:*
 - i. Banks lead: A private lender originates, prices, and services the loan.
 - ii. Borrowers repay banks: The borrower pays the bank, not the state.
 - iii. State as backstop only: Kansas steps in only if a loss occurs, and only up to a cap set in statute.
 - iv. Self-funding: Modest guarantee fees build and replenish a loan-loss reserve.
 - v. Strong guardrails: No state lending, no project selection, and total losses are capped by law.

2. Rural Permit Shot Clock

- a. *What it does:* Sets clear timelines for state permits (generally 60–90 days), requires coordinated reviews for small rural projects with a single state point of contact, and standardizes application requirements and templates.
- b. *How it differs from Kansas:* Kansas agencies largely operate independently, with no statutory decision clocks and no consistent rural permitting pathway. This creates uncertainty rather than clarity.
- c. *Why consider it:* Rural projects often fail not because they break the rules, but because delays and uncertainty kill financing. Time certainty helps good projects move forward without weakening health, safety, or environmental standards.
- d. *How the program works:*
 - i. Know the timeline: Applicants know how long a permit decision should take.
 - ii. Coordinated review: Agencies review small rural projects together instead of one at a time.



- iii. Clear requirements: Standard forms and templates reduce confusion and rework.
- iv. No silent delays: Agencies must respond or formally extend deadlines in writing.
- v. Local control protected: Zoning and land-use authority stays with local governments.

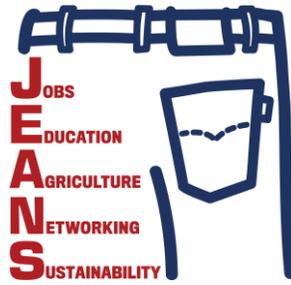
3. **Grow It Here**

- a. *What it does:* Uses one-time state dollars to help rural food-processing and agricultural manufacturing projects overcome early, high-cost barriers like site prep, utilities, building upgrades, and specialized equipment.
- b. *How it differs from Kansas:* Most Kansas incentives help businesses after they're operating. This policy focuses on the front end, when rural projects most often fail, and is limited to processing Kansas-grown products, not chasing speculative outside deals.
- c. *Why consider it:* Kansas exports too much agricultural value by shipping raw products out of state for processing. Helping projects get built locally keeps jobs, tax base, and long-term investment in rural communities.
- d. *How the program works:*
 - i. Private money first: Companies must commit real private capital before any state support.
 - ii. Targeted help only: State funds are limited to early barriers that stop rural projects.
 - iii. Pay for results: Funds are reimbursed only after clear milestones are met.
 - iv. Accountability built in: No project, no payment; clawbacks apply if commitments aren't met.
 - v. Narrow focus: Limited to rural counties and Kansas-based ag processing.

4. **Retool Kansas Commerce to Small Business First**

- a. *What it does:* Refocuses the Kansas Department of Commerce on helping existing Kansas small businesses and rural employers grow by assigning regional staff as direct, accountable points of contact.
- b. *How it differs from Kansas:* Commerce often prioritizes large, out-of-state recruitment deals. This policy shifts the focus to service delivery for Kansas-based businesses, especially in rural communities.
- c. *Why consider it:* Rural employers consistently say their biggest barriers aren't incentives; it's lack of workforce, Commerce's slow responses, unclear processes,

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and lack of follow-through. Faster, hands-on support helps projects move from idea to reality.

- d. *How the program works:*
- i. Regional deployment: Commerce staff are placed in rural regions to serve local employers directly.
 - ii. Single point of contact: Businesses deal with one person who helps navigate permits, workforce programs, and financing tools.
 - iii. Accountability through metrics: Commerce publicly tracks cycle-time measures like days to response and time to project completion.
 - iv. No new incentives: The policy improves performance and coordination, not spending or authority.

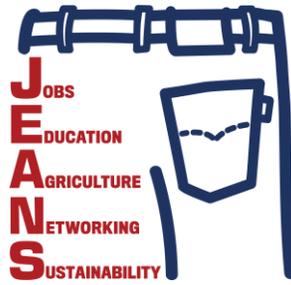
5. Pathway From Classroom to Kansas Jobs

- a. *What it does:* Connects education and workforce data so students, parents, and schools can see which programs lead to real jobs and paychecks in Kansas, including transparent outcome reporting for community college athletics.
- b. *How it differs from Kansas:* Instead of new mandates or preference rules, PrepareKS uses transparency, not bureaucracy. It aligns data that Kansas already collects but is not currently present in a clear, decision-ready way.
- c. *Why consider it:* Students often choose programs without knowing whether they lead to jobs in Kansas. Better information helps students make smarter choices, helps schools adjust programs, and keeps more talent working in-state.
- d. *How the program works:*
 - i. Clear outcome dashboards: Show employment rates and wages by program, credential, and region.
 - ii. Athletics transparency: Report aggregated outcomes for community college athletics (roster origins, completion, post-school employment).
 - iii. Privacy protected: Uses aggregated data only—no student tracking.
 - iv. Local control preserved: Schools keep authority over programs and curriculum.

6. Finish the Highway. Connect Southwest Kansas

- a. *What it does:* Makes US-54 a four-lane highway between southwest Kansas and the Wichita region, delivered in phases, while adopting a smart freight corridor plan for US-83 using passing lanes, access management, and technology improvements.
- b. *How it differs from Kansas:* Kansas has treated four-laning US-54 as a long-term aspiration. This policy makes it a clear priority with a defined path, instead of a patchwork of disconnected upgrades.

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- c. *Why consider it:* US-54 carries heavy truck traffic and is a critical route for workers, freight, health care access, and regional commerce. A phased four-lane approach improves safety and lowers transportation costs sooner, while a defined US-83 corridor plan strengthens freight movement toward I-70 without waiting decades for full expansion.
- d. *How the program works:*
 - i. Four-lane commitment: US-54 is designated for full four-lane build-out, delivered segment by segment.
 - ii. Phased delivery: Highest traffic and highest-risk segments are built first.
 - iii. US-83 freight plan: Passing lanes, access management, and technology improve reliability toward I-70.
 - iv. Fiscal discipline: Projects are sequenced and budget-constrained to deliver progress at every phase.

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