

## CITY of LIBERAL

P.O. Box 2199 • Liberal, Kansas 67905-2199

November 3, 2021

Dear SPARK Fund Executive Committee members,

I was invited to provide testimony for the SPARK federal relief program funds for the City of Liberal at the November 4<sup>th</sup> meeting in Dodge City. Due to other commitments, I am not able to attend this meeting, but appreciate the opportunity to share some pressing needs for Liberal that these funds may help with.

The first need is broadband. We need better reliability and higher speeds to serve the needs of our businesses, schools and residents alike. Epic Touch is in the process of bringing fiber to the premise in Liberal, but has only been able to do certain parts of town due to lack of funding. Due to the pandemic and some people having to work remotely, reliable broadband connectivity is more important than ever. Funds to help expand our connectivity with the outside world is needed and would be utilized in our education, healthcare and business needs. It would also be a draw to bring in more residents, knowing they have a good broadband network here.

A second need is childcare services. The City of Liberal's Recreation Center programs are expanding and we can see a need for more day care in the area. There is space at the Recreation Center available to use, which at one time was a former school, but due to lack of funding, this idea is not feasible. There is a lack of childcare facilities in town and a parent cannot go to work if they have no place to watch their children. Having a safe, caring environment for their children, a parent would go back to work and this in turn would help with some of the labor shortage we are seeing in our businesses and industries.

The third need deals with healthcare and recreation. The City Recreation Center only has one gym and it is constantly being used with our youth, but there is not enough room for all the youth wanting to use it. Another gym or two could be utilized to promote healthy activities for our youth and also bring in basketball tournaments, volleyball tournaments, etc. These events bring in outside teams which in turn helps the city's economy with people staying in motels, eating at our local restaurants, buying gas and shopping at our local merchants.

The last pressing need is funding to retain our businesses or help with new business start-ups. Some ideas to help with this is starting a business incubator program and also setting up some grant or loan programs to assist with training, accounting and marketing of their business.

I appreciate the opportunity to highlight some of our needs in Liberal and hope you will consider them. I would be glad to visit with the committee further, if needed. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cindy Wallace, Director  
City of Liberal Economic Development Dept.

# Dodge City Ford County



DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

101 E. Wyatt Earp Blvd. • P.O. Box 818 • Dodge City, KS 67801-0818 • (620) 227-9501 • FAX (620) 227-2957 • 1-800-381-3690  
www.dodgedev.org • email: jknight@dodgedev.org

November 2, 2021

Dear Sparks Committee Members;

I have been working on economic development for the past 30 years in Dodge City/Ford County and very involved in regional and state organizations as well. The rural areas of Kansas, primarily Southwest Kansas, are currently facing tremendous opportunity to grow with the changes in agricultural production, agricultural processing and energy industry developments and expansions. These opportunities are here but we need your help.

Workforce, childcare and housing shortages are the primary obstacles we are currently facing and we know that it is going to get worse. With the combination of previous workforce shortages, immigration issues, the effects that COVID has had on our businesses and the opportunity for new investment interested in being in our region due to our natural resources, we need your immediate assistance in helping us to address these issues.

We are also the only quadrant of the State of Kansas that does not have a four-lane highway or a four-year university. We appreciate what the State has recently approved in passing lanes, but we need more and sooner. With the addition of Hilmar Cheese, new dairies and several additional energy projects, transportation and education must be enhanced.

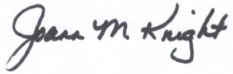
The Dodge City/Ford County Development Corporation and City of Dodge City have partnered to convert classroom space for our new University Training Center. We have also set up satellite classrooms in five frontier communities and hope to continue to add on to those options in other small rural towns. We are working with the Regents institutions and private colleges to bring Bachelors and Master's degree programs here so that we can have the option for our children and working adults to stay in this region and gain the certifications and degrees that we so desperately need to fill our workforce and primary healthcare positions. We need better broadband and more support for providing these degree programs to our residents.

You ask what we need...To summarize.. assistance with housing, childcare, education, broadband expansion, workforce development/recruitment and infrastructure. These are all critical for us to sustain the current economy and businesses that we

have. With this assistance, you will see Southwest Kansas thrive with existing business growth and new business development by investing in companies that greatly enhance the State's economic strength through utilization of our natural resources.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of helping us rebound and move forward into a stronger economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joann M. Knight". The signature is enclosed in a thin, light-colored rectangular border.

Joann Knight, Executive Director  
620-338-5101 cell  
jknight@dodgev.org

# Proposal to Support Medically Complex Children in Kansas by Allocating ARPA Funds for Specialized Medical Care

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ATTN: SPARK Taskforce Executive Committee Members

FROM: Specialized Medical Care (SMC) Providers serving patients on the HCBS TA Waiver and IDD Waiver

Sean Balke / President & CEO, Craig HomeCare, Office: 316-266-8722  
[seanb@craighomecare.com](mailto:seanb@craighomecare.com), 1100 E. 1st Street N., PO Box 2241, Wichita, KS 67201

Matt Johnston / Director of Business Operations, Maxim Healthcare Services, Office: (913) 381-8233, [majohnst@maxhealth.com](mailto:majohnst@maxhealth.com), 10881 Lowell Ave. Suite 100, Overland Park, KS 66210

Lynn Dalrymple / Kansas Area Director, Thrive Skilled Pediatric Care, Office: (316) 522-0608  
[ldalrymple@thrivespc.com](mailto:ldalrymple@thrivespc.com), 534 N Ridge Road, Suite C, Wichita, KS 67212

**What is Specialized Medical Care (SMC)?** SMC is in-home nursing care by RNs and LPNs for medically complex patients – mostly children – that reduces hospital pressure by allowing children to transition from acute care in hospitals to their home and community setting. Care is provided in shifts in the home by nurses, resulting in reduced length of hospital stays, reduced hospital readmissions, and reduced Emergency Room utilization.

**What's the Challenge?** Current conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic are causing a nursing workforce crisis beyond that which we have ever experienced. The Home Health nursing workforce is stretched beyond its limit and SMC provider agencies are challenged with recruitment and retention of caregiving staff, due to historically low reimbursement that cannot currently compete with the high pay, bonuses, and incentives now being offered by hospitals, clinics, and health care systems. SMC providers are at a disadvantage, children are going without the care they desperately need, and hospitals are facing added pressure when they can't discharge these patients to their home setting.

**What's our Proposal?** Allocate ARPA funds for SMC on the TA & IDD Waivers – Codes T1000, T1005, and T100TD. These funds would be used to recruit, pay, and retain RNs and LPNs providing SMC. Specifically:

**Overtime Reimbursement** – SMC providers would be able to bill time and a half (1.5x either the Medicaid fee schedule or contracted rate) for any services rendered by an employee over 40 hours per week.

**Hospital to Home Transitions Reimbursement** – SMC providers allowed to bill \$5000 per Hospital to Home Transition planned and executed for a patient receiving SMC.

**Employee Signing/Retention Bonus Payment** – SMC providers would receive funds to pay signing bonus and retention payments to nursing staff, \$10,000 per employee.

**Education and Training Reimbursement** – SMC providers allowed to bill \$600 per 485 plan of care developed and updated for a patient receiving SMC. Funds would also be used to support training cost associated with developing and retaining nurses.

**SPARK Taskforce Executive Committee Meeting**  
**November 4, 2021 – Dodge City, Kansas**

My name is Trey Grebe and I am the Assistant GM for Wheatland Electric and I am representing Wheatland Electric and Kansas Electric Cooperatives.

We understand that the Governor and the Legislature are very interested in “Rural Revitalization.” We ask you to consider investments in EV fast chargers, especially in rural areas. This is an opportunity to serve our Kansas citizens, but more also encourage economic development and tourism and travel by out-of-state visitors. We believe these one-time state investments would be beneficial to support the adoption of EVs in Kansas, particularly rural Kansas.

The rapid transition to EVs is creating an emerging need for access to fast chargers. These chargers are necessary, not only for Kansans, but also for those non-residents traveling across our great state. Oklahoma has aggressively completed a statewide charging station network and Missouri and Colorado are further along with their build-out than Kansas. By investing in public EV fast chargers in Kansas, we have an opportunity to prevent a fly-over state from becoming a drive-around-it state.

We are on the verge of a huge transformation in the transportation sector. Auto manufacturers are increasingly moving to EVs, and Ford’s F-150 Lighting is scheduled for production next year which could be a game changer in Kansas.

EV prices are dropping, battery ranges are increasing and EVs cost less to operate than gasoline powered vehicles. Kansas EV drivers will enjoy savings of \$1,000-\$2,000 dollars annually.

And finally, the increased adoption of EVs can have a significant impact on grid operating efficiencies, driving down the cost of electricity for everyone.

If there are so many benefits to EVs and the forecast of adoption is high, why should the state invest public money to build a statewide EV fast charging network? Public fast chargers are not profitable right now due to low utilization versus the upfront investment.

If public EV charging left solely to the private sector, charging stations will end up only in urban areas, creating yet another rural-urban divide. We've seen this play out over the years in other areas including rural electricity, telephone and now broadband. EV charging stations located in rural areas will assist in the economic revitalization and tourism of these areas.

KDOT recently issued an RFP for funds received from the VW settlement, for the installation of charging stations along I-70, I-35 and I-135/US-81. This will be a good start, but many highway corridors will remain unserved leaving Kansas without a complete EV charging network.

If we don't want Kansas to be left behind, we must start building out the fast-charging network today. The time to think about an EV fast charging network is now, not when the last internal combustion engine vehicle rolls off the production line. As such, we respectfully request the SPARK Executive Committee and the full SPARK task force make a strategic investment in EV fast charging infrastructure.

SPARK Task Force Testimony  
Dodge City, November 4, 2021

Thank you for this opportunity to give input regarding ARPA funds allocated to Kansas. I am the City Administrator in Greensburg and would like to touch on a couple of issues that most cities in Kansas are trying to address and how these funds could help. Time and time again housing and childcare seem to be top of mind for challenges that communities of all sizes are facing. These issues are not quality of life issues, they are economic development issues.

Housing challenges could be very easily addressed through further investment in the already successful Kansas Housing Resources Moderate Income Housing program. KHRC is currently reviewing fall grant submissions and only has a \$2 million dollar budget to allocate to projects. Last year there were 24 applications submitted but only 7 projects funded due to the limited budget of the program.

The MIH program provides funding to cities and counties under 60,000 population and gives great flexibility in types of projects that can be completed from new construction to rehabilitation, rental or for purchase, single or multi-family. MIH has put many housing units of all types into service across the state since the program began. In Greensburg, we were awarded a MIH grant in 2019 to construct 4 duplex units that were rented within a month of their completion. There are virtually no rental properties available in Greensburg and this hinders our growth. By immediately putting additional funds in the MIH program for this grant cycle and perhaps opening an additional spring grant cycle, this could quickly jump start housing development all across the state.

Childcare is another tremendous need across all of our communities. Without childcare, we cannot recruit new families. Period. This need has been identified and many communities are working on it, but it seems there is no one on the state level helping to champion this effort and show a business model that can work long term. Perhaps the Kansas Department of Education is a potential resource to provide funds to and our schools can help with this extreme need for our most valuable population, our 0–5-year-olds.

Workforce recruitment is also a tremendous need. Kansas needs people for unfilled positions and for future job growth and development. This recruitment just can't happen without housing and childcare.

Two divisions within the Department of Commerce that have successful grant programs in place are Kansas Tourism and Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission. Tourism, hospitality and arts non-profits are some of the most hard-hit sectors by the pandemic. Further investing in the programs of these divisions will provide much needed assistance and growth to these sectors across Kansas.

There is another tool readily available that supports these needs across Kansas and that is the Power Up and Go Report from the Office of Rural Prosperity and Kansas Sampler Foundation.

This report, released May 2021, contains 460 survey responses and 175 interviews from 21–39-year-old Kansans and the report is a roadmap for development and investment in our great state.

Kansas has agencies and organizations with good programs already in place. These funds can add to the impact to the proven track record by making additional investments in things that already exist and can have a more immediate impact. There is no sense in completely reinventing the wheel when there are some mechanisms for investment and success already in place.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Stacy Barnes, City Administrator  
City of Greensburg  
620-723-2751  
administrator@greensburgks.org



SPARK Executive Committee event Dodge City Thursday at 3pm

Dr. Amber D. Jones

Dean of Industrial Technology at Seward County Community College

SPARKS Funds Meeting – Industrial Tech Needs for Economic Rejuvenation in Southwest Kansas

Occupation	Base 2018	Projection 2028
Agriculture equipment operators	346	385
Auto service technicians and mechanics	644	614 (projected decrease)
Diesel mechanics and specialists	352	358
HVAC	87	99
Machinists	91	124
Welders	177	214
Truck drivers	1892	1944

The talking points:

Seward County Community College offers several industrial technology programs that directly impact the economy of Liberal and Southwest Kansas. Industrial Tech program in the transportation, manufacturing, and energy sectors educate and maintain a skilled workforce. We provide students with high-quality, cost effective, short-term, career-relevant training solutions, as well as academic programs and certifications aligned with the needs of employers in our region.

Due to the extreme transportation challenges that have been exacerbated by COVID, Seward County Community College is in the process of expansion of its existing and thriving CDL truck driving and diesel mechanic programs which have size limitations. We are currently making investments in both these programs and looking for other means of funding for this expansion. Currently, we are in the process of purchasing diagnostic equipment, training, and additional trucks. We are looking to utilize SPARK funding in our expansion of the diesel mechanic shop and enlarge the CDL truck driving classroom and lab space, and the purchase a truck simulator to train students on manual shifting before they get behind the wheel. We are looking at a timeline that double the capacity of truck driving and diesel program every two years for the next 6 years. This will help us begin to meet the dire need for truck drivers. The local projections show that Southwest Kansas will be needing to hire approximately 1900 truck drivers and almost 400 diesel techs a year by 2028. Being able to address this need will allow us to most directly impact the economic needs of our area and address the transportation needs that have been compounded by COVID.

To: Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Executive Committee  
From: Mike Posson, Executive Director, Norton City/County Economic Development  
Re: Norton Investment Opportunities

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony. I am Mike Posson, the Executive Director of the Norton City/County Economic Development. Norton County is located in Northwest Kansas and has a population of approximately 3,000. During this calendar year, 6 locally owned businesses – including four manufacturing businesses and a health care provider, pursued Kansas Department of Commerce HPIP/PEAK tax credit status for economic growth projects within Norton. Today there are 75 job postings on [www.DiscoverNorton.com](http://www.DiscoverNorton.com) the majority of which are high quality jobs, at or above median income.

These businesses have committed to Kansas Department of Commerce to significantly invest in their operations to grow and expand operations and create new jobs. Their combined investments will create an additional 40 to 50 high value jobs over-and-above the currently existing 75 posted job vacancies. These net-new jobs will positively impact the businesses needing to grow, our community, and the local and state tax base.

It is estimated the forecasted job growth will likely add over \$5 Million in net new annual payroll to our small-town economy over the next two years. While this job growth is a real possibility, Norton County continues to grapple with an acute shortage of housing that threatens our region from growing.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic Norton had an inventory of over 120 houses on the market for sale. Currently the existing housing stock stands at less than 15 homes for sale within the City limits of Norton. Norton has been the beneficiary of a population explosion caused in-part by out-migration from the Colorado metro areas. While our population has grown, our housing stock is now nearly completely exhausted. And, interestingly, the new residents have not filled the vacant or expansion workforce needs. This presents a real challenge.

I'm requesting your consideration to invest SPARK funds to create build-ready housing developments. There is land within City limits suitable to housing growth. This proposal is really rather simple. The housing crisis and labor shortage both must be solved. The need for housing and filling high quality, well-paying jobs goes hand-in-hand. You cannot have one without the other. Norton's challenge is the desperate need for build-ready development sites to build homes. The high infrastructure costs are beyond our financial capacity.

Norton City/County Economic Development requests \$3,000,000 to develop and construct the necessary infrastructure – streets, curb and guttering, water and other utilities for at least 42 new build-ready sites. This would be a three phase project:

Phase 1: 16 units \$1,000,000 infrastructure costs.  
Phase 2: 14 units \$1,200,000 infrastructure costs.  
Phase 3: 12 units \$800,000

Thank you for consideration of our proposal.

<b>Modernize Kansas Public Broadcasting 2021</b>		
KHCD Antenna	\$125,000	KHCC-FM, Hutchinson
KHCT Antenna	\$125,000	
Studio Transmitter Link (STL)	\$40,000	
On Air Processors	\$25,000	
FM Transmitters (3)	\$240,000	
FM Transmitter Remote system	\$37,000	
Microwave Remotes	\$10,000	
Data Path Upgrade	\$5,000	
CR Studio Consoles	\$100,000	
FM Exciter/Modulators (3)	\$30,000	
Tower Retentioning & Painting	\$160,000	
LED Beacons 800 ft. Towers (2)	\$40,000	
KHCT A/C	\$5,000	
Acoustic Treatment	\$40,000	
Fiber Interconnect	\$23,000	
Translator Network	\$34,000	HPPR-FM, Garden City
FM Transmitters, Next-Gen	\$420,000	
Connection Equip btwn Main FMs	\$15,000	
Prod Axia Series	\$82,660	
IP & Video Conf equip	\$15,830	
IT & Audio Processing	\$17,950	
FM Transmitter	\$140,000	KMUW-FM, Wichita
MC & Prod Axia Series (6)	\$184,700.00	
ENCO Server Network	\$33,487	
Radome Antenna De-icing	78,700	
Plate Blocker Tube	\$1,400	
Remote Broadcast Vehicle (2)	\$82,000	

Studio Security Installation	\$16,125	
IT Replacements	\$17,000	
Acoustic Doors & Insulation	\$25,000	
STL Extention	\$35,000	
30K UPS w/Circuit	\$31,000	
On Air Servers	\$146,000	KCPT-TV, Kansas City
On Air Encoders (4)	\$70,000	
AVID Editing	\$42,000	
Remote Camera Packages (3)	\$19,500	
Production Switcher	\$175,000	
Audio Console Router	\$100,000	
Network Router	\$160,000	
Remote Vehicle (2)	\$82,000	
Transmission Line	\$200,000	
TV Transmitter	\$1,700,000	
Copper Feed Line	\$175,000	
Tower Retentioning & Painting	\$150,000	
FM Nautel GV-40 Transmitter	\$250,000	KRPS-FM, Pittsburg
Trasmitter Back-up Build	\$20,000	
HD Nautel Importer/Exporter	\$25,000	
Audio Processor Omnia-12	\$15,000	
Studio Transmitter Link (STL)	\$20,000	
ENCO Soft & Hardware	\$15,000	
Axia Series Consoles	\$50,000	
Tower Painting	\$25,000	
FM Broadcast Antenna	\$150,000	

Back-Up Antenna Build	\$20,000	
Remote Broadcasting Codecs	\$25,000	KANU-FM, Lawrence
Studio Security Installation	\$60,000	
Studio Air Quality Improvement	\$25,000	
Engineering Vehicle	\$40,000	
Tower Light Upgrade	\$15,000	
Live Studio Performance Camera	\$15,000	
Studio Playout System	\$25,000	
FM Transmitter Project	\$351,000	
TV Transmitter (3)	\$5,100,000	KOOD-TV, Hays
Copper Feed Line	\$525,000	
Tower Retentioning & Painting	\$450,000	
MC Automation	14,265	
MC Guide Builder	90,000	
MC Cherry Picker/Mux	\$20,000	
KOOD Tower Lights	\$150,000	
MC Digital Router	15,000	
MC 6 PSIP Generator/Editor	39,218	
MC 6 HD Encoders	\$150,000	
Multi-Image Display System	16,296	
Master Control Switcher/Router	\$156,257	
Transmitter Digital Decoders (5)	\$18,868	
Remote System for Transmitter	\$32,435	
4 Digital Time Base Corrector	\$20,000	

KSWK Microwave trans/receiver	\$36,553	
MC Sat. Clock System	\$7,500	
KWKS Tower Lights	\$180,000	
SHPTV Facility/Studio Replace	\$2,500,000.00	
TV Transmitter	\$1,700,000	KTWU-TV, Topeka
Copper Feed Line	\$175,000	
Tower Retentioning & Painting	\$150,000	
Translator Equipment	\$480,000	
Master Control Equipment	\$147,000	
Heating and Cooling	92,000	
Remote Production Equipment	338,000	
Studio Production Equipment	1,000,000	
Remote Vehicles	\$115,000	
Studio Lighting	\$83,000	
Transmitter Park City	\$2,025,000	KPTS-TV, Wichita
Transmitter Hutchinson	\$2,025,000	
Router	\$69,000	
Encoder	\$25,000	
Microwave Transmission Line	\$35,000	
Character Generator	\$35,000	
Studio Build-Out Equipment	\$59,430	
Master Control Equipment	\$12,000	
Board Room Build-Out	12,040	
Conference Room Buil-Out	\$7,640	
Studio 4K Camera	\$74,985	
High Def Lens Zoom	\$55,550	
Studio Camera Control Unit	\$35,985	
Studio & Field LED	\$29,985	

Studio Support Equipment	\$28,149	
Live Remote Truck	\$800,000	
MC Automation System	\$200,000	
Vinten 4-Stage Studio Pedestal	\$153,444	
%10 Contingency Allowance	\$258,849	
Modernize Public Broadcasting TOTAL	26,143,801	

My name is Will Murphy. I am the general manager at High Plains Public Radio and the chair of the Kansas Public Broadcasting Council.

I come before you to request that you consider investing SPARK funds to help modernize Kansas' public broadcasting network.

At my station, much of the equipment dates back 40 years, to the founding of the station in 1980. When equipment fails, it is often difficult to find parts as our transmitters and their components are no longer manufactured.

This past winter, we had a chunk of ice fall from a tower following a bad storm. The ice punctured the transmitter building and disabled a critical transmitter component. We were off the air for a few weeks, as our engineer searched for a replacement part. He was able to find a part in the storage area of a small Texas radio station. Our engineer was surprised to learn that the part came from one of our original transmitters of 40 years ago.

We have a particular challenge in western Kansas: we operate multiple towers across vast distances to serve a small number of listeners. For many families, we provide primary broadcast service of news and weather. Service to remote areas is vital to our mission, but costs of delivery are much higher than they would be in a concentrated metropolitan area.

Of course, as HPPR struggles just to maintain equipment that is decades old, broadcast standards have increased radically. We can't afford to keep up. We've not been able to invest strategically in solid state technology, and instead we are, of necessity, paying for repairs to technology that is 20, 30, even 40 years old.

In an earlier era, public radio and television stations could turn to a federal program [PTFP] for major capital improvements. Funding for that program ended ten years ago. Since then, public broadcasters have been hard pressed to replace outdated and failing equipment, not to mention investing in next-generation technology.

The mandate that Kansas public broadcasters were given **by legislative statute** almost 20 years ago was *"to provide an educational, cultural, and informational service to the people of this state ... [and] to provide public broadcasting service at a level of quality comparable to that available in*



***other states.***” Simply put, with current financial challenges, I’m not sure Kansas public radio and TV stations will be able to fulfill that obligation.

The Kansas Public Broadcasting Council maintains a list of equipment needed to keep our stations current. A version completed last March indicated that an investment of \$26.1 million would fully modernize our deteriorating infrastructure. The recent creation of the SPARK Taskforce provides the **unique** opportunity to use *federal, not state* dollars address these critical one-time costs. We look forward to working with you to fulfill our legislative charge and to continue to provide the quality “educational, cultural and informational services” that all Kansans, urban and rural, expect and deserve. Thank You.

Good afternoon SPARK executive committee members,

My name is Dr. Ryan Ruda, President of Garden City community College. I testify in front of you today regarding a request for funding through the state SPARK funding process to directly impact workforce training and business needs in Southwest Kansas and the entire state of Kansas. We have identified need from business and industry partners to expand the number of students who are admitted and being trained in our John Deere Agriculture Technician program. We currently have space to accept up to 25 students annually. This year, we had six students on the waiting list who could not be accepted and there are more identified needs for this upcoming year and foreseeable future.

The funding request is for capital of \$1.2 million to add physical infrastructure for classroom and shop/lab space so that we can accept up to an additional 15 students annually. This request in capital will be leveraged with requests that we are making at the Finney County level to support enhanced workforce training and industry needs, as well as leveraging with institutional funds which are available at GCCC. We have also leveraged local SPARK funds with the City of Garden City for other workforce programs on campus. Additionally, we will leverage equipment and machinery totaling close to \$200,000, that would be donated from John Deere Corporation to assist in having the program equipped and capable to accommodate the additional students.

We also are working with industry partners such as American Implement to do workforce trainings and earn credentials. This funding request would be a catalyst to meeting industry needs, mitigating the lack of technicians in the field, and supporting an increased need and demand for customer service in the agriculture-based economy of the Western Kansas region and state-wide. Garden City is one of only two John Deere training programs in the state, and this investment will help to support workforce demand across the entire state. There is strong local and industry support to propel workforce training forward, in collaboration with state support. The additional infrastructure from this funding request will utilize institutional, city, county, industry, and state collaboration to be a catalyst for program viability and industry sustainability.

Good afternoon SPARK executive council members,

My name is Dr. Scott Myers. I have the honor of serving as the Superintendent of Schools for the Holcomb Public School System. I testify in front of you today regarding a request for funding through the State SPARK funding process to impact workforce training and business needs in Southwest Kansas and the greater Western Kansas region. We have identified a need for helping provide more skilled laborers to work in the construction industry. With the sheer amount of construction taking place here in Finney County, there really are not enough highly-trained workers in the various building trades. To address this, we are in discussion with Garden City Community College (GCCC) to establish and launch a Building Trades program here in Holcomb. This shared venture would allow junior and senior high school students the opportunity to get involved in this sort of work, allowing them then to continue their educational journey at GCCC. This shared approach to creating and sustaining a program like this ensures continued success far into the future.

We are seeking a one-time capital investment of \$450,000 from the SPARK funds to help build a dynamic/flexible building trades training center located on district property in Holcomb. This center would provide ample training opportunities for our projected ten students annually. The unique design of this training center would accommodate a variety of training options. Portions of the center would be dedicated to plumbing or electricity or dry wall or framing or to any other building trades skills needed. The flexible nature of the center would allow the students the opportunity to run through all of the different building trades' skills all within a centralized location. Then, the skills acquired would allow the students to move onto an actual job site, meeting the need for more highly-skilled tradesmen.

There is a definite workforce need in Western Kansas, Finney County in particular. We believe the establishment of this program would provide essential workers to engage in construction projects. This result, of course, benefits the entire community in many ways as the economy would be impacted positively. Due to this belief, USD 363 is leveraging local dollars to ensure the training center is built and maintained. If done appropriately, this project would serve as a catalyst to meeting local workforce needs.

## Miller, Sarah [GO]

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**From:** DAN <dans.nwk@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 3, 2021 3:41 PM  
**To:** SPARKTaskForce  
**Subject:** Written Testimony for the SPARK Executive Committee on Economic Revitalization

**EXTERNAL:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

To: The SPARK Executive Committee on Economic Revitalization  
From: Dan Steffen – Economic Development Coordinator  
Northwest Kansas Planning & Development Commission  
Date: 11/3/21

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Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input for the Committee's consideration. As the Economic Development Coordinator for the NWKP&DC, I have been charged with assisting with the economic recovery of the 18 County region of N.W. Kansas from the COVID-19 Pandemic. In this effort, I have visited with all 73 Cities in the Region and all 18 Counties, regarding their recovery efforts and needs.

In the e-mail I received, regarding the meeting in Dodge City, it stated that we should "focus our comments on pressing needs/areas for improvement, rather than proposed solutions." The Communities in the Region have weathered the COVID-19 Pandemic, very well. However, the primary need that was described from almost every Community, was "Wage Appropriate" / Workforce Housing. When employers can find labor, those individuals cannot find housing to meet their needs, and thus decline the job offering.

Another NEED, is a return to previous funding levels for Certified Development Companies (CDC's) and Regional Planning Commissions, to be able to assist both Community and Business Development efforts in the Region. Staff shortages, due to budget constraints, have impacted the ability of both the CDC and the NWKP&DC, to provide the services needed for the Region.

Please take this into consideration, as the Committee moves forward with recommendations of future allocations of SPARK funds for Kansas.

Thank you, Dan

Dan Steffen  
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Northwest Kansas Planning & Development Commission  
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[www.nwkpdc.com](http://www.nwkpdc.com)

## Miller, Sarah [GO]

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**From:** Belshe, Ethan S [GO]  
**Sent:** Friday, October 29, 2021 10:17 AM  
**To:** SPARKTaskForce  
**Subject:** FW: to the SPARK Exec Committee; RE: American Rescue Plan Act Funds

See written testimony below.

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**From:** Michele Ediger <vicepresident@harveycountyhabitat.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 29, 2021 10:16 AM  
**To:** Belshe, Ethan S [GO] <Ethan.S.Belshe@ks.gov>  
**Subject:** to the SPARK Exec Committee; RE: American Rescue Plan Act Funds

**EXTERNAL:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear members of the SPARK Executive Committee,

I am so honored to be involved with Habitat for Humanity in Harvey County. Building new homes for low income families across Kansas is so important! So many families suffer from having no choice but to live in dilapidated rentals that are unaffordable at best, and unsafe at their worst.

In Harvey County we have been fortunate to build 17 new homes so far and we continue to build one new home a year to our community. We would like to do so much more, including rehabilitating older homes, as the need is so very great in our rural community.

These new homes increase revenue base to our cities and towns. Children in Habitat homes do better in school, families are healthier and happier. Owning a home of their own gives them a new sense of pride in self, and in their community.

I don't have to tell you how the price of building has dramatically increased since the pandemic began. Supply chain issues put additional pressure on our ability to build and rehabilitate homes. We could put the **American Rescue Plan Act funds** to very good and sustainable use at Habitat for Humanity affiliates across the State of Kansas. Your investment of these funds in our mission will serve families and communities for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration,

Michele Ediger  
Board Vice President  
Harvey County Habitat for Humanity  
620-869-5124

*Seeking to put God's love into action, Harvey County Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope. Habitat's vision is a world where everyone has a decent place to live.*

## Miller, Sarah [GO]

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**From:** Scott, Mary <MScott@dc3.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 4, 2021 10:02 AM  
**To:** SPARKTaskForce  
**Subject:** Thank you

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Since I am unable to attend the meeting, I would like to thank the provision of SPARK funds that helped us improve the delivery of classes, especially for STEM at the Community College level. It can be more challenging for community colleges to find funding sources to keep up with the changing technology. When COVID struck, this only increased the pressure. Providing technology for our students to use and to continue to use after the requirements for online delivery has improved STEM education. Because we still have positive COVID tests, the ability to assist those students with attendance via ZOOM is important for their success. I realize that there is a long list of needs, but certainly anything that helps our students continue their education, or further improve their education, would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Scott

Professor of Biology

Dodge City Community College