

Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference June 26-27, 2025, Kingman Kansas

Thursday, June 26th - Rotation Session Summaries



Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities

Rotation Session 1

1. ***From Ideas to Compliance: Legal Must-Knows for Small Business Success***

11:00AM – 11:45 AM

Presented by Julie Grabbe, Grabbe Law

“From Ideas to Compliance: Legal Must-Knows for Small Business Success” provides business owners with the essential legal tools to thrive. This session demystifies key topics, including choosing the right business entity, protecting your brand through trademarks, crafting solid contracts, and navigating compliance issues and employment law. Included are actionable tips and take-home resources. Whether you're starting out or scaling up, this presentation delivers practical strategies to help you stay compliant, reduce risks, and focus on growing your business.

2. ***Advantage Marketing: The Art of Storytelling***

11:00AM – 11:45AM

Presented by Taylor Overton, Director, Kansas Entrepreneurship and Small Business Office

Discover how storytelling can set your small business apart and help you connect with customers in meaningful ways. This workshop will teach you how to craft authentic, relatable narratives that highlight your unique value and build trust with your audience. Learn practical techniques to share your business journey, showcase your impact, and turn your story into a competitive advantage. Whether you're just starting out or looking to grow, this session will equip you with tools to stand out, inspire loyalty, and drive success in your small business.

3. ***The Social MVP: Marketing and Branding Workshop***

11:00AM – 11:45AM

Presented by Ti'Juana Hardwell, Founder, Mamarazzi Communications

Join us for The Social MVP: Marketing and Branding Workshop, designed specifically for entrepreneurs and small business owners eager to build a compelling brand using budget-friendly strategies. In this session, you'll discover actionable insights to elevate your brand presence without the need for significant investment. Learn how to harness your creativity and resourcefulness to effectively attract customers and boost engagement, whether you're just getting started or looking to refresh your branding. Most importantly, explore how to leverage your social media platforms to make meaningful connections and ensure potential customers know you long before your first handshake.

4. ***Using Your 401(k) or IRA to Start or Buy a Business Without Paying Taxes or Penalties***

11:00AM - 11:45AM

Presented by Mickey Parker, CPA at Accelefund

Mickey Parker will discuss a little-known strategy for investing your 401(k) or IRA in your own business, without paying taxes and penalties on a retirement plan distribution. YES, you can use your 401(k) or IRA or other pre-tax retirement as startup capital to buy or start a new business. Not a distribution or loan...not a self-directed IRA...no income taxes...no early withdrawal penalties. It is a business funding tool that has been around for decades, yet most people do not know about it.

5. ***From Competition to Collaboration***

11:00AM - 11:45AM

Presented by Madison Bosewell, Owner, The Polished Coupe

Mady will explain the boutique bounce for The Polished Coupe in Kingman, and how she markets the store and events through social media. She also has a unique story for how communication and collaboration with other small boutiques has benefited all.

6. ***From Start to Scale: Building and Growing Your Food Business***

11:00AM – 11:45AM

Presented by Jenny Doty, Food Systems Entrepreneurial Resource Navigator, K-State Research & Extension

Whether you're dreaming of launching your first food product or ready to take your existing business to the next level, this presentation is a guide to success in the food industry. We'll cover the essentials of starting strong – developing your product, navigating food safety regulations, and finding your target market – while diving into growth strategies like scaling production, expanding distribution, and building a loyal customer base. Discover practical tips for branding, funding, and leveraging opportunities like farmers markets, retail partnerships, and online sales.

Rotation Session 2

1. ***Funding the Future: How Kansas Supports Entrepreneurial Success***

1:30PM – 2:15PM

Presented by Thomas Papadatos, NetWork Kansas and Bethany Johnson, SCKEDD

Discover how Kansas is fostering entrepreneurship through innovative financing programs and initiatives. This session will explore the state's commitment to supporting startups and small businesses, highlighting resources such as equity investment, loan programs, and non-dilutive opportunities. Learn how Kansas partners with entrepreneurs to overcome financial barriers, fuel innovation, and drive economic growth across the state. Whether you're an entrepreneur seeking funding or an organization supporting entrepreneurs, this session will provide valuable insights into Kansas' role in empowering businesses to success.

2. *So You Want to Start a Business: Identifying Local Need*

1:30PM – 2:15PM

Presented by Gustavo Ustariz, Main Street America

Are you ready to launch your entrepreneurial journey but unsure where to start? This session dives into the critical first step: identifying unmet needs in your local community. Learn practical strategies for researching market gaps, understanding opportunities, and aligning your business idea with local demand. Gain insights into turning opportunities into impactful business ventures. Whether you're brainstorming new ideas or refining your business concept, this session will provide you with tools to ensure your business addresses a need and sets the stage for success.

3. *Successfully Blending Family and Business*

1:30PM – 2:15PM

Presented by Patrick McGinnis, LMSW, Founder, Breathe Coffee House

How do you pursue with passion a career that makes a difference through the building of a successful business/non-profit while balancing your values of being a good husband, father and friend? Being an entrepreneur can make you feel like you must choose between the success of your business or success at home. Patrick McGinnis started a non-profit coffee house focused on creating dialogue, community outreach and addressing the loneliness and mental health epidemics. This presentation will focus on strategic methods to stay focused and balanced in the areas of your life that matter the most.

4. *Winning the Bid: Unlocking Supply Chain Success*

1:30PM – 2:15PM

Presented by Taylor Overton, Director, Kansas Entrepreneurship and Small Business Office

Navigating supply chains and responding to RFPs can be daunting, but they're critical for small business growth. This workshop demystifies the process, offering actionable insights to help you streamline your operations and position your business for success. Learn how to identify opportunities, craft competitive proposals, and leverage your strengths to win contracts. Gain an understanding of supply chain dynamics and how to build relationships that enhance your business's credibility and capacity. Whether you're new to bidding or looking to refine your strategy, this session will equip you with the tools to compete and thrive.

5. *From Ideas to Compliance: Legal Must-Knows for Small Business Success*

1:30PM – 2:15PM

Presented by Julie Grabbe, Grabbe Law

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Rotation Session 3

1. ***Navigating the Loan Process – The Insider Way***

2:30PM - 3:15PM

Presented by Vince Haworth, Director, Capital Access Center, KSBDC

Do you know how the lending process really works? Do you know all the loan products that are available to you? Are you getting the best deal? Does it seem like every banker is a Vice President regardless of their day-to-day job duties? Navigating the loan process is complicated! Even the best deals do not get the best terms or even approved!

In this presentation you will hear Vincent Haworth, who is a 25-year banking professional, explain the loan process. Attendees will receive insider tips and advice, learn how the banks always protect their assets and how even finding the right lender/bank can increase your chances of success!

2. ***Failure As Fuel: Turning Setbacks Into Success***

2:30PM – 3:15PM

Presented by Taylor Overton, Director, Kansas Entrepreneurship and Small Business Office

Every small business owner faces challenges, but failure doesn't have to be the end of the road -- it can be the fuel for your greatest achievements. In this workshop, learn how to embrace failure as a powerful learning tool and transform setbacks into steppingstones for growth. Discover strategies for building resilience, reframing challenges, and fostering a mindset that sees opportunity in adversity. Through real-life examples and interactive discussions, you'll gain the confidence to navigate obstacles and use them to propel your small business forward. Leave inspired and ready to turn failure into your greatest asset.

3. ***Mindful Mindset***

2:30PM – 3:15PM

Presented by Constance Porazka, Co-Founder, Retreat to Joy

Life as an entrepreneur is demanding. Learn how to keep yourself charged with Mindful skills and practices. Mindful living is an antidote to too much stress and anxiety.

4. ***Youth Entrepreneurship: Learn How to Join the Movement***

2:30PM - 3:15PM

Presented by Bailee Henry, NetWork Kansas

Discover how over 1,100 young people across Kansas are honing their entrepreneurial skills and shaping their futures annually. Join us to explore how Kansas is investing in its 'futurepreneurs,' fostering leadership and innovation that will empower the next generation for years to come.

5. ***Using Google and Local Search to Benefit Your Business***

2:30PM – 3:15PM

Presented by Sheri Hart, Group Discoverability Director, VML

In this presentation you will learn about the tools to understand and talk about local search and how it impacts your community and businesses. Our goal is to empower you to develop a best-in-class Google Business Profile to enhance your digital footprint, bringing more traffic to your community and businesses. Time will be allowed to work on your business profile. Bring your laptop to the session.

6. ***Old Spaces, New Possibilities: Transforming Our Downtown***

2:30PM – 3:15PM

Presented by Arik Hook, Local Business Owner, Kingman

Explore how repurposing old buildings can breathe new life into Kansas downtowns, fostering economic growth and community pride. This presentation dives into innovative strategies for revitalization, from adaptive reuse and creative design to engaging stakeholders and securing funding. Learn how to turn vacant properties into vibrant spaces that serve modern needs while preserving local heritage. This presentation will inspire actionable ideas to reimagine the potential of your town's core and create a thriving, welcoming environment for businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

Friday, June 27th - Rotation Session Summaries

Rotation Session 4

1. ***How Arts Can Bring Money and Tourism to Small Towns***

9:30AM -10:15AM

Presented by Jenny Russell, JenRus Freelance Marketing, and Kate VanSteenHuyse, Assistant Director, Kansas Arts Commission

Small towns sometimes see art as something that only big cities need. At other times art is forgone because of limited funds. In this session, participants will be given real-life examples from a town of less than 300 people, of how art and tourism can be accessible and profitable to a town's economy.

2. *The Transition Imperative for Rural Grocery*

9:30AM – 10:15AM

Presented by Clara Misenhelter, Rural Grocery Initiative Program Manager, K-State Research & Extension

Between 2008 and 2018, 1 in 5 grocery stores in rural Kansas closed their doors. When this happens, communities lose out. In a 2021 survey of rural Kansas grocery stores, the Rural Grocery Initiative at Kansas State University learned that nearly 1 in 4 rural grocers plan to retire in the next 5-10 years and 73% of those do not have any transition plans in place. Supporting rural grocers in transition planning is essential to keeping the benefits of hometown grocery stores in rural communities. Come learn about the tools needed to support rural grocers through business transition!

3. *Startup Capital in the Heartland*

9:30AM – 10:15AM

Presented by Thomas Papadatos, NetWork Kansas

Attendees will get insights into the financing options available to Kansas entrepreneurs, including the GROWKS Equity Program. The panel will explore how this innovative program supports startups by leveraging state investment to attract private capital, promoting economic growth across Kansas. Participants will also learn about the program's application process, eligibility criteria, and success stories, as well as strategies to effectively access and utilize equity financing to scale their ventures.

4. *So You Want to Start a Business: Identifying Local Need*

9:30AM – 10:15AM

Presented by Gustavo Ustariz, Main Street America

Are you ready to launch your entrepreneurial journey but unsure where to start? This session dives into the critical first step: identifying unmet needs in your local community. Learn practical strategies for researching market gaps, understanding opportunities, and aligning your business idea with local demand. Gain insights into turning opportunities into impactful business ventures. Whether you're brainstorming new ideas or refining your business concept, this session will provide you with tools to ensure your business addresses a need and sets the stage for success.

5. *Youth Perspectives Panel*

9:30AM – 10:15AM

Moderated by Sara Bloom, Kansas Department of Commerce with insights by Kingman County 4-H Ambassadors

Join us for an inspiring discussion as young leaders share their visions for vibrant, thriving communities. This panel will explore what youth value in their hometowns, why entrepreneurship matters to them, and the innovative business ideas they envision. Gain insight into their hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future.

6. ***Love, Kansas and ROZ: A Sweet Collaboration for Recruitment***

9:30AM – 10:15AM

Presented by Rosa Casavos, Tourism Special Projects Manager, and Sheena Thomas, Rural Opportunity Zones Program Manager, Kansas Department of Commerce

Ever wonder how a great cherry turnover is made? You must start with a great mix of cold butter and flour that can mix well together then add the cherry filling. This is exactly how the Love, Kansas campaign and the Rural Opportunity Zone (ROZ) program work hand in hand. Love, Kansas is the flakey pastry puff, and the ROZ program is the cherry on top!

Join us as we share how our two programs are bringing boomerangs back to Kansas and receiving incentives to work, live, and play here!

Rotation Session 5

1. ***Using Technology for Building Renewal***

10:30AM – 11:15AM

Presented by Tom Harris, KSU Technology Development Institute with Scott Mueller, real estate entrepreneur

Building scanning with LIDAR is at the forefront of survey technology and is known as Digital Twin creation. Learn how this technology works to create dimensionally accurate 3D virtual models and how quickly it can scan both modern and historic buildings. Additionally, the discussion will focus on how the resulting data can be used by architects and developers to begin the process of costing out updates or developing new conceptual building designs virtually.

2. ***CEO – Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities***

10:30AM – 11:15AM

Presented by Dickinson County CEO Board Members

CEO transforms your youth and is a game changer for your community. It is a program for high school juniors and seniors that teaches them about what it takes to own and operate a business, but even more than that - it teaches them about life. CEO immerses students in the community, instills an entrepreneurial mindset and inspires the next generation.

3. ***Using Your 401(k) or IRA to Start or Buy a Business Without Paying Taxes or Penalties***

10:30AM - 11:15AM

Presented by Mickey Parker, CPA at Accelefund

Mickey Parker will discuss a little-known strategy for investing your 401(k) or IRA in your own business, without paying taxes and penalties on a retirement plan distribution. YES, you can use your 401(k) or IRA or other pre-tax retirement as startup capital to buy or start a new business. Not a distribution or loan...not a self-directed IRA...no income taxes...no early withdrawal penalties. It is a business funding tool that has been around for decades, yet most people do not know about it.

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5. ***Welcoming Communities***

10:30AM – 11:15AM

Presented by Simone Elder, PowerUp and Engagement Manager, Kansas Sampler Foundation

Young people want to live and thrive in communities of the future. These are communities that are welcoming to newcomers and have a desire to engage all residents in moving a community forward. What if we approached rural communities as start-ups and work to adopt an experimental mindset to solve problems and re-arrange the way we welcome, engage, and involve new ideas and people to get things that are good for the community. This session will share about the PowerUp Movement – supporting young people who are rural by choice and explore a variety of exercises and programs that can help your community become a community of the future.

6. ***Reaching Non-Traditional Markets***

10:30AM – 11:15AM

Presented by Christian Hopkins, Director, Office of Minority & Women Business Development, Kansas Department of Commerce

Have you noticed there has been a gap in your network? Are you attending events where there more Entrepreneurship Support Organizations than business owners? This topic will discuss accessing business owners that are not in traditional entrepreneurial spaces but in non-traditional spaces. How to strategically and authentically enter these spaces and position your organization as a valuable resource for entrepreneurial assistance in new spaces.