



UPWARD
MOBILITY
CROWDSOURCING
ANALYSIS



INTRODUCTION

As part of its commitment to making Kansas a leader in health, the Kansas Health Foundation (KHF) launched a purposeful crowdsourcing campaign from June to September 2025. This campaign aimed to gather innovative ideas from across the state to promote upward mobility. By inviting public contributions, KHF sought to challenge conventional approaches and foster new strategies to build a better financial future for Kansans. Participants were encouraged to share their innovative solutions through video messages at the Somewhere Fest and Conference in Wichita, Kansas as well as through KHF's online platform. The Kansas Health Institute (KHI) was contracted to analyze and summarize the submitted ideas through this crowdsourcing effort to assist understanding and future planning efforts.

HOW TO USE THIS SUMMARY

The Kansas Health Institute prepared this summary for the Kansas Health Foundation (KHF). The analysis focused on describing the types of ideas that were proposed by participants. Ideas were not assessed for their alignment with evidence-based or equitable practices. Entries could have more than one idea. Video entries also often included more than one person responding. Due to the nature of these crowdsourcing responses, all entries were coded with a label describing all comments and ideas in the entry, using an inductive approach. Inductive coding is a bottom-up approach without pre-set codes where the participants' own words are used to develop codes during the analysis. For example, if a participant named three ideas within one sentence, the three ideas were coded separately, even though it was one entry.



RESULTS

PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED TO ANSWER THE PROMPT:

"Picture someone you know who is currently struggling to make ends meet. Now imagine their life five years from now if their financial situation had improved. What would be different? Think about what would help a person find a good job, start a business, achieve their goals and build a better life. What kind of support would they need to build a better financial future? Tell us your idea!"

A total of 513 responses were collected. The five most common ideas included having: 1) a supportive community, particularly for specific population groups like single parents; 2) access to affordable and quality health care; 3) access to affordable and quality mental health care and substance use and addiction treatment; 4) affordable and stable housing options; and 5) pathways to affordable higher education. Of the 513 responses, the majority of respondents (85.1 percent) were under age 44 (Figure 1). More than half of respondents (53.6 percent) were younger than age 34. Figure 2 (pages 5-14) summarizes all themes with at least 10 common ideas across all crowdsourcing submissions.

Figure 1. AGE OF RESPONDENTS

AGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS
Less than 25 years	131	25.5%
25-34 years	144	28.1%
35-44 years	125	24.4%
45-54 years	65	12.7%
55-64 years	30	5.8%
65 years or older	9	1.8%
Did not provide age	9	1.8%
TOTAL	513	100%

Note: Age is based on the self-reported information provided in the form.

Figure 2. CROWDSOURCING IDEAS

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Supportive Community	<p>Respondents described community support as a strategy for improving financial futures. Most often, this was in connection with individuals who are struggling to build strong personal relationships with friends and others in their social network who could provide a listening ear. However, some respondents described support as providing money or resources that could align with a mutual aid framework of community members contributing to support community members in need. The wish for community wraparound support was frequently referenced as a need to support single-parent families, particularly those led by single mothers. Additionally, respondents highlighted the need for community support for caretakers, people with disabilities, older adults, immigrants and formerly incarcerated individuals. Additionally, some respondents described the role of sexual assault, abuse, and trauma from violence as barriers to upward mobility.</p> <p><i>"And just, you know, for them to have a community where they have that support that they're honestly needing, versus, you know, just not getting it because they moved out here by themselves."</i></p> <p><i>"Someone I know has recently lost their husband. They have two young girls and one on the way. So, what, I guess my wish for them would just be that they would be taken care of and, you know, whatever that entails."</i></p> <p><i>"I have worked with survivors of domestic and sexual violence for over 25 years. Critical resources are devoted to assisting at the time of acute crisis, but fewer programs assist with the long-term financial impact of the victimization."</i></p>	78

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Overall Health Care Access, Affordability and Quality	<p>Respondents most often connected improved financial futures with access to affordable, high-quality health care. Some respondents wished for free health care. Respondents described difficulty finding insurance coverage for things like dental care or getting insulin for diabetes. One respondent described needing to travel out of state to receive specialist care. Additionally, respondents described a need for providing health care to all, regardless of the language they speak, their gender or their ability to pay. Follow-up care and additional services were described as important to maintaining access to health care.</p> <p><i>"Affordable health care. Choosing a job that you are passionate about, that you can use your strengths instead of choosing a job just for affordable health care."</i></p> <p><i>"My wish would be to get better health care for those in need and not have to count on money to just get help. You know, walk in, you got a small problem, or even a big problem, you can get somebody to walk in, go in and get and not have to worry about writing the check or paying the money."</i></p>	63
Behavioral Health Care Access, Affordability and Quality	<p>The impact of mental health on being able to maintain a job or care for oneself was regularly referenced by participants. Additionally, some responses described the toll of economic hardship on mental health. Culturally aware and trauma-informed mental health care was also indicated as a need. Additionally, nearly a quarter of responses focused on addiction as a barrier to upward mobility, particularly the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Affordable or free addiction treatment was mentioned as a priority.</p> <p><i>"I would like to make a wish for my mom. I think if we had free rehabs for people that were struggling with addiction and stuff like that that would help out. That didn't take insurance and have to pay for it. I think it would help a lot of people in this world."</i></p> <p><i>"My wish for someone who's struggling would be affordable mental health services, because therapy is amazing, but therapy is super expensive. And I know that from some experience, once you're insured, it's better, but it's still expensive. And I can imagine someone who's not, it doesn't have health insurance, it's ridiculous. It's cost prohibitive to be able to talk to someone like a therapist."</i></p>	51

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Affordable and Stable Housing	<p>Respondents described the cost and availability of housing as a barrier to improving their own financial futures. They also described high housing costs as a reason for homelessness. Wishes included policies, programs and support that would help people afford housing and pay for housing-related expenses such as utilities. A few participants described opportunities to improve existing programs. Additionally, some respondents wished for programs that would help support people buying their first home.</p> <p><i>"I think that if we can address the affordable housing crisis, people won't feel stuck at dead end jobs that they can't ever advance at because they just have to make that next payment, they have to make that next bill, or they don't have a roof over their head if they had somewhere stable, or they had help to make sure that everything didn't fall apart while they tried something new and they tried to pursue something better that might give them a better financial future, then I think that would really help."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't have to picture someone who is currently struggling to make ends meet. I work with them every day. And their biggest obstacle? Affordable housing that makes sense. I work and have worked/volunteered with folks with intellectual and developmental disabilities since 1991. And housing has ALWAYS been a pain point. Either landlords have concerns with renting to people "like that," they won't accept section 8 vouchers, or it's not accessible. Or we institutionalize them. Or put them all in the same apartment building. What would it look like to have something that is walking distance to grocery, public transportation, fast casual, pharmacy, farmers market, community center?? That was INCLUSIVE. That was within budget. That accepted Vouchers. That provided a community room and URBAN AGRICULTURE??? That would be amazing. I know this, because we are in the midst of building it."</i></p>	45

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Affordable Higher Education Pathway	<p>Respondents described higher education as key to improved financial futures. They wished for scholarships or financial aid to pay for college. Some wished college was free. Additionally, some respondents wished more people had opportunities to pursue degrees in the trades or STEM fields.</p> <p><i>"I was going to say, yeah, in terms of education, financial aid, I think education is super important, especially in America. In the United States, this competitiveness with jobs and everything."</i></p> <p><i>"One of the most important pieces we have is education. And I feel as though if I was on a five-year plan, one of the most important things we could do is probably communicate the availability of vocational or technical education. There's a two-year pathway that's essentially at no cost for anyone in the state of Kansas, as long as you promise to remain in Kansas two years postgraduate graduation. I mean just communicating the fact that you could be a nurse, a veterinarian, work on an ambulance, as an EMS technician, work in a machine shop, weld, you could be a freaking pilot in aviation, like all of these pathways are available to Kansas at no cost. Well, I want to say no cost, but truly it's offset by the Kansas Promise. And again, the Kansas Promise is changing lives everyday. I don't care what background you're coming from, it's something that, if you're from Kansas, we want to keep you here, and we want to keep your talent and your treasure."</i></p>	41

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Workforce Support or Job Finding	<p>Respondents wished for support finding jobs and exploring new career paths, as well as support with networking and interviewing in order to secure jobs. One area described by respondents was a need for more job opportunities for people with disabilities, those experiencing mental health challenges and youth. Some respondents described the importance of supporting people experiencing cuts due to factory closures, and some respondents offered approaches like providing matching funds to support the Community Health Worker certification process.</p> <p><i>"I think my wish would be resume and job interview help. I think a lot of people struggle with that process, and it kicks them, takes them down and they just don't feel like trying."</i></p> <p><i>"Okay, so first thing that comes to mind immediately when you were explaining it was my dad. We grew up pretty poor. He had a stroke a few years ago, and he was no longer able to work, so he's on disability now, which is great. We're getting support from the government, but he still really wants to work, and the support that we get is just enough to pay for ends to meet, you know, pay for the mortgage. We still have a mortgage, still paying for the house, still paying for food and stuff. So, it'd be really nice if there were opportunities for him of some context, he can only use his right hand now, so half his body is no longer like mobile, right? So, if there were more jobs that he could do, either remotely or he can still drive. He has, like, a hand thing in his car. So, if he could just be able to find jobs. He's been trying, but no one's hiring someone that can just only use their right arm."</i></p>	40

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Debt Relief	<p>Respondents discussed debt as a barrier to financial stability, particularly referencing student and medical debt. Participants ranged from wishing for complete elimination of debt, support for payments and for people to find a way to pay it off on their own. Paying off debt was described as an essential step to upward mobility.</p> <p><i>"Financial aid if someone's like, struggling with like, college debt, something to relieve that, that weight off their shoulders of just crippling debt and from college tuitions and stuff."</i></p> <p><i>"My wish would be for more help with medical debt. I feel like a lot of families of people with medical problems get saddled with it after death, too, and that's also really hard, so just help with that would be great."</i></p> <p><i>"By tackling structural barriers like predatory lending and lack of credit access, we'd help Kansans find good jobs, start businesses, achieve their goals, and build lasting financial security."</i></p>	37
Financial Literacy and Financial Education	<p>Respondents wished more people had access to or received financial literacy education about how to manage money, invest and save. Several participants emphasized that this should begin early, with some suggesting it be taught in schools. Some respondents provided advice on how they themselves budget and invest. A few participants named financial planning resources as important to upward mobility.</p> <p><i>"I wish for financial literacy. I don't feel like it's something that it's taught in schools these days, and we have so many of our youth. We have so much homelessness going on in the city, and I feel like it could be, you know, avoided, if financial literacy was taught in schools."</i></p> <p><i>"My wish is for all the young people in the world and America to become financially literate and actually get the education that they need so they stay out of debt to begin with and are able to build a future for themselves."</i></p>	37

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Child Care Access, Affordability and Quality	<p>Respondents talked about cost and access to child care as a barrier to employment. Additionally, there were concerns raised about the quality of child care available and not wanting to worry about their child's safety.</p> <p><i>"My wish is that everybody could have access to childcare, so they don't have to worry about their children while they're trying to provide for their children."</i></p> <p><i>"I also have family friends that are in the military, and they're couples, and sometimes they struggle because they're either trying to choose between both parents working to make it, or they end up having to have just one parent make it to work because they can't afford daycare. So, I wish daycare was affordable for everyone."</i></p>	31
Higher Income and Livable Wages	<p>Some respondents wished for higher incomes, better paying jobs or livable wages. Three participants suggested universal basic income as an approach.</p> <p><i>"I wish for someone to get a raise."</i></p> <p><i>"My wish is that minimum wage will go up to a livable cost."</i></p> <p><i>"If I had one wish, it would probably be for some sort of universal base income. Because regardless of what your situation is, every human being deserves shelter, food, water, that whole bottom of the pyramid Maslow's Hierarchy. I want everyone to have that, and I think a universal based income would do that."</i></p>	28
Food Access and Affordability	<p>Respondents wished for affordable access to nutritious groceries. They described needing support to purchase food, the addition of new purchasing locations and education related to nutrition. One participant also suggested free meals for school children. Other participants described supporting access to food through the charitable food system.</p> <p><i>"I wish for any Kansan to be able to go into a Dillon's marketplace and be able to afford a week's worth of groceries without panicking or having to get dig for coins, because I've had to do that twice in the last two weeks, and I'm not cool with that."</i></p> <p><i>"I wish for more access to I just wish that there was more access to quality healthy foods in our community."</i></p>	26

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Streamline Existing Access to Resources	<p>Respondents described the path to upward mobility as streamlining existing support to make existing resources easier to navigate, apply for and access. Community health workers and other resource navigators across Kansas were described as important resources for helping achieve this streamlined system. Additionally, some respondents indicated a need to improve some of the existing programs like disability and Social Security.</p> <p><i>"I would wish for them to have access to the whatever help they need; childcare, education, transportation, etc from a responsive system that answers the phone and meets the person where they are at."</i></p> <p><i>"A way to understand the universe of resources AND how to access those resources."</i></p>	26
Basic Needs Funded	<p>Respondents described financial stability interventions as those that addressed the basic needs, paid for bills or helped recover from a challenging situation such as debt, unemployment or abuse. These ideas usually involved directly giving money or supporting costs for multiple financial expenses. As one respondent described, paying the bills is all that matters.</p> <p><i>"Support with daycare, groceries, bill assistance, and educational assistance."</i></p> <p><i>"Everyone needs money, like everything keeps on going up, prices, bills, everything that's what you need."</i></p>	22

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Transportation Access	<p>Respondents described transportation as a barrier. Although five respondents requested improvements to free public transportation, most transportation responses related to procuring a vehicle or affordable means for transportation to work or other venues. A couple of people said they rely on Uber to get to work because they lack other means.</p> <p><i>"Something I want to help someone financially with is I work with someone. She has four kids, and she doesn't have a car, so she has to Uber to work every day, and I know that's really hard, especially with having four teenagers, so I hope that would get better for her."</i></p> <p><i>"I feel like transportation is the barrier to, like getting to the jobs to make the money, showing up to the conferences, showing up to appointments, and, like, we work in foster care. So, transportation is a big thing, and so I feel like if our transportation system was more accessible and easier, I think that it would break the barrier of those financial crisis that we kind of see most times."</i></p>	22
Support for Starting Your Own Business	<p>Some respondents wished for support for entrepreneurs and startup capital to start their own small business. Some ideas for support included education, relaxing regulations and investing in companies that give back to the community. Starting a business was seen as a way to succeed, but also a risk. One participant described success as critical to keeping their home.</p> <p><i>"Honestly, I think something that'll improve Kansans' lives and everything else like that, like accessibility to starting their own business. So, I think, like easier loans to gain to start up their own like small business will go a long way. A lot of people have their own wishes and dreams, and sometimes it's not a nine to five, you know, they want to start their own thing. And coming from experience as an entrepreneur myself, like it's tough starting out. And so, I think, like with programs that make it just a little bit easier to get that extra step in just to get started, would go a long way."</i></p> <p><i>"My wish is for somebody whose name I will not share, but he is in the process of launching his own company, and it's with an app. And I just really hope the app works and it enables him to get the wealth that that will require him to keep his home."</i></p>	14

THEME	DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLE QUOTES	IDEA COUNT
Believe in Yourself	<p>Some respondents saw the barrier to economic success as a lack of confidence in oneself and not to be afraid to try. They wished people who were struggling developed a strong belief that they could push through it and succeed.</p> <p><i>"The best advice that I can give as my mom, she's a social worker and works in a domestic violence shelter, the number one thing that I can tell is just put yourself out there more. Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty. You know, don't be afraid to fail, because failing is where we all learn and you know, you know you never know the result until you actually get out and do it. You know. You know don't think you're wasting your time on something that you feel like you're not going to succeed with. You know, because it's all part of the process of learning and just getting better and growing as an individual."</i></p> <p><i>"I think believe in yourself and have faith in yourself that you succeed at anything you want to do. That even if you think it's impossible to reach, like going back to school or doing something completely different from what you usually do, that it's reachable. You just have to believe in yourself."</i></p>	11
Mentorship	<p>Some respondents described mentorship as key to upward mobility. They described having someone who can provide guidance to help people who are struggling to navigate challenges and grow in their careers and as people.</p> <p><i>"I just wish for them to have a good influence, you know, I think that can be one of the most powerful things that, you know, bringing somebody into a better situation, the person I'm picking up. You know, they are not in a great situation housing, with housing right now. They don't really know where they're going to live. So, you know, I just wish for them to get somebody in their life, you know, to help them. You know, I'm trying to influence them as best I can, and just find something they're truly passionate about with their job and stuff as well, so they can, you know, progress their career and, you know, build their life up into something more meaningful for themselves."</i></p> <p><i>"My wish is for kids in the foster system to have a way to access resources that are available to them more consistently and easily through some sort of mentorship program where people can dedicate more time with them and help them navigate their way through the system as they grow."</i></p>	10

Note: Only themes with at least 10 common ideas are listed.





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