

Kansas State University to Help New Initiative Improve Healthy Food Access

To help improve Kansans' access to healthy food, the [Kansas Health Foundation](#) is launching the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative Nov. 6 in Wichita. The kickoff of the \$4.2 million initiative will be from 1-3 p.m. at the Kansas Leadership Center's Town Hall, 325 E. Douglas Ave.

Of the \$4.2 million the Kansas Health Foundation is putting toward the initiative, \$866,000 is going to Kansas State University's [Center for Engagement and Community Development](#). The center will contribute by assessing participating communities' food systems; offering information on funding for healthy food operations; assisting with addressing distribution needs in the supplier-retailer gap; analyzing and supporting marketing and policy efforts; educating Kansans on how to find, purchase, store and prepare healthy foods; and helping develop strategies for building partnerships to advance healthy food access.

"Since 2007, when K-State launched the [Rural Grocery Initiative](#), our university has been a leader in improving food access in the areas that need it most," said David Procter, director of the Center for Engagement and Community Development. "K-State's agricultural heritage, food systems expertise and world-class research facilities have firmly established the university as a leader in addressing the growing technological, educational and human resource needs of global food systems."

More than 800,000 Kansans do not live within a reasonable distance of grocery stores that offer healthy, affordable food, and more than 30 percent of Kansas counties are considered food deserts, according to the Kansas Health Foundation. Food deserts are low-income areas where a substantial portion of the population live more than a mile from a grocery store in urban areas or more than 10 miles from a grocery store in rural areas, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Kansas is often referred to as 'the nation's breadbasket,' but our state has consistently ranked above the national average for food insecurity," Procter said.

The Wichita event will be an opportunity for civic leaders, grocery owners and other food access stakeholders to network, ask questions and learn details of the initiative, including how to apply for funds, Procter said.

"Individuals and families can improve their health when they have better access to healthy food," Procter said. "We believe every Kansan should have that

access."

In addition to Kansas State University, participating organizations include NetWork Kansas; The Food Trust of Philadelphia; and IFF, a community development financial institution.

To show support for bringing greater access to healthy food for Kansans, register for the event at kansashealthyfood.org.