



- Updated November 2015

COMPETITION BACKGROUND

America's Best Communities is a three-year competition providing \$4 million and other support to communities as they develop economic growth strategies.

The top three communities — those with the most innovative proposals being effectively implemented — will be awarded \$3 million for first place, with \$2 million for second and \$1 million for third.

KEARNEY STATUS

In April, Kearney was one of 50 communities that won \$50,000 and advanced to the quarterfinals of the competition, sponsored by Frontier Communications, DISH Network, CoBank and The Weather Channel.

Buffalo Community Partners is leading the initiative and brought people together from numerous Kearney organizations and companies to submit the application and develop future phases.

The ABC contest asks Kearney and other finalists to develop strategies and a community revitalization plan that stimulates the local economy.

SKILLED LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

- ABC Team Kearney used its \$50,000 prize money to implement a plan that would create a new Workforce Career Center called Kearney Works.
- The biggest challenge for Kearney employers is finding trained skilled labor. Kearney has a significant number of workers who graduated from high school but did not attend or graduate from college. ABC Team Kearney is focusing on that gap, where skillsets fall somewhere between a high school and college degree.
- Kearney Works will offer workforce development and skill training solutions for unemployed and underemployed through training and community collaboration.

KEARNEY WORKS DETAILS

- 6-Month pilot program
- Nonprofit status with board of directors and a new director position to oversee
- Workforce Career Center targets people working \$9 to \$14 per-hour jobs who cannot attend post-secondary school because of financial obligations or other barriers.
- Focus on meeting employer workforce shortages in skilled labor areas of information technology, advanced manufacturing, education, retail and health care.
- Partner with existing agencies to train unemployed labor force
- Establish a system of volunteers, mentors/coaches, and develop referral system
- Soft Skills training program, with curriculum in areas such as resume building, interviewing etc....
- Establish certificate programs
- Determine and secure physical location for training

FUNDING

Kearney Works initial 6-month pilot program will be funded by the \$100,000 prize money awarded in the next phase of the America's Best Communities competition.

The program will then be sustained by a fund raising goal of \$100,000, with grant money also a funding option.

COMMUNITY INPUT UPDATE

Through community listening sessions and focus groups hosted by ABC Team Kearney, a number of key issues were identified that create barriers and impact Kearney's workforce and employers. While these issues are not the current focus of the ABC competition and Kearney Works, they remain a key part of the conversation moving forward.

- Public Transportation
- Housing
- Rate of People Living In Poverty

#ABC50

#AmericasBestKearney

@ABCCommunities



KEY DATES

- **Nov. 6, 2015** - Quarterfinalist revitalization plan deadline
- **Jan. 13, 2016** - 15 semifinalists announced & invited to attend summit to present strategies. 8 Finalists will be awarded \$100,000 to further implement plans.
- **April 13, 2016** - 8 finalists announced (\$100,000 prize)
- **March 28, 2017** - Revitalization plan implemented
- **March 29, 2017** - Final plan deadline
- **April 26, 2017** - Grand prize winners (3) announced (\$3 million, \$2 million, \$1 million prizes)
- **April 30, 2018** - Presentation of awards in communities

AMERICA'S BEST COMMUNITIES – “Team Kearney” Committee

- Denise Zwiener, Buffalo County Community Partners
- Stan Clouse, Kearney Mayor
- Marion McDermott, Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce
- Darren Robinson, Economic Development Council of Buffalo County
- Kelsey Hemman, Economic Development Council of Buffalo County
- JoAnn Andersen, City of Kearney
- Jonathan Nikkila, Kearney City Council
- Pat Compton, Downtown Kearney Association
- Shayne Zwiener, Frontier Communications
- Kristin Gottula, Frontier Communications
- Carol Renner, Kearney Public Schools
- Todd Gottula, University of Nebraska at Kearney
- Meredith Collins, Community Action Partnership of Mid Nebraska
- Judi Sickler, Kearney Area Community Foundation
- Jan Rodehorst, Business Owner
- Amanda Shoemaker, Royal Neighbors – Kearney Chapter
- Kyle Means, University of Nebraska at Kearney
- Dana Wright, Viaero Event Center
- Michelle Toukan, Buffalo County Community Partners
- Sarah McCaslin, Buffalo County Community Partners
- Josh Jelden, Younes Center
- Michael Garretson, Central Community College
- Kelly Christensen, Central Community College
- Consultants Brenda Jensen, Eric Hellriegel and Jennie Kozal, Miller and Associates
- Consultants Bree Dority and Shawn Kaskie, University of Nebraska at Kearney