

Kansas Growing as Proving Grounds for Community Health, Vibrancy Innovations
NXTUS Program Prompts 22 Projects Tackling Rural Challenges with Technology Tools

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Wichita, Kan. – October 9, 2025 – At today's Innovation Showcase for the **NXTSTAGE Community Health & Vibrancy Pilot Competition**, presented by **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas**, program partners announced **22 projects** to improve the health and vitality of Kansas communities.

The 2025 program, run by NXTUS, Inc., included nine community partners from leading Kansas health and economic development organizations. From nearly 150 competing startups, these pilot partners selected 10 finalists offering technology-driven solutions relevant to their communities' health and growth challenges.

At today's culminating event, finalists pitched their solutions to an audience of health professionals and community-development advocates, including 130 in the Vault at Equity Bank Park and others watching online from around the state. The program partners announced ongoing dialogue and finalized collaborations to run pilots focused on support for community health workers, preventative diabetes care, family addiction recovery, social media literacy, civic engagement, online pharmacy access and more.

The showcase included these 22 announcements of upcoming community projects:

- **Coffey County Economic Development:** Cairn Health, GrownBy and Polco
- **Hodgeman County Economic Development:** Cairn Health, Greens Health, Kind-Ed, Healium and We the Village
- **LiveWell Northwest Kansas:** Cairn Health, Pear Suite and We the Village
- **NMC Health:** Cairn Health and We the Village
- **Russell Regional Hospital:** Healium, Kwema and Polco
- **Thrive Allen County/Thrive Kansas:** Cairn Health, GrownBy, Kind-Ed, Pear Suite, Polco and We the Village

In addition, **Greens Health** remains in discussion with four pilot partners; **GrownBy**, two; **Healium**, two; **Kind-Ed**, three; **Kwema**, three; **Pear Suite**, one; **Polco**, one; **We the Village**, two; and **Welfie** has six potential partnerships still in the works.

"We've been honored to participate in the NXTSTAGE Community Health and Vibrancy Pilot Competition from its inception. Through this competition, we have been introduced to founders and platforms that we would never have had access to in our everyday work. Our collaborations have benefited thousands of Kansans across the state," said **Lisse Regehr**, President and CEO, **Thrive Allen County**.

Now in its fifth year, the NXTSTAGE Community Health & Vibrancy Competition has produced 53 finalists and catalyzed 55 local and statewide innovation projects. This year alone, the program attracted 143 applicants from 27 states and 15 countries.

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New this year, a Networked Community Solutions Grant supported the creation of video impact stories spotlighting the future-minded communities implementing startups' technology tools to improve their population health and community vibrancy. Initial videos debuted at the Innovation Showcase, helping celebrate innovators and embolden more Kansas leaders to become proving grounds for community health innovations.

"As the state's largest and only local health plan, we are proud of the ways we serve our local communities," said **Virginia Barnes**, BCBSKS Director of Blue Health Initiatives. "By investing in building connections between our community partners and startups from across the world, we are ensuring Kansans have early access to innovation to support healthy, vibrant communities."

The 2025 NXTSTAGE Community Health & Vibrancy finalists who pitched today include:

- **Cairn Health** (Wichita, KS): Cairn Health helps uninsured, low-income Kansans access vital prescriptions through a mail-order charitable pharmacy for a small, affordable dispensing fee.
- **Greens Health** (Houston, Texas): Greens Health helps Medicare seniors and caregivers manage blood sugar and pressure, medications, and meals with culturally tailored, convenient, holistic support.
- **GrownBy** (Cooperstown, NY): GrownBy is the farmer-owned marketplace for local food.
- **Healium XR** (Columbia, MO): Healium is relaxation for a new reality allowing you to SEE your feelings. The company's mental wellness software is popular in areas of stress.
- **Kind-Ed** (Chicago, IL.): KindEd is a social media and AI literacy provider. We use a behavior-focused approach to support healthy digital habits and youth wellness.
- **Kwema** (Saint Louis, MO): The Kwema Smart Badge Reel contains a hidden duress button that empowers community healthcare workers to discreetly call for help during workplace violence incidents.
- **PearSuite** (Tulsa, OK): Pear Suite empowers community health workers (CHWs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) through an AI-powered care navigation platform, a national provider network, and comprehensive managed services.
- **Polco** (Madison, WI): Polco helps local leaders understand community needs, design programs to address them, and secure funding with AI-powered grant management.
- **We the Village** (New York City): We The Village empowers families to better recover from addiction, together, with clinically proven online family programs and professional training.
- **Welfie** (San Diego, CA): Welfie is building AI patients to train the youth mental health workforce and create economic mobility for youth and underserved families.

In addition to presenting sponsorship from **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas**, the 2025 program is supported by the **Kansas Health Foundation**, the **Kansas Health Science University - Kansas College of Osteopathic Medicine**, **Hinkle Law Firm**, the **University of Kansas School of Medicine – Wichita Medical Practice Association**, and the **Greater Wichita Partnership's Opportunity Wichita** initiative.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.nxtus.io/nxtstage-community-health-and-vibrancy>

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About NXTUS:

[NXTUS, Inc](https://www.nxtus.io) helps entrepreneurs grow companies of significance. The organization works to connect startup founders with community resources, capital, and customers. NXTUS manages NXTSTAGE programs, which are aimed at connecting startups to mature businesses and regional partners looking to become customers for their innovations and to help accelerate the pace of innovation and startup growth in the region, as well as Accelerate Venture Partners, a fast-growing regional angel investor syndicate.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas

For more than 80 years, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas has built a reputation of trust with its members and contracting providers by providing outstanding customer service while quickly and accurately processing claims; fairly administering benefit plans and contracts; offering programs, services and tools to help members improve or maintain their health; and operating under the highest ethical standards while being good stewards of premium dollars. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association and is the state's largest insurer, serving all Kansas counties except Johnson and Wyandotte. For more information, visit [bcbsks.com](https://www.bcbsks.com).