

August 4-5, 2026
Lawrence, KS

Second Annual
**KANSAS
FOOD
BUSINESS
START-UP
SUMMIT**





Welcome to our Business Project Teams!

Shared Expectations

The greatest strength of this Summit is the people in the room. By approaching our time together with curiosity, generosity, and respect, we create an environment where everyone feels comfortable asking questions and sharing ideas. The following shared expectations help set the stage for a productive and rewarding experience for all.

1. **Collaboration Over Competition.** We are here to build community and strengthen Kansas' food ecosystem, not to compete.
2. **Respect Confidentiality.** Some ideas, stories, or business details shared may be proprietary or sensitive. Treat what you hear with discretion.
3. **Practice Active Listening.** Give others your full attention; avoid side conversations or distractions when someone is speaking.
4. **Share the Floor.** Contribute your voice, but also make space for others to participate.
5. **Assume Positive Intent, Acknowledge Impact.** Approach conversations with curiosity, openness, and respect. Strive for understanding and be open to feedback.
6. **Be Present.** Phones and laptops are fine for note-taking, but please limit multitasking so we can all get the most out of our time together.
7. **Support One Another.** Celebrate successes, share lessons learned, and offer encouragement — we rise together.
8. **Take Care of Yourself and Others.** Use breaks, ask questions, and let us know if you need support during the event.



**Get to know the
teams you'll be
working alongside!**



Rebekah Boline
Lemenet | Baldwin City

Lemenet crafts premium bottled lemonades and is growing from local events into retail markets across Kansas. At the Summit, the team will focus on building a sales strategy, hiring the right staff, and creating an efficient plan for statewide distribution.

Sandy Wendel -
Future Incubator Kitchen
& Market | Minneapolis

This team is planning a new shared-use commercial kitchen and local food marketplace in downtown Minneapolis, Kansas, designed to support food entrepreneurs and regional producers. They're seeking guidance on business planning, feasibility, funding, and the partnerships needed to launch a sustainable community resource.

Jake King - The Tee Box | Topeka

The Tee Box combines an indoor golf venue, restaurant, bar, catering company, and event business serving the Topeka area. Their Summit project centers on refining operations, strengthening financial sustainability, and preparing for long-term growth.

Bobby Santacrocce - Bobby's
Food Co | St. Marys

Bobby's Food Co. operates a restaurant, food truck, catering business, and school meal program, and is entering its next stage of growth. The team will be working on systems, financing, technology, and operational strategies that support successful scaling.

Maria Del Rocio Perez -
Tony's Tropical Treats LLC. |
Overland Park

Tony's Tropical Treats is a startup beverage business specializing in fresh, cold-pressed juices. As the business prepares to enter farmers markets and expand into handcrafted popsicles, they are seeking guidance on launching, growing, and building a strong foundation for long-term success.

Karen Bottary - BPM
Farms | Leavenworth

BPM Farms grows hydroponic culinary herbs for local markets and restaurants. Their Summit focus is developing value-added freeze-dried herb products while improving packaging, labeling, and marketing.

Corinna West
USA Duck Team | Kansas City

USA Duck Team offers a diverse range of farm products including duck eggs, duck meat, baked goods, jams, and more. At the Summit, they'll work on becoming retail-ready through improved branding, packaging, food safety planning, and distribution.

Kate Stucky
The Cheney Market | Cheney

The Cheney Market is renovating a historic neighborhood grocery store to better serve its rural community. Summit conversations will help the team navigate startup operations, retail best practices, food safety, and insurance considerations.

Eric Beachy - Helmuth County
Bakery | Hutchinson

Helmuth Country Bakery is an established bakery looking toward its next chapter of growth. The team is interested in strengthening marketing, improving distribution, and learning from fellow entrepreneurs and industry experts.

Anita Clubine - Rocky Top Meats
| Havana

Rocky Top Meats has built a strong customer base through farmers markets, selling locally raised meats and grains. At the Summit, the business will explore financing and product development opportunities to introduce new value-added offerings.

Rebecca Clark - Fern Full Circle
Market | Lenexa

Fern Full Circle Market is developing a farm stop that connects consumers with local farmers, ranchers, and food producers. Their Summit project focuses on branding, business planning, and building a strong operational foundation before opening.

Melissa Garrett - Douglas
County CORE | Lawrence

Douglas County CORE supports entrepreneurs through community markets, business development, and collaborative economic development initiatives. The organization is attending to strengthen its understanding of Kansas' food business ecosystem and build stronger referral pathways for local food entrepreneurs.

Allyssa Foster - The Pretzelly
Truck | Bladwin City

Pretzelly is a gourmet soft pretzel truck specializing in festivals, community events, private catering, and corporate gatherings. After building a brand and loyal following, the business is now expanding into its first brick-and-mortar location while developing the systems, production capacity, and legal framework needed to support long-term growth.

Keith Vacha - Transition Plus
Association | Summerfield

Transition Plus Association's Better Produce program grows specialty crops year-round through controlled environment agriculture using aeroponic towers and a greenhouse in Summerfield, Kansas. At the Summit, the team is focusing on the operational systems and business strategies needed to support long-term growth.

Tuesday, August 4

8:00-9:00 a.m. | Check-In

Arrive, pick up your materials, enjoy coffee, and get settled before the Summit begins.

9:00-11:00 a.m. | Summit Kick-Off

Meet your fellow entrepreneurs, facilitators, and project teams while exploring opportunities for business growth and setting goals for the two days ahead.

11:00-11:45 a.m. | Opening Keynote: Cathy Terrell, Mama T's Jams & Jellies

Hear Cathy's inspiring entrepreneurial journey and how last year's Summit helped accelerate her growth. She'll share lessons on innovation, embracing opportunity, and making the most of your Summit experience.

12:00-1:00 p.m. | Lunch

Enjoy lunch while continuing conversations with fellow participants.

1:00-4:00 p.m. | Project Team Work Session

Meet with your facilitator, refine your business priorities, and prepare for tomorrow's Key Informant consultations. (Hotel guest room check-in begins at 4:00 p.m.)

4:45 p.m. | Depart for Culinary Commons Tour

Meet in the hotel lobby before traveling together to the Douglas County Culinary Commons Shared Kitchen.

5:15 p.m. | Tour: Douglas County Culinary Commons Shared Kitchen

Explore one of Kansas' shared-use commercial kitchens and learn how it supports food entrepreneurs in launching and growing their businesses.

6:30 p.m. | Dinner at Free State Brewing Company

Enjoy dinner with fellow participants and hear a special "mini keynote" from owner Chuck Magerl on entrepreneurship, community, and building a lasting local business.

8:00-11:00 p.m. | Open Project Work Time

Continue collaborating with your project team or connect informally with fellow entrepreneurs.

Keynote Cathy Terrell Mama T's Jams and Jellies, Founder

Cathy "Mama T" Terrell is the founder of Mama T Jams & Jellies, an award-winning specialty food business built on family recipes and entrepreneurial spirit. A former educator and 2025 Food Business Start-Up Summit participant, she inspires others through her innovative business, youth entrepreneurship programs, and passion for helping food businesses grow.



Wednesday, August 5

6:00–8:45 a.m. | Breakfast

Enjoy the breakfast buffet in the hotel restaurant before the day's activities begin.

9:00 a.m. | Welcome & Key Informant Introductions

Meet the experts who will help you tackle your business challenges during today's consultation sessions.

9:15 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Key Informant Speed Consultations

Rotate through focused, 15-minute conversations with business advisors and subject matter experts tailored to your goals.

12:00–1:00 p.m. | Lunch

Recharge and continue conversations with fellow entrepreneurs and Key Informants.

1:00–2:00 p.m. | Key Informant Speed Consultations

Continue meeting with advisors to refine strategies and identify your next steps.

2:00–3:00 p.m. | Team Reflection & Action Planning

Work with your facilitator to synthesize what you've learned, prioritize next steps, and develop an action plan. Key Informants will remain available through 3:00 p.m. for follow-up conversations as schedules allow.

3:00–3:45 p.m. | Business Team Share-Outs

Celebrate breakthrough moments, share key takeaways, and learn from the experiences of fellow entrepreneurs.

3:45–4:30 p.m. | Closing Keynote: Cami SanRomani, Cami's Cake Co.

Discover how one rural entrepreneur built a growing brand through resilience, creativity, and community. Cami will share lessons on embracing failure, pursuing ambitious goals, and recognizing the unique advantages of doing business in rural Kansas.

4:30 p.m. | Closing Reflections & Next Steps

Reflect on your Summit experience, celebrate your progress, and learn about resources and support available after the Summit.



Cami SanRomani
Cami's Cake Co., Founder

Cami SanRomani is the founder of Cami's Cake Co. - a rural entrepreneur who has built a growing brand from her small Kansas community. Through resilience, creativity, and grassroots marketing, she encourages others to pursue big dreams, embrace failure as part of the journey, and recognize the unique opportunities small rural communities provide.

Keynote

Facilitators

Lori Trojan, *Wild Ivy Herb Farm, LLC*

Lori Trojan is a Master Herbalist, Master Gardener, Author, Life-long Entrepreneur, Educator and Farmer. She is the steward and owner of Wild Ivy Herb Farm where she grows over 80 varieties of kitchen and medicinal herbs plus an elderberry orchard. From the harvest, she produces 65 hand-crafted herbal products available through numerous sales outlets.



Nicole Rials, *K.N. Rials Therapy and Consulting*

Nicole Rials is a Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker and Certified Leadership Coach with over 25 years dedicated to mental health, community service, and social advocacy. She founded LRM Foundation in 2007, and K.N. Rials Therapy and Consulting in 2021. Her expertise extends to professional and organizational growth, strategic development, equity-focused policy analysis, trauma management within organizational contexts, and critical incident response for First Responders. Nicole's guiding principles include Courage, Integrity, Trust, Loyalty, and Excellence!



Jessica Pauly, *Omni Circle Group*

Dr. Jessica Pauly (PhD, Organizational Communication) is Economic Development Director at Omni Circle. Jessica supports early-stage entrepreneurs in identify and connecting with the resources they need to build and grow their business. She's a community builder, educator, and author, with expertise in helping individuals and organizations navigate complex communication challenges.



Kelli Hansen, *Kansas Department of Commerce, Office of Rural Prosperity*

Kelli Hansen brings over 25 years of experience in rural development, including entrepreneurship, finance, grant writing, civic service, and strategic planning. A former Mayor in her hometown of Plainville, she prides herself on relationship building. She led the redevelopment of 20+ historic properties in Downtown Hays and Plainville, including Gella's Diner & Lb. Brewing Co., overseeing its operations for the first 15 years. Currently, she works for the Office of Rural Prosperity, advocating for rural communities and connecting them with resources to support economic growth and community development across Kansas. She has a focus on local food access and food businesses.



Key Informants

*Note: Participants marked with an * will be available on Zoom*

Dacia Clark is the Regional Director of the Pittsburg State University Small Business Development Center. With nearly a decade of experience advising small businesses, she helps entrepreneurs start, grow, and strengthen their businesses through strategic advising, financial guidance, and community partnerships

- How to start a business - LLC, EIN, KS Retailer Sales Tax
- Quickbooks/other bookkeeping systems
- Cash Flow Projections/Business Plan
- Other loan options - Grow Kansas/E-Community, SEK Prosperity Foundation, SEK Regional Planning Commission



Marc Howell has nearly 20 years' experience in banking. This includes branch management, retail lending, business development and commercial lending. He engages with business owners, bankers and partner organizations to grow entrepreneurship. Marc grew up in Kansas and has a long history of working with entrepreneurs to grow their businesses.

- Business Startup
- Business Lending - Expansion
- Commercial Real Estate



Julie Grabbe, trademark attorney, educator, & entrepreneur ally, helps businesses protect what makes them unique. With 20+ years of legal experience, she translates legalese into practical, engaging guidance. Creator of The Grabbe Snackdown, Julie delivers proactive, right-sized trademark & business strategies that empower entrepreneurs to build bulletproof brands with confidence.

- legal support, federal trademarks, contracts, and business entity formation.



Angie West is a registered nurse turned entrepreneur and ACC-accredited coach. In 2025, she founded Genuine Growth LLC to help leaders understand what their goals are and help them build lives that are actually sustainable. She brings firsthand experience, starting from scratch, the risk, the pivots, and the systems thinking it takes to keep going.

- Leadership clarity and decision-making
- Goal-setting and vision alignment
- Sustainable growth without burnout



Key Informants

*Note: Participants marked with an * will be available on Zoom*



Mark Rider is Founder & CEO of ScalePoint CPG, a retail sales and brand advisory firm based in St. Louis. With 20+ years of grocery industry experience — from entry-level retail roles to VP of Sales — he helps emerging food, beverage, and wellness brands secure retail placements and build toward national distribution.

- Retail buyer relationships and store placement
- Sales execution and distribution strategy
- Pricing and margin structuring across retail, specialty, and foodservice channels



Gabe Muñoz is the Founder and Executive Director of The Toolbox: Small Business Resource Center., a Kansas City, Kansas nonprofit that helps entrepreneurs start, operate, and grow businesses through coaching, education, and access to resources. He has more than 18 years of experience supporting small business owners.

- Permits & Licenses
- Business Planning
- General Business/Start-Up



Daniel Hipsher has been in the food industry including restaurants, manufacturing, distribution, and consulting for over 30 years. He is the owner and founder of both Daniel's Bar-B-Q Sauces and Midwest Specialty Foods.

- Manufacturing
- Distribution
- Compliance
- Development



Mindy Lee is the State Marketing Manager for the Kansas Small Business Development Center. Her specialties include marketing, social media, basic website development, copy editing, and market research.

- Online Marketing
- Social Media
- Website/SEO

Key Informants

*Note: Participants marked with an * will be available on Zoom*

Mark Meier has been a Food, Drug & Lodging Surveyor with the State of Kansas for five years, specializing in Manufactured Foods and Produce Farm Inspections. He has experience in conducting Hazard Analyses and inspecting under State/Federal jurisdictions, focusing on performing Limited Scope and Preventive Controls inspections for FDA within Kansas.



- Licensing their food business with the State of Kansas
- Food Safety & Current Good Manufacturing Practices
- Information around State and Federal regulations and inspections of food facilities and produce farms

Chris Kollman brings more than 40 years of banking experience, including extensive work with startups, agricultural businesses, and rural entrepreneurs. Now an associate broker with Foundations Commercial Real Estate, he helps businesses navigate financing, lending readiness, and real estate considerations.



- Financing & lending readiness
- Business growth & startup support
- Commercial real estate considerations

Marsha Toler, founder of Marsha Toler Grant Writing Services, LLC, helps nonprofits secure vital funding through expert proposal research and submission. Backed by 25 years in municipal government, her business has won over \$500,000 since beginning in 2023. Marsha enjoys reading mysteries and cheering at her grandkids' sports events.



- Finding funders
- Funder mission alignment
- Achieving grant readiness

Michael Odupitan is Chief Executive Officer of OmniCircle Group in Topeka, KS, where he also leads their economic development work. With a background in program implementation and a passion for strengthening communities, he is excited to support the Summit by consulting on advancing entrepreneurship, innovation, and community resilience.



- Financial planning, budgeting, and cash flow
- Business growth & startup support
- Community connections & professional development via Omni Circle

Key Informants

*Note: Participants marked with an * will be available on Zoom*



Margit Kaltenecker is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent for Douglas County Extension, where she supports specialty crop, livestock, and row crop producers through whole-farm management strategies that improve soil health, productivity, and profitability.

- Regenerative whole-farm systems
- Soil health and nutrient management
- Specialty crop production



Claire Sinovic is Co-Executive Director and co-founder of The Food Circle. She partners with farmers and local food businesses to increase visibility, build connections and grow local food markets through education, promotion and community collaboration.

- Local food marketing via The Food Circle
- Growing customer base
- Building partnerships and community connections



Troy Smith* is Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Food Liability Insurance Program (FLIP), a leading provider of insurance designed specifically for food and beverage businesses. He works with entrepreneurs, organizations, and business support networks nationwide to help food businesses better understand risk management, liability, and insurance.

- Business liability & Hold Harmless Agreements
- Additional insureds
- Securing insurance that fits your operation



Caroline Lewis* is the founder of The Farmer's Feed and host of the Raising the Barn podcast. A marketing strategist and speaker, she helps farmers and food entrepreneurs grow through storytelling, digital marketing, and consumer engagement. She is passionate about strengthening local food systems by connecting communities with the people behind their food.

- Growing through social media, storytelling, and digital marketing
- Developing or expanding agritourism and on-farm experiences
- Finding creative ways to attract local customers and build community partnerships

Key Informants

*Note: Participants marked with an * will be available on Zoom*

Dr. Shivaprasad Doddabematti Prakash (Shiva) is an Assistant Professor and Food Safety Processing Extension Specialist with the Kansas Value-Added Foods Lab. He works with food businesses to navigate food safety requirements and connect them with the Lab's product evaluation, process authority, and technical assistance services.

- When and how to work with the Kansas Value-Added Foods Lab
- Food safety, shelf stability & process authority
- Product development & commercialization support



Kristina Edwards, MBA, is a Regional Director who has spent nearly a decade helping small businesses start and grow. She prioritizes trust through listening, sharing proven business strategy in an accessible manner, and ensuring entrepreneurs are connected to the right information, education and resources that strengthen businesses and communities.

- Business planning and growth strategies.
- Marketing, branding, and online presence.
- Financial planning, budgeting, and cash flow.



Robin Dolby brings a lifelong connection to Kansas agriculture and experience supporting agricultural businesses through marketing, lending, and business development. As part of the Kansas Department of Agriculture's From the Land of Kansas program, she helps value-added businesses build their brands, connect with customers, and access resources to grow.

- From the Land of Kansas program & certification
- Retail readiness (UPC barcodes, etc.)
- Customer connections & market opportunities



Karissa Kary is a food systems entrepreneur, connector, and enthusiastic champion of local food. She founded Ozarks Farm Stop and now helps food businesses grow through the Heartland Food Business Coalition, believing the best communities are built one farmer, one entrepreneur, and one meal at a time.

- Market access, retail strategy, and customer development
- All things related to farm stands
- New Growth's Harvest to Market Grant





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