

EMPLOYER/FOUNDATION -SPONSORSHIP OF ROZ APPLICANTS
Information

The Kansas Department of Commerce (KDC) encourages Rural Opportunity Zone (ROZ) counties to partner with local employers and foundations to sponsor individual ROZ applicants. Employers may sponsor their employees if the employee meets the ROZ qualifications. Foundations may sponsor participants who meet the foundation's criteria as well as the ROZ qualifications. This means employers and foundations would provide the necessary ROZ funding for the participant they are sponsoring. Sponsored ROZ participants are not subject to the "first-come, first-serve" rule that is applied to the general applicant pool.

Requirements for Employer/Foundation Sponsorship:

1. A ROZ county submit a ROZ resolution to the KDC no later than January 31 of the calendar year the ROZ eligible partner wishes to sponsor a participant. Note: for CY-2021 this date had been extended to June 30, 2021.
2. A sponsoring partner must submit a completed "Rural Opportunity Zone – Sponsorship Confirmation Form" to the KDC at www.kansascommerce.gov/roz
3. A sponsoring partner must agree, as part of the sponsorship, to pay the annual matching payment for the participant for the full 5 years or for as long as the individual remains eligible for ROZ benefits in the county.
4. A sponsoring partner must submit a funding match for the participant each year no later than September 30. Payment can be submitted via electronic transfer here:
<https://otc.cdc.nicusa.com/Public2.aspx?portal=Kansas&organization=Kansas%20Department%20of%20Commerce%20-%20ROZ%20Sponsor%20Contribution>

FAQs

1. **What is the sponsorship term once the sponsorship confirmation form is completed for the participant?**
 - a. Employer sponsorships run for 5 years, subject to ROZ recipient meeting ROZ eligibility requirement. Sponsorships will not exceed 5 years. Sponsorship funding is no greater than \$1,500 a year per participant.
2. **If an employee quits or is terminated from employment, is the employer still responsible to cover the ROZ sponsorship of the terminated employee?**
 - a. Employers are not required to continue paying the ROZ matching payment for an employee that is terminated from employment with the company.
3. **What happens if a participant moves counties?**
 - a. Unlike county and city sponsorships, if the participant is employer or foundation sponsored and the employee moves to a new or different ROZ county before they have been in the program the full 5 years, the employer or foundation may still fund the participant in the program so as long as they are still employed or still meet the foundation requirement for sponsorship.
 - b. If the employee moves to a non-ROZ county, they will be disqualified no matter the sponsorship level.

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4. **What does the employer or foundation do if a sponsored participant is no longer employed or meets the requirements for sponsorship?**
 - a. Employers and foundations must notify the KDC of change in participant employment and qualification status before September 1 each calendar year. If timely notification is not given, the sponsored participant will receive ROZ distribution for that calendar year and the sponsor will be required to submit matching funds for the participant.
5. **What if the employer or foundation is not located in the ROZ County but the participant lives in ROZ county? (Remote work/ Telecommute/ Lives one county over)**
 - a. Employers and foundations are not required to be in the same county as the sponsored participant. The participant is the only one required to be domiciled in a ROZ county. The participant can work in any county or be remotely employed by an entity. Participant eligibility in ROZ is based upon where you live and not where you work.
6. **How do employer or foundation sponsorships work?**
 - a. Sponsoring partner must submit a completed “Rural Opportunity Zone – Sponsorship Conformation Form” to the KDC for each individual they wish to sponsor at www.kansascommerce.com/roz.
 - b. If employee terminates employment, the sponsor must inform KDC by September 30 to terminate Employee Sponsorship Agreement and not be held liable for program match.
7. **Can the sponsorship be an amount less than \$1,500? For example, if the employer wants to do \$500, would the state then do \$500? Or, must it be \$1,500?**
 - a. The sponsorship match is determined based upon the approved participant’s student loan debt. If the applicant is eligible for \$3,000 a year, then the sponsor match is \$1,500 a year. A sponsor cannot opt to only cover a portion of the eligible match.
8. **My question about the lower student loan assistance amount is based more on the employer’s willingness to pay versus what the person may be eligible for based on the 20% max rule. So, if they want to do less than the \$1,500 can they do less and still have it matched?**
 - a. No
9. **Can a school board/district be a sponsor?**
 - a. Yes, they can be an employer sponsor.
10. **Does an employer sponsor have to be a Kansas business?**
 - a. No, employer sponsors can be based anywhere. This allows companies who promote Telework or that may be headquartered in another state to allow their employees to live in Kansas.
 - b. The employer does not have to be in a ROZ county.
11. **As a new ROZ county, we have a group of employers that are interested in sponsoring a participant. Is there someone at the KDC available for a local meeting?**
 - a. Yes. If new or old counties are in need a program overview or refresher, we are happy to meet locally to discuss ROZ and any scenarios your county may have for participation options.
12. **Our company also participates in another student tuition/loan assistance program, can our employees do both?**
 - a. ROZ does not disqualify an applicant just because they are already receiving assistance, however, other assistance programs may have eligibility requirements that participants

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need to be aware of when applying for ROZ. Employers and participants should check all program requirements.

13. **Can a participant have more than one sponsor? For example, if both a business and school district participate in ROZ, can both fund a participant?**
 - a. Only one sponsor will be held liable to KDC for funding a participant. The KDC will only invoice and report to one sponsor.
14. **If a person wants to apply for the program being offered by the city or county, do they do this directly to commerce online?**
 - a. Please go to www.kansascommerce.gov/roz to apply. Applications are received directly by the KDC ROZ staff for processing. The sponsor will be informed if an applicant applies and the determination of the application. It is very important that there is one designated ROZ contact for the sponsor.