



IMPACT REPORT

KANSAS AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LEADERSHIP, INC.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear KARL Friends and Fellows,

As we mark the 35th anniversary of the KARL program, we celebrate the profound impact it has had on individuals, Kansas communities, and the agriculture industry. For decades, we've known—intuitively and through countless stories—just how transformative KARL is. Yet, we felt it was time to move beyond anecdotes and take a deeper, more detailed look at the true scope of the impact of KARL.

Our Board of Directors commissioned a comprehensive impact study, bringing in a third party to lead this effort. This independent group conducted a survey of our Fellows and Friends and held in-depth interviews with leaders close to the program. The result of their work is this report—a reflection on the reach, influence, and long-term value of the program.

The findings confirm what we have long believed: the program attracts talented leaders with a spark. The KARL program adds to the existing interests and passions of participants, taking the spark and growing it into a powerful flame. This transformation happens by:

- Expanding networks and opening doors to meaningful connections
- Developing vital leadership skills that shape futures
- Deepening participants' understanding of agriculture, community needs, and rural issues

But the impact doesn't end there. Our participants carry this knowledge and energy forward, becoming catalysts in their communities, Kansas, and beyond. They are not only more involved in their communities, but also actively contribute to helping their communities grow and thrive.

As we look ahead, the future of KARL is bright. We remain committed to delivering high-quality, relevant programming that continues to attract the best and brightest. Together, we will invest in the leaders who build a stronger Kansas, foster vibrant rural communities, and champion the future of agriculture.

Thank you for your continued belief in and support of our mission.

Sincerely,

Jill Zimmerman
President
Class V



MISSION:

KARL identifies, prepares, and connects aspiring leaders to spark action that will positively impact Kansas agriculture and rural communities.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to our Impact Report sponsors.



MEASURING THE IMPACT

This report offers a comprehensive reflection on the reach, influence, and lasting value of KARL. To capture the true scope of this impact, Friends and Fellows were surveyed and 29 in-depth interviews were conducted. The result is a powerful collection of data and stories that demonstrates how the program not only shapes leaders but also drives growth in communities and the broader agriculture sector. Through these insights, the enduring legacy and far-reaching effects of KARL are highlighted.

To experience more stories of impact:



**OVER 450
KARL FELLOWS**



KARL Class I, 1991-1993

IMPACT STUDY FACTS

154
SURVEY
RESPONDENTS

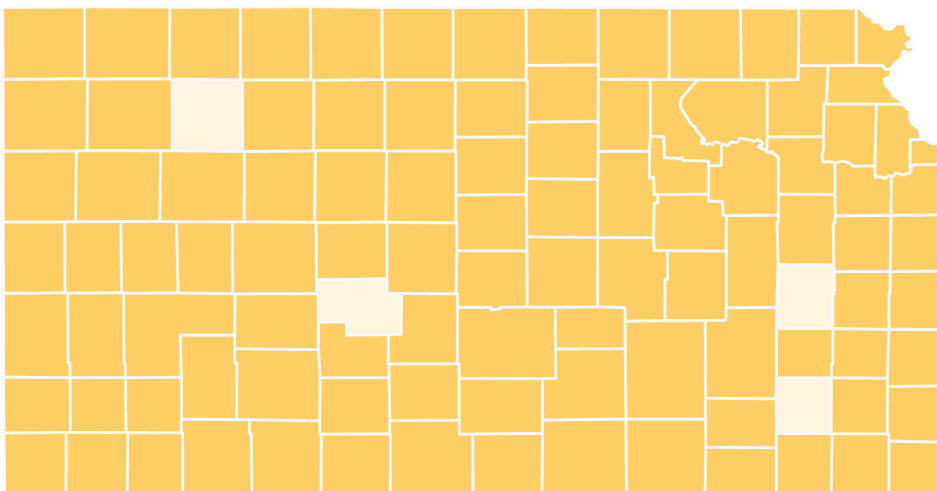
29
INTERVIEW
PARTICIPANTS

SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

- **100%** class representation (every class had at least one respondent)
- **77%** identified as living in a rural area
- **81%** were Fellows
- **25%** were current or past volunteer leaders on the Board of Directors

DEFINITIONS

- **Fellow:** alumni of the program
- **Friend:** volunteer, donor, sponsor, program speaker
- **Associate:** current participant



KARL Fellows have represented 101 of 105 Kansas counties.

PROGRAM EVOLUTION

A seed was planted. In the **early 1980s**, many states were participating in a national leadership development model sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation. A small, dedicated group of Kansans began asking a critical question: How could we bring something similar to our state?

Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Sam Brownback and Dr. Barry Flinchbaugh, a prominent figure in K-State's Extension Agricultural Economics Department, became key sounding boards for those exploring the idea. By **1985**, the first county-wide program, focused on agricultural leadership, was successfully piloted in Douglas County — proving that Kansas was ready for something bigger.

With momentum building, Dr. Marc Johnson, then Head of K-State's Ag Economics Department, organized a program feasibility meeting, where farm group leaders enthusiastically endorsed the concept. A steering committee was elected, and by **October 1989**, the first board of directors was formed. Just two years later, in **October 1991**, Class I was launched.

Fast forward 35 years, and the program has continued to grow and evolve, with **June 2024** marking the induction of the seventeenth class. To date, over 450 leaders across Kansas have participated in KARL, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to shape the future of agriculture and rural communities in the state.

"I had heard about the program and thought it had potential. Dr. Flinchbaugh's involvement was a motivator. I knew others interviewing and was fortunate to be accepted. Originally, the intention was to help develop and train leaders in Kansas to be part of the state and its organizations in some way. That intention has come to fruition. Since my class experience, I have been involved in hiring leadership, served on the board and various committees, and helped start the original Fellows program. KARL was the best experience I have ever had."



JERRY McREYNOLDS

Class I

Self-employed production agriculture



Class I International Study - Germany, Poland and Czech Republic, 1993

"Leadership needs two things – civility and compromise. Compromise is a dirty word. The word compromise is the only way we can live together in the modern world. But it takes a real leader to compromise."

*– Dr. Barry Flinchbaugh
KARL program legacy leader*

In 2020, KARL introduced a revised mission and brand, including a new logo and website.



The KARL Program logo since 2020



KARL's first logo



The logo progressed with time

CURRICULUM PILLARS

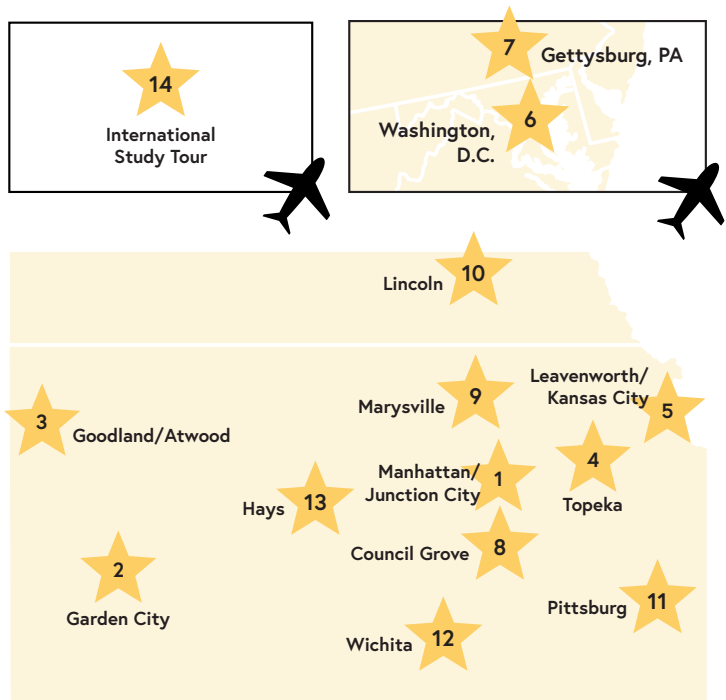
**PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

AGRICULTURE

**KANSAS &
COMMUNITY
NEEDS**

THE CLASS EXPERIENCE

KARL participants are already established leaders who are selected through a rigorous application and interview process. As Fellows reflect on their time in KARL, they report that it is not only the immersive and relevant curriculum - it is also the quality of the people they experience it with – that makes the experience valuable. KARL Friends, Fellows, Staff, and the volunteer Board of Directors, work to create an environment where leaders can grow alongside peers who challenge and inspire them. This collaborative, hands-on approach allows participants to deepen their leadership skills and forge connections that extend far beyond the program itself.



SEMINARS		
YEAR ONE:	1 Genesis	
	2 Economic Development	
	3 Innovation & Technology	
	4 State of the State	
	5 Conflict Management – Tools for Peace	
6/7	National Issues, Service & Leadership	
YEAR TWO:	8 Genesis 2.0	
	9/10 Domestic Study Tour	
	11 Navigating Change	
	12 Economics of Kansas/Global Leadership	
	13 Energy, Water & Natural Resources	
	14	International Study Tour (locations shown at right)

INTERNATIONAL STUDY TOUR LOCATIONS

INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE:

- **Class I** – Germany, Poland & Czech Republic (1993)
- **Class II** – Belgium, France & England (1995)
- **Class III** – Peoples Republic of China (1997)
- **Class IV** – Chile & Argentina (1999)
- **Class V** – Australia & New Zealand (2001)
- **Class VI** – Mexico and Costa Rica (2003)
- **Class VII** – Brazil (2005)
- **Class VIII** – Ghana, West Africa (2007)
- **Class IX** – India (2009)
- **Class X** – Vietnam (2011)
- **Class XI** – Peru (2013)
- **Class XII** – South Africa (2015)
- **Class XIII** – Chile (2017)
- **Class XIV** – Cuba (2019)
- **Class XV** – United Arab Emirates (2022)
- **Class XVI** – Spain (2024)

"KARL challenges you to adapt and change. It is broader than just Kansas as you travel to Washington D.C. and across the globe. We are provided a framework to think differently about communities and industries through several lenses – technology, business, social, philanthropic, health, education, and so much more."



LANCE WOODBURY
Class IV
Principal, Pinion



DANA WOODBURY
Class V
Executive Director, Barry Flinchbaugh Center for Ag and Food Policy

CULTIVATING LEADERS: EXPANDING NETWORKS, SKILLS AND FUTURES

The KARL program is designed to attract and cultivate exceptional leaders, equipping them with the skills and connections necessary to make a lasting impact on their communities, industries, and the state. Associates are immersed in a dynamic curriculum that **expands their networks, deepens their leadership abilities, and influences their careers and futures.** The program's seminars, experiences in communities, and interactions with industry leaders provide a foundation for expanding perspectives and new ways of thinking. Long-lasting connections are forged, and participants emerge with new stronger networks, additional capacity to lead, and a renewed commitment to making a difference. For some, this experience accelerates their career trajectories, while for others, it opens entirely new paths to leadership and service.

"KARL teaches humility and the importance of a team. The program helps us learn to diffuse situations and be better listeners. Before we make our opinion known, we listen. In Topeka, this skill has helped me communicate with those different than myself."

KEN RAHJES
Class III

State Representative,
District 110 & President,
Authentic Ag, Inc.



"I have done many media interviews. KARL taught me how to work with the media – showing me how to get my point across and then be quiet. **It was such useful training that I still use today.**"



MIKE MCCLELLAN
Class IV
Self-employed farmer



"KARL encourages you to get outside your bubble. My experience changed my path in life. Through KARL, I began learning about business structures and now had the business exposure to ask myself some tough questions and to think outside the box. Rather than rely on just our generational family business, my husband and I started our own business. **It was a time in my life full of new thinking, new approaches, and growth. You can't be afraid of change.**"

SARA DAWSON
Class XII

Rancher and
Business Owner



Dr. Barry Flinchbaugh with KARL Class XV, Leavenworth, February 2020. Dr. Flinchbaugh shared his now-famous "Kings and Kingmakers" presentation with each class until his passing in November 2020.

"I have called several classmates about business or inquiring about other folks they may know – maybe I'm interviewing a candidate from their area or doing business with someone they may know."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow



KARL's first Board of Directors, 1989

"KARL gave me a support system. I reflected with fellow KARL Associates regarding my career. Before leaving for the South Africa International Seminar, I had a call with a potential new employer. We were in Johannesburg when I got the call for the interview. My KARL classmates helped me a great deal with my career decision and deciding what was best for my future. I have since been able to give back to KARL by serving on the Board of Directors and bringing my marketing experience to push for the new branding, logo, and feel that KARL uses today."



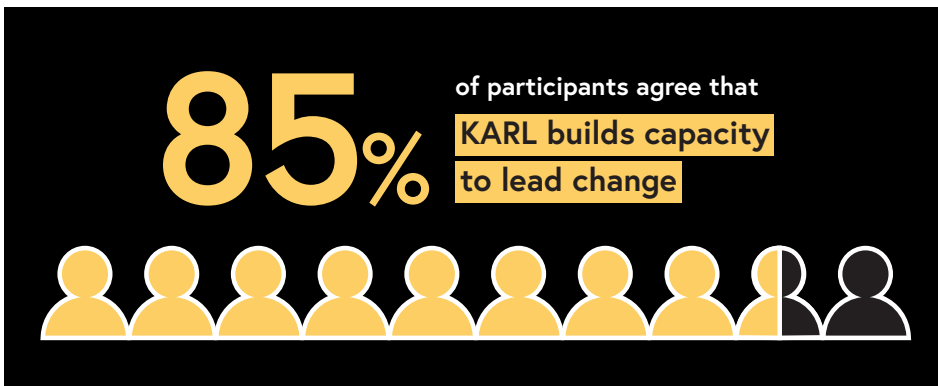
SARAH FARLEE

Class XII

Communications Manager
FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

"KARL has empowered me to believe that I do have a place in any room that I walk into and that if an opportunity presents itself, I have no business second guessing whether or not I should consider it."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow

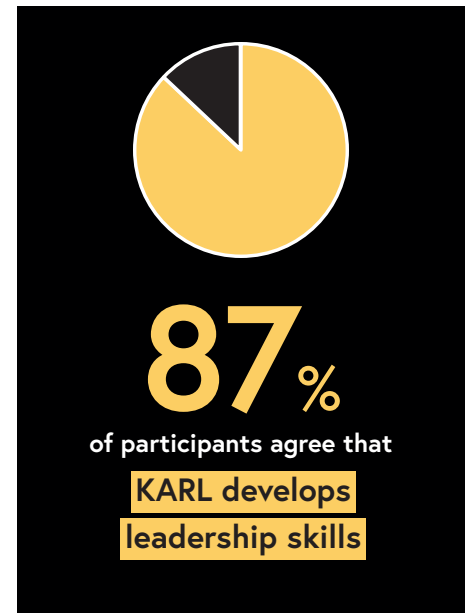


"KARL improved my confidence in speaking up and encouraging others. It helped my involvement within my farming community and outside of the community I live. I have been on local, regional and state boards including commodity boards and the Kansas State Fair Board."

JEFF DEEDS

Class III

Self-employed
production agriculture



"One of the things we don't talk about enough is how KARL impacts women. In my class there were 6. In the most recent class, there were 16. We are starting to be seen as leaders in the industry – I'm proud to be part of that group of women who sees the impact and promotes it. KARL is empowering and recognizing women."

NANCY HONIG

Class VI

Adult Development & Aging/Youth Development
K-State Research & Extension



KARL INSTILLS AGRICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

It is imperative that the leaders of today and tomorrow understand food and agriculture. Through KARL programming and events, Associates are exposed to agriculture and its numerous sectors across Kansas and the world. KARL instills a heightened awareness and appreciation for the most prominent industry in Kansas.

"My international seminar with KARL took us to Ghana, and this was an experience outside of my comfort zone. That trip has helped me later in my career as I have had the chance to experience trade team visits to other international locations. I appreciate being able to see similarities between regions."



GARY MILLERSHASKI
Class VIII
Self-employed,
Millershaski Farms

"Through the connections and experiences with KARL, in 2018, Ashland Jr.-Sr. High School launched its first Ag Education Program and FFA Chapter. **KARL has directly impacted my life and decision-making in my profession**, which has now positively impacted every student who walks through Ashland Public Schools."



JAMIE WETIG
Class XIV
Asst. Principal
Wichita Southeast
High School

"KARL began at a time of generational change in Kansas agriculture. Without the program, I believe Kansas would not be the global leader in agriculture and many communities would be in peril."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow

"The relationship between Kansas Wheat organizations and KARL has a deep history. We have been able to partner with KARL through the Kansas Association of Wheat Grower's scholarship to help producer leaders develop leadership skills and connect to a strong network across Kansas. **KARL changes their perspective on agriculture in the state and broadens their understanding beyond wheat.** Roughly one-third of our board members are also KARL Fellows."

AARON HARRIES
Class XI
Vice President of
Research & Operations
Kansas Wheat



JUSTIN GILPIN
Friend of KARL
CEO
Kansas Wheat



"It allowed me to get out of the "bubble" of my farm and community, opening my eyes to the similar struggles that we as rural agriculturalists have in the USA and around the world."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow

"When dealing with challenges on my local community boards, I have gone back to content from KARL seminars. **They help you in skill development, decision making, consensus building, relationships, and interviews.** KARL may not have told me what to do, but it told me what not to do."



KENNETH WOOD
Class II
Retired producer



95%

of participants agree that

KARL increases knowledge of Kansas agriculture

KARL FELLOWS RISE TO INDUSTRY SERVICE

Many KARL Fellows have and continue to advance the agriculture industry. This list represents a selection of such state and national leadership roles.

Kansas Dairy Commission

- Dennis Metz, Class VI

Kansas Farm Bureau

- Steve Baccus, Class I
- Rich Felts, Class I

Kansas Grain Sorghum

- Adam York, Class XVI

Kansas Legislature

- Don Schroeder, Class I, House of Representatives
- Ken Rahjes, Class III, House of Representatives
- Susan Concannon, Class IX, House of Representatives
- Sean Gatewood, Class XV, House of Representatives

Kansas Livestock Association

- David Cross, Class I
- Mark Smith, Class I
- Larry Jones, Class II
- Mark Harms, Class IV
- Barb Downey, Class VIII

Kansas Soybean Association

- Scott Gigstad, Class IV

Kansas Soybean Commission

- Bob Haselwood, Class I

Kansas Water Authority

- Gary Harshberger, Class VII

Kansas Wheat Growers

- Jerry McReynolds, Class I
- John Thaemert, Class I
- Ken Wood, Class II
- Kendall Hodgson, Class IV
- Gary Millershashki, Class VIII
- Kyler Millershashki, Class XV

National Association of Wheat Growers

- John Thaemert*, Class I
- Jerry McReynolds, Class I
- Dana Peterson, Class VII

National Sorghum Producers

- Dan Atkisson, Class XI

No-Till on the Plains Chair

- Doug Palen, Class III
- Josh Lloyd, Class VII

United Sorghum Checkoff

- Kendall Hodgson, Class IV

United Soybean Board

- Bob Haselwood, Class I

US Wheat Associates

- Ron Suppes, Class IV
- Gary Millershashki, Class VIII

Other Agriculture Leaders

- Holly Martin, Class VI, Publisher of High Plains Journal
- Jill Zimmerman, Class V, KARL President
- Eric Atkinson, Class IV, Agriculture Today
- Jenny Latzke, Class X, KS Farmer Publisher
- Kelsey Olson, Kansas Department of Agriculture - Deputy Secretary
- Jennifer Wilson, K-State Extension Operations Leader

**First national commodity role for KARL graduate*

"KARL provides a more strategic view of business and agriculture. KARL exposes us to other sides of the conversation or another view - and as a result, you grow naturally and your strategic thinking elevates."



BOB CAMPBELL
Donor/Sponsor
Senior Vice President
Frontier Farm Credit

"Being able to see from an agricultural perspective, the bigger picture, has allowed me to be more progressive on my own farm, and has given me tools to communicate as an effective manager with my employees and partners. I have also been able to get involved in leadership roles, helping to develop policy that impacts agriculture and rural communities."

— Anonymous survey response, Fellow

"The confidence factor of KARL is monumental, especially for women. It gave me the confidence that I can lead and communicate to people to get the job done. There is a group of us women that still get together today to champion and cheer each other on through job changes, community projects, life changes, etc."

SIMONE ELDER

Class XIV

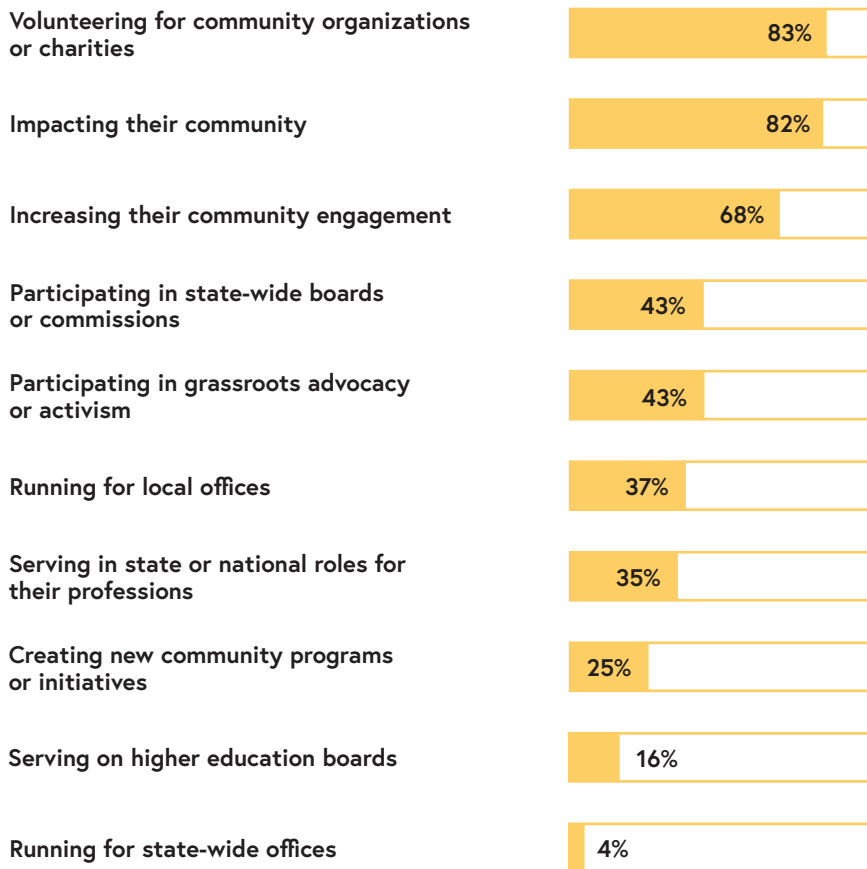
PowerUp and
Engagement Manager
Kansas Sampler Foundation



KARL FELLOWS IN ACTION

KARL Fellows are dedicated to making a difference, using their leadership skills and experiences to strengthen both their local communities and the state of Kansas. Equipped with the tools and knowledge to lead effectively, Fellows are empowered to tackle industry challenges, address community needs, and inspire meaningful change. Whether through civic engagement, leadership in agriculture, or service to rural communities, Fellows are catalysts for progress, shaping a brighter future for Kansas.

AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATING IN KARL, FELLOWS REPORTED:



"As I reflected on my personal goals, I realized I had a passion for public schools. My dad was a middle school teacher so education had always been part of my life. Out of one of the seminars, I set the goal to be elected to the school board. **My KARL experience gave me the legs to stand on** – as a result, I was appointed."



ANDY FAHRMEIER
Class XIII
Area Office Leader, Hutton

98%

of participants agree that
KARL increases
knowledge of issues
impacting rural Kansas
communities

"KARL connected me with the right people to preserve a culture and celebrate a way of life a lot of people care about. **I was motivated to start a leadership development program similar to KARL for people in my county.** Russell County Leadership was a direct result of my participation in KARL and several other community members seeing the value of such a program."

ANDREW OCHAMPAUGH
Class XV



Director of Operations & Technical Services, Agrilead

"I was accepted to KARL directly from being on the farm. After KARL, I became involved in state and local affairs. No question, I would not have ever gotten as involved at any level had it not been for KARL."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow

KARL FELLOWS INCREASE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

"When I think of KARL, I think of the word cohesion. I thought I understood Kansas, but I really didn't. Seeing someone like me and coming together with them to learn about goals and concerns resulted in a common consciousness about the state. Why is this part of Kansas doing this and not that? What makes KARL different is to then have a sounding board to talk about state-wide issues."



JESSE MCCURRY

Class X

Ag Brand Ambassador, Adams Brown

"The KARL seminars introduced me to smart, thoughtful people who had insight into why communities are the way they are. Additionally, KARL did an outstanding job of finding people who aren't afraid to ask the hard questions and want to know how to improve their community. Members in my class were dedicated to finding ways to make their community more welcoming through increased housing options in smaller towns, doing town beautification projects, and having the courage to branch out and start their own business."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow

"The state of Kansas is a better place because of KARL. We have had some amazing people do amazing things and KARL is part of who they are. It's all connected. One cannot underestimate KARL's value."



LUKE THORNTON

Class XI

Vice President of Operations, Harper Industries

"KARL empowered me to advocate for change. For example, Highway 156 is unsafe and has been for many years. I have provided testimony to the Legislature numerous times and have "rallied the troops" in Southwest Kansas. I doubt I ever would have taken the initiative without KARL. My efforts have finally proven successful as Highway 156 will be widened for enhanced safety this coming year. This is a HUGE win for our community and those who travel this highway."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow, Donor

"KARL led me to help lead a total revamp of our County Economic Development group. It also enabled me to be a better banker in helping start-up businesses in my community."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow



of participants agree that

KARL increases

community engagement

"I became an entrepreneur because of my KARL participation. My classmates really pushed me to start my own business and because of their support and the seminar learnings, I did. The seminars allowed me to build a solid business plan, learn how to budget, and make business adjustments to allow for expansion. After hearing from other entrepreneurs, I was able to overcome some of my fears. I still talk with many of my classmates. They offer advice and perspective – they encouraged me to hire my first employee and now I'm preparing to hire my second."

NATHAN MILLER

Class XVI

Owner-Independent

Crop Consultant

Deep Roots Consulting, LLC



GRASSROOTS SUPPORT FOR KARL

The impact of the KARL program over the past 35 years is a testament to the power of leadership, collaboration, and grassroots support. From the beginning, KARL's success has been driven by the dedication of Friends and Fellows who believe in the program's mission and generously contribute their time, energy, and resources. Their unwavering support has helped grow a network of over 450 leaders who are making meaningful changes across Kansas.

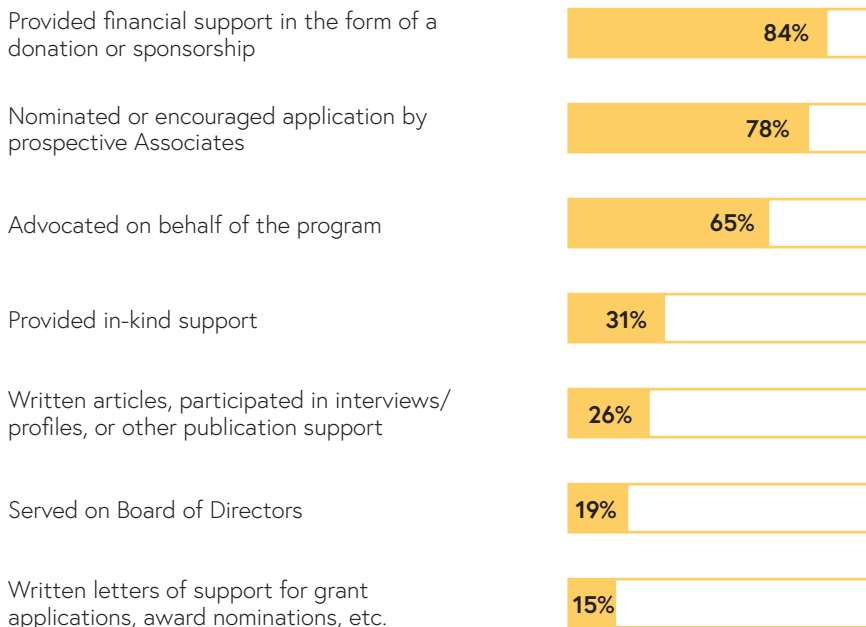
As the legacy is celebrated, KARL looks toward the future with optimism and determination. The strong foundation built together will continue to empower leaders for generations to come, ensuring a bright future for Kansas, its communities, and its agricultural industry.

"KARL has greatly benefited my company. Four of my employees have gone through the program and I hope many more. **Programs like KARL raise the next generation and assist in the formation of leaders.** KARL has really given feet to making rural Kansas a better place."



TIM PENNER
Donor/Sponsor
President
Harper Industries

Survey participants reported supporting KARL in the following ways:



74% of survey respondents have supported KARL for 10 or more years

"The value of your contribution is expanded because those benefiting from the program have the potential to impact many more."

– Anonymous survey response, Fellow

"I can't think of another organization like KARL. It is separate and apart from other groups – that is not easy to achieve. **You can't duplicate KARL – it has kept its worthiness and hasn't faded. KARL demonstrates a legacy.**"



TY BROOKOVER
Class X
Partner
Brookover Land Enterprises

CONNECT WITH KARL