



KENTUCKY
COMMERCIALIZATION
VENTURES

KCV EDGE Impact Report – Year 1

Laying the Foundation for
Future Impact

May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025

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KCV EDGE Year 1 Partners & Funders



KCV's Caroline Stivers and Kayla Meisner share EDGE insights at the LES Annual Meeting.

Laying the Foundation for Future Impact

In its first year, the Kentucky Commercialization Ventures EDGE initiative established the foundation for sustainable transformation in Kentucky's research infrastructure. Guided by institutional insight and regional needs, the initiative launched a collaborative, iterative process to build capacity, expand

resources, foster innovation and define systems for measurable long-term outcomes. Funded by the NSF GRANTED program and led by PI Kayla Meisner, KCV EDGE anchors its mission in access, cross-sector collaboration and translational research development.

KCV EDGE Key Goals

- Build a shared research infrastructure and support ecosystem
- Tailor solutions to partner institution needs
- Develop Kentucky's research leadership pipeline
- Strengthen cross-sector partnerships to scale innovation

We hit the ground running in Year 1 by expanding institutional and support teams, identifying gaps through a statewide needs assessment and leveraging nationwide professional development opportunities. And **we're just getting started**. With KCV EDGE, we're **transforming research infrastructure** in the commonwealth and beyond.

- Kayla Meisner, Executive Director
Kentucky Commercialization Ventures



These goals are designed to enhance the research capacity and competitiveness of emerging research institutions across Kentucky.

Year 1 Highlights

Impact Focus:

Increased institutional readiness, stronger professional networks and customized strategies for sustainable research growth.

The project focused on building capacity at three emerging research institutions – Kentucky State University (KSU), Morehead State University (MoSU) and Northern Kentucky University (NKU).

Key Milestones

- Conducted a Needs Assessment Survey engaging 150 faculty, administrators and leaders to explore institutional challenges and strengths
- Recruited and onboarded seven research support professionals across KCV and partner institutions and adapted to Champion (co-PI) transitions
- Participation in national conferences (AUTM, SSTI, NORDP)
- Subawards executed with KSU, MoSU, NKU within 90 days of award start date
- Offered professional development to build knowledge and capacity across stakeholders
- Addressed hiring barriers to modernize policies at one institution, improving talent recruitment

- KCV NSF GRANTED EDGE Awarded
- Partner Subaward Agreements Executed
- LEAP Consultant Agreement Executed
- Established regular meetings and centralized drive per the KCV EDGE Communication & Management Plan
- Added project overview to KCV's website for public visibility
- AUTM Central Meisner and Stivers Plenary Host

- NKU Research Operations Manager and Pre-Award Senior Administrator Hired
- KCV AD Research Enterprise Hired
- KSU Research Development Specialist Hired
- Build Needs Assessment

- 3686 Conference
- LES 24 – Meisner Panelist: Fostering Innovation Culture
- EPSCoR Presentation (Meisner)

Aug – Oct

2024

May – July

Nov – Jan

- KCV Grant Coordinator Hired
- Needs Assessment Launched 11/4/24
- Needs Assessment Results Analyzed & Shared with Partners – 30% Response Rate
- SSTI – Panel: Do Centralized Tech Transfer Offices Deliver Success? (Meisner Panelist, Hensley Attendee)
- SRAI Subrecipient Monitoring & Management Webinar (NKU Attendee)

Feb – April

- KCV Roadshow/Focus Group Sessions
- Annual Report to NSF
- AUTM Annual Meeting (Meisner, Stivers, Hensley, Stanley)
- NIH Flat Rate for Research Overhead Course (NKU Attendee)
- NSF Engines GAME Change Summit (Meisner)
- KY Innovator Challenge (Meisner & Hensley)
- UNITE Research Showcase (Hensley)
- NORDP Panel – The Role of Change Management in Building Community (Meisner Panelist, Hensley & Stanley Attendees)
- NCURA Region III Annual Meeting (MoSU Attendees)

Building a Partnership-Centered Model

KCV EDGE used stakeholder interviews and institutional analysis to co-develop a partnership-centered model anchored in flexibility and responsiveness to institutional context.

Model Features

- Institutional subawards tied to staffing priorities
- Centralized technical assistance in grants, compliance and communications (beginning Year 2)
- Support for conference travel and leadership development

High-Impact Services Identified by Partner Institutions

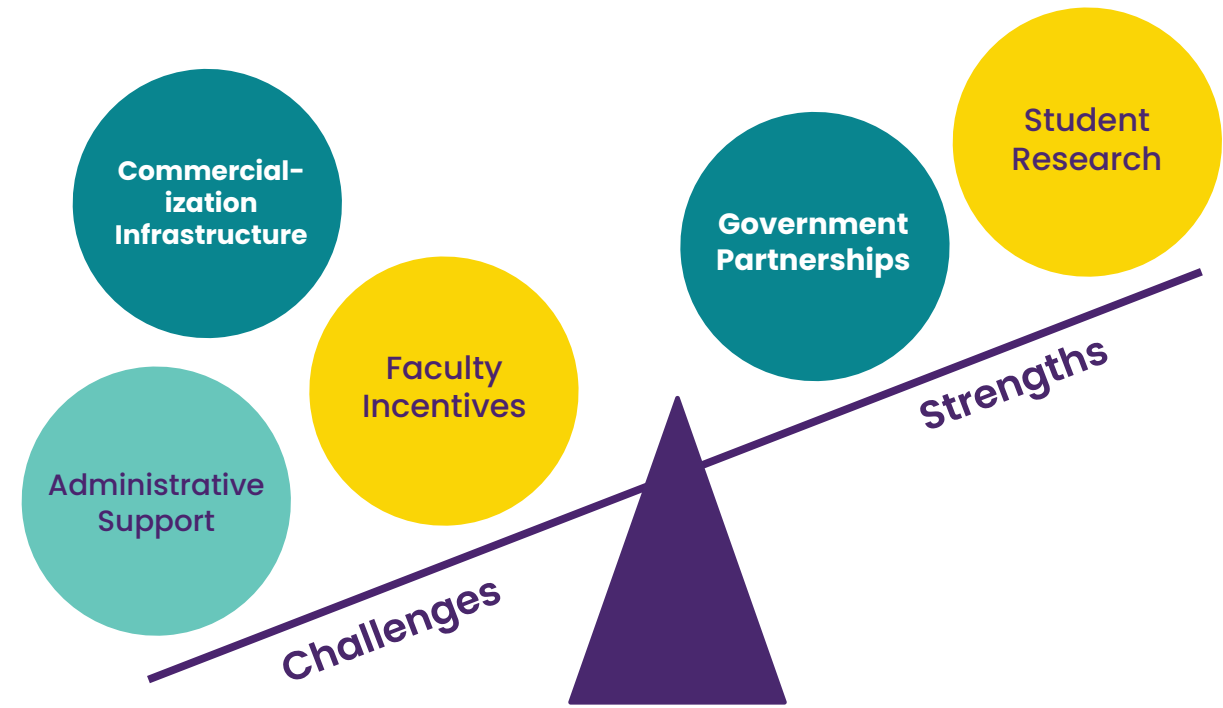
- Strategic staffing support (e.g., hiring research administrators)
- Funding for staff to attend professional development events (UIDP, SRAI, AUTM)



Kayla Meisner (KCV EDGE PI) and Elizabeth McGee (External Evaluator) joined dedicated KSU faculty for a powerful focus group session during our KCV Roadshow—deepening partnerships and shaping the future of research and innovation in Kentucky.



During the KCV Roadshow, EDGE team members Christy Stanley and Mandy Hensley welcomed innovators, faculty and students to learn more about how KCV empowers research and commercialization across Kentucky.



Identifying Infrastructure Gaps: A Multi-Method Needs Assessment

Methods	Key Findings	Conclusion
• 57-question survey across partner institutions (30% response rate) • Focus groups to contextualize and deepen survey findings • Interviews with Institutional Champions and leadership • Analysis of Higher Education Research & Development (HERD) data and institutional strategic plans	• Strengths: student research, government partnerships • Gaps: commercialization infrastructure, faculty incentives, administrative support	This approach ensured interventions were evidence-based, institution-specific and immediately actionable, directly informing Year 2 plans and shaping scalable tools.

46 faculty, staff and leadership participated in the focus groups across the 3 partners

Meet the EDGE Team

Project Lead

Kentucky Commercialization Ventures



- Kayla Meisner, Executive Director
- Caroline Stivers, Associate Director of Operations
- Mandy Hensley, Associate Director of Research
- Christy Stanley, Grants Coordinator

External Evaluator

LEAP Evaluation Consulting



- Daniel Cicala, CEO & Co-founder
- Elizabeth McGee, Co-founder and Senior Consultant

Partner Institutions

All three institutions are PUIs with modest research funding and limited federal grant infrastructure.

Morehead State University (MoSU)

Regional comprehensive university



- Shannon Harr, Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
- Janet Cline, Director of Research Integrity and Compliance
- Nellie Middleton, Grant and Contract Administrator Senior Grants Specialist
- Debbie Ross, Research Integrity Officer Grants & Contracts Specialist (Research Integrity & Infrastructure)
- **Institution Highlights:** new staff hired, professional development support, initiated research enterprise software functionality requirements



Dr. Shannon Harr,
MoSU Champion

/// The NSF EDGE Grant has been instrumental in allowing Morehead to move forward with enhancing our research infrastructure. ///

Kentucky State University (KSU)

HBCU and land-grant institution



- Dorothy Daley, Interim Director Sponsored Programs
- Bisola Asaolu, Research Development Associate
- Maja Bursac, Research Development Associate
- Sujeet Acharya, Research Development Associate and Innovation Associate



Dorothy Daley,
Interim Director
Sponsored Programs

/// The NSF EDGE Grant has helped us overcome critical staffing limitations that previously hindered our ability to support faculty in proposal development. Before receiving the EDGE award, we lacked personnel specifically dedicated to this function, which limited our service offerings. With an expanded and more specialized team, we are now better equipped to support Kentucky State University's research growth and position the institution for greater competitiveness in securing external funding. ///

Northern Kentucky University (NKU)

Comprehensive metropolitan university



- Shauna Reilly, Assistant Vice Provost for Outreach and Engagement
- Mark Lackey, Manager Research Operations
- Kathleen Sullivan, Senior Grant Administrator
- **Institution Highlights:** full-time staff hired, improved grant processes implemented and capacity for grant submissions increased



Shauna Reilly,
Interim Co-PI

/// As we navigate the new normal of grant uncertainty, we are thankful for the support and capacity building work that EDGE has made possible for NKU. We look forward to increased and varied submissions to external funders as well as support for commercialization and IP development. ///

Lessons Learned & Evaluation

External Evaluation Insights

LEAP Consulting

LEAP Consulting conducted a cross-institutional needs assessment and process evaluation. They administered a cross-site survey, facilitated stakeholder focus groups and produced institutional reports and a cross-site synthesis. The following was identified:

Shared Strengths

- Strong student involvement in faculty-led research
- Longstanding government partnerships that enable external funding

Common Challenges

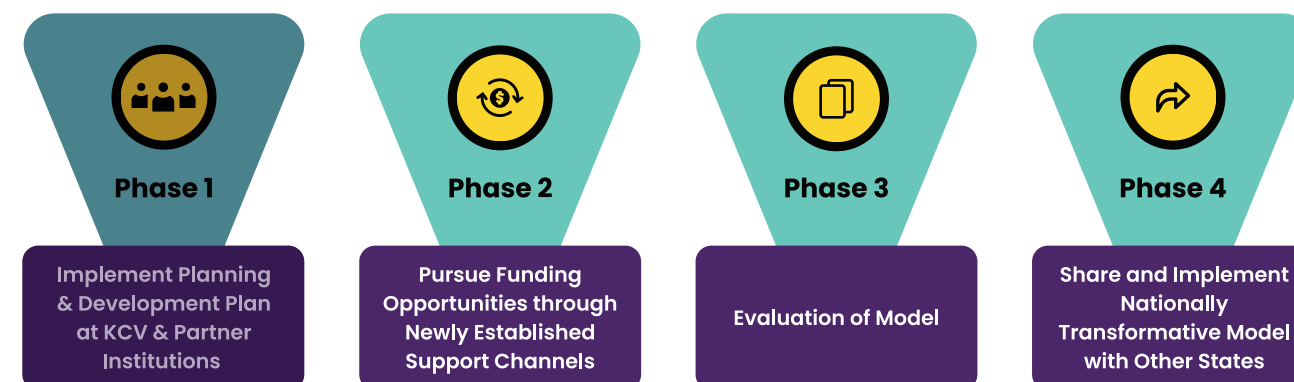
- Unclear research development strategies
- Limited faculty time and incentives for grant work
- Gaps in commercialization infrastructure (low IP awareness, limited staff expertise, weak entrepreneurial pathways)
- Pre-/post-award administrative constraints

Despite these challenges, LEAP observed a strong commitment to building a sustainable research ecosystem and will continue supporting strategy development to align and strengthen efforts.

From this evaluation, as well as experiences throughout Year 1, we have learned...

- Invest in people: hiring and professional development have an outsized impact
- Flexible models win: one size doesn't fit all
- Prepare for turnover: proactive, transparent communication is critical
- Relationships are more important than frameworks early on
- Hiring delays and HR limitations at partner institutions exist

Looking Ahead (Years 2-5)



Phase 2 – Year 2

- Define metrics for program outcomes and regional impact
- Develop a shared resource library (including SOPs, templates, tools and best practices)
- Use Year 1 insights to drive targeted improvements and strategy refinement
- Continue sharing lessons learned regionally and nationally

Phase 3 – Year 3

- Address remaining research administration challenges
- Evaluate and publish program successes and tools
- Fill staffing gaps to support growth
- Boost proposal submission rates and indirect cost recovery
- Conduct a comprehensive model evaluation to assess implemented practices, proposal success rates and partner engagement

Phase 4 – Years 4 & 5

- Establish EDGE as a fully developed model encompassing funding, administration, commercialization and leadership
- Collaborate with states, territories, agencies and consortia to implement successful EDGE practices
- Provide tailored guidance to help others strengthen research infrastructure
- Reduce institutional burden and improve responsiveness to funding opportunities

With national application, the EDGE model will transform research administration, enabling more *agile, collaborative and sustainable* ecosystems across the country.



KENTUCKY COMMERCIALIZATION VENTURES

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KSTC
KENTUCKY SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY CORPORATION



kycommercializationventures.com

Year 1: Professional Development Highlights

A strategic shift toward virtual learning reduced travel and time away from campus while maintaining valuable training.

Key Engagements

- KY INBRE: IP protection and commercialization insights (Hensley)
- UIDP Virtual: University-industry collaboration strategies (Hensley)
- NSF GAME Change Summit #4: Regional innovation leadership (Meisner)
- AUTM Annual Meeting: 50th anniversary; tech-transfer best practices (KCV team)
- Kentucky Innovator Challenge: identifying pressing challenges and exploring collaborative solutions through research and innovation (Meisner, Hensley)
- UNITE Research Showcase: Highlighted cross-disciplinary impact (Hensley)
- NORDP Research Development Conference: Virtual research development and community-building (Meisner, Hensley, Stanley)

Additional Trainings

- SRAI Webinar: Subrecipient monitoring (Lackey, NKU)
- NIH Overhead Course: Flat-rate overview (Sullivan, NKU)
- NCURA Region III Annual Meeting: Research admin updates (Cline, Middleton, Hamilton, Beauchamp, Hargett, MoSU)

Dissemination & National Engagement

- EDGE highlighted Kentucky's model at key national events, positioning Kentucky as a national leader in collaborative research ecosystem design.
- AUTM Central: Consortium Network launch (Meisner and Stivers)
- 3686 Conference: Regional innovation collaboration
- LES Annual Meeting: Innovation culture & IP strategies (Meisner)
- EPSCoR Presentation: Statewide impact presentation (Meisner)
- SSTI & NORDP Annual Conferences, KY INBRE: EDGE framework and GRANTED alignment (Meisner)