



Mike Beam, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

The Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) is currently seeking a Governor’s Budget Amendment (GBA) for three (3) separate items, all from State General Funds.

- \$204,831 in salary enhancements for agency engineers
- \$100,000 in funding for a grant specialist
- \$350,000 in funding for a dairy-industry profitability study

Details of the requests and supporting documentation are as follows:

- 1) The Division of Water Resources (DWR) within KDA is comprised of three inter-related water programs, all which utilize the work of engineers (Water Appropriations, Water Management, and Water Structures). As background, the Water Structures Program has had an engineering position open for over a year with a budgeted base salary of \$50,918. The position was offered to two candidates, one a December 2021 graduate and the other an anticipated May 2022 graduate. Both candidates declined the offer, stating that they need \$65,000. Additionally, the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) testified during the Kansas Department of Health and Environment – Environment budget hearing (2022 Legislative session; House Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget Committee) that the legislature should appropriate \$94,000 for a livestock waste engineer. Citing the extreme demand of the engineering job market. Furthermore, a consulting firm that works closely with DWR on multiple federal grant contracts is in negotiations with two of their employees to keep them from leaving. One of the employees, was trained by current DWR staff while at KDHE. The employee was making \$40,000 at KDHE and 6 years later is being offered \$175,000 to stay at a consulting firm. While state government cannot pay the same as consulting firms, the gap must be narrowed in order to hire and retain qualified engineers.

Therefore, if we are to remain competitive for new applicants and raise our current engineers to even the national average level for the profession, **\$204,831** would be necessary. This request is associated with object/account code(s) 51000, Salaries and Wages.

Exhibit I. KDA Division of Water Resources (DWR) Engineer Salary Modification

Count	Job Description	Current Avg	Proposed Minimum	National Average	Total Additional Salary	Total w/23.107% Fringe Benefit Rate
5	Engineering Associate	52,612	62,500	63,000	49,440	60,864
5	Profession Engineer	67,312	80,000	84,000	63,440	78,099
3	Supervisory Professional Engineer	72,165	90,000	95,000	53,505	65,868
				Engineer Total	166,385	204,831

- 2) Recently passed federal legislation provides significant additional funding opportunities for water / soil conservation and infrastructure. A portion of these funds are available, and will continue to be available, for states to access through competitive grants. Millions of dollars in funding are potentially available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Interior, and others. There is an opportunity to seek grants that fit existing defined needs in Kansas, as well as leverage partnerships amongst shareholders in the space. Testimony provided by stakeholders to the House Water Committee this session identified the need to seek additional federal grants to supplement the funding provided by the state. This enhancement would put the agency in a position to act on that recommendation. KDA is seeking **\$100,000** to hire a grant specialist that would work with agency staff and stakeholders to identify opportunities to leverage federal funding, develop the grant applications, and manage grants that are received. This is a unique opportunity to bring significant federal funds to Kansas to address some of our most pressing issues. This request is associated with object/account code(s) 51000, Salaries and Wages.
  
- 3) Kansas ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in the nation in dairy production with an industry made up of more than 173,000 dairy cows on 228 dairy farms. Since 2014, total pounds of milk produced in the state has increased 29%. In addition to milk production, the recent announcement by Hilmar Cheese Company regarding a new processing plant in Ford County will lead to continued growth and diversification of this import value-added segment of the agricultural economy and the Kansas dairy sector is projected to grow by at least 60% by the end of this decade. Due to the immense growth of the dairy industry in Kansas, stakeholders in this sector have requested that additional resources be committed to support and encourage the growth of this sector. In order to ensure that Kansas is not left behind, KDA is requesting **\$350,000** to conduct a needs assessment to determine the impact of additional research and extension efforts to enhance the viability of the dairy industry in Kansas and to determine the best practices for recruiting, training, and retaining a qualified workforce for the industry. This request is associated with object/account code 529900, Other Contractual Services.

Thank you for your consideration of these items and we look forward to discussing them with you in more detail, should the opportunity arise.