



EXTENSION

Leading Locally: Building Entrepreneurial Communities

A collaboration with UNL Extension to provide leadership development training for five consecutive years paid off in one northeast Nebraska community this year. Prior to the start of the leadership programs, the need for a new swimming pool had been identified. The mayor formed a citizens advisory committee, but for several years it struggled to come up with a viable plan, and the pool became a pseudo community project that groups in the leadership programs tackled every year.

Four graduates solicited the mayor to be appointed to the pool committee. They along with the other committee members put together a plan, that in the November election, led 65.66% of voters to pass a half-cent sales tax increase to pay for a \$2.8 million bond issue for a new pool.

The four leaders graduated from the Extension leadership programs in different years. Together they created a vision and the synergy required to solve a community problem.



Through enhanced confidence, skill building and networking three UNITE 16 Leading Locally graduates increased personal and community value through new employment.

- *“I have to give credit to Leading Locally – without the class I would never have had the opportunity for this new job.”*
- Another graduate started an online company resulting in growth and contracting 7 – 8 other people from across the U.S. to increase marketing and sales.
- The third graduate increased coalition building, communication and financial value for the community through her new employment.

PUBLIC VALUE: Regional research sponsored by USDA/CREES indicate that “social capital” was the most powerful indicator of community vitality.

Local Leadership development program participants increase their level of involvement, leading to a variety of actions to address community and workplace issues. These actions empower communities to thrive and increase their capacity to deal with change.

In the **Water Leaders Academy** (NWLA) 2014 final Report, Dr. Mark Burbach writes that Nebraska’s increasingly complex water resources challenges require developing leaders with the capacity to understand and address issues.

Leadership is needed to initiate and drive change, enable innovation, build shared visions for a more sustainable water future, and deliver these visions through aligning resources and building commitment to collective success” (McIntosh & Taylor, 2013). Translational research on the Academy has indicated that the NWLA is positively affecting innovation at the individual level.

Several Academy alumni are serving on the 2015 Academy planning team. Alumni are also presenting at some 2015 Academy sessions and are actively following Academy activities on-line. Alumni are giving presentations to citizen groups on water issues in Nebraska, and some are now serving on water governance boards. A graduate student is conducting a research project focused on NWLA alumni.

Support for the academy includes public-private partnerships, multi-disciplinary instructors and lecturers, volunteers, corporate sponsorships and grant-funding .



Visit

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Marketing Hometown America helps a community look at itself through the eyes of a prospective new residents. Based on research conducted in Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota, it empowers community members to identify their local assets and link them to what potential new residents are looking for to effectively recruit and retain them as members of the community. Funded through the Nebraska Rural Futures Institute, two pilot communities in Nebraska trained over 20 local group facilitators that provided leadership to 14 small groups. Approximately 200 people participated in the small groups and public forums where draft marketing plans were shared.

New and increased involvement in community decision making was noted from both new and long-term residents. As a result, 14 draft marketing plans were designed with elements of these local plans being implemented in each location. Some specific direct and indirect outcomes include :

- [This is MY Neligh – Not Too Small To Have It All](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5QEQLvwHmA&feature=youtu.be) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5QEQLvwHmA&feature=youtu.be) was created for web based marketing
- The formation of the Kimball Recruitment Coalition and four spin-off working groups continue to pursue opportunities – [Impact in Kimball](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgDK9UmzoSc&feature=youtu.be) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgDK9UmzoSc&feature=youtu.be)
- A community promotional brochure was published in Spanish and a GPS inspired community treasure hunt for tourists was conceived and developed by local youth; and
- Residents are noticing a positive change in the tone of the local newspaper toward community issues.



The **Nebraska Rural Poll**, America’s largest and longest running survey of rural opinions, was conducted for the 19th time in 2014. Unique in this iteration of the Poll was a collaboration with the University of Nebraska-Omaha that allowed us for the first time to cover all 93 Nebraska Counties. The combined study makes possible the comparison of rural and urban attitudes with regard to crime and personal safety, work and employment, community conditions and confidence in the future.

By engaging in **ECAP (Entrepreneurial Community Activation Process)** communities embrace visionary thinking, endorse entrepreneurial leadership, build synergy and are able to leverage resources to attract and retain working-age population, which will empower community economic growth. In 2014,

- North Platte, ECAP evolved from planning meetings >to a young professional group networking socially > to the creation of an “Entrepreneurial Support Systems” website housing business resources to assist entrepreneurs.
- Central City has been named by the State of Nebraska as a “Leadership Community” following ECAP efforts. Other ECAP successes include: 1) new community wide internet portal where eight different governmental and entities funnel information into the website to enhance information for the community)2 the construction of a new arena at the fairgrounds; 3) repurposing of Merrick Manner; 4) looking for a new location for the theatre which recently closed and 5) investigation of new marketing logo/signage for the town.
- Ashland has 1) identified seed money for an economic development corporation; 2) developed a community-wide vision; and 3) formed work groups around the Sense of Place, Vision, Culture of Change, Entrepreneurial Support Systems and Infrastructure. Over 500 individuals have been engaged in the process with 457 completing the discovery tool and 90 people participating in at least one of the community conversations.
- Gage County, Hartington and Thayer County are in the initial stages of ECAP and will continue in 2015.



**North Platte NE
Young Professionals
Developing online resources
for entrepreneurs**



Through the **Nebraska Broadband Initiative** households were surveyed to better understand how they are using broadband technologies. Gaps in broadband adoption are closing. In 2014:

- 82% of Nebraska households have broadband service—up from 76% in 2010.
- 65% of those 65 and older have broadband at home up from 48% in 2010.
- The proportion of persons with the lowest household incomes having broadband service at home increased from 44% to 53%.

The Broadband Initiative partnered with the Nebraska Library Commission to build the confidence of librarians in meeting the technology needs of patrons. Over 150 individuals participated in trainings.

Testimonial: “Knowledge gained...has already proved beneficial. It has helped me tremendously in relating to patrons and their potential problems.” Kathy Schable, Dakota City Public Library Librarian.

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