



2014 IMPACTS

COMMUNITY VITALITY INITIATIVE - GROWING BUSINESS

COOPERATIVE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- The Nebraska Cooperative Development Center (NCDC) consulted and provided technical assistance to 17 individual businesses. Six were already incorporated and eleven businesses were projects under development.
- Of the development projects NCDC was involved with, two became incorporated in 2014. One business is a multi-state coop business that has owner members from five states. New economic activity created by these two businesses is conservatively estimated at over \$120,000, with both being in business less than six months.
- NCDC conducted business development training programs for more than 25 businesses.

ACA FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

- Health Care Decisions for Small Businesses continues to provide relevant Affordable Care Act (ACA) information for small business owners through a website that received, 12,500 page views in 2014, and workshops.

SUPPORT FOR RURAL ENTREPRENEURS

- Received a grant, "Measuring the Impact of Extension's Web-Based Entrepreneurship Outreach", to develop videos and downloadable articles for rural entrepreneurs.

UTILIZATION OF NEW DELIVERY METHODS

- Designed and developed an app called Happy Orchard with the objective to increase understanding of pollinators, increase awareness of value-added production and products, and develop understanding of value-added agriculture and entrepreneurship and its importance to local economies and communities.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Stronger Economies Together (SET) is working toward the creation of a high quality regional economic development plan for 17 counties in Northeast Nebraska that will be finished and implemented in 2015.
- Joined a four state team of Extension professionals in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas (MINK) that received a grant, "Taking Charge: Action Planning for Economic Recovery in the 4-State 2011 Missouri River Flood Region", to facilitate regional economic development efforts.
- Over 40 people from four states participated in the MINK strategic planning process hosted and facilitated by Nebraska Extension.

GROWING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

- Buy Fresh, Buy Local Nebraska developed a curriculum based on the business, production, and marketing needs of specialty crop growers in the state. A total of 49 specialty crop growers participated in workshops or a webinar utilizing the curriculum.
- Ten consumers and eight specialty crop growers attended a tour of Wolff Farms, an organic specialty crop business that includes high tunnels and vegetable row crops. Consumers reported an increased understanding of how their food is grown and made available to them. Growers reported knowledge gained in production practices and how to interact with consumers.

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EXTENSION

DIVERSIFIED AG BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Five small-scale farmers completed the Farm Beginnings program that provided information on financial planning, marketing, and goal setting.
- The “Small Spaces, Big Potential” Small Scale Farming Workshop reached over 50 individuals interested in starting a diversified agricultural enterprise on their acreage or farm. As a result of attending 30% of respondents indicated they were very likely to grow or raise something new, and 47% indicated they were likely to do so.
- Organized the ninth annual Southeast Nebraska Diversified Ag Tour and a local food systems tour attracted 38 participants, 79% of survey respondents indicated a significant increase in their overall awareness and knowledge of local food systems as a result of attending.

HIGH SCHOOL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- With support from RFI grant a high school entrepreneur curriculum was developed, reaching 24 students from three high schools. Seven students completed a viable business plan that they pitched to over 50 community members.
- Students completing the two-semester class indicated they now have more confidence in themselves and their ability to create a business or get involved in their community.

BUSINESS BROADBAND

- Nebraska businesses and households were surveyed to understand the use of broadband technologies. Broadband use has a positive impact on jobs with 364 respondents reporting a net increase of 654 jobs. Broadband use by businesses typically increased revenue 24-45%.
- Taking expert resources on broadband technology utilization to regions across the state was focus of Nebraska Broadband Initiative Tech Fairs. Over 140 businesses/organizations attended eight technology fairs held regionally.

- The Economic Development Director in Seward County made a connection at the Seward Technology fair that has resulted in broadband fiber to be pulled through the main business district of Seward this past fall.
- As a result of the connections made at the Grand Island Broadband Technology Fair, industrial park businesses now have identified new alternatives to getting higher Internet speeds to their businesses.

ONLINE MARKETING INITIATIVE

- Teaming with Grow Nebraska, Nebraska Extension Educators held sessions for 104 people on basic online business marketing.
- A joint teaching venture with the Nebraska Library Commission produced Tech 101 for Librarians. 144 librarians from libraries around the state were enthusiastic about the sessions with 95% saying they would like to learn more in this format.
- Three online, z-mag based curricula (Direct Marketing Food Specialty Products Online, Marketing AgriTourism Online, and eTailing - Taking Charge of Your Online Presence) continue to be used.
- Two classes worked with 11 small, rural entrepreneurs to get their business online or to enhance online marketing. Business owners reported that 60% would make changes to their online presence to increase the power of their online presence.
- The Power of Business provides short, live online webinars using Google Hangouts to the audience. The sessions are recorded and uploaded. From 10 live interviews with business people, 647 followers have been recorded. In the past month online action spiked with a 25% increase (sharing, posting, commenting, etc).

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