

2015 IMPACT REPORT

N EXTENSION

Community Vitality Initiative

“A future where communities are strong, businesses thrive, and youth are engaged.”

Working toward this vision, the Community Vitality Initiative focuses on

- Creating 21st Century Communities that Attract and Retain People
- Developing and/or Growing Rural Nebraska Businesses, and
- Engaging Youth and Young Adults in Rural Communities

Community Vitality Initiative programming promotes

- A community-centered focus to build local capacity
- Educational opportunities that are relevant and research-based
- Collaborative networks that address rural opportunities



Creating 21st Century Communities

To attract and retain people, communities and regions were engaged in processes that brought together diverse people to vision and plan for their future that have resulted in idea generation, projects and goals. Program examples include:

- The **Entrepreneurial Community Activation Process (ECAP)** engaged over 2,500 people through community conversations and online discovery tools to capture input. Community actions included community-wide visions, a new economic development corporation, community web portal, and a young professional network.
- **Strengthening Economies Together (SET)** works with regions to develop and implement a collaborative economic development plan for action. Over 200 individuals participated in planning sessions in northeast and southeast Nebraska. The Northeast region is implementing goals that include advancing manufacturing and increasing housing for young families.
- **Broadband Planning**, from 2010-2015, over 10,000 Nebraskans engaged in development of plans and outreach efforts, including youth and diverse populations. In 2015, efforts moved toward broadband plan implementation and enhanced statewide collaborations. Communities are now using a recently launched broadband community planning workbook.
- Over 250 people participated in **disaster education preparedness** through the inaugural Disaster Preparedness Summit and virtual table-top exercise (VTTX) focused on zoonotic disease outbreaks. In addition, youth participated through FEMA's Student Tools for Emergency Planning.

“[I will] form a task force that will produce a disaster preparedness/recovery plan for different types of disasters.”
- Disaster Preparedness Summit Participant.

CVI Extension professionals help to inform communities in making decisions

- The Nebraska Rural Poll is in its 20th year with input from nearly 56,000 nonmetropolitan Nebraskans. Policymakers, state agencies, grant writers, community/rural development organizations, and local economic developers have used the poll to explain current trends and provide guidance.
- Connection is the overarching theme identified through extension led focus groups that are a component of the Kettering Redefining Rural Project with a goal of identifying the realities and ideals of rural life.
- Through leadership education, nearly 100 individuals strengthened leadership skills during the NACO Institute of Excellence, Northeast Leadership programs or a pilot board training.

Rural Poll is the preeminent dataset for all things rural in Nebraska. It is an invaluable tool for municipalities, counties and planning consultants.” - Economic Developer

Developing and Growing Businesses

CVI Business provided niche business education and assistance to a variety of Nebraska business owners.

- The Nebraska Cooperative Development Center (NCDC) assisted more than 865 individuals with knowledge and skills on the cooperative business model, together they created an economic impact of over \$460,000 for rural communities.
- Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska (BFBL) works to expand specialty crop businesses. Over 150 people toured businesses on mushroom cultivation and fruit and nut production. 10,000 Local Food Guides published and distributed, with an additional 20,000 accessed online.

Tourism is the 3rd largest Nebraska industry and Red Carpet Service workshops are helping to grow the industry. Nearly 200 front-line employees strengthened customer service skills to enhance the tourist experience. Secrets of Service workshop trained over 70 public professionals affecting more than 160,000 citizens annually.

Business growth is expanded with online commerce. In 2015, the Enhancing Your Online Marketing Strategy trained 8 managers and staff in Kimball and Chadron on the economics and management of using Facebook to expand markets. Participating businesses increased customer network size by 271,950 and customer engagement increased by 67%, creating brand value by estimated \$84,693 dollars.



Engaging Youth Across Nebraska

CVI entrepreneurship is engaging youth across Nebraska. Programs are offered in-school, after school, in summer camps, through clubs, or in self-learning formats. In 2015, nearly 750 youth gained skills and the desire to explore business as a career option during one of 49 EntrepreneurShip Investigation (ESI) summer camps or through the digital Blueprint curriculum. Half of the young entrepreneurs then took their businesses to the community and sold their products and services at 24 different sales events held throughout Nebraska. The ESI curricula is now offered in 48 states and in countries such as Costa Rica, Brazil, and Bangladesh. Colorado held 30 camps with 230 youth.

CVI entrepreneurship is engaging adults to change the Nebraska entrepreneurial landscape, the team collaborated with other youth and adult educators to host the Entrepreneurship Summit in October with more than 170 community and state decision-makers attending.

"Before I was like, Oh, I could never do this.' Then after the [ESI] course I realized I could do it if I ever wanted to." - EntrepreneurShip Investigation participant

CVI Leadership is engaging youth, creating leaders for tomorrow. The Nebraska Human Resources Institute (NHRI) paired 180 K-12 students and 180 college student leaders in a strengths-based leadership/mentoring program. Through summer youth leadership programs another 225 students gain 21st century leadership skills.

Over 30 youth attended Sandhills Leadership & Entrepreneurship program, to increase awareness of rural issues and community action needs. Youth reported increases in: confidence to cooperatively work with a group (69%); and, support for the development of entrepreneurial businesses (79%).

It has taught me the value of investing in another person and showed me that putting your time, energy, and efforts into another human being is such a rewarding experience." - NHRI Counselor

Visit
extension.unl.edu

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln®

211 Agricultural Hall
Lincoln, NE 68583-0703