

Rural Prosperity Nebraska



2021 Impact At-A-Glance

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In 2021, many Nebraska communities were unaware that funds connected to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) were available to help with infrastructure projects—and time was running out. Collaborating with the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services, Extension educators contacted more than 90 communities that had not applied for ARPA funds. Extra effort was needed as many small communities had no contact information for the Village Clerk, Treasurer or Board Chair, or Mayor. In the end, all but 18 of Nebraska’s 531 communities claimed the available funds.

“Extension’s work in reaching 90 rural communities helped secure an additional \$1.6 million that will help these small rural communities become more resilient in the future.”

- Lee Will, State Budget Administrator

90 communities contacted by Extension that did not submit applications for ARPA funding.

73 communities responded to Extension RPN Educator contact applying for ARPA funds.

\$1.6 MILLION secured in additional funds received by Nebraska communities for infrastructure improvement.

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Vibrant rural communities are essential to the economic health of the entire state. Through Extension, rural communities find ways to engage citizens of every age, interest and background in reimagining the trajectory of the place they call home. Nebraska Extension links people across our state with University resources and research. Encouraging diversity, entrepreneurship, innovation and investment. Helping communities discover their strengths and transforming them into vitality and prosperity. Nebraska Extension convenes community stakeholders and facilitates discussions as they envision the future of their hometown—and turn that vision into reality.

+400 Elected and appointed county officials in Nebraska have grown in their leadership capacities through participation in the NACO Institute of Excellence.

Rural Prosperity Nebraska 2021 Highlights

- Latino entrepreneurs attended the First Latino Small Business Conference receiving information in Spanish, networking, and learning from each other. Topics included accessing resources, bookkeeping, marketing, and retirement planning.
- Extension partnered with the Library Commission and Innovation Studio to place makerspaces at 35 public libraries for 20 weeks. Many of those libraries went on to purchase makerspace equipment.
- Nebraska Extension launched MarketMaker, a free, searchable database that seeks to connect local producers of fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, herbs, and other foods with a variety of customers.



Tribal Food Sovereignty is High Priority

The RPN Tribal Extension Office partners with Nebraska tribal communities in rural and urban areas to help them grow healthy traditional food for the benefit of their families and economic development. These partnerships weave traditional growing and gathering practices with UNL horticultural techniques.



88% of the Omaha Tribe's tillable acres are leased to non-tribal farmers who export their crops off the reservation limiting access to healthy locally produced food.