

nebraska

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NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FISCAL YEAR ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2009 - JUNE 30, 2010



NEBRASKA

possibilities...endlessSM

Department of Economic Development

Message from DED Director Richard J. Baier

Governor Heineman, Members of the Nebraska Legislature, Fellow Nebraskans:

Weathering adverse conditions challenges the most steadfast. At the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, we welcome the challenges and opportunities to explore where we can continue working closely with local, state and federal partners to ensure that programs and services provide the most coverage for the greatest value.

I am proud that our Department continues to do its part in helping Nebraska's communities address their critical needs that revolve around continued future expansion and growth. These encompass promoting Nebraska to attract new and retain expanding businesses, supporting local entrepreneurs, building and maintaining much needed infrastructure, providing quality affordable housing, and expanding tourism development.

As you will read, our state still leads the nation in low unemployment, steadily maintaining 5 percent compared with the national average of 9.5 percent. The growth of employment in the services sector in Nebraska in FY 2009-2010 also was accompanied by an increase in wages from \$19.89 in June 2009 to \$21.17 in June 2010—a good sign.

And while our per capita personal income remains close to the U.S. average, our citizens also benefit from the state's low cost of living, including the cost of big ticket items, such as housing. So there continues to be tremendous all-around advantages for choosing to call Nebraska home, whether it's entrepreneurs, CEOs of large corporations, or citizens in general.

So where do we go from here? Recent findings of a study conducted by Battelle Technology Partnership Practice have provided us with a strategic blueprint for future economic growth and development that we are already working on initial implementation stages. And as the U.S. economy begins to improve, we expect to see similar upticks here in Nebraska as well...in rising employment numbers, economic indicators, and revenue generation among other factors.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Baier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard J. Baier
Director

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About DED

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development's programs and services help grow strong communities, retain and expand existing businesses, attract new businesses, encourage entrepreneurship, develop a flourishing tourism industry, and market Nebraska locally, nationally and internationally.

While job creation and development of new capital investment receive special emphasis, the Department's offerings are all aimed at helping communities, businesses and people compete globally.

Three divisions—Business Development, Community and Rural Development, and Travel and Tourism—and the Department's administrative area, including operations and marketing, accomplish this work.

Most of the Department's 74 employees are based in the Lincoln office; however, a number of field staff maintain offices in the western, central and eastern regions of the state to provide constituents with more convenient access.

Economic Performance Indicators

Unemployment Rate

Nebraska fared better than the overall U.S. in recent years during the national recession and the period of slow economic growth afterward. As reported by the Nebraska Department of Labor, the state's unemployment rate was 5.0 percent in June 2009, compared to 9.5 percent for the nation. Likewise, a year later, in June 2010, Nebraska's unemployment rate was 5.0 percent, and the nation's was 9.5 percent.

Industry Employment

The total non-farm job count in Nebraska advanced 0.3 percent from June 2009 to June 2010. In the overall U.S., it fell 0.9 percent. Both total private employment and government employment had gains in Nebraska. Goods-producing jobs, with the majority in manufacturing, declined. But those losses were more than offset by increases in service-providing employment. Industries with gains in jobs included retail trade, professional and business services, educational and health services, and leisure and hospitality services. In agriculture—Nebraska's largest sector for both self-employment and home-based business—total farm income grew, boosted especially by large gains in cattle and hog prices from June 2009 to June 2010.

Wages

The growth of employment in services in Nebraska in FY 2009-2010 was accompanied by an increase in wages in that sector. The average hourly earnings of private service-providing industries increased from \$19.89 in June 2009 to \$21.17 in June 2010. But, at the same time, the decline in manufacturing employment in the state was accompanied by a drop in wages in that sector. Earnings of manufacturing production workers averaged \$16.18 an hour in June 2010, compared to \$16.59 an hour in June 2009.

Income and Cost of Living

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that Nebraska's per capita personal income was \$39,277 in 2009, close to the U.S. average of \$39,626 and ranking 20th among all states. Well below the national average was the state's cost of living, as reported by the American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association. The Association's Cost of Living Index showed that the cities of Hastings, Lincoln, and Omaha together had general living costs that averaged 91.4 percent of the national average in the second quarter of 2010.

Housing

Housing prices are, on average, lower in Nebraska than in the nation overall, leading to owner-occupied housing making up a higher percent of total units in the state than the U.S. average. The U.S. Bureau of the Census reports that in 2009 the home ownership rate in Nebraska was 70.2 percent, compared to 67.4 percent for the nation. Housing sales also increased at a faster rate in Nebraska than in the overall U.S. in FY 2009-2010. According to the National Association of Realtors, the number of existing home sales in Nebraska rose 20.5 percent in the second quarter of 2010 from the second quarter of 2009, compared to 17.3 percent for the nation.

Online Data

More detailed demographic and economic data for Nebraska are in the Research & Databook section of the Department's web site at www.neded.org.

Nebraska Department of Economic Development Fiscal Year 07/01/09 thru 06/30/10 Total Budget Sources and Major Uses

Sources of Funds	FY 2009-2010 Total Budget
General Funds	\$ 7,987,000
Cash Funds	36,065,000
Federal Funds	59,602,000
	\$103,654,000
Uses of Funds	
Staff	\$ 5,294,000
Operations	10,010,000
Aid/Grants (Listed Below)	88,350,000
	\$103,654,000
Major Aid/Grant Programs and Service Contracts	
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	\$ 17,748,000
CDBG Disaster Funds	7,447,000
Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)	17,640,000
Affordable Housing Trust Fund	15,693,000
HOME	10,672,000
Job Training	13,094,000
Value-Added Agriculture & BECA Grants	1,530,000
Microenterprise Program Contract	884,000
Manufacturing Extension Partnership	743,000
Nebraska Operational Assistance Act	558,000
Tourism Grants	538,000
Civic, Cultural & Convention Center Funds	921,000
Other	882,000
	\$88,350,000



Business Development Division

Business Development staff works with businesses, regional organizations and communities to help expand economic opportunities in business and industry recruitment, international trade and investment, existing and start-up business assistance, entrepreneurship, workforce development and job training.

Business Recruitment

In FY 2009-2010, business recruitment staff closed a number of successful projects. Among the most notable were 21st Century Systems, Norfolk Iron & Metal, Milk Specialties, Lincoln Industries, Neapco, Cargill, The Buckle, Technique Surfaces, USA and Apogee Retail. Recruitment efforts continued to closely involve public and private partnerships in accomplishing solid projects, closing more than 40 during this fiscal year.

Company-direct contacts for recruitment activity accounts for 26% of lead generation. An additional 30% comes from consultants that the recruitment team works closely with and meets with during events, including Industrial Asset Management Council, CoreNet, and Area Development Forums. During FY 2009-2010, the Department focused on renewable energy, data centers, food and biotechnology trade shows. Recruitment trips were made to California, Missouri and New York.

Nebraska Advantage

The Nebraska Advantage Act has significantly enhanced the state's business climate. Department efforts focused on a statewide vision in the global economy. The Department works closely with companies and communities to address labor availability, accessible employee training programs, financial assistance, available properties that meet clients' needs and other issues. During FY 2010, the Act attracted 38 applications for a potential \$298.6 million in investment and 2,200 jobs.

Customized Job Training

In FY 2009-2010, the Customized Job Training Program signed 18 contracts, resulting in a \$2,446,250 investment, creating 1,975 jobs and further educating Nebraska workers. To date (June 30, 2010), there are 34 businesses under contract, representing \$6,192,825 and 3,447 jobs. The average dollar amount per job is \$1,797. An additional \$11,667,500 is committed to 28 businesses, which propose to create 4,015 jobs. For FY 2009-2010, at the time of application, 16 of the projects under contract (47 percent) had a base employment of 25 or fewer employees. Of the 34 projects under contract for FY 2010, 47 percent are for businesses in Greater Nebraska, outside of the Lincoln and Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

Nebraska's Growth Targets

Nebraska continues to develop targeted industries based on existing synergies for knowledge-based, diversified economy focused on a competitive global environment. The following industries were identified as having high growth potential, diversifying the economy and employing a highly skilled workforce:

- Insurance and Financial Services
- Information Technology and Data Centers
- Bioscience and Technology
- Renewable Energy, including Biofuels, Wind, Solar and Geothermal
- Transportation, Warehousing, Distribution, and Logistics
- Advanced Manufacturing and Value-added Agriculture
- Defense

One-Stop Business and Entrepreneur Center

The One-Stop office responded to 2,980 requests for information and assistance in FY2009-2010 by phone, email and office visits. Eighty-three percent of telephone inquiries originated in Nebraska and 17% from 45 states and Canadian provinces. Of the in-state phone inquiries, 24.2% came from Omaha, 17.4% from Lincoln and 41.4% from 180 other Nebraska communities.

Nebraska Business Visitation Program

Existing businesses form the basis of Nebraska's economy. And they represent the key to sustaining local economies. Business owners and managers are socially responsible contributors to the economy in communities across Nebraska. Their employees form the basis for consumption of local goods and services, as well as serve in leadership roles for civic, recreational, social, and cultural events.

With this in mind state and local economic developers maintain regular contact with business owners and managers in Nebraska through a formal Nebraska Business Visitation Program. During the past three years more than 1,200 personal interviews were conducted. From last year's 391 interviews, 211 were with primary businesses that draw in sales from outside the community; 184 businesses reported increased sales over the last year and 136 businesses reported employment needs have increased at their facility. Other positive signs of economic growth are indicated by plans to hire 1,980 new employees and 1 out of 3 businesses interviewed plan to expand the physical space of the business. The estimated amount of new investment in land, equipment, and other physical expansions is more than \$257 million during the next three years.

The data collected from the interviews is tracked through the Synchronist Business Information System®. The system also analyzes growth potential, value and risk of businesses within the local, regional, state and national economy.

In 2010 the department purchased additional sub-licenses for the Synchronist System using a grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration in partnership with the Nebraska Public Service Commission, Nebraska Information Technology Commission, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Twenty-five local and regional economic development groups, including utility partners Black Hills and Nebraska Public Power, are using the system to analyze trends in industry sectors and the impact of the current business climate on their plans for future growth.

Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)

Nebraska MEP provided services to 214 manufacturers during FY 2009-2010. Of that total, fifty-one clients were surveyed and reported that Nebraska MEP's services led to 118 created or retained jobs, generating increased and retained sales of more than \$4.24 million, helped reduced costs by more than \$1.9 million, and generated \$4.11 million in new investments. Clients rated the quality services at 8.5 on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being highest.

Business Development Regional Staff

Business Development field staff are conveniently located across the state, living and working in the regions in which they serve. Field staff provide technical assistance, financial packaging, marketing, site development and organizational assistance and services. They also meet with existing businesses through the state's Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program. Field staff assisted with over 35 successful projects in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, including The Buckle, Easyway International LLC, Milk Specialties Global and Plymouth Industries.

Nebraska Economic Development Certified Communities

The program marked its fifth anniversary in May 2010 with 29 certified communities. The Nebraska Diplomats and other development partners sponsor the program, and the Department administers it. The program is one of only a few in the nation to recognize communities for economic development preparedness.



LB 840

The Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act (LB 840) authorizes incorporated cities and villages to collect and appropriate local tax dollars (sales and/or property tax), if approved by the local voters, for economic development purposes. To date, 55 communities have voted to create LB 840 programs.

Invest Nebraska Corporation

During the 2007 legislative session, LB 425—the Nebraska Operational Assistance Act was introduced and signed into law to assist potential high-growth businesses in establishing foundations sufficient for the attraction of private venture capital financing. DED was tasked with the responsibility to contract with a non-profit organization to carry out the purposes of the Act. Invest Nebraska Corporation was subsequently contracted by DED to carry out the provisions of the Act.

During 2009, Invest Nebraska developed itself around these main programs: New Venture Competitions, Operational Assistance, Angel Network, and Creative Capital Pitch Competitions. During the year, Invest Nebraska reached the following metrics:

- Reviewed 110 business plans from entrepreneurs and provided feedback
- Leveraged state funding to receive 3 grants totaling \$282,000
- Approached by 160 entrepreneurs and investors seeking guidance, referrals, funding and funding opportunities
- Provided 1 operational assistance loan
- Received \$93,500 in donations
- Held 5 regional new venture competitions in Scottsbluff, Norfolk, McCook, York, and Peru
- Held the 1st annual East 2 West New Venture Competition in Lincoln.

Patent Development and Technology Program

The Department works with the University of Nebraska to identify and commercialize technologies in the state that can result in new businesses and higher-paying jobs. The Department's activities focus primarily on the knowledge-based industries, including information sciences, bio-medical equipment, bioinformatics, health technologies and biotechnology.

Nebraska Microenterprise Program

The Department contracts with the Nebraska Enterprise Fund to administer the Microenterprise Development Act Funds. Individuals from all 93 counties have received services throughout the years. Microenterprise development organizations provided training and technical assistance, including business planning and management, financial analysis, marketing strategies and /or micro loans for start up or expansions. The number of micro loans was up 29 percent from more than a year ago with \$1,283,325 loaned. A total \$1,718,634 in loans was leveraged from other capital sources, such as banks, public agencies and revolving loan pools.

Nebraska Film Office

The Nebraska Film Office supports efforts to film on location throughout the state. Staff responded to requests for film and video production information including: securing locations, permits (if necessary), crew resources and production services. The Film Office maintains a searchable database of crew and service providers. Many providers are independent contractors who work to help build infrastructure that is vital in attracting and growing this industry across the state.

Film and video production this past year took place all across the state and included locations such as the Kernel Field ball park in Central City. Other locations and projects included: a Burger King commercial in Omaha, an independent feature film, "Geocachers" in Western, an independent feature film in the Ravenna area, "Borders," a documentary on the 150th anniversary of the Pony Express at Homestead National Monument, and "Trunk'd" filmed in the Wahoo area. Staff worked with National Geographic, Discovery Channel, Twofour Broadcasting out of London and several studio-driven features looking for rural and small town locations.

International Trade and Investment

Nebraska Exports

Source: Office of Trade and Industry Information (OTII), Manufacturing and Services, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

2005 - \$3,003,380,987

2006 - \$3,633,247,980 (increase of 21% from 2005)

2007 - \$4,266,141,656 (increase of 17% from 2006)

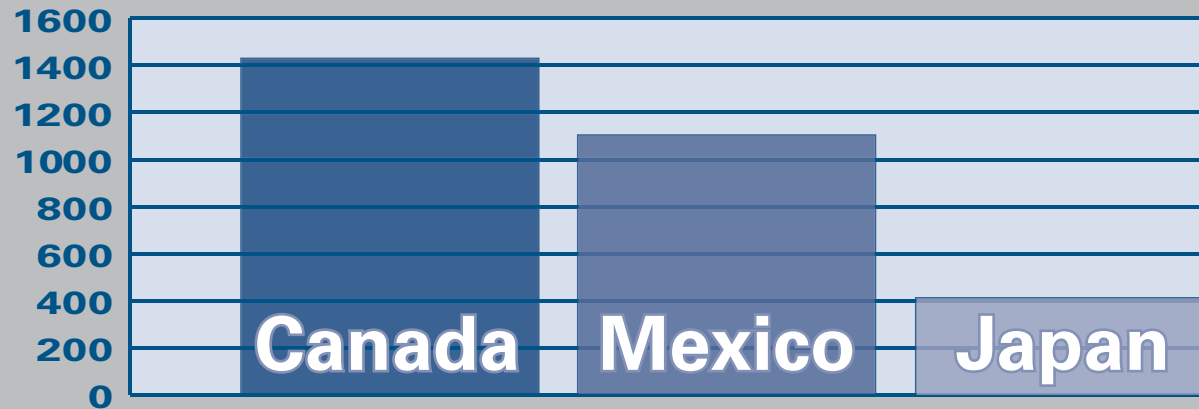
2008 - \$5,412,021,410 (increase of 27% from 2007)

2009 - \$4,872,924,899 (decrease of 10% from 2008)

Nebraska exported to more than 175 countries in 2009!

50 countries accounted for 97% of Nebraska's exports in 2009. But, 60% of Nebraska's exports went to only three countries.

- 29% - Canada (\$1,430,437,330)
- 23% - Mexico (\$1,104,973,099)
- 8% - Japan (\$416,004,963)



DED's focus on training resulted in sponsoring and co-sponsoring 19 international business education workshops and seminars covering a multitude of international trade topics during this period of time, in addition to kicking off our "Traveling" International Office Program by completing three community visits in June 2010, with an additional 8 scheduled to be completed before the end of the year 2010.

The Nebraska Center-Japan (NCJ), Nebraska's trade office located in Tokyo, was very busy during the year. NCJ staff assisted 17 Nebraska companies to enter or expand their market in Japan. NCJ led a delegation of Japanese companies to the Diplomat's Passport to Nebraska event, and helped to coordinate a Governor Heineman-led delegation to the Midwest U.S.-Japan Association Conference.

JZW International, a consulting company contracted by DED to represent and market Nebraska in China, helped numerous Nebraska companies interested in doing business in China. A key focus of JZW is to promote Nebraska as a place for Chinese companies to expand their operations by way of foreign direct investment. In February Easyway International, a Chinese logistics company, announced the opening of their North American office in La Vista.



Community and Rural Development Division

The Department's Community and Rural Development Division administers grant programs for housing, community infrastructure, planning and business development. The division's technical and financial services target communities and region-wide delivery.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

In FY 2009-2010, the Department distributed CDBG funds in the categories of Comprehensive Revitalization, Downtown Revitalization, Economic Development, Planning, Public Works, Tourism, and Water/Wastewater.

Comprehensive Revitalization

During FY 2009-2010, the cities of Bellevue, Columbus, Fremont, Grand Island, Kearney, Norfolk and North Platte received \$1,418,932 for needs assessment and comprehensive revitalization.

Downtown Revitalization

During FY 2009-2010, \$96,750 Phase I CDBG planning and economic development category funds were distributed to Geneva, Lexington, Plattsmouth, Scribner and South Sioux City for Downtown Revitalization. An additional \$700,000 Phase II for downtown revitalization activities was awarded to Geneva and South Sioux City.

Economic Development

To promote business growth and expansion, a number of economic development loans were awarded in FY 2009-2010. Awards totaling \$1,869,500 were made for business expansions taking place in nine Nebraska cities.

Planning

Planning grants totaling \$462,300 were distributed. These grants are used for everything from comprehensive zoning plans and housing market studies to recreation plans and water and wastewater system studies.

Public Works

A total \$3,694,600 public works grants were distributed to 14 communities in FY 2009-2010.

Tourism

A total \$200,000 Tourism Development Grant was awarded to Cass County for museum renovation activities.

Water/Wastewater

A total \$1.75 million water/wastewater grants were distributed in FY 2009-2010. The governor awarded CDBG funding to five Nebraska communities to help local governments repair or update existing water and wastewater systems.

Housing

The Department works closely with private and nonprofit organizations to identify housing needs, fill gaps in services and provide technical assistance. Available affordable housing is a high priority for the Department, particularly for people and families earning anywhere from 80 to 100 percent or less of the Area Median Income.

During FY 2009-2010, \$4.618 million in Nebraska Affordable Housing Program funds were invested in rehabilitating owner-occupied homes. An additional \$2,537,300 of Housing Program funds went toward rehabilitating homes and helping first-time homebuyers purchase homes. \$1,967,114 of the Housing Program's HOME funds went toward affordable rental projects, including those with Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) Low-Income Housing Tax Credit equity as a funding source.

Community Development Assistance Act

The Community Development Assistance Act provides tax credits to local governments and nonprofit organizations that use the credits as incentives to attract private investment in support of specific community economic development projects. In FY 2009-2010, 13 projects were awarded tax credit authorization, leveraging \$38,271,283 in investment.

Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP)

In 2009, NCIP celebrated its 46th anniversary, with 34 communities participating in the program. Regional workshops were held in five communities, with 20 communities represented, to help prepare community volunteers for participation in NCIP. More than 100 projects were completed by NCIP participants in 2009 with 87,723 volunteer hours, resulting in a \$1.4 million total investment in rural Nebraska.

Travel and Tourism Division

The Department's Travel and Tourism Division offers programs and services to help communities and regions develop tourism potential and further strengthen the state's third-largest earner of revenue from outside the state, after agriculture and manufacturing. In 2009, travelers spent almost \$3.8 billion in the state on trips with overnight stays in paid accommodations and on day trips to places 100 miles or more from home. Annual spending on these trips has increased by more than \$2.1 billion since 1990. Nebraska jobs directly attributed to travel and tourism spending totaled over 45,000 in 2009. In addition, each dollar spent by tourists in Nebraska is re-spent in the state to produce an additional \$1.70 in business and income, creating an overall impact of \$2.70.

Nebraskans and visitors to the state made 18.7 million trips in the state in 2009 to destinations 100 miles or more from home. Leading states for visitor origin were Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, and South Dakota. The average nonresident traveling party visiting Nebraska by highway during the summer consisted of 2.4 persons who stayed 2.2 nights in the state and spent \$435. More than one-third of the nonresident traveling parties go to attractions and events, and for each attraction or event visited, they average a half-day longer in Nebraska, spending an additional \$100.

Tourism Advertising

Funded mostly with revenues from the State's one percent lodging tax, the Travel and Tourism Division devotes a large portion of its resources to advertising, printing and distributing state travel literature, and answering requests for travel information. In FY 2009-2010, paid ads generated 281,992 inquiries for travel information. Of that number, 265,870 were received in the first six months of 2009, when most of the tourism ads also ran. The Division has recorded consistent increases in requests for travel information from non-neighboring states, including California, Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida, indicating that its advertising 'footprint' is growing.

Tourism Marketing Grants

Tourism groups throughout Nebraska received 36 Tourism Marketing Grants totaling almost \$125,000 in FY 2009-2010. Grants were awarded for promotion of events and regions, and general marketing.

Nebraska Byways Program

The Nebraska Byways Program, which began in 1999, showcases outstanding archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities along Nebraska's two-lane highways. The state has nine designated scenic and historic byways. A Division staff member serves as a byways coordinator, helping byway organizations receive grants and other assistance for promoting these roadways.

Tourism Assessment Resource Growth Evaluation Team (TARGET)

The TARGET Program helps Nebraska's communities build on strengths, correct weaknesses, and reach tourism potentials.



Communities organize local TARGET teams that evaluate local past and present tourism efforts and issues. After the TARGET coordinator reviews an evaluation, a community site visit is scheduled, when local TARGET members and staff from the Travel and Tourism Division meet to tour and discuss the community's existing tourism assets and potential for future tourism development. In FY 2009-2010, TARGET visits were made to Broken Bow, Butler County, Fremont, Holdrege, Holt County, Ogallala, Plainview, and Sherman County.

Tourism Development and Marketing Resources Guide

The Tourism Development and Marketing Resources Guide provides useful information on local, State, and Federal funding resources, community and statewide foundations, tourist-oriented organizations and associations, and other information pertinent to developing the tourism industry. It is continually updated.

Agritourism and Ecotourism

With increasing interest in agritourism and ecotourism in Nebraska, the Travel and Tourism Division has specialists on its staff to assist in these areas of development. In February 2010, Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy hosted an agri/ecotourism workshop in Kearney attended by more than 150 people. Overall, agri/ecotourism continues to show strong interest statewide, with an increase in businesses specializing in wine (wineries and vineyards), birding opportunities, river activities, country retreats, and local food production. There are more places where people can "Buy Fresh/Buy Local" foods, including cheese, bison jerky, jellies, homemade pies, and organic beef and poultry.

Local Civic, Cultural and Convention Center Financing Fund

The Local Civic, Cultural and Convention Center Financing Fund was created by an act of the same name in 1999 to support the development of civic, cultural, and convention centers in Nebraska municipalities, particularly centers that attract visitors from outside the state. In FY 2009-2010, a total of \$455,525 was awarded in grants to seven communities for qualifying projects.

Commissions and Organizations

Economic Development Commission

The Department is served by a nine-member voting Economic Development Commission and the Department director, who serves as a non-voting member. The members are Tim Burke, Phyllis Gardner, Mike Herre, Craig K. Madson, Janet Palmtag, Bob Unzicker, Tim White, and DED Director Richard Baier.

Nebraska Rural Development Commission

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission (RDC) administers the Building Entrepreneurial Communities Act (BECA) grant and the Agricultural Innovation and Value-Added Agriculture (VAA) grant programs. To date, 78 grants have been awarded in the BECA program totaling \$1,478,133. Uses of these funds included entrepreneur camps for kids, business mentoring and coaching, business courses, technical assistance for businesses, resident recruitment, regional promotions, website development, and building regional economic development coalitions. Since its inception, the VAA program has awarded 110 grants totaling \$3,518,698. Uses of these funds helped a variety of projects including agri-tourism efforts, formation of cooperatives, renewable energy research, introduction of specialty crops, and value-added agricultural processing.

Nebraska Innovation Zone Commission

As the Nebraska Innovation Zone Commission (NIZC) prepared to sunset in 2010 as set out in legislation, the largest concern from commissioners and community members was "What would happen to the past five years of work effort and momentum?" After careful consideration and the reality of limited funding, NIZC proudly handed off activities and long-range planning goals to the established Metro Area Planning Association (MAPA) and Omaha and Lincoln Chambers of Commerce, jointly. These entities have

committed to work toward developing and marketing the I-80 corridor region for the next five years beginning January 2011. This new relationship will provide current NIZC commissioners, business leaders, and regional community members an opportunity to participate in the planning and marketing process. The goals and outline of the newly established “I-80 Council” is built upon the Ten Guiding Principles established by the commission as a result of the Phase I Study.

All work completed by the Commission, including regional studies, for the past five years is located at www.i-80ideas.com.

NIZC contracted with Olsson Associates and Clarion Associates to lead in developing design standards for the region. The creation of design standards that could be used across jurisdictional lines was a primary recommendation from the Phase I Study—the NIZC Regional Comprehensive Plan. The purpose and intent of these model design standards is to promote quality design, preserve natural and agricultural features and landscape, and promote economic development along the Interstate 80 (I-80) corridor and in the study area. Generally, the study area includes the I-80 corridor region with a southern boundary no more than 2 miles south of I-80, a northern boundary up to 1 mile north of Highway 6, and from I-80 exit number 405 to exit 440. The Design Standards report provides options for adopting and administering the regulations, providing a framework for ongoing regional cooperation.

Nebraska Diplomats

The nonprofit Nebraska Diplomats Inc. has a membership of more than 380 business executives and community leaders and is the largest economic development organization in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Diplomats support the Department’s efforts to assist the growth and expansion of existing businesses, attract new business to the state and improve Nebraska’s business climate and competitiveness. Among their many activities in FY 2009–2010 were sponsorship of State Chamber Legislative Day in February, Business & Industry Day in Alliance in May, and Passport Weekend in Lincoln in September.





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