

WCNDD
Comprehensive
Economic
Development
Strategy
(CEDDS)

2019-2024 Five-year document

West Central Nebraska Development District
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Executive Summary

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for each District in Nebraska is defined a bit differently as each area or region has different data sets and economic hurdles. Those being population demographics, per capita income, and trade centers and hubs.

The West Central Nebraska Development District, Inc. coverage area is located in the southcentral and southwest Nebraska region. This region as a whole would be considered rural, as out of 58 incorporated communities there are only two communities with populations greater than 10,000 persons. After the 2010 census figures were released, only two counties within our region (Arthur and McPherson) did not suffer from out-migration of population. Their combined total of increased population was a meager 22 persons.

Inflated property valuations and assessed taxes in the agriculture arena, coupled with the high cost of supplies, and low prices for commodities in the market has caused distressed areas in the region. Those adversely affected are Villages already without key services. Communities must be proactive in trying to find a means to continue to thrive on limited budgets, with only entry-level jobs available, and sparse workforce housing.

The data tells the story on Nebraska's landscape. The eastern border as an economic hub has continual entrepreneurship flowing into the marketplace, business expansion and recruitment is at its highest level, and population is moving eastward. For those of us in the western plains, broadband will continue to be an important economic piece to the puzzle. Enabling those who want to leave the urban setting with the tools to 'work from home'. Broadband continues to be an important role in making that happen.

Communities in our region must run their towns like a business – looking towards the future to budget for replacement and repairs to their essential systems – water and waste water. Planning ahead and not waiting for an administrative order to place hundreds without of water.

We will continue to be a champion of our region by partnering assets and participation with communities and counties to provide available resources and problem solving. Meeting with people 'where they meet' to increase awareness of community and economic development and to champion opportunities and strengths in the region.

CJ Poltack
Executive Director

Chapter 1: Background

History and Objectives

The West Central Nebraska Development District (WCNDD) is one of eight development districts in Nebraska which were established in 1974 to enhance the ability of local governments, economic development areas and chambers of commerce to jointly plan, address issues, and seize opportunities that transcend individual boundaries.

We are an independent quasi-governmental consulting group assisting local governments, businesses, homeowners, landowners, healthcare providers and educational institutions in solving problems, creating holistic solutions, and planning. Our district was formed in 1979 as a voluntary association of local governments established under Nebraska State Statutes 13-801 through 13-827, (the Nebraska Interlocal Cooperation Act) and Nebraska State Statutes 13-1901 through 13-1907, (Development Districts).

The objectives of the West Central Nebraska Development District are:

- To join together the local governments within the geographical area of Thomas, Logan, Lincoln, McPherson, Hooker, Grant, Arthur, Keith, Perkins, Dawson, Hayes, Chase, Frontier, Dundy, Hitchcock, Red Willow, Furnas and Gosper Counties as an economic development district;
- To promote economic development;
- To qualify for federal, state, and local government programs;
- To promote intergovernmental cooperation, through communication, planning, policy making, coordination and technical assistance, strengthen local units of government; address issues and needs which cross city, county and state boundaries;
- To participate in identifying and prioritizing local and regional problems;
- To advise local officials on trends in state and federal programs and the availability of state and federal funding; to create joint service opportunities;
- To provide technical, administrative and professional services;
- To eliminate duplication and promote efficiency in local government.

Strategy Committee Requirements

The CEDS Strategy Committee is comprised of eight regional representatives. At least 51% are elected officials and/or employees of a general-purpose unit of state, local or Indian tribal government who have been appointed to represent the government. There is at least 35% representation from the private sector with a senior management official or executive holding a key decision-making position, with respect to any for-profit enterprise and at least one executive director of a chamber of commerce, or representatives of institutions of post-secondary education, workforce development groups or labor groups.

Member:	Entity:
Jason Tuller, Chairman	City of Imperial
Doug Schultz, Vice-Chairman	City of Curtis
Bob Sestak, Secretary/Treasurer	Adams Bank & Trust
Kandra Kinne	City of Cambridge
Mary Pierce	Mid-Plains Community College
Michael Tuttle	Keith County Area Development Johnson, Bergmeier, Wolf, & Cipperley, p.c.
Mike Aldridge	City of Benkelman CRA
Richard Colson	Village of Paxton

Population

Total population in the West Central Nebraska Development District was 103,402 in 2017, which is a slight decrease (-2.81%) from 2010.

As seen in many rural counties, only three showed an increase in population and one of those is negligible.

Difference in county population 2010 vs. 2017

Town Name	2010	2017 (Est)	
WCNDD	106,311	103,402	-2.81%
Arthur County, NE	465	457	-1.75%
Chase County, NE	3,966	3,971	0.13%
Dawson County, NE	24,318	23,709	-2.57%
Dundy County, NE	2,008	1,801	-11.49%
Frontier County, NE	2,760	2,631	-4.90%
Furnas County, NE	4,945	4,780	-3.45%
Gosper County, NE	2,040	2,028	-0.59%
Grant County, NE	613	649	5.55%
Hayes County, NE	956	893	-7.05%
Hitchcock County, NE	2,900	2,834	-2.33%
Hooker County, NE	737	674	-9.35%
Keith County, NE	8,354	8,072	-3.49%
Lincoln County, NE	36,251	35,280	-2.75%
Logan County, NE	772	768	-0.52%
McPherson County, NE	540	499	-8.22%
Perkins County, NE	2,981	2,903	-2.69%
Red Willow County, NE	11,058	10,728	-3.08%
Thomas County, NE	647	725	10.76%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

WCNDD Municipality's Population and LMI

Town Name	Population	LMI %	Town Name	Population	LMI %
Lamar Village	10	40.00%	Stratton Village	365	54.79%
Moorefield Village	20	20.00%	Maywood Village	410	25.61%
Hendley Village	25	80.00%	Wallace Village	440	44.32%
Stockville Village	40	50.00%	Brady Village	455	37.36%
Gandy Village	45	77.78%	Trenton Village	475	58.95%
Lebanon Village	50	70.00%	Palisade Village	510	23.53%
Smithfield Village	60	33.33%	Beaver City (City)	570	63.16%
Hamlet Village	65	46.15%	Paxton Village	590	23.73%
Elsie Village	65	46.15%	Hershey Village	625	21.60%
Eddyville Village	75	20.00%	Wauneta Village	660	57.58%
Edison Village	85	76.47%	Indianola City	715	23.78%
Danbury Village	85	58.82%	Elwood Village	715	30.77%
Wellfleet Village	90	55.56%	Overton Village	730	53.42%
Wilsonville Village	100	55.00%	Culbertson Village	740	38.51%
Farnam Village	105	42.86%	Oxford Village	770	48.70%
Arthur Village	120	33.33%	Curtis City	870	56.90%
Venango Village	145	65.52%	Benkelman City	975	46.67%
Holbrook Village	155	29.03%	Cambridge City	1020	38.24%
Haigler Village	170	47.06%	Arapahoe City	1130	42.04%
Theford Village	210	42.86%	Grant City	1165	27.90%
Stapleton Village	235	34.04%	Sutherland Village	1165	29.61%
Hyannis Village	245	48.98%	Imperial City	2035	45.70%
Hayes Center Village	245	46.94%	Gothenburg City	3530	35.98%
Maxwell Village	255	35.29%	Cozad City	3915	46.23%
Madrid Village	270	48.15%	Ogallala City	4550	43.19%
Sumner Village	280	50.00%	McCook City	7405	42.47%
Bartley Village	285	47.37%	Lexington City	9960	48.09%
Brule Village	305	37.70%	North Platte City	24145	44.96%

Source: HUD Exchange

Communities which may seek Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding are limited to those that are over 51% Low and Moderate Income (LMI) per U.S. Census data or by a specific survey requirement that is only good for a limited time. Communities that do

qualify typically are on the lower population end and therefore are also limited in their ability to meet other requirements such as cash match or number of beneficiaries.

In Fiscal Year 2017, the largest categories of CDBG spending nationally were:

- Public infrastructure (36.0%)
- Housing (24.7%)
- Administrative and planning (14.2%)
- Public services (10.5%)
- Economic development (6.3%)
- Acquisition (4.9%)
- Other (4.0%)

Economy

From a perspective on assistance from a potential Economic Development Administration (EDA) project receiving funding the possibilities are limited. Only four counties meet the Per Capita Income (PCI) threshold, as they do not qualify in any other category. The geographical location of those four counties and their primary industry (sand hills ranching), and lack of population makes it unlikely that they would have an eligible project.

Based on the Pre-application for Federal Assistance from the EDA, project funding is based on unemployment or PCI compared to the national average.

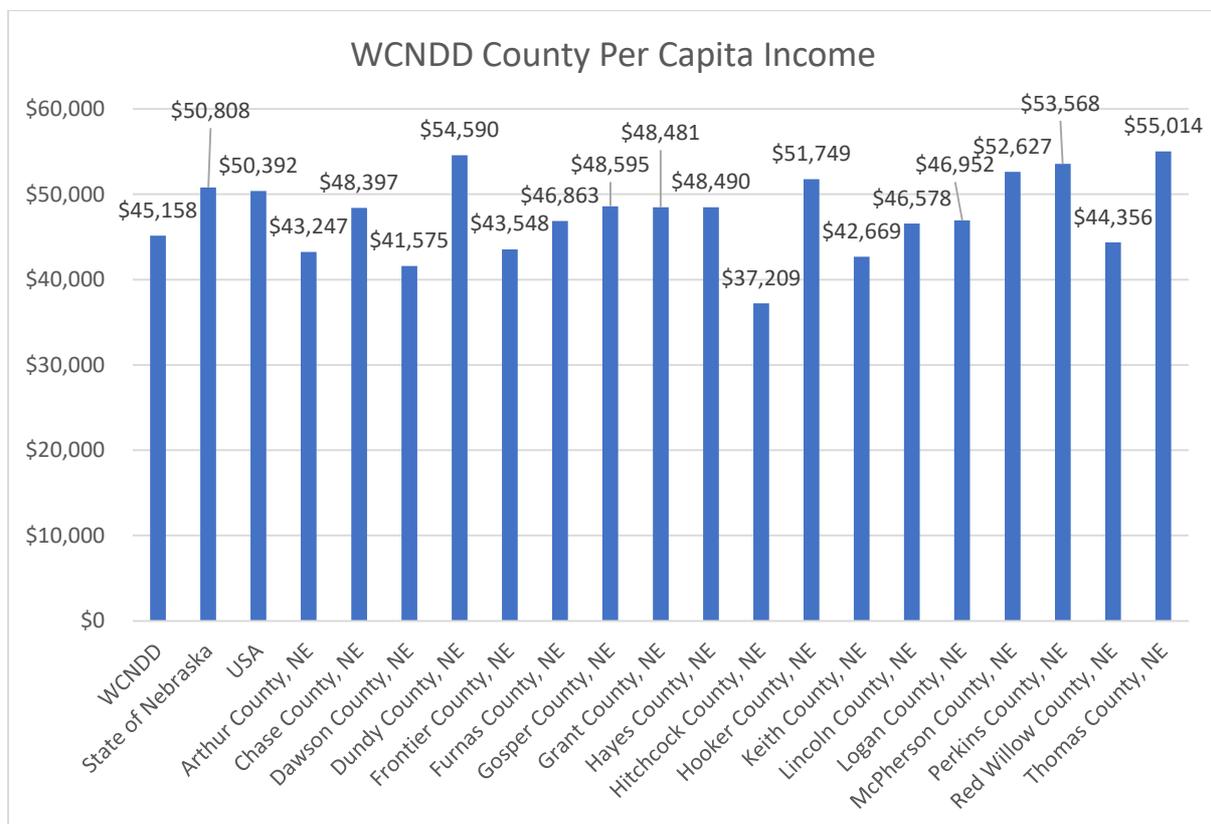
If the 24-month unemployment rate is at least 225% of the national average or PCI is less than 50% then EDA eligibility is 80%.

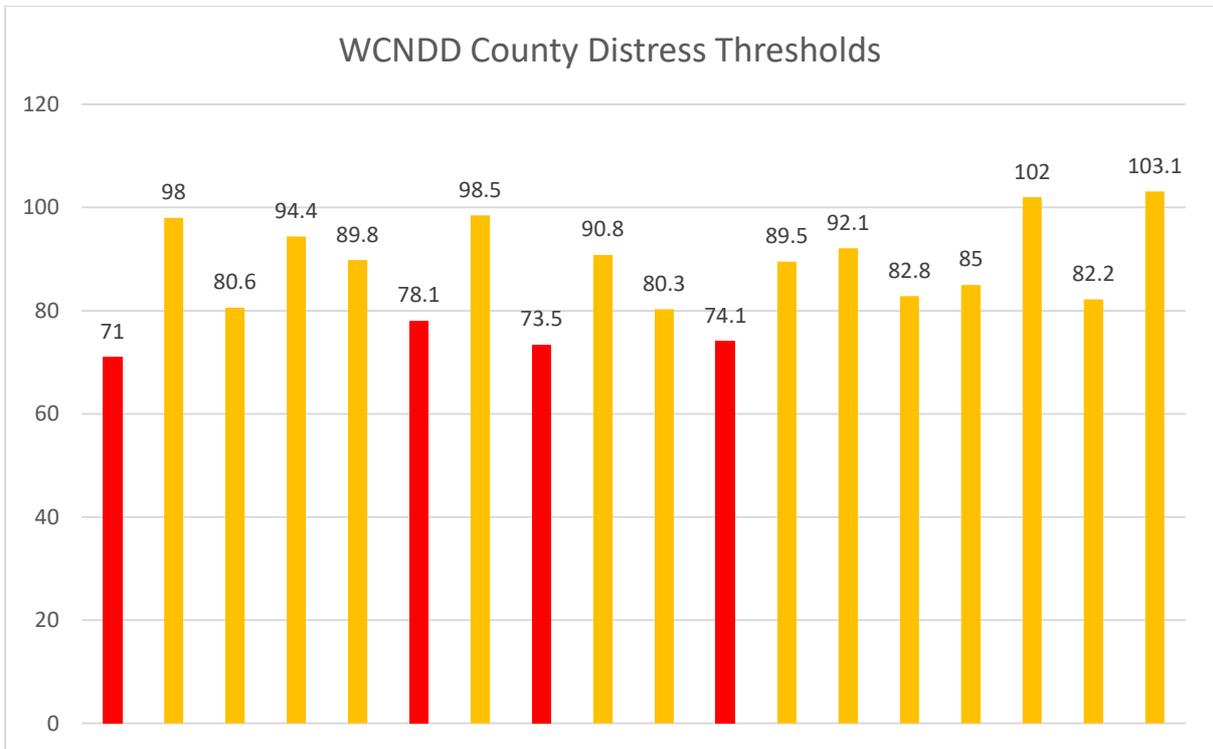
If the 24-month unemployment rate is at least 180% of the national average or PCI is less than 60% then EDA eligibility is 70%.

If the 24-month unemployment rate is at least 150% of the national average or PCI is less than 65% then EDA eligibility is 60%.

If PCI is less than 80% then EDA eligibility is 50%. Four counties in the WCNDD region qualify here, as seen in the chart on page 9.

If PCI is 80% or greater then not EDA eligible based on PCI.





Source: StatsAmerica

The selected area's per capita value is divided by the U.S. per capita income and shown as a percentage share of the U.S. figure. For example, if Thomas County has a threshold calculation of 103.1, this means its PCI is 3.1 percent higher than the national average.

Housing

Occupied Vs. Vacant and Year Built

COUNTY	UNITS	OCCUPIED	VACANT	Pre-1939	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010+
Arthur	259	183	76	75	26	23	25	44	24	14	24	4
Chase	1,939	1,693	246	580	155	165	143	338	192	210	100	56
Dawson	10,156	8,791	1,365	2,385	678	1,042	1,336	2,114	733	875	884	109
Dundy	1,102	815	287	389	158	133	102	165	73	41	20	21
Frontier	1,541	1,097	444	576	96	140	104	342	113	102	68	0
Fumas	2,710	2,227	483	1,190	259	229	248	406	119	111	110	38
Gosper	1,251	811	440	286	65	147	163	264	87	181	56	2
Grant	385	272	113	166	36	26	32	40	36	13	23	13
Hayes	527	441	86	254	48	32	18	90	47	16	5	17
Hitchcock	1,727	1,288	439	731	150	182	129	260	92	82	101	0
Hooker	427	301	126	96	24	65	62	70	31	24	46	9
Keith	5,365	3,926	1,439	853	419	667	675	1,284	635	432	351	49
Lincoln	16,632	14,965	1,667	3,400	1,404	1,735	1,964	4,015	1,065	1,474	1,361	214
Logan	421	352	69	145	21	34	51	80	19	30	30	11
McPherson	240	195	45	81	15	30	28	37	13	22	8	6
Perkins	1,444	1,241	203	354	169	203	125	350	97	74	40	32
Red Willow	5,275	4,572	703	1,779	379	603	683	855	542	279	153	2
Thomas	391	298	93	123	20	35	36	70	41	32	28	6
WCNDD	51,792	43,468	8,324	13,463	4,122	5,491	5,924	10,824	3,959	4,012	3,408	589
FACTFINDER - 2016 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY												

Housing is the common discussion voiced by the communities in the WCNDD district. Generally speaking, communities are concerned about the lack of affordable workforce housing and rentals both in the single family and multi-family arena.

When reviewing the numbers, over 16% of all housing structures are vacant with an individual county high of 35%. Another concern is that 26% of all structures were built prior to 1939. Through a visual assessment within the WCNDD District, we can ascertain that there are a large number of dilapidated and uninhabitable units. It would be safe to assume that although according to statistics there are over 8,000 housing units vacant, a large portion of those units are not feasibly economical to repair and become viable homes.

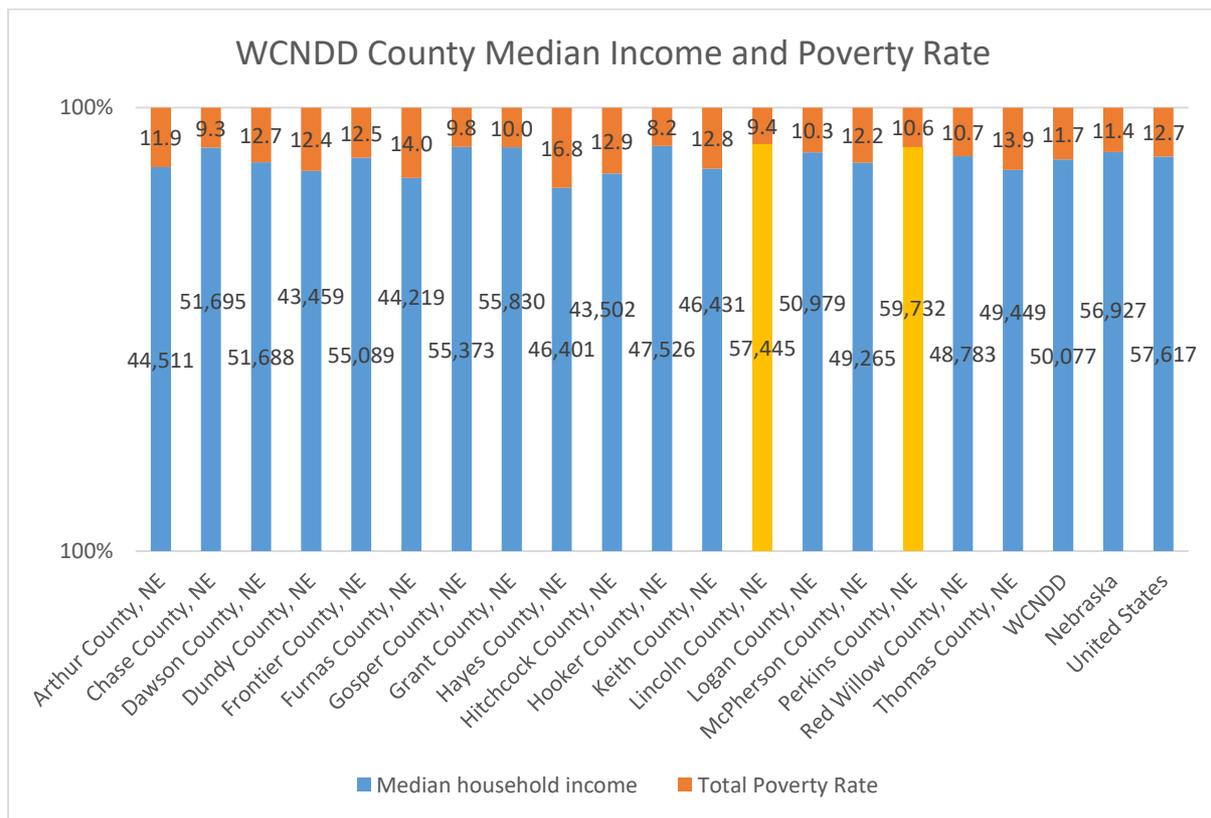
WCNDD continues to assist homeowners with owner-occupied housing rehabilitation. Over the past **five years, 40 homes** within the district have been brought up to required HUD standards of rehabilitation.

Household Income

From the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the population of Nebraska in 2017 was 1,920,076. The ranking was 37th in the nation, which is the same as the last CEDS in 2014. However, the Per Capita Personal Income ranked 21st in the United States.

In 2016, Nebraska had a per capita personal income was \$50,321 and was 99.9 percent of the national average, \$50,392.

On the whole Nebraska does well for their population size in comparison with the United States and has had a higher growth rate. Sixteen of the eighteen counties in the WCNDD are below the Median Household income of \$56,927 for Nebraska according to the American Community Survey of 2016. This remains the same from the CEDS of 2014. The Median Household Income for the United States in 2016 was \$57,617.

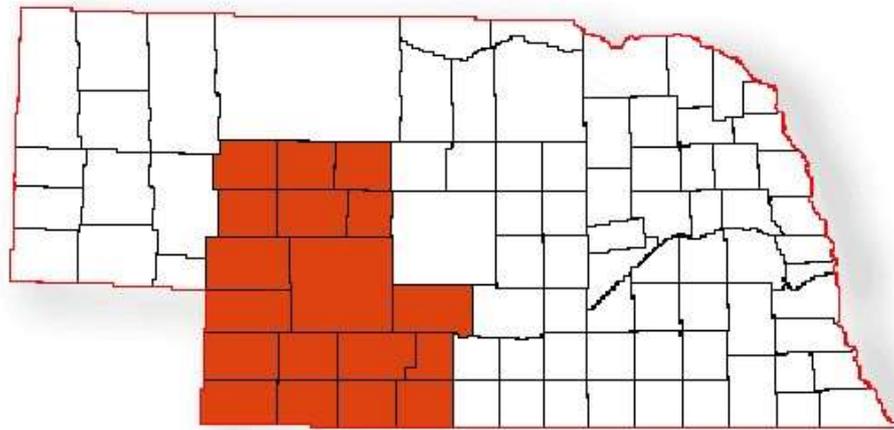


Geography

The West Central Nebraska District is located in the southwestern region of the state of Nebraska. As mentioned, the coverage area consists of eighteen counties; Grant, Hooker, Thomas, Arthur, McPherson, Logan, Keith, Perkins, Lincoln, Dawson, Chase, Hayes, Frontier, Gosper, Dundy, Hitchcock, Red Willows and Furnas.

The coverage area is shown below in the dark orange.

WCNDD



Source: diymaps.net (c)

Nebraska is roughly rectangular, except in the northeast and the east where the border is formed by the irregular course of the Missouri River and in the southwest where the state of Colorado cuts out a squared corner. The land rises more or less gradually from 840 ft (256 m) in the east to 5,426 ft (1,654 m) in the west. The great but shallow Platte River, formed in our district by the junction of the North Platte and the South Platte, flows across the state from west to east to join the Missouri south of Omaha. The Platte and the Missouri, together with their tributaries, give Nebraska all-important water sources that are essential to farming in this agricultural state. Underground water sources are also widely used for irrigation. The river valleys have long provided routes westward, and today the transcontinental railroads and highways follow the valleys.

To the west and northwest the Sandhills of Nebraska fan out, their wind-eroded contours now more or less are stabilized by grass coverage. Cattle graze on the slopes and tablelands, protected in the severe winters by the sand bluffs and the valleys.

The climate in the western half, including the WCNDD region, is a semi-arid climate. The entire state experiences wide seasonal variations in both temperature and precipitation. Average temperatures are fairly uniform across Nebraska, with hot summers and generally cold winters. Average annual precipitation decreases east to west from about 31.5 inches (800 mm) in the southeast corner of the state to about 13.8 inches (350 mm) in the Panhandle. Humidity also decreases significantly from east to west. Snowfall across the state is fairly even, with most of Nebraska receiving between 25 to 35 inches (640 to 890 mm) of snow each year.

Workforce Development

County	Labor Force	Employed Labor Force	Unemployed Labor Force	Unemployment Rate	Work at Home
Arthur County, NE	209	198	11	5.3	23
Chase County, NE	2,163	2,115	48	2.2	176
Dawson County, NE	12,626	12,321	305	2.4	373
Dundy County, NE	1,125	1,097	28	2.5	86
Frontier County, NE	1,467	1,432	35	2.4	121
Furnas County, NE	2,535	2,479	56	2.2	205
Gosper County, NE	1,030	1,004	26	2.5	58
Grant County, NE	399	388	11	2.8	35
Hayes County, NE	552	540	12	2.2	74
Hitchcock County, NE	1,204	1,165	39	3.2	129
Hooker County, NE	404	393	11	2.7	26
Keith County, NE	4,477	4,363	114	2.5	243
Lincoln County, NE	18,264	17,788	476	2.6	734
Logan County, NE	453	439	14	3.1	86
McPherson County, NE	429	420	9	2.1	
Perkins County, NE	1,747	1,714	33	1.9	145
Red Willow County, NE	5,757	5,625	132	2.3	393
Thomas County, NE	419	408	11	2.6	65
WCNDD	55,260	53,889	1,371	2.5	2,972

Source: Department of Labor

According to the Nebraska Department of Labor, the mid-2018 unemployment rate for Nebraska is 2.8% as compared nationally to 3.7%. Within the WCNDD district the unemployment rate is an average of 2.5% with 1,371 unemployed persons.

In the 2016 to 2026 Long-term Occupational Projections report compiled by NEworks, it is estimated that an additional 2,358 jobs will be made available throughout all the trades in the Nebraska Mid-Plains region. The largest growth in employment is projected within the Management, Healthcare Practitioner, Transportation, and Sales areas.

Currently over 2,900 workers in the District work from home. This number has the potential to grow as better broadband capabilities are integrated in our communities, providing faster and more secure Internet service. Home based business and at-home employment opportunities are increased with this advancement of technology.

Transportation

The vast majority of trips made in the district are in personal vehicles. According to the most recent American Community Survey, 80 percent of Nebraska commuters drive alone to work. That percentage drops slightly in our district.

Carpooling accounted for 10.5 percent and public transportation accounts for only a small share of commuters in the district. Since most of the areas within the WCNDD district are very sparsely populated, generally, there is limited or no public transportation between communities. Individual community handi-bus systems operate during business hours and usually not on the weekends. Two communities in the District, North Platte and McCook, have available taxi service, which operates with increased hours of service.

Modes of Transportation

Geography	Total Workers	Auto Drove Alone %	Auto Carpool %	Public Transit %	Work at Home %		Mean Travel Time to Work
Arthur County, Nebraska	159	64.2%	10.1%	0.0%	14.5%		20.2
Chase County, Nebraska	2128	78.8%	7.2%	0.1%	8.3%		N
Dawson County, Nebraska	11707	76.6%	15.9%	0.0%	3.2%		14.6
Dundy County, Nebraska	843	80.3%	1.4%	0.0%	10.2%		N
Frontier County, Nebraska	1064	67.8%	11.7%	0.0%	11.4%		N
Furnas County, Nebraska	2237	73.6%	10.9%	0.5%	9.2%		N
Gosper County, Nebraska	669	77.7%	6.1%	0.0%	8.7%		N
Grant County, Nebraska	321	65.4%	8.4%	0.0%	10.9%		18.6
Hayes County, Nebraska	365	60.3%	11.5%	0.0%	20.3%		N
Hitchcock County, Nebraska	957	72.8%	6.7%	0.2%	13.5%		N
Hooker County, Nebraska	374	62.8%	16.3%	1.9%	7.0%		N
Keith County, Nebraska	3980	76.8%	7.0%	1.5%	6.1%		N
Lincoln County, Nebraska	18363	82.7%	9.8%	0.4%	4.0%		15.4
Logan County, Nebraska	317	54.6%	11.7%	0.0%	27.1%		14.9
McPherson County, Nebraska	N	N	N	N	N		N
Perkins County, Nebraska	1497	78.0%	9.0%	0.1%	9.7%		N
Red Willow County, Nebraska	5852	80.2%	7.4%	0.2%	6.7%		12.9
Thomas County, Nebraska	353	57.8%	13.0%	0.0%	18.4%		N
WCNDD	51186	78.4%	10.5%	0.3%	5.8%		16.1
State of Nebraska		79.6%	9.9%	0.7%	5.2%		17.7

Airports

WCNDD Area Airports

City	Airport	LocID	Owner-ship	Role	Category		Current		2019-2023 Dev Estimate
					Current	Year 5	Enplaned	Based	
Cambridge	Cambridge Municipal	CSB	PU	Basic	GA	GA	0	14	\$2,005,000
Cozad	Cozad Municipal	CZD	PU	Local	GA	GA	0	15	\$3,909,500
Curtis	Curtis Municipal	47V	PU	Basic	GA	GA	0	5	\$1,921,673
Grant	Grant Municipal	GGF	PU	Local	GA	GA	0	25	\$3,265,796
Hyannis	Grant County	1V2	PU	Basic	GA	GA	0	5	\$1,500,449
Imperial	Imperial Municipal	IML	PU	Local	GA	GA	1	16	\$1,700,000
Lexington	Jim Kelly Field	LXN	PU	Local	GA	GA	0	27	\$1,537,366
McCook	McCook Ben Nelson Regional	MCK	PU	Local	GA	GA	1,619	26	\$1,241,760
North Platte	North Platte Regional Airport Lee Bird Field	LBF	PU	Regional	CS	CS	4,075	53	\$4,445,000
Ogallala	Searle Field	OGA	PU	Basic	GA	GA	0	14	\$3,152,500
Theadford	Thomas County	TIF	PU	Basic	GA	GA	0	5	\$1,495,667
Wallace	Wallace Municipal	64V	PU	Basic	GA	GA	0	12	\$0

The Nebraska Department of Roads and County Commissioners are responsible for Federal, State and county roads. Funding is from the Federal Highway Administration, State, and county local funds.

For those residents working outside of their communities or in rural areas must provide transportation by personal vehicle. The Trailways Bus System runs along the 1-80 corridor making two stops per day. There are only three stops on the route within our area; those being Lexington, North Platte, and Ogallala. There is no rail service offered within the district, other than Amtrak, which stops only in McCook.

Resources

Part of the Great Plains, Nebraska lies in the Midwestern United States. The state is one of the major ranching and farming centers in the country. In the 1860s, the government opened up the Nebraska territory and encouraged settlement of the area by offering free land grants to homesteaders. After the Civil War, Nebraska became a state. The state is rich in natural resources that have made agriculture an important component of the Nebraska economy.

Land

Nebraska contains fertile soil for agriculture and grassland for grazing. Deposits of nutrient-rich loess soil lie under most of the state's topsoil, which aids crops in surviving the meager rainfall that falls in the district. Corn, soybeans and wheat, which are some of Nebraska's major cash crops, thrive in this soil.

Farmers utilize intense conservation methods such as crop rotation to protect this fertile cropland. Scattered forest groves provide windbreaks that help prevent soil erosion. A portion of the Great Plains extends into the western half of the state, providing a vast amount of grazing land for cattle.

Minerals

Nebraska possesses few mineral resources. Sand and gravel pits, which are found along the Platte and Republican rivers, provide important commercial mineral reserves. These minerals are used for making concrete and surfacing roads. However, Nebraska also ships sand and gravel to neighboring states. Limestone quarries are located along the Missouri River in southeastern Nebraska. They produce stone used for roadbeds, the manufacture of cement, river improvement work and building purposes. The eastern part of the state contains outcroppings of clay suitable for use in manufacturing pottery, tile and brick. Small deposits of petroleum and natural gas have been found in the western part of the state.

Water

Rivers, lakes and groundwater provide major water sources in the state. The Platte River is Nebraska's principal waterway. It is too shallow for navigation; however, Nebraskans use it for recreation, hydroelectric power and irrigation. They also built dams to control the flow of rivers and provide water for irrigation and livestock. The state's large supply of underground water, found in the Ogallala Aquifer, led to the construction of many wells, which aid irrigation of crops. The numerous lakes dotting the state's countryside are small and shallow. People use them mainly for recreation purposes.

Environment

Land Use and Water

The land use of the WCNDD district outside of any urban areas is used primarily for agriculture and grazing. The northern most part of the District has some farming and crop production, but a large portion of the area is pastureland for grazing. The central area along the Platte River has fertile ground and irrigation supply canals that were built decades ago to help boost lively crop production. The southern portion of the district is again a combination of pastureland and crop production.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture reports that our ten leading commodities (in order of importance) are cattle and calves, corn, soybeans, hogs, wheat, dairy products, hay, chicken eggs, dry beans, and sugar beets. Every dollar in agricultural exports generates \$1.29 in economic activities. In 2012 there were a total of 49,969 farms and ranches with an average operation of 907 acres.

In order to support the over 49,000 farms and ranches, the district is situated over the Ogallala Aquifer, one of the world's largest aquifers, and is a vast underground lake. In a four-year study done by Kansas State University, researchers state that the life of the Ogallala Aquifer could be extended several decades, but only if water usage is reduced. Concerns of the depletion of the aquifer have caused some counties to place a moratorium on drilling irrigation wells. The absence of the aquifer will have the potential to turn productive farm ground into semi-arid ground. This prediction is not in our immediate future, however the change in the environment will cause a drastic change in the future economy of the district.

Natural Resources

There are several resource districts across Nebraska to coordinate efforts to conserve, sustain, and improve our natural resources and environment. The Upper Loup, Twin Platte, Upper Republican, and Middle Republican NRD's (Natural Resource Districts), work collectively in the district with groundwater management, tree conservations programs, grasslands and wildlife programs, and flood controls.

Air Quality

Nebraska regulations for air quality are derived from the Clean Air Act and the Nebraska Environmental

Protection Act (NEPA). The air quality regulations are found in Title 129 of the Nebraska Administrative Code. The air quality overall in Nebraska is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses little or no risk.

Chapter 2: Analysis of Economic Development Problems and Opportunities

In updating the plan, the modified analysis centered on the region as a whole rather than breaking it up into different sub-regions. It was apparent through meetings in communities that the core issues are the same across the region. Each participating community was asked to define what were their top priority issues. This allowed the communities to focus on their key objectives that they want to accomplish. There is also a realization that communities and their leaders have the ability to create the changes they desire more from within rather than expecting that someone from the outside will be able to do it for them.

One of the highest-ranking problems was population decline. With the loss of population, it creates a trickle-down effect that sometimes turns into a flood of problems. While everyone likes expansion and new housing subdivisions the reality is that only a few communities have the economic synergy to have those. In most cases it was the product of good future planning and calculated risks taken on by forward thinking leaders in their community.

There is a definite need for community clean up. As the population has declined properties have become dilapidated. This lends itself to a better model of in-fill replacement housing then a new development. The need to clean up abandoned or blighted areas was a high concern for participating communities. As a result of these meetings, several communities empowered themselves to participate in a community cleanup day/weekend. By directing individuals to speak to their public officials about helping pay for waste dump fees gave them the opportunity in which to begin cleaning up their community for a new face lift.

Public facilities were the next basic concern identified through the town hall meetings; public facilities being defined as water/sewer, street improvements, infrastructure, fire barns, emergency shelters and community centers. Almost all of the communities identified their need for streets, sidewalks, as well as curb and gutter. The opportunity for many communities to participate in an infrastructure project can be balanced with funding through the WWAC (Water Waste Water Advisory Committee), which is a resource partnership between the USDA Rural Development, Nebraska Health and Human Services (NHHS), the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED), and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ). This is a loan and grant opportunity that is offered to communities that are low-moderate income (I-MI) communities that have been identified LMI by the 2010 US Census and those that are not. The Nebraska Health and Human Services Revolving Loan Fund can also be utilized to obtain lower cost loans for repairs and

replacement as well. The priority-ranking list published by NHHS and DEQ will also offer additional relief to those communities who rank high on the list but do not have the test of credit in order to pay for all of the project costs themselves. The water/waste water and street projects utilizing NDED funding all require match funding provided by the community. All that utilize USDA funding will require that the municipality become a metered system, thus adding an additional economic hardship to the residents of those communities affected.

Business Development ranked third in the strategic process with many residents acknowledging the outmigration of the populations within their communities. Not only was it recognized that 'new' businesses were needed, there was no mention of 'business transition', which is even more of an integral part of the business development within a community. Many businesses continue closing as the older generation is retiring with no plan in place to take over an existing business. It could be determined that the total FTE's per business only averaged one or two persons.

Many communities define business development as a manufacturing plant bringing in 100 new employees to their community, rather than those micro business owners that may only host one or two employees but will have longevity for a long period of time. Communities are learning to focus on business development that grows their existing employers. Some have taken to the 10/80/10 idea that 10% is focused on entrepreneurship, 80% on economic gardening of existing businesses and 10% on recruiting new businesses. Even in the recruiting area, communities are more focused on realistic goals. Instead of responding to request for proposals for a 100-person employer they are looking at what they can provide and respond to the 10-person business proposal instead with the idea that they have a better chance at landing that type of employer that better fits their resources. It comes down to what is the best plan to allocate their limited resources to be successful in their return on community.

Funding for higher risk business ventures is available through WCNDD through the SBA lending program. WCNDD is partnering with Mid Plains Community College to promote a business development program to identify not only those entrepreneurs who may fit the role of becoming a new business owner but also find possible candidates for the business transition role.

The need for affordable housing is the constant thread in all communities within the region. Over half the homes (59%) in the Region were built prior to 1960 and without proper repair and maintenance throughout the past 50 years, are showing severe decline.

Owner occupied rehab programs are offered throughout the region, but there are limited funds, which limit the number of homes rehabilitated. With budget cuts across the board for housing programs, it is difficult for smaller communities to be able to build affordable housing rental projects. New construction is on the decline in small communities, as the cost of a new home is prohibitive to persons who are earning below the threshold requirement for market rate mortgages or rentals.

With the changes on the federal level concerning health care there is a concern for how it is affecting rural service providers, specifically hospitals. It is uncertain how many hospitals in our region will close or be forced to become part of a larger network in order to afford the mandatory requirements. Again, population plays a significant role in this situation. Most of our care facilities do not have the volume to absorb electronic medical record requirements, professional billing dedicated to understanding

Medicare and Medicaid re-imburements, specialty doctors, or coverage of malpractice insurance. It is a daunting task to open or transition a local medical clinic.

Also, our communities are facing a shortage of emergency responders. Less people in the community mean fewer people available to respond. The issue is more prevalent for ambulance service than firefighting response. There is a higher call volume for medical treatment or transportation. Employers are

What is a CEDS? In Nebraska we know football and a football team needs a playbook. Everyone on the team needs to know what the other player is doing in order for the offense to score. A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a region's playbook for engaging in a collaborative, region wide transformation of the economy in order to raise productivity, create wealth, and increase prosperity for residents. We don't want to be successful only when we are lucky. Sustained success comes from a good plan and a well thought out playbook. Success requires facing tough decisions and changing our approach to the game at hand.

High School sports have a high value in our rural region. It has a historical culture of competitiveness. Unfortunately, it has caused a lack of collaboration between communities. As a result of declining population some schools were forced to consolidate and disagreements arose on what would be the school name, mascot and what the logo would look like on the gym floor. Failure to address the collaborative disconnect will result in many of our younger residents continuing to seek economic opportunities elsewhere and leave.

In the past, promotion of quality of place seemed to be the resounding theme to attract new talent, retired or semi-retired households and businesses. Those types of conditions alone

are not sufficient for long-term sustainable growth and regional prosperity. It requires steady growth in the region's tax base with good paying wages and a labor force with increased skill sets. There is an increasing demand for highly skilled workers across all industry sectors. Wages are a function of skills, productivity, and supply and demand as well as the structural make-up of the regional economy.

What constitutes economic development and growth are not universally shared. In some venues there is even a lack of understanding in the difference between community development and economic development. The goal is economic transformation.

Using comprehensive data from the region, WCNDD has identified four core goals and the seven objectives that will help us reach those goals. Under each objective are a series of strategies intended to directly incorporate the region's challenges and opportunities provide a means for improving the region's economy. These goals, objectives, strategies and actions are the metrics by which WCNDD will measure the performance of the overall plan to improve the region. The plan will be reviewed and updated at least annually with an overall revision in 2020.

Goal 1: Act regionally

Objective 1.1 Collaboration with local, regional and state entities

Strategy 1.1 Be known and interactive

Action Plan 1.1A Compile list of all economic development organizations

Action Plan 1.1B Compile list of all community chamber of commerce

Action Plan 1.1C Contact all entities identified to provide introduction

Action Plan 1.1D Host an economic developers event

Action Plan 1.1E Implement a marketing plan

Goal 2: Community development

Objective 2.1 Develop community tools

Strategy 2.1 Provide key identifiable resources for communities

Action Plan 2.1A Nuisance Abatement Program

Action Plan 2.1B Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) program

Objective 2.2 Technology improvements for efficiency

Strategy 2.2 Determine what areas can be improved and funded

Action Plan 2.2A Geographic Information Systems (GIS) program

Objective 2.3 Rehabilitation of housing market

Strategy 2.3 Identify homes and lots for in fill

Action Plan 2.3A Utilize Owner Occupied Rehabilitation (OOR) Program

Action Plan 2.3B Encourage rehabilitation of aging housing structure & stock

Action Plan 2.3C Promote minimum property standards

Action Plan 2.3D Provide local option sales tax & LB840 information

Action Plan 2.3E Integrate CRA for infrastructure development & demo

Goal 3: Business Development (BD)

Objective 3.1 Enhance existing businesses

Strategy 3.1A Determine needs of business

Action Plan 3.1A Survey business

Strategy 3.1B Succession planning

Action Plan 3.1B Identify accounting firms

Action Plan 3.2B Provide information to accounting firms

Action Plan 3.3B Collaborate with Chambers of Commerce

Objective 3.2 Create an entrepreneurial environment

Strategy 3.2A Provide tools for new and expanding businesses

Action Plan 3.2A WCNDD Incubator

Action Plan 3.2B Assist local economic developers

Goal 4: Workforce Development

Objective 4.1 Increase qualities of workforce and wages

Strategy 4. IA Coordinate BD findings with Community College (CC)

Action Plan 4.1A Meet with CC curriculum coordinator

Strategy 4.1B Coordinate BD findings with High School (I-IS)

Action Plan 4.1B Meet with HS personnel

Strategy 4.1C Enhance spousal employment

Action Plan 4.1C Provide coordinating information

CHAPTER 4: Community and Private Sector Involvement

WCNDD will enlist the help of community partners throughout the Region. Officials of municipalities, lenders, other resource providers, and local economic development groups will be identified and invited to work together as a coalition, which would provide assistance in the event of future development in their community. This will be accomplished through a series of meetings within the community.

WCNDD personnel have participated in strategic planning sessions with Educational Service Units, hospitals, local economic development agencies and communities. We have also hosted office space for state workforce development personnel and participated in all hazards school safety and security plan workshops provided through the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

Through collaboration with local Chambers of Commerce, private sector businesses will identify workforce development skills that are required to enhance wage increases. Mid Plains Community College will be utilized to provide specific training if required for those private sector employers.

Communities will implement the required tools to enhance their ability to complete improvements to infrastructure and community clean up. Communities will lay the groundwork for in-fill lot clearing that will allow private development of those properties as the market allows. The Community provides the community development aspect so that the private sector can make the economic development investment.

CHAPTER 5: Strategic Projects, Programs and Activities

In order to fulfill the CEDS objective, WCNDD will continue to meet with business owners and city officials to gather critical community information. The community information gathered will be used to assess their needs and concerns to include regional collaboration, business development, workforce development, housing, revitalization, and improved public infrastructure.

Local officials will be informed regarding funding possibilities through the Economic Development Administration, USDA Rural Development, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Health and Human Services Revolving Loan Fund, NIFA, WCNDD's entrepreneurial technical assistance, and other private foundations for community development projects.

As a result of the information gathered, a report will be compiled for use as a business resource document to be utilized by WCNDD, to promote business development within the region as well as be provided to Mid Plains Community College to stimulate interest in the business development class for business expansion and transition within the region.

Job retention and business succession transition through work with accounting firms will be a project to help determine the number of jobs retained or created.

Professional staff of WCNDD will attend appropriate economic development conferences and other applicable regional meetings; visit with congressmen and legislators and their representatives about funding possibilities for communities in our region.

This is a vital program and key to building a community foundation for renewal and growth. WCNDD will continue to update and administer a Nuisance Abatement Program that has been made available to the communities of the region for the purposes of community cleanup, as well as the other Development Districts in the state. The program that was started by WCNDD has now been implemented in 30 communities in the state. The program will identify unsafe and unsanitary properties that may require demolition and thus freeing up sites for future business development or housing lots within the municipalities.

WCNDD will continue to develop the strategic planning processes in communities that have not participated previously. We believe this is a first step in determining the needs of the community and also identify future community or economic development projects to match up with possible funding resources.

These vital activities and programs will address the region's greatest need for business development and also to define opportunity for future investment within the region as well as benchmark the outcomes for future project based strategic plans.

CHAPTER 6: CEDS Plan of Action

Municipal governments must be an active participant in marketing their community and knowing what they can or cannot bring to the table to negotiate business development. Throughout every community, business owners will be interviewed by local Chambers of Commerce, with assistance as requested, as to their needs for the future as well as their retirement plans for business transition. Economic development and opportunities are identified through Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) surveys. In this way we promote growth through identification of work force requirements of the private sector and then maximizes Nebraska's workforce strategy. This also helps to retain jobs.

Business succession planning is key for our region and has had a hit and miss success. Accounting firms have been identified as key advisors to those businesses in how to properly structure an exit strategy.

This is a change in strategy as the goal for the business in the past was to reduce the tax burden and the shift is to maximize the value and sale price of the business. Only trusted advisors can provide this to the key business owners. It is our goal to assist those trusted accounting advisors with the information necessary to assist in a transition of a business succession plan.

The 180 corridor bisects the region into two different distinct areas. There are those communities who directly live on the corridor and those who are located in rural Nebraska. WCNDD will work with communities living along the corridor to evaluate their opportunities within the transportation industry as well as the possibility of warehousing along the corridor. The region is perfectly suited to warehousing due to the low cost of storage as well as in locale; it is 24 hours to each coast from the region.

Internet resource information is in abundance only in certain areas across the state and when reachable is easily accessible through web browser. Therefore, it will be important that each community has available advanced high capacity communications networks. Nebraska continues to be proactive in this area with a dedicated Nebraska Broadband Initiative. Also, the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development has been vital in providing funding for service providers to increase the networks available for rural Nebraska.

For those who have availability, there are several web sites that can be utilized as resource information for economic development within the region. Those sites are hosted by the Department of Economic Development, Workforce Development, Nebraska Public Power,

Nebraska Economic Developers Association as well as economic development groups organized in various communities. It will be important to make available web resource information to communities' region-wide.

The CEDS Plan of Action will utilize not only funding made available through the Economic Development Administration but through funds obtained through the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, Small Business Administration, and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. WCNDD provides a high degree of technical assistance and expertise to their current borrower base as well as will provide technical assistance and loans to new customers within the region through their lending programs.

Protection of the environment has become a larger issue in Nebraska due to the proposed Keystone pipeline. Water is the key resource in Nebraska and without it the ability to be the leader in Agriculture would be greatly diminished. WCNDD will continue to provide information and references to resources so community leaders can make informed decisions.

The WCNDD will continue to offer a Nuisance Abatement Program, and will collaborate with local community legal counsel to establish proper ordinances for the delivery of the program. This is a start to a process of cleaning up communities for future economic development growth within their boundaries.

WCNDD will encourage communities to participate in housing market studies to determine the numbers of safe, sanitary and affordable housing within their communities as well as the need for future housing development. Communities will be encouraged to utilize the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority as well as the Department of Economic Development to help fund the studies.

The physical development of infrastructure for community development is the responsibility of the local government. This requires leadership and proper planning for future development. WCNDD will continue to assist in this area including seeking financial resources that can be accomplished locally or through state and/or federal programs.

CHAPTER 7: Performance Measures

It will be important to measure the success of the CEDS by evaluating and monitoring the results of scope of work across the region. Other economic development opportunities should be measured as a collaborative effort within the communities as well. The timelines for completion are ongoing as the response of a community is beyond the control of the development district. Status reports to the WCNDD Governing Board will be provided on a monthly basis to monitor progress in all areas. In this manner the CEDS becomes an active part of each board meeting. Performance measurements are as follows:

Goal 1: Act Regionally

Identify all economic development organizations in the region and create a contact list.

Create a list of all community chambers of commerce.

Host an economic developers event.

Goal 2: Community Development

The number of communities that have or implement a Nuisance Abatement or Community Clean Up program.

The number of communities that have or create a Community Redevelopment Authority.

How many communities implement or have an electronic data collection system for utilities like GIS.

The number of lots available for housing in-fill projects.

The amount of housing Owner Occupied Rehabilitation provided.

The number of communities that have or adopt LB840 or local option sales tax.

The number of communities that promote or adopt minimum property standards.

Goal 3: Business Development

Count the number of Chambers of Commerce that were assisted with surveys of business needs.

Identify a list of accounting firms.

Count the number of accounting firms that were provided information concerning succession planning.

Track the number WCNDD Incubator clients served.

Track the number of requests received from local economic developers or businesses for assistance.

Goal 4: Workforce Development

Track the number of meetings with the Community College.

Track the number of meetings with High School officials.

EDA Requirements

WCNDD will also include, number of jobs created after implementation of the CEDS, number and types of investments undertaken in the region related to EDA, number of jobs retained in the region, amount of private sector investment in the region after implementation of the CEDS as it relates to EDA and changes in the economic environment of the region.

CHAPTER 8: Disaster and Economic Recovery and Resiliency

Summary

WCNDD Staff helped to write the Hazard Mitigation Plans for Frontier and Hitchcock Counties with support from NEMA and FEMA. State agencies contracted with firms to provide plans for other counties.

The plans were part of the State of Nebraska Hazard Mitigation Plan prepared by NEMA in 2011.

Counties are responsible for their own Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP). The plans contain the strategies necessary to provide overall resiliency to stabilize and support the region in the event of a disaster. These processes are universal for Nebraska and excerpts have been included from the CNEDD CEDS.

The full State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) is available at: <http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/nebraska-seop.pdf>

The full Hazard Mitigation Plan is available at: <http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/hazmitplan.pdf>

Background

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is charged by state statute to reduce the vulnerabilities of the people and communities of Nebraska from the damage, injury and loss of life and property resulting from natural, technological, or man-made disasters and emergencies.

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency has developed a framework of emergency planning and management, as follows:

The State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) establishes the policies, plans, guidelines and procedures that will allow agencies with emergency planning, response, recovery or mitigation responsibilities to function effectively when disaster strikes. This Plan is compliant and consistent with Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 5 and Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 8. The state, and the agencies involved, will operate within the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) in support of the National Response Plan and the National Response Framework.

A Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) establishes the standardized policies, plans, guidelines and procedures that will allow all our emergency resources, governmental and non-governmental, to collectively manage and coordinate the preparation, prevention, response, recovery and mitigation functions effectively and in a consistent manner, as a team, when disaster strikes. In content and in format, the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) is consistent with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and with the current nationwide concept embodied in the Integrated Emergency Management System (IEMS).

The mission of the Emergency Manager is to create a community organization to reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters. This is done by coordinating and integrating all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to alleviate against, prepare for, respond to and recover from threatened or actual natural disaster, acts of terrorism or other human caused disasters.

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency has developed a framework for the State and Local Governments to develop "basic emergency operation plans", which provide guidance in preparing for and managing a disaster event. These emergency plans and management procedures are reviewed, updated, and disseminated to numerous agencies and entities who are involved in the Planning process, and may be called upon to provide assistance during a Disaster event.

Each county in the State is responsible for developing a Local Emergency Operating Plan (LEOP) specific to their county and communities located within their municipal boundaries, and to employ an Emergency Manager who has received specialized training in coordinating disaster and emergency services when called upon to do so.

These Emergency Operations Plans and Manuals provide detailed guidance and an inventory of available resources that assist the Emergency Manager and others responding to the disaster/emergency to reduce the response to the disaster and service to the citizens of the community affected by the disaster.

Pre-disaster planning activities, conducted by the State and Local government, have identified the communication chain required as a result of a Disaster, and written LEOP's include a section devoted to "Communication" as part of their pre-disaster plan. This Communications section includes a local

Communications Capabilities listing, Nebraska Emergency Management Warning Network and contacts, Emergency Alert Systems Operational Areas, National Weather Service Areas and Primary Contacts, and the National Warning System.

Effective plans and procedures already in place, WCNDD's role is to have the proper required state Interlocal Agreements in place with our communities to be able to step in and provide services if funding flows through our agency in the event of a disaster. WCNDD is not a front line contact agency, but will provide recovery assistance with available financial resources post disaster, as they are available. We have provided housing assistance in the past after a disaster. WCNDD will contact County Emergency Managers and provide contact information and request to be included as part of their LEOP with updates.