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# Direction for Business

September 2010



## New Economy Innovation for Nebraska

*A Message from your Chamber President*

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How well positioned is Nebraska for future economic development growth? While the Cornhusker State has weathered the recent recession relatively well, how will we fare in future years? According to a study commissioned by the State of Nebraska's Department of Economic Development, Nebraska has solid economic fundamentals in place but has a pressing need to move up the value added curve.

Three initiatives to help Nebraska advance have been recommended by the Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, the economic development consulting arm of the world's largest independent non-profit research development organization. They are:

- Industry Cluster Initiative – providing tailored support to encourage development of growing industries in the state;
- Talent Advantage Initiative – connecting talented professionals and recent graduates with opportunities for high-skill jobs in Nebraska; and
- Innovative Initiative – supporting the innovative expansion efforts of companies already doing business in the state

Currently, Nebraska has 12 primary industry clusters that are driving the state's economic base. Of these, financial services, transportation, warehousing and distribution logistics, precision metals manufacturing, biosciences, and renewable energy were recognized as **current strengths** which are specialized, growing and outpacing national growth.

Three industry clusters (research and development and engineering services, health services and hospitality and tourism) were identified as **emerging strengths** or opportunities that are not specialized, but growing in

Lisa Willman

employment and may be gaining competitive share. These areas have strong potential to attract new investment and create new jobs.

Four industry clusters (agriculture and food processing, business management and administrative services, software and computer services, and agriculture machinery) have a significant presence in Nebraska. These companies are considered to be important to retain and would benefit from a highly-trained workforce. These clusters are **challenged in employment and competitive share.**

Talent Advantage Initiative. Nebraska is falling short in use of high skilled talent across primary industry clusters, including agricultural machinery, biosciences, business management and administrative services, precision metals manufacturing, research, development and engineering services, software and computer services. Strategies to address this deficiency include:

- Promote on-site and distance-related postsecondary student internships across the state with businesses in economic base industries
- Develop and market a Nebraska Jobs Search Site in collaboration with the Department of Labor to serve as a portal and networking vehicle with specific emphasis on connecting students and graduates with employer needs in targeted high skill occupations
- Revamp career and technical education in kindergarten through 12th grade targeted to high demand, high shortage occupations, including through virtual high school enabled by expanded broadband
- Enhance entrepreneurial opportunities by providing mentoring, training and increased capital access, particularly for high growth businesses
- Create targeted skill centers at post-secondary institutions for documented skill shortage areas
- Provide for incentives in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) occupations for graduates in high wage, high skill fields to work in Nebraska in target industry clusters for which there is a current and critical skill shortage

Industry Cluster Initiative. Recommendations for this initiative include:

- Enhance functionality of incentives for high impact projects
- Establish state agency cluster resource teams each with a lead DED staff person with initial focus on bio solutions
- Establish a strategic opportunity fund for site and facility development

- Provide competitive matching funds for project-based “cluster activities”, including formation of industry-led cluster organizations and industry-higher education collaboration centers
- Establish a major tourism destination in the Sandhills that capitalizes on the region’s unique scenic, ecological and recreational advantages

Innovation Initiative. Recommendations include:

- Expand Small Business Innovation Research outreach efforts
- Enact an angel investment tax credit
- Provide a financing mechanism for modernization and expansion to manufacturing companies tied to investments in improved productivity and higher wages
- Develop applied industry-university research matching grants for next generation product and process innovations
- Revise Nebraska Advantage tiers to provide incentives for manufacturing firms to modernize their business operations in a manner that generates increases in sales and raises wage levels
- Update efforts in modernization and technology advancement for manufacturing companies to also include a matching fund for product design, prototyping and testing
- Adopt and support minimum standards for broadband internet service to help grow the mobile and entrepreneurial economy
- Establish a statewide commercialization service to mentor and advise technology-oriented entrepreneurs and early stage companies
- Establish a private sector-driven Nebraska Innovation and Technology Development Organization
- Create a private sector driven venture financing entity for equity, near-equity, modernization and working capital.

Governor Heineman and state departmental leaders consider the report a roadmap for future economic development efforts, highlighting opportunities for better collaboration and offering ideas for accelerating new economy innovation in communities across Nebraska. While a timeline for implementation of these recommendations has not been established, it is likely that changes in the State’s economic development and labor practices and policies which reflect these suggestions will be discussed during the upcoming legislative sessions as decisions are made relative to program funding.

Essentially, changes in the economic landscape mean modification to approaches for growing business in Nebraska.

While the list may appear daunting, I am proud to say that many of the above recommendations are already being addressed in Grand Island thanks to aggressive and visionary action by your Chamber Board. Grand Island is indeed a can-do community!



Hamilton Information Systems Business After Hours, August 12, 2010.



Tim and Brenda Branstiter, Kent Brown, and Cindy Johnson visit at the Hamilton Information Systems Business After Hours.



Silpada Designs Jewelry invited the Connectors to a ribbon cutting on August 13, 2010 to celebrate their new Chamber partnership.



Central Community College celebrated the completion of their Health/Science Education Center with a ribbon cutting on August 19, 2010.

## Husker Harvest Days

There's no better way to get a sense of the business of agriculture than by attending the largest working agriculture show in the United States – Husker Harvest Days.

September 14-16 will mark the 33rd year that the Grand Island community showcases the importance of the ag industry by playing host to Husker Harvest Days. Each year, tens of thousands of people from around the globe travel to Grand Island to experience Husker Harvest Days, the cream of the crop in ag shows, and all it has to offer; 600 exhibitors, working field demonstrations, cutting edge machinery, stock animal handling demonstrations, crafts, and free health screenings. If previous years are any indication, we can expect visitors from more than 20 states and 10 foreign countries. New product introductions from many of the corporate entities are planned. Many manufacturers take the opportunity to offer a first to look at their latest machinery or products at Husker Harvest Days.

Field plots of the latest genetics designed specifically for this part of the Corn Belt can also be seen.

Recognizing the \$5 million economic impact these visitors and exhibitors have on the Grand Island area (and realizing how other cities would love to host a show of this magnitude), demonstrating our community's support for the event is appreciated!

Husker Harvest Days, located west of Grand Island on Husker Highway, is open today from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Parking is free. Daily admission is \$7 for adults and students 13 -17 are admitted for \$5. Shuttle buses are available at both north and south Wal-mart Super Center Stores, and Orscheln Farm & Home (515 South Webb Road). Shuttles will run on the hour. For more information, contact the Chamber, 382-9210.

## Nebraska State Fair Feedback

Here is a sampling of comments received by the Chamber regarding the inaugural Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island.

"You should be very proud of what you and all of Grand Island have accomplished with the State Fair!! I attended twice (first Saturday and last Sunday) and was pleasantly impressed! The livestock facilities and arenas are top notch. It's amazing to think how quickly all of this came together.

My first impression was one of feeling lost. I've attended the State Fair since I was young and this year - I couldn't find the entrance gate!! After walking around and finding most things the first day, I felt more at home the second day. I really want to compliment you on the volunteers and people at the gates, etc. They were so pleasant and helpful. I even had someone on a cart stop on Sunday morning to ask if I needed help finding something (I was looking for the Bristol Window stage for church), she gave me directions and then offered us a ride. No one ever did that in Lincoln!! Everyone was very friendly and I heard several comments about that.

I know you will continue to improve the grounds and facilities in future years and it will get even better. I just wanted to say congrats to you and staff - I know you have worked hard and remained positive while a lot of folks were saying it would never work. What a great feeling to have one successful year behind you!!

I'm sure you are all exhausted.....but know that hundreds and hundreds of people enjoyed the fruits of your labor. Great job!!" - Roberta

"I know you are swamped – but just one more thing – everyone is just buzzing about all the WONDERFUL comments received from attendees (local and elsewhere!) from the restrooms – (lots of them and constantly clean!) to the enthusiasm and customer service of the staff – and everything in between ! You guys should be very proud. (I have heard many say – "I was skeptical this year – but next year – I'm volunteering!") You guys took on one HUGE mountain – but WOW – the rewards were awesome. I tried to thank every volunteer that I came into contact with! You should be VERY, VERY proud." - Sandi

"Congrats to you, your staff and all those volunteers. You could literally feel the pride in the community. And as the fair board and local volunteers reflect, and build upon what was accomplished, I can't wait to see what the future brings due to the efforts you, and many others brought in not only bringing the Nebraska State Fair to Grand Island, but making it a huge success. One word comes to mind, "FANTASTIC"." - Jeff

***OUTSTANDING!!! It was a "GRAND AFFAIR"!***  
Congratulations to all involved.....at the Chamber, the City, in Grand Island, in the Heartland and throughout Nebraska!! (And the State Fair staff did a get job with keeping the grounds clean!! .....even when the wind blew 2-3-4 days above 25 mph) – Kurt

## New Chamber Partners

*September 2010*

Farmers Insurance Group  
Amanda Hanquist  
Kmart Plaza  
3537 W. 13th Street  
Suite #103  
Grand Island, NE 68803  
308.382.8787

Full Circle Venue  
Misti Williams  
1010 Diers Avenue  
Suite #4  
Grand Island, NE 68803  
308.227.6470

Rustad Dermatology  
Dr. Elliot Rustad

3016 West Faidley Street  
Grand Island, NE 68803  
308.384.0133

Sassy's Hair and Tanning Studio  
Jamie Moser  
2808 Old Fair Road Suite F  
Grand Island, NE 68803  
308.382.9196

309 West 2nd Street | PO Box 1486 | Grand Island, NE 68802-1486  
Phone: 308.382.9210 | Fax: 308.382.1154

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