



NETForce Meeting

Friday, April 13, 2018

Informal Networking – 9:00-9:30 a.m. (CST)

Meeting – 9:30 a.m. (CST) – 2:45 p.m. (CST)

Holthus Conference Center

York, NE

The meeting convened at 9:30 a.m.

Nancy Eberle called the meeting to order.

Steve Bors brought greetings on behalf of Southeast Community College, Director of the SCC Entrepreneurship Center.

Present: Steve Bors, Brooke, Jim Reiff, April Myers, Chad Johnson, Marilyn Schlake, Monica Braun, Gregg Christensen, Nancy Eberle, Doris Lux, Dagen Valentine, Gene Knapp (SCORE), Kathy Eitzmann. Attending via WebEx conference call Judy Amoo.

Everyone was asked to introduce themselves.

Minutes

The draft minutes for the NETForce meetings of February 22, 2017 and September 22, 2017, which have been available online at <https://www.education.ne.gov/entreped/net-force/>. Doris Lux moved, Marilyn Schlake seconded that both sets of minutes be approved. Approved unanimously.

Entrepreneurship Best Practices Summit

The budget report was shared for the 2017 EBPS Summit. Total receipts as of 4/1/18 were \$7,800.00 and total expenses were \$6,127.51 for an estimated net income of \$1,672.49.

The balance in the EBPS Summit account housed at UNL is currently 11,017.16.

The venue for the 2018 conference has been confirmed for the Holthus Convention Center in York, Nebraska.

- The contract is in process. Total rental is \$1,500.00.
- The Summit will be October 30, 2018.

Marilyn indicated there were 86 participants, 30 speakers in attendance at the 2017 Summit in Kearney. She also reported on the stats and feedback from the evaluation survey:

- 42 responses on evaluation
- 55% were educators
- 28% were economic developers
- 12% were community developers
- 5% were entrepreneurial advocates

General feedback received via the evaluation included:

- They loved the keynote speakers and Big Idea Talks.
- Andy Stoll (Kauffman-Kansas City) received great reviews.
- They enjoyed networking with others.
- They felt the Summit was very well organized and the sessions were very beneficial.

Suggestions from the evaluation:

- Appreciation was expressed for having it in Kearney (more geographically accessible for non-Lincoln and Omaha participants)
- More agriculture-oriented entrepreneurship was recommended
- More networking was suggested
- Add high school examples into breakout sessions
- Promote to legislators
- More time for questions

Marilyn will send the evaluation to Gregg electronically to share.

Discussion and feedback from the NETForce meeting participants included:

- We need to work on having sessions featuring Ag entrepreneurship.
- Doris suggested partnering with SCORE for Ag entrepreneurship sessions.
- Gregg mentioned having Nancy and Tom Field assist in identifying ag entrepreneurs
- Organizations that best support ag entrepreneurs include:
Engler Agri-Business Entrepreneurship Program, UNL Center for Entrepreneurship, Agri-Ecotourism with Nebraska Tourism, Nebraska FSA, LEAD program, Farm Credit Services, Women in Ag, Ag-Ceptional Conference for Women hosted by NECC or Northeast Economic Development (Marilyn will check). Judy will think about some possible speakers from Western Nebraska.
- The online Request for Presentations RFP is now live. The group was encouraged to distribute information about the RFP far and wide
- Dave Rippe, State Director of DED has been confirmed to be a keynote.
- The group felt we should pursue having Andy Stoll return to do another keynote and follow-up breakout session(s). If we have Andy Stoll, possibly have a limited registration for a breakout session.
- Josh Berry with Econic was suggested as another good keynote speaker.
- Jeremy Bowman with Divine Ventures was suggested.
- Dagen Valentine suggested we might use Zoom to engage more people statewide.
- Doris Lux noted using virtual meeting concept.
- UNL can offer livestreaming at a fee. Marilyn will research the cost.
- April Myers (Director-Business Development for Greater Nebraska) will serve on the planning committee.

Chad Johnson, NPPD Education Specialist Presentation

Chad shared the work he is doing to focus young people on the opportunities in STEM careers. The decision was made to create pathways to a technical future. The curriculum integrates STEM skills with workforce skills (employability/career readiness skills).

NPPD has created a mobile MakerSpace.

NPPD has also sponsored the Create Open (competitive robotics competitions) that does not have required the use of VEX parts. This year's event was the 5th season and there were over 40 robots. It is focused on middle school through high school youth.

A robotics program was started in Aurora 3 years ago. In addition, Youth Engaged in Technology and Innovation, a non-profit after school program was created. An extension of this is entrepreneurship.

NPPD will start giving away circuit boards that will take you to a shopping cart to get parts to build a robot.

They will be hosting a robot tournament in titled the Aurora Robot Open and Innovation Showcase.

- Business displays with hands-on components will be set up.
- They will have 48 robot teams, 50 businesses. There will be 25 teams NOT focused on robots, but focused on innovation instead with an industry challenge provided by a business. Participants will be challenged to work on a project. A full blown MakerSpace will be at the facility to allow them to build mock-ups and prototypes.
- This event is the only fundraising they do to sustain their work all year long.
- Culture of Innovation is planned to sustain MakerSpaces. They will remodel Technology Center space into full-blown MakerSpace (permanent facility).
- They have raised \$15,000 already, goal is \$150 K.
- They are looking at not just startups, but also spawning business relationships.
- Want it to be a big event with entrepreneurship focus.
 - Four categories will be focused on:
 - Energy Category
 - Ag Category
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Small Business Startup/Entrepreneurial
- It takes over 50 people to run the event but the expansion will require 100 people.
- The event is planned for the first Saturday in February (February 2, 2019)
- 3-5 kids on team for Robotics competition
- Kids can do individual projects as well.
- Currently the gender breakout is 90% male, 10% female.
- NPPD is working with the Economic Development Group (out of Kearney office of NPPD).
- The MakerSpace will be 3,500 square feet (Technology Center will be remodeled).
- The Technology Center is 100% on board.

A goal is to figure out how to get high school and college teams to participate. It was suggested that Chad reach out to Nebraska 4H and the Nebraska Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) including SkillsUSA, FFA, FBLA, DECA, and FCCLA.

Gregg volunteered to set up a meeting with Chad and the Nebraska Career Education Career Field Specialists and CTSO Advisers.

Chad was also encouraged him to submit presentation proposal for the Summit.

Luncheon Panel

Bruce Wagner (Wagner Decorating)

- The family has been in York for 50 years
- They owned the Ace Drive In Restaurant
- They then purchased Wagner Decorating and the mother and brother were engaged in the business.
- It started out as paint, paper, and craft store but when Walmart came to town they backed off crafts and moved to other merchandise.
- Six years ago they added toys back to their inventory and now have 3,000 different SKUs.
- Clientele comes from Omaha, Lincoln and it has become a destination retailer

- They are a Hunter-Douglas premiere Gallery and their grand opening drew 250 in attendance/
- They continue to sell gift items and do custom picture framing.
- Over the years have just looked to what York needs and can support.
- They try to promote to community members that they are part of the hometown team.
- They draw from 50 miles away, with 60-70% of customers from York.

Taylor Siebert (Striv)

- Taylor was one of speakers at EBPS 2017
- Striv combines streaming and live video.
- Striv is based in Henderson, NE
- Taylor graduated from Heartland Public Schools and Doane University.
- He shared that he had an Impactful professor who focused on entrepreneurship
- Word of mouth is how Striv grew and it now serves over 80 schools.
- The goal is to help schools share their stories on-line.
- Striv is starting E-Sports video games.
- Class Intercom is a social media platform for schools available through Striv and is now in 30 schools in 10 different states
- Striv treats themselves as a media company and they employ 3 core people along with the use of a lot of independent contractors.
- Striv train students how to use the media technology.
- Taylor gave a “shout out” to Cornerstone Bank for being an amazing partner.
- They will not franchise because he does not think it is that would work.

Lisa Hurley (York County Development Corporation)

Lisa gave an overview of some the work that she and the Corporation engage in.

- Small Business Week is April 30, 2018.
- National Economic Development Week is the (1st week in May).
- They will be rolling out videos on “Why York County?”
- A talent website that will be located under York County Development focused on the theme “Why York County? Is also under development. It will feature 10 different videos
- Lisa noted that they have shifted from requiring a business plan, to giving them the template and focusing more on having potential entrepreneurs think it through.
- She noted that nationally we are 100K startups down from where nation should be.
- York County is trying to figure out how to promote new business startups.
- They are working with SCC on workforce training.
- Currently all of the industry is on the north side of town.
- They are working to become a destination (retail pull is twice the state average).
- They have also rolled out their first virtual reality videos (economic development tour, quality of life tour, talent recruitment video, tourism video, and student recruitment for York College)
- The three exciting projects currently underway are focused on housing, retail, and workforce/
- York is currently at a 1% growth rate

Three Minute Highlights of Activities by NETForce Members

Extension - Dagen Valentine

- Two locations for InVENTURE Days curriculum.
- Delivery will be through summer programming
- The Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference will be held October 4 and 5 (<https://communityvitality.unl.edu/connecting-entrepreneurial-communities>).
- The Nebraska Library Commission and Extension are working on mobile makerspaces.
- Nebraska Children and Family Foundation is interested in delivering and entrepreneurship after-school challenge.

Gene Knapp – SCORE

- SCORE will be working closely with Farm Service Agency to provide mentoring with their clients
- SCORE has 10,000 volunteers nationwide.
- They rotate people from the field as board members.
- There are 7 regions for SCORE.
- Their website is <https://www.score.org/>.

Doris Lux - Central Community College

- The Columbus chapter of SCORE has 2 grants – Table Talks grant that offers table talks twice a month (incubator businesses and others attend) and a Paycheck grant (HR grant coordinates with HR group in town for employee questions).
- The High School Entrepreneurship Showcase will be on Sunday April 15, 12:00-4:00 at Farmers Market.
- The NACCE Verizon Grant events will be held in Hastings and Columbus.
 - They are looking for 100 females (5, 6, 7 grade); low income; 70-80% reduced lunch
 - Verizon wants to train 200,000 girls by 2025
 - 15 colleges across the nation will be involved in the grant program this year
- Doris is working with 24 businesses (well over 50% are Spanish-speaking)
- CCC and Doris will offer three entrepreneurship summer camps.
- Doris will be retiring in September. The group wished her well but will miss her energy and enthusiasm for fostering entrepreneurship statewide and beyond!

Nancy Eberle

- Nancy indicated she will be helping Doris facilitate the Verizon Grant activities.
- She will also be helping with a couple of ESI camps.
- The ESI curriculum is adding more digital based curriculum.
- Now that she is retiring, she plans to expand her Woody Florals business.

Steve Bors – Southeast Community College Entrepreneurship Center

- The SCC Entrepreneurship Center now has 20 Focus Suites, all are full and there are 6 on a waiting list.
- The SCC Culinary program has new space so there is now an open commercial kitchen space they would like to turn into an incubator program.
- It was suggested that No More Empty Pots and Kitchen Council might be contacts for occupying the commercial kitchen.
- Blueprint Incubator paid for by Kidwell Electric is a blue-collar incubator

Monica Braun –REAP

- There were 60 participants in the Women’s’ Entrepreneurship Conference
- Evaluations were all positive.
- This was the first time it was held in Kearney.
- Online Marketing Strategies training is on the agenda coming up
- Monica Braun is retiring after 12 years as Women’s Business Center Director and 16 years with the Center for Rural Affairs. The group wished her well but will miss her participation in NETForce.

Marilyn Schlake – Extension

- The Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference was held April 4-5 in Hastings.
- The venues for this unique conference are the actual the retail locations with the meetings held in the retail space.
- Two breweries were involved this year.
- They brought in 2 national speakers (Jason Lindsey, Retail Academy in Atlanta; Michael Fortunado, Community Developer)
- They will be posting an RFP for 2019, 2020; probably going north in the state because it is a very regional conference.
- Marilyn and the University have conducted 5 county business surveys (1,200 businesses and 39% return rate)
- A grant from USDA will provide training on what these businesses need.
- Marilyn is no longer on youth entrepreneurship team.
- She will be working with Cathy Lang on the SourceLink prototype. For now SourceLink will be strictly University of Nebraska based and focusing on e-communities and eco-systems.

Jim Reiff – Nebraska Enterprise Fund

- NEF is publishing a calendar every quarter.
- If anyone sees a topic needed they are encouraged to contact Jim.
- One on one consulting is going very well

April – Nebraska Enterprise Fund

- NEF will be offering Sales Acceleration Training
- In addition, they will be doing a workshop on Disaster Preparedness for Small Business (2 hours over lunch).

Judy – Scottsbluff Business Masterminds/SCORE

- On 2/22/18, Korey Donahoo, Founder of the American Outlaws, was invited to Scottsbluff by the Scottsbluff Business Masterminds, to tell his story about how the American Outlaws was founded in Lincoln, Nebraska in 2007 and has grown to more than 30,000 unified and dedicated soccer fans nationwide, providing support to the U.S. National Soccer Teams. Korey’s story is a fascinating journey about how his interest in soccer led to the establishment of this growing international organization.
- Korey will be visiting the Scottsbluff Business Masterminds on Thursday, Feb. 22 as part of National Entrepreneurship Week. Donahoo founded the American Outlaws in 2007, a group with more than 30,000 members who support our national soccer teams. The Scottsbluff Masterminds are a local grassroots club of entrepreneurs established in 2013 to act as the “ultimate peer group,” as members problem-solve and learn from each other. The mission of the Scottsbluff Masterminds is to inspire, innovate, and impact the community through entrepreneurs.

- See Judy's Activities Summary for more complete information.

Gregg – Nebraska Department of Education

- Gregg continues to do communications and outreach via the Nebraska Entrepreneurship listserv, Twitter (@NDE_EntreED), and the website (<https://www.education.ne.gov/entreped/>)
- The deadline for submission of information for the Entrepreneurship Conferences and Competitions Brochure was revised to April 17th to give more time for dates and key information for the 2018-2019 academic year. The flyer highlights entrepreneurship activities, conferences and competitions and copies are shared at reVISION meetings, Nebraska Career Education conferences and workshops.
- The Nebraska Career Tours Videos (www.nebraskacareerclusters.com) for 2018 (Round 5) are still being filmed. The Teacher Discussion Guides and Student Viewing Guides will be developed once all the videos are finalized. The Career Tours videos are “virtual tours” of Nebraska businesses.
- Schools engaged in reVISION for 2017-18 will be submitting their 3-5 year action plans and applying for Action Grants (grant applications due May 1).
- Gregg will be attending the Summit hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City on April 25-26. The Growing Entrepreneurial Communities Summit is a practitioner-focused summit designed to help economic development and small business practitioners effectively create economic growth through entrepreneurship in local communities.
- The Nebraska Career Education Conference (June 4-7, 2018) will include special poster sessions presented by schools who are engaged in school-based enterprises. Also, Maker Space tables and areas will be set up by NPPD, ESU 10, Beyond School Bells, and Custer Capable Mobile STEM Lab in the Younes Conference Center as well as in the parking area outside the Center.
- On Tuesday and Wednesday, June 5th and 6th, a special track of work-based learning best practices sessions will be presented by schools who are successfully implementing workplace experiences.

Report on NEED Ecosystem Prospectus – Catherine Lang (NBDC)

- It was mentioned that Steve Bors, Doris Lux and Gregg Christensen had volunteered to serve in some capacity (committee work) for the NEED planning.
- Cathy said that the idea for the NEED Ecosystem came out of a conversation with NBDC and Nebraska Extension (connected with Don Macke's work on community vitality).
 - They are currently working on the creation of a web platform for the entrepreneurial eco-system in Nebraska. Items noted during the discussion included:
 - We know there is an incredibly vibrant entrepreneurial eco-system in Nebraska.
 - The Nebraskaentrepreneurship.com website (<https://www.neentrepreneurship.com/>) is minimally maintained and is basically stagnant. Ben Dutton does try to update it on occasion.
 - The Omaha Chamber has something similar.
 - There is an energy growing to create a platform for Omaha entrepreneurial service providers.
 - Don Macke and Cathy Lang will fund the University piece of this. The platform that has been chosen to pilot is SourceLink. It would first map the university resources, then it would be determined if a collaborative partnership could be created for other service providers to join in. If it works, the plan would be to build it out.
 - Cathy has had conversations with others around the nation and the opinions about SourceLink have been very positive.

- One idea would be to include a calendar to assist all of our work.
- Jim Reiff indicated that one of this challenges he is concerned about is that we not let this be a siloed platform. It will be important to figure out how to make it most user-friendly. There is a need for it to be super specific about what needs to be on it and who can be on this platform. Relationships are key to its success.
- Dagen Valentine mentioned AI Chatbot as a way to guide people to the resources on the website.
- Multiple comments were made that it needs to be statewide in scope.
- The biggest challenge is the price tag. Foundations might need to be brought to the table.
- Informal conversations have been taking place with the Peter Kiewit Foundation.
- NBDC has pledged to be the host.
- Cathy mentioned the experience of one state that had it, loved it, then the governor cut the budget causing them to have to rebuild it completely.
- The platform allows each community to have its own branded entry point.
- SourceLink builds the platform and then it is sustained by the state entity purchases its services.
- Lincoln has its Startup LNK as an example of a locally created website.
- It could be a subscription service that communities could join.
- Entrepreneurs, business, community, economic development would be the focus points.
- Heidi Garvin mentioned a geofilter might be incorporated. Tracking data and keywords are used to map the ecosystem to help identify gaps in service providers.
- Kauffman Foundation might be a funding source to explore.
- Nancy posed the question of how this will help very small communities. Doris thought the community colleges could be the key assistance points to meet this challenge.
- It was noted that a conversation with Jeff Yost and the Community Foundation might be productive.
- Don Hulme posed the question of “Who is the customer for this?” The response was that it would be for entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship advocates and service providers, and economic developers.

Friday, September 7th is the next NETForce meeting and it will be held at the Grand Island Career Pathways Institute. We have met there once before.

Respectfully submitted

Gregg Christensen, Secretary