



**NROC**  
Nebraska Regional  
Officials Council



# **Rural Economic Development:** Responding to Immediate Needs, Preparing for the Future

June 2022

# AGENDA

- ▶ **NROC & EDD Overview:**
  - ▶ **Who we are - your Resource**
- ▶ **Economic Development**
  - ▶ **Workforce - filling jobs we have**
    - ▶ **Housing**
    - ▶ **Broadband**
    - ▶ **Child Care**
- ▶ **Opportunities & Questions**



# NROC

Nebraska Regional  
Officials Council



[www.nrocne.com](http://www.nrocne.com)

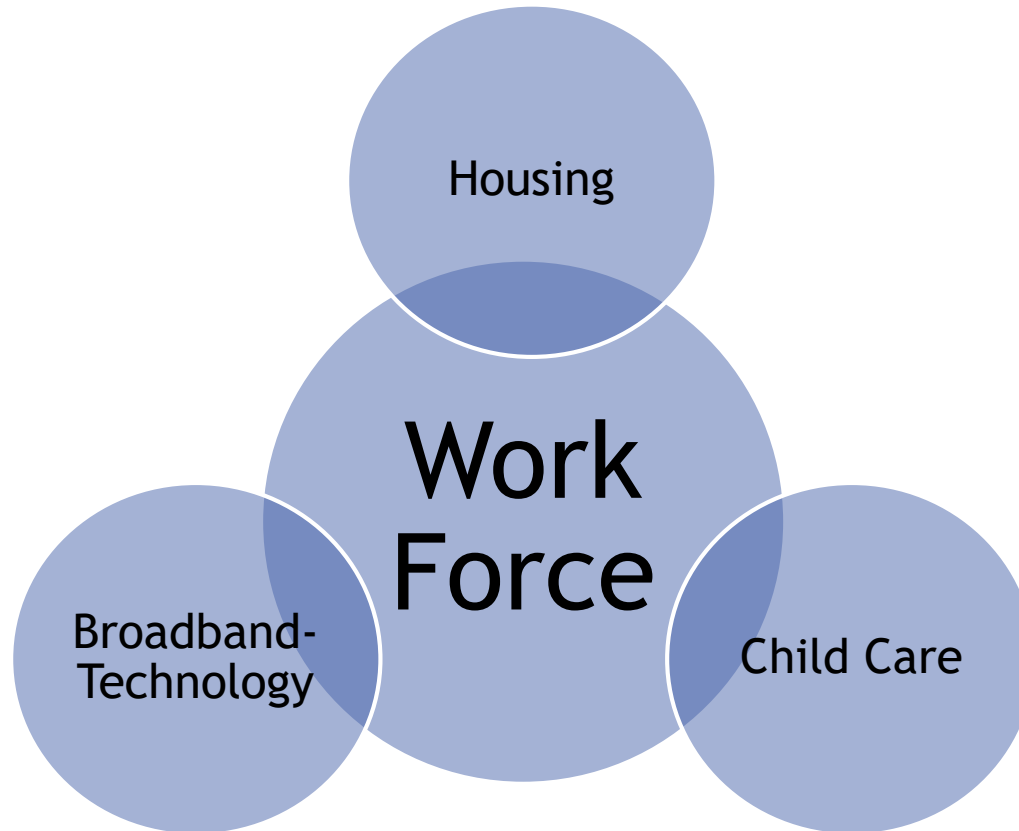
## ▶ NE Statute 13-1904. Development District

- ▶ A development district shall, as directed by its policy board, **serve as a regional resource center and provide planning, community and economic development, and technical assistance to local governments** which are members of the district and may provide assistance to industrial development organizations, tourism promotion organizations, community development groups, and similar organizations upon request.

## ▶ Economic Development Administration Designation

- ▶ Dept. of Commerce, US Government

# RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FACTORS





# Workforce

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**Nebraska**  
The Good Life Is Calling

**The door of *opportunity* is everywhere. But it's easier to find when people hold it *open*.**

# Regional Employment Summaries

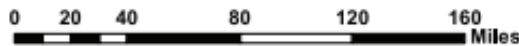
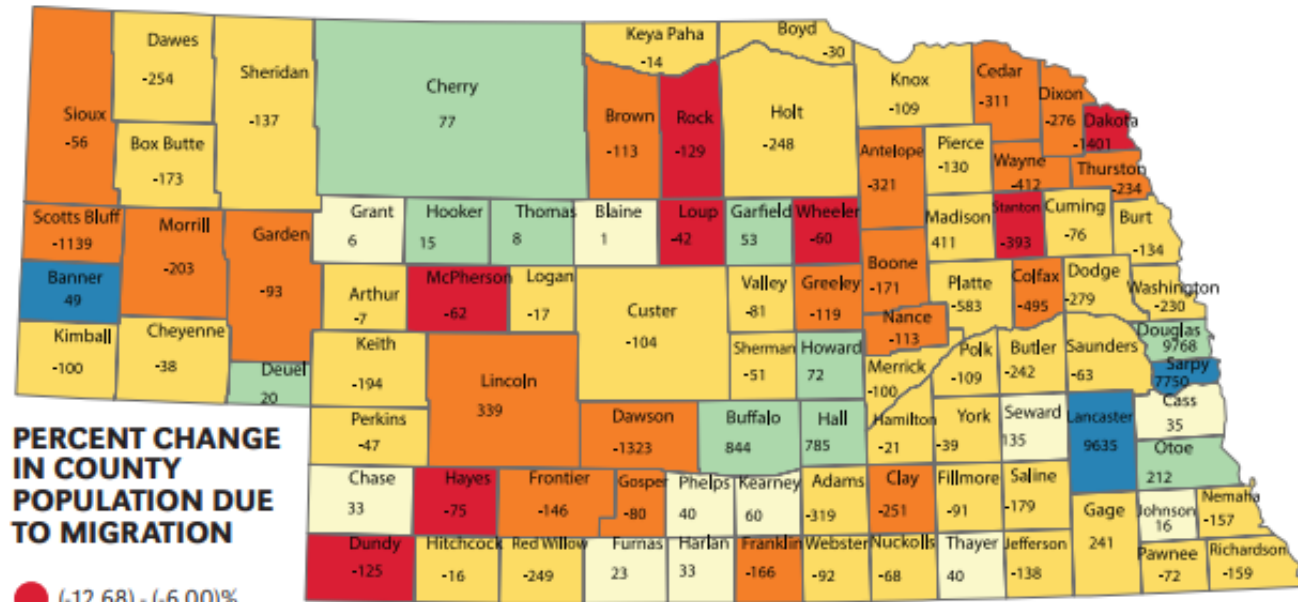


County	Unemployment Rate	Open Jobs on NEworks
Adams	1.7%	1,094
Buffalo & Kearney	1.6%	1,915
Dawson & Gosper	1.9%	346
Gage	1.8%	502
Platte	1.6%	1,444
Red Willow & Hitchcock	1.6%	153
Scottsbluff, Banner & Sioux	2.1%	1,168
Lancaster	1.8%	8,966
Douglas	2.2%	21,931
Sarpy	1.8%	4,008

Source: <https://www.dol.nebraska.gov/infolink> > Regional Summaries & NEworks Area Profile, as of April 2022.

# Nebraska Population Migration

**FIGURE 1. OVERALL NET MIGRATION AND PERCENT CHANGE IN POPULATION BY COUNTY FROM 2010 TO 2015**



Source: US Census Bureau, "Estimates of the Components of Resident Population Change: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2015" (PEPTCOMP)

Note: County numbers represent net migration counts (the difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants in each county).



## Workforce



- ▶ **Brain Gain** *not the* Brain Drain - Flip your Script!
- ▶ 30-49 year olds migrate to rural communities for:
  - ▶ 1) A Simpler Life
  - ▶ 2) Safety & Security
  - ▶ 3) Affordable Housing
  - ▶ 4) Outdoor Recreation
  - ▶ 5) Quality Schools

*Relocate...Not  
for a job!  
Many can  
choose to work  
anywhere!*

Source: University of Minnesota Extension, Rural Brain Gain Migration, retrieved May, 2022

## ▶ Nebraska Rankings:

# 3

Hardest Working  
State

*WalletHub, 2021*

# 4

New Economic  
Development  
Projects Per Capita

*Site Selection, 2020*

# 5

Most Diverse  
Economy

*Bloomberg, 2019*

# 7

Best Work  
Environment

*WalletHub, 2021*

# The Welcome Message: *If you can work from anywhere, live here!*

## THELEN FINDS "RARE OPPORTUNITY" AT HOLDREGE DANCE STUDIO

27 APR 2022

The pandemic created a lot of challenges, but it also led to the purchase of a local dance studio.

Mady graduated from Woodbury University with a bachelor's degree in dance from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

After graduation, she moved to Holdrege and became a member of City of Holdrege. She also is certified in different teaching methods.

But, during the COVID pandemic, she moved temporarily to Lincoln to be with her family and "fell in love with the area and purchase a dance studio area."

"This was an opportunity that I didn't know I had," she said.

## WHY PEOPLE WHO HAVE TRAVELED THE WORLD CHOOSE TO LIVE IN PHELPS COUNTY

18 MAY 2022

news

Out of all of the places Jack and Amanda Kraus have lived, Holdrege, Nebraska, was the place they chose to live.

Jack and Amanda had a move-about lifestyle due to their military service. Jack was no stranger to living in about every state. Prior to settling in Holdrege,

"We just came from Las Vegas, where everything is about Instagram and TikTok. You are a good person, and do you care about things that matter in the world, and that's why I chose to live here."

While Amanda is a Phelps County native, Jack grew up, I kind of fell in love with the place," Jack is friendly and kind."

While they could have chosen to live anywhere, they moved to Holdrege. Rangers, while Amanda recently finished her senior year from the high school where Amanda graduated.



## SMITHS CHOOSE HOLDREGE TO BUY A BUSINESS AND START A BUSINESS

23 MAR 2022

After several trips to Phelps County to visit friends, Kevin and Dr. Jill Smith decided to plant their roots here. The couple moved to Holdrege in December 2021 with their newborn child, bought a business and started another business.

"Each time we visited, we always left thinking how fantastic of an area this was," Jill said. "We continually saw growth in Phelps County in its health care clinics, schools, parishes and businesses. Knowing this was everything we were looking for, we pursued a life here."

Jill, who grew up on a farm near Elgin, has been practicing dentistry in the Lincoln area for four years since graduating from the University of Nebraska Medical Center. She had previously met Dr. Grant Hinze when she completed a dental externship in Alma.

"The opportunity to purchase Dr. Grant Hinze's dental practice was a large reason behind our move to Holdrege," she said.

Jack She purchased Hinze's longtime dental practice in January 2022. The business is now named Holdrege Dental Arts. Grant and his wife, their Kay, owned the business for more than 44 years. Kay has retired, and Grant has cut back on his hours in an attempt to slowly work toward retirement.

Phel Hinze said Dr. Smith's dental skills are "of the highest caliber. Dr. Smith has an excellent reputation, and she is well-respected by her peers and patients."

Besides continuing to offer high-quality dental care in the area, Jill said another driving force in their decision to move to Phelps County was the need for construction contractors.



# Youth Considering Returning 'Home' as an Adult

## MY IDEAL COMMUNITY

What is the ideal size of a community to live in?



**SMALL,**  
like my hometown  
**64%**



**MEDIUM,**  
like Grand Island  
**23%**



**LARGE,**  
like Omaha  
**9%**



**VERY LARGE,**  
like Chicago  
**4%**

2020

**47%**

**33%**

**15%**

**5%**

## NEBRASKA YOUTH SURVEY

*Understanding the perceptions and perspectives of Nebraska's next generation*

If you were to live in this area as an adult, what do you think the main reason would be?



- Job or business opportunity = 13%
- Good place to raise a family = 31%
- Family ties = 26%
- Low cost of living = 6%
- Quality schools = 3%
- Recreation opportunities = 1%
- Other = 3%

Nebraska Community Foundation & University of Nebraska Omaha –  
August 2021 Report; 1047 Respondents from 17 communities, 7-12<sup>th</sup> grades.



# Housing

“Houses are where jobs sleep.”

Source unknown

## Housing



“Even with competitive wages, we’re unable to get people to move here,” Dugan said. “Not because they are afraid of coming to rural America, but because they have nowhere to live.”

It’s a struggle familiar to nearly every Nebraska mid-sized city and small town. There simply aren’t enough houses. And the few that are on the market are aging and often in need of repair.

- Vince Dugan, owner of Trego-Dugan, a national aviation company headquartered in North Platte for over 50 years.

Source: **Rural Nebraska’s Housing Crunch Is Costing Towns New Residents Who ‘Have Nowhere to Live’**, Flatwater Free Press, February 15, 2022.

## Housing



- ▶ **46,096 homes built in Nebraska from 2010 to 2019, *less than half than in the previous decade***

Source: Nebraska Public Media, February 15, 2022.

- ▶ Homes built before 1970:
    - ▶ 55% in North Platte
    - ▶ 61% in Nebraska City
    - ▶ 73% in Bertrand
  - ▶ “Workforce Housing” often blamed for nearly 70,000 jobs unfilled across the state
- Source: New Funding for Rural Housing, Nebraska Examiner, Jan 31, 2022.
- ▶ \$20M ARPA appropriated for Rural Workforce Housing in FY2022-23

Housing



# What Type of Homes are Needed?

**Age:** 20s    30s    40s    50s    60s    70s



<b>Housing Cycle:</b>	Single- or multi-family rent	Single-family own	Upgrade	Downsize	Assisted living
<b>New Units Built:</b>	Multi-family rentals	Starter homes	Larger homes	Townhome units	Assisted living units

- ▶ Post-World War II American housing was driven by nuclear families (a married couple with children under the age of 18), the nation’s leading demographic = represented 43% of households
- ▶ Today, nuclear families account for 20% of America’s households
- ▶ Leading category is a single adult living alone accounting for 28% of America’s households

# Housing



## Does Inventory Match the Needs?

Household Demographics		Housing Stock	
Single Person	28%	Studio	< 1%
Couples	25%	1 Bedroom	11.6%
Adults living together	20%	2 Bedroom	26.5%
	<b>73%</b>		<b>38.2%</b>
Nuclear Families	20%	3 Bedroom	39.8%
Single Parent Families	7%	4 Bedroom	16.7%
		5 Bedroom	4.5%
	<b>27%</b>		<b>61%</b>

Source: *Local Housing Projects: Do they align with your market and needs?*, HomeNE webinar, April, 2022, Cliff Mesner, Mesner Development.





**SOLUTIONS**

# Housing Resources

- ▶ Investment Clubs
- ▶ Nuisance Abatement & Vacant Registries
- ▶ TIF and Micro-TIF
- ▶ Employer Down Payment Assistance
- ▶ Owner Occupied Rehab\*
- ▶ Rural Workforce Housing Fund\*
- ▶ Community Development Block Grants\*

**NEBRASKA**

Good Life. Great Opportunity.

**DEPT. OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

\* Programs



# HomeNE

## Learning Network

- ▶ **Housing Resources to Jump-Start Your Community**
  - ▶ 47 webinars and counting since 2022
  - ▶ 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 2:00 PM, January-November
- ▶ **HomeNE Gatherings In-Person**
  - ▶ Network with others across the state
  - ▶ Engage with others and hear success stories



## County Officials' Opportunities

- ▶ **Comprehensive Planning**
  - ▶ Density per square mile
  - ▶ Average 3-5 acres for house, well, septic
- ▶ ***Progressive* development mindset**
  - ▶ Partner with Community
- ▶ **Zoning to promote housing & industry**
  - ▶ Increase tax base
  - ▶ Keep development in county
  - ▶ Business will look to see how they are protected
- ▶ **Land Use Policies**
  - ▶ Allowing other things in Ag districts



# Workforce & Broadband / Technology

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Workforce



## Nebraska Employment by Industry

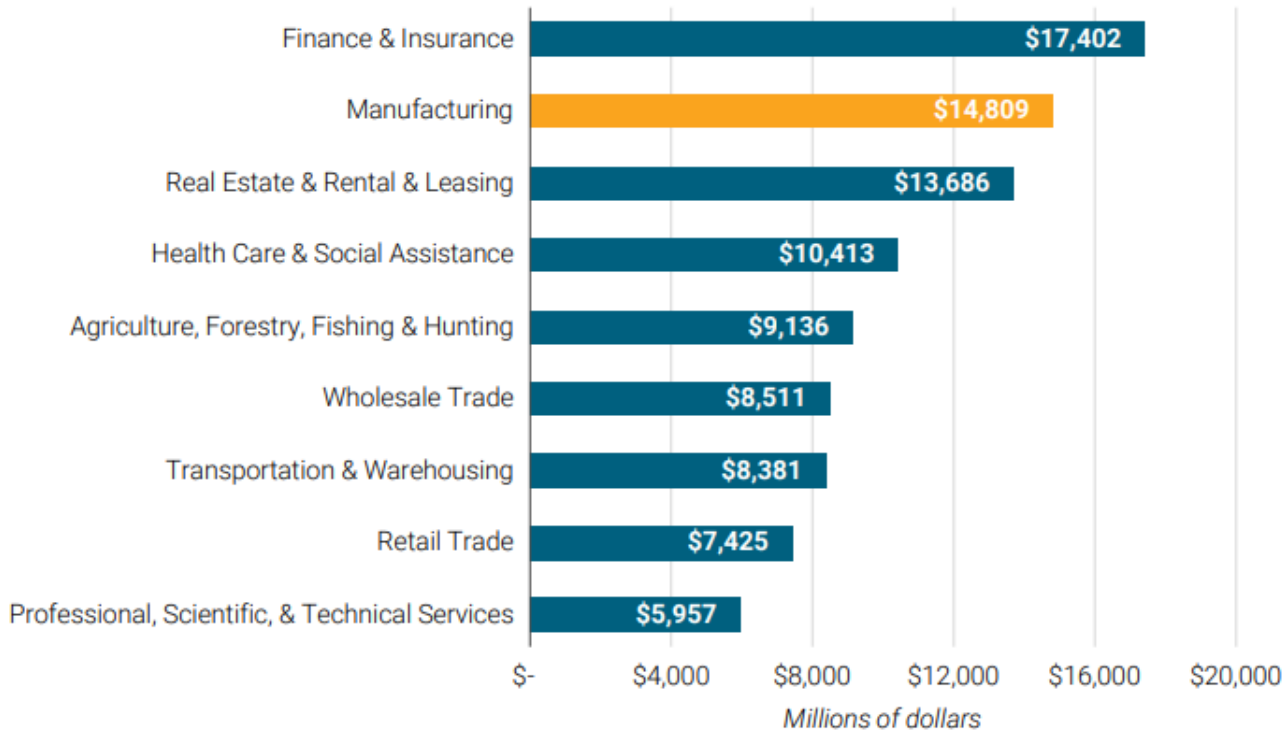
Industry	Employment #	Average Hourly Wage
Total nonfarm	1,028,675	-
Service-providing	869,012	-
Total private	856,477	\$29.44
Private service-providing	696,814	\$29.66
Trade, transportation, and utilities	198,912	\$25.21
Government	172,198	-
Education and health services	160,664	\$31.15
Goods-producing	159,663	\$28.67
Professional and business services	120,125	\$33.59
Retail trade	107,027	-
Manufacturing	101,011	\$28.03
Leisure and hospitality	90,467	\$17.11
Financial activities	71,747	\$34.61
Natural Resources- Mining, Construction	58,652	\$29.68
Construction	57,670	-
Nondurable goods	56,243	-
Transportation and warehousing	51,166	-

Workforce



# Nebraska's Industry Diversification

Total Nebraska GDP by Industry Sector, Q1 2021



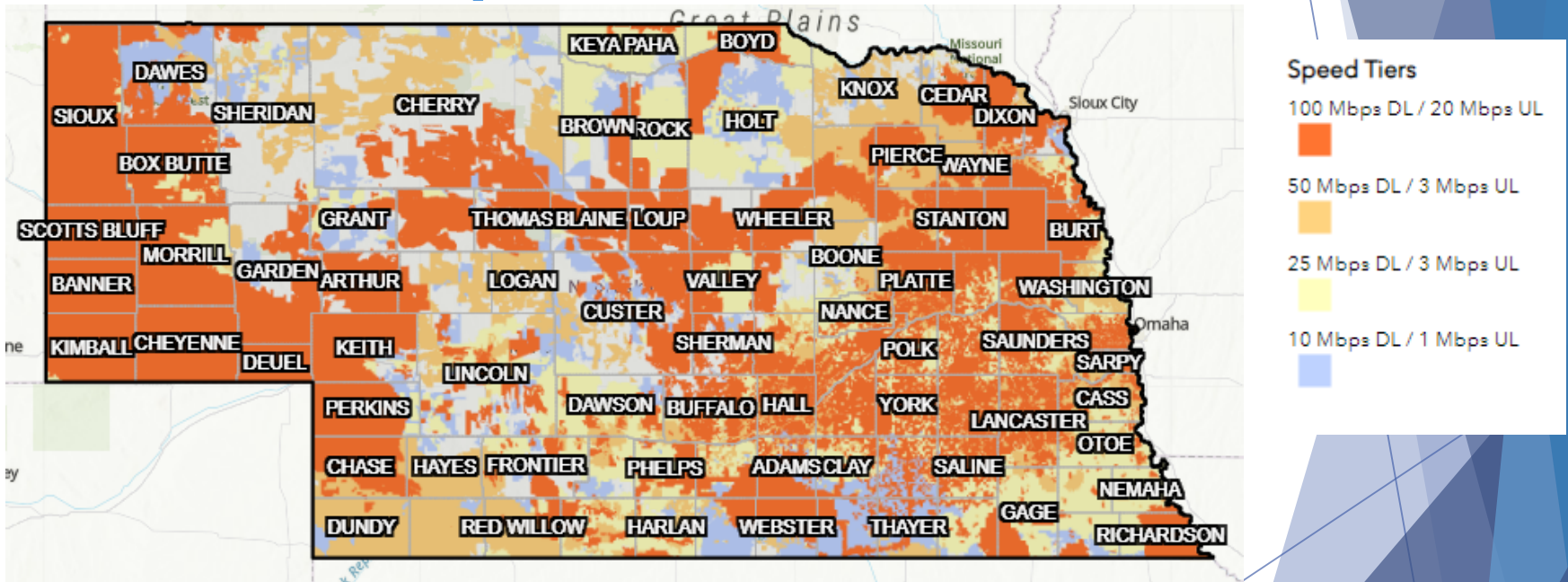
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. GDP and Personal Income by State. July 2021. [bea.gov](https://www.bea.gov/).

Source: <https://thegoodlifeiscalling.com/work/>

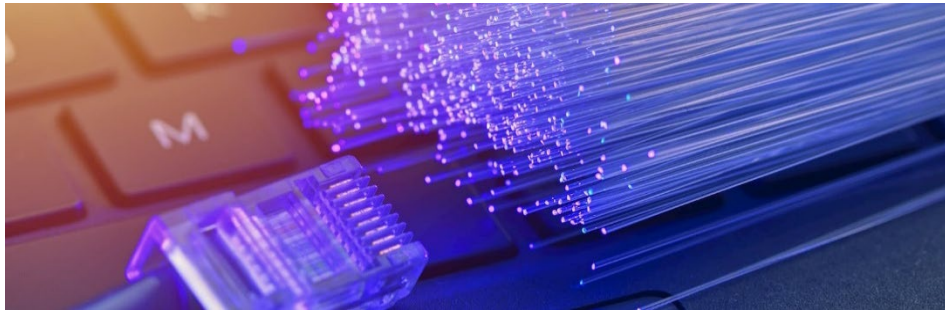
Broadband  
-  
Technology



# Broadband Speed Tests



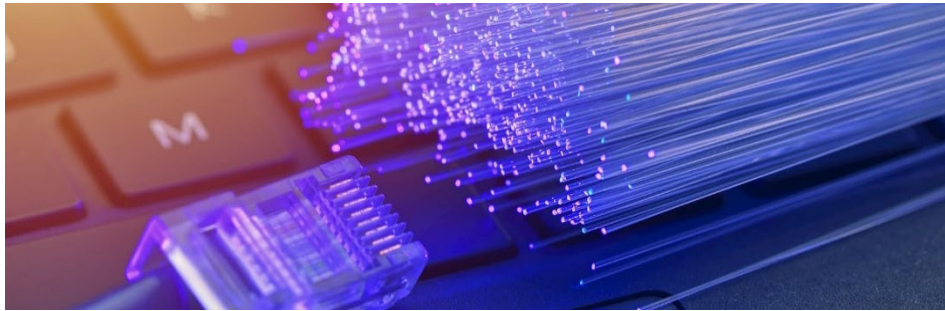
FCC reports 39% of Americans in rural areas lack access to high-speed, high-quality internet service.



## Are your county residents ‘connected’?

- ▶ **Broadband Fiber** - the gold standard
- ▶ **Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program**
  - ▶ 2022 - \$20M grant incentivizes rural development of broadband fiber - for unserved or underserved
  - ▶ Now only 25% match requirement for Rural
  - ▶ Opportunity to maximize ARPA Investment
  - ▶ Reach out to a local ISP (Internet Service Provider) willing to partner for rural development
- ▶ **BEAD** - Broadband Equity Access & Deployment
  - ▶ \$200-250M early 2023
  - ▶ Emphasis on Unserved / Underserved = RURAL
- ▶ **Precision Agriculture** - future grant focus





## County Officials' Opportunities

- ▶ **Strategic Planning with Road Infrastructure**
- ▶ ***Cooperative* development mindset**
  - ▶ Fillmore & Gage County - Public Private Partnership; Phelps County in progress
  - ▶ Loup Power District - 4 counties w/ NPPD
    - ▶ Partnering with Internet Service Providers & Public Power Districts to reach the unreached
  - ▶ Housing Development with Fiber in Mind
- ▶ **Software supporting the County's Role**
  - ▶ Sheriff's Office
  - ▶ GWorks - land development resource



# Child Care

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## Child Care



**Without a strong **early childhood infrastructure**, Nebraska will struggle to attract and/or anchor young families, **strengthen its workforce** and **grow communities** where all residents can prosper.**

- ▶ **91% of Nebraska counties lack sufficient child care options to meet demands**
- ▶ **36% of rural Nebraskans live in a child care “desert” -defined as *more than 3 children under age 5 for each licensed child care slot***
- ▶ **2/3 of Nebraska children under age 6 have all available parents in the workforce**

## Child Care



# Child Care Resources

- ▶ **C4K - Communities for Kids:** develops right-sized solutions for selected communities
- ▶ **Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy:**

[www.firstfive-nebraska.org/what-we-do/policy-leadership-academy/](http://www.firstfive-nebraska.org/what-we-do/policy-leadership-academy/)

“Quality early childhood care and education are critical for communities like Scottsbluff to thrive. They provide safe learning environments while parents are at work and teach children the skills necessary for success in life.”

# County Officials' Opportunities

- ▶ ARPA Funding for expansion of licensed CDC's
- ▶ Progressive and collaborative mindset
- ▶ Aware of and supportive for need to expand



**Kevin Spencer**

Chief of Police, Scottsbluff  
Police Department

Middle of Everywhere.

**Rural America's  
Brain Gain.**



Rural by Choice.



# Questions

- Sharon Hueftle, Executive Director  
[sharonh@scedd.us](mailto:sharonh@scedd.us)
- LeAnn Jochum, Deputy Director  
[leann@scedd.us](mailto:leann@scedd.us)

[www.scedd.us](http://www.scedd.us) | [www.nrocne.com](http://www.nrocne.com)

308.455.4770