

Chapter 1

Development Strategy & Process

Thayer County

About This Report

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the first regional economic development plan completed by citizen representatives of Thayer County, Nebraska. As a member of the Southeast Nebraska Development District, Thayer County and its communities are working with the River Country Economic Development District (River Country) to gain formal recognition as a constituent member of River Country.

Thayer County is a component county of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Economic Area 95 (November 2004 definition). This CEDS is the outcome of a county-wide planning process to address the economic issues and potential of Thayer County within the larger surrounding nonmetropolitan region.

Through its CEDS planning process, Thayer County seeks to establish a framework for comprehensive, objective reporting on the state of the Thayer County area and define goals and strategies to coordinate activities in support of its vision within the larger regional economy. This report draws together a wide variety of data indicators to sketch a holistic picture of conditions in Thayer County. And, it will continue this process to identify measurable indicators of county and regional conditions and link these to the development programs instituted for the county itself and those of the River Country Economic Development District.

1. Governance Structure

The County of Thayer, Nebraska operates under an organized county government structure of townships and is governed by a board of supervisors. Thayer County is one of 27 counties among Nebraska's 93 counties with a township government. The balance are organized as commissioner counties that are governed by a board of commissioners.

Thayer County is governed by a Board of Supervisors with three (3) members who are elected to four-year terms. (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Thayer County Board of Supervisors - Membership 2006 Dave Bruning Lawrence F. Traudt Bob Werner

Municipalities in Thayer County are organized via instruments of incorporation recorded with the Office of the County Clerk. Eleven incorporated communities are located in the county. The City of Hebron is the largest community and County Seat. The cities of Hebron and Deshler are organized as a "City of the Second Class," a classification for Nebraska municipalities with a population between 801 and 5,000. Both cities are organized as a mayor-council form of government.

The remaining nine communities are organized as under the municipal classification of "Village." These include Alexandria, Belvidere, Bruning, Byron, Carleton, Chester, Davenport, Gilead and Hubbell. Each village is organized as a five member board of trustees form of government. Nebraska's state constitution grants citizens the right to organize and incorporate as a "Village" if their community has a population of 100 to 800.

1.1 CEDS Committee

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was developed through a public participatory process led by a CEDS Committee authorized by the Thayer County Board of Supervisors.

The CEDS Committee is composed of county residents who, acting in a voluntary capacity, represent diverse populations (gender, age, ancestry) and interests, including educators, small business owners/employees, agricultural interests, corporate firms, health service providers, community representatives (elected and private citizen), professional industrial developers and media interests. (See Table 1.2)

Table 1.2 Thayer County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Membership			
Member	Place of Residence	Elective Status	Interest/ Affiliation
Rosemary Dageforde	Hebron	No	Insurance
Al Dlouhy	Deshler	No	Finance
Tina Domeier	Bruning	Yes	Community Representative
Larry Fangmeier	Hebron	Yes	Community Representative
Gordon Fleming	Deshler	No	Community Representative
Arlis Hohl	Hebron	No	Economic Development Agent
Alan Holle	Deshler	Yes	Community Representative
Pat Kenner	Hebron	No	Community Representative
Eric Leichty	Deshler	No	Finance
Jaye Moeller	Byron	Yes	Community Representative
Craig Pope	Hebron	No	Finance
Robert Reinke	Deshler	No	Manufacturing
Brenda Rippe	Hubbell	Yes	Community Representative
John Schlife	Chester	Yes	Community Representative
Mark Starbuck	Deshler	No	Manufacturing
Randy Stubbs	Deshler	No	Small Business
Freda Wiedel	Hubbell	No	Community Representative

The Thayer County CEDS Committee is constituted of the representatives of both private enterprises and public bodies. These representatives work to promote economic development in the county and area communities and providing local leadership on issues of business, transportation, housing and tourism development.

Working to develop its goals, objectives, and strategies, the CEDS Committee was representative of county-wide stakeholders. (See Table 1.2) Three general work sessions were completed for the purpose of gathering input.

Throughout the CEDS development process, the CEDS Committee brought forward insights from their individual capacities and discussions with other stakeholders. Staff of the Southeast Nebraska Development District gathered this information and used it for the foundation of the final CEDS strategic planning and priority setting effort of the CEDS Committee in September 2006.

2. Strategic Planning Process

The Thayer County CEDS is built upon a vision for the future. This vision has long-range measurable goals and strategies that lead to the achievement of those goals.

The CEDS Committee participated in the plan development process and reviewed information gathered through research activities, compilation of community activities, and strategic planning activities.

The 2006 Thayer County CEDS presents a comprehensive review of regional trends, an inventory of environmental resources and assets, while focusing upon the opportunities and challenges presented by the county's and region's changing economy.

Basic community-based infrastructure and systems, including roads, community facilities, housing, and support services, serve not only local residents and business and industry but also the larger region and visitors. In addition, investments that enhance the economic well-being of county residents, whether by private or public sector entities, also contribute to the region's economy by enhancing regional income and employment opportunities.

2.1 Stakeholders

Recognition of stakeholders in the future prosperity of Thayer County helps identify partners for economic development. As part of their analysis, local leaders can incorporate this information into their assessment of what groups, organizations or representatives they have the opportunity to partner with for development purposes. This assists in their determination if the identified opportunities and challenges are best able to be addressed by local institutions or other entities.

A stakeholder is any person, group or organization that can place a claim on a region's attention, activity, resources, products or services and anybody affected by an area's action has a "stake" in the future of the region. A stake is merely an "interest," something to gain or lose depending on what a region does and how. An interest can be economic, social, sentimental or historical; consequently, stakeholders have needs and expectations that center on a region's ability to provide, produce or preserve something.

A non-exhaustive list of Thayer County's stakeholders would include:

STAKEHOLDERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The Board of Supervisors of Thayer County as the governing body of Thayer County > Thayer County's municipalities > Local chambers of commerce > Community service providers > Business and economic development entities > Schools, community colleges, and other institutions of higher education > Hospital and other healthcare providers > Thayer County workers > Thayer County's youth > Thayer County's parents > Thayer County's seniors > Enterprises and Industry in Thayer County > Future generations of Thayer County residents > Agriculture operators and service providers > Area Fire Departments and Auxiliary organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Households who would like to buy or rent property in Thayer County > Banking and financial institutions > Civic and religious organizations > Thayer County property owners > Elected officials > Jurisdictions receiving sales, income or property taxes > Local, regional, state and federal governmental entities > Southeast Nebraska Development District > Travelers who visit Thayer County for recreation, business, etc. > Nebraska Public Power District > Businesses wanting to enter the local market > Businesses outside the County patronized by Thayer County residents > Businesses outside the County employing residents of Thayer County

2.2 Environmental Scan

Meetings and discussions conducted during the planning process were used to identify key issues, both internal and external constraints and opportunities. This activity provided an environmental scan of issues of concern to private and public entities in Thayer County. Identification of these issues can assist in developing priorities to guide coordinated activities that address Thayer County's competitive advantages and disadvantages.

A summary of the constraints and opportunities identified via these meetings and discussions is provided below.

IDENTIFIED CONSTRAINTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Low unemployment rate. ✧ Decreasing population in Thayer County ✧ Awareness of opportunities among area youth ✧ Undeveloped commercial areas ✧ Availability of business support services ✧ Underdeveloped tourism services ✧ Business development financial tools ✧ Value added agriculture (i.e., livestock) secondary impacts ✧ Business regulatory and insurance costs ✧ Housing unit efficiencies and appropriateness ✧ Health services and insurance costs ✧ Rural health care issues ✧ Underemployment ✧ Perceived remoteness of Thayer County ✧ Undeveloped distance learning opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Aging population ✧ Availability of appropriate housing serving particular market segments (affordable, special need, and executive) ✧ Flight of youth ✧ Low unemployment rate and the perception is creates when recruiting ✧ Competition for available labor supply ✧ Undeveloped transportation corridors ✧ Costly extension of public infrastructure to industrial/commercial areas ✧ School consolidations ✧ Aging business proprietorships ✧ Civic organization involvement ✧ Growing expense of law enforcement ✧ Telephony issues – availability and accessibility ✧ Negative perception of growth

IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Value-added agriculture - manufacturing ✧ Value-added agriculture - livestock ✧ Manufacturing base for cluster development ✧ Tourism adds to quality of life ✧ Highway traffic volumes on US 136 and US 81 (1.2 million/year) ✧ Aging in place services and opportunities ✧ Affordable housing services/ availability ✧ Vertical integration of manufacturing industries ✧ Community facilities reuse opportunities ✧ Build on existing high-tech enterprises presence in community ✧ Support investment in housing providing choice and opportunity ✧ Outstanding health services ✧ Engage youth via civic and business activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Develop retail strategies ✧ Good infrastructure systems support development ✧ Capture commuting labor force ✧ Housing development to serve existing market ✧ Business succession – generational transfer ✧ Wireless offices – live here commute to job via internet ✧ Develop thematic tourism ✧ Build on distance learning opportunities ✧ Building awareness among youth about opportunities ✧ Low unemployment rate ✧ Natural resource amenities- tourism ✧ Available public power and utility presence and supply ✧ Labor force training programs ✧ Development of affordable housing |
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2.3 Strategic Issues

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy planning process has included participants representing diverse interests from across Thayer County in order to establish a coordinated local economic development effort within the county and region.

Strategic issues are a response to economic opportunities and adjustment challenges. Identification of strategic issues within the framework of the CEDS process enables local leaders, both private and public, guide economic development efforts in a focused manner that builds upon an understanding of the area's changing economy. These strategic issues are about what Thayer County, as a community and within the region, will do and why, and where, and when, and how, and to or for whom.

The CEDS Committee recognized that many strategic issues could be grouped into common sets of superordinate issues toward which to direct available resources. These issues illuminate broad policy questions and direction setting that will help Thayer County assist efforts to increase employment and income opportunities and serve stakeholders effectively, efficiently, and responsibly.

The CEDS Committee identified strategic issues within Thayer County. Seven superordinate issues emerged and these are presented below.

✧ Population and Health Care

The aging population of the county and the decline in population presents challenges and opportunities for economic activity and services affecting the local quality-of-life.

Stabilization and reversal of the area population is identified as a strategic issue. The provision of income and employment opportunities through coordinated community and business development strategies can work to address this issue.

Thayer County should continue to develop a full continuum of care services available for its residents. This includes institutional services (hospital, long term care, nursing homes, assisted living, and home health care) and private medical practices.

The health care sector is an important economic engine in the county that also is a vital community resource supporting the larger community.

✧ Tourism Development

Thayer County has opportunities for growth in the tourism sector of its economy. It should continue to pursue opportunities and develop initiatives that will enable Thayer County to capitalize on the economic impact of the tourism industry.

Recognizing and realizing opportunities presented by high volume, excellent transportation systems, particularly U.S. Highways 136 and 81, is strategic issue in developing tourism strategies.

Tourism resources include historical, natural resource and farm sector assets. Developing strategies to develop these opportunities will assist future economic development opportunities.

The Big Blue River is an underdeveloped asset across the county. Opportunities for communities and businesses to enhance existing uses and create new uses should be assessed and developed if feasible.

Continued development of Thayer County's thematic tourism strategy employing its Oregon Trail heritage is an identified strategic issue.

✧ Labor Force

A low unemployment rate in Thayer County and surrounding area is a constraint to economic development. Representatives of Thayer County involved in economic development activities have identified opportunities to develop the available labor supply.

Develop recruitment activities informed about the need to complement and build on existing enterprises' skilled work forces to utilize the potential presented by manufacturing cluster synergies.

Partner with existing enterprises to diversify activities to fully exploit existing skilled labor resources and assist these enterprises to achieve opportunities.

Thayer County is a net exporter of manufacturing jobs – many manufacturing jobs are held by commuters into the county. Enticing these workers and families to relocate their residence to Thayer County involves creating an environment attractive to these workers, including housing and employment opportunities for dual income households.

The outmigration of population has affected all aspects of the local economy, including the local labor supply, schools, business activity and civic involvement. Building the skills of existing labor supply is an identified strategy to be developed.

Labor supply programs designed to improve the readiness, skills, or wages of individuals through partnerships with educational and work force agencies.

Labor demand programs designed to address the needs of employers could be coordinated with area employers.

Mitigating and reversing the impact of the “brain drain” is an identified opportunity. This includes educating area youth to recognize local opportunities, developing business succession opportunities, and, increasing awareness of the skills and opportunities in today's manufacturing sector.

✧ Business Infrastructure

Community central business districts hold potential for local and export-based (i.e., tourism) service growth. Developing retail facilities (structures, storefronts, and facade improvements) and retail strategies can benefit community residents and businesses, not only enhancing employment and income opportunities but also quality-of-life amenities.

Recognizing and realizing opportunities presented by high volume, excellent transportation systems, particularly U.S. Highways 136 and 81, is an identified goal for Thayer County. This includes creating public-private partnerships to develop Main Street, industrial, and tourism strategies.

The availability of financial tools to local entities for business development purposes is an identified strategic issue. The expansion of the available economic development financial tools should include at a minimum:

- > Increased funds available in loan pools
 - > Increased flexibility in employment of existing financial tools
 - > Increased availability of financial tools to serve development efforts
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Available and accessible high speed internet access services and cellular phone service can benefit every community. These benefits are not available to many areas in Thayer County and addressing these concerns is an identified strategic issue.

✧ Industrial Development

Transportation corridors are prime areas ready for development, especially the U.S. Highway 81 expressway corridor.

Development of new or expanded industrial site facilities is an identified issue. Barriers to development include land assembly and/or purchase, construction of infrastructure systems, and financial resources.

Opportunities to build on existing clusters of industry include the varied value added agriculture operations and facilities.

Development of labor resources is a necessary component of an industrial development program. Building the skills of existing labor supply is an identified strategy to be developed.

Labor supply programs designed to improve the readiness, skills, or wages of individuals through partnerships with educational and work force agencies.

Labor demand programs designed to address the needs of employers could be coordinated with area employers.

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- > Increased availability of financial tools to serve development efforts

✧ Value Added Agriculture

Value-added agriculture is an important industrial activity in Thayer County and one that offers additional opportunities for area enterprises and residents.

Livestock operations are increasingly facing regulatory issues and concerns about nuisance issues

Development of ethanol and biodiesel production facilities offers both economic development and growth opportunities, including the use or development of downstream or byproduct resources.

Transportation systems serving Thayer County provide excellent opportunities for expanding and developing new value added agriculture industries. Truck and rail transportation readily serves the entire county.

> A cultural/public understanding of the what value-added agriculture entails in terms of benefits and costs (i.e. jobs and income and environmental concerns) to residents.

Residents both new and old are encouraged to develop an understanding of what value added agriculture entails in terms of benefits and costs (i.e. jobs and income and environmental concerns).

✧ Community Infrastructure

Community water and wastewater systems provide quality services to residents in many communities in Thayer County. Smaller communities, however, will increasingly confront the need to update or replace aged water and wastewater systems.

Operation costs of basic community infrastructure is a growing concern for many smaller communities that have experienced declines in population; placing increasing burdens on resident populations that are characterized as elderly and fixed income.

Governmental regulatory requirements for water and wastewater systems are increasingly placing additional operational and design burdens on many communities that are least able to afford activities required by compliance orders.

Opportunities to enhance the quality-of-life in our communities include developing dual use wellness and recreation facilities. Partnerships between public and private entities could strategically employ limited resources.

Underdeveloped natural resources amenities, particularly the Big Blue River, hold great potential for creating and enhancing recreation opportunities and tourism.

School consolidations have closed schools in smaller communities, leaving structures and facilities unused. Residents have responded by identifying the need investigate strategies to reuse these facilities.

Affordable housing opportunity is an identified need throughout the county. Housing development strategies need to be developed to meet the varied needs.

Housing choice for the work force that is appropriate for first time homebuyers, experienced workers, and management is a desired end in all communities. This includes both owner-occupied and rental housing units.

Community housing rehabilitation needs serving residents is an identified need throughout the county.

Public and private partnerships to facilitate the development of life cycle housing serving families and individuals of all ages are an expressed need.

2.4 Vision Statement

The CEDS Committee worked through the planning process and developed a strategic vision to guide economic development efforts toward attainment of identified goals.

Thayer County is a community:

- △ That is characterized by welcoming communities with opportunities for all ages;
- △ That encourages active civic involvement;
- △ That embraces the heritage and natural amenities of the region;
- △ That offers outstanding educational and health services;
- △ Supports housing choice and opportunity; and
- △ That offers employment and business opportunities to all.

Observation and insights gathered through the planning process can be woven together under the unified theme of positioning area businesses and residents to surmount challenges and utilize opportunities to enhance community economic development.

2.5 CEDS Goals

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Thayer County is framed within six broad based goals. These include:

- <> Promote Local Economic Activity that is Sustainable and Supports Existing Businesses
- <> Retain and Encourage Increased Population Levels in Communities and County
- <> Support Existing Labor Force Competitiveness and Increase the Size of the Labor Force
- <> Strengthen, Promote, and Develop Quality of Life Amenities Serving our Communities
- <> Develop and Improve Infrastructure to Leverage Transportation and Community Systems
- <> Create a Business Friendly Environment Conducive for Investment, Capital Formation, and Capital Access

These six broad goals respond to the analysis of the area's development potential and challenges, as identified through the planning process conducted by the CEDS Committee. Goals are general statements that provide the basis for formulating the policy objectives and serve to guide strategic activities of the CEDS Committee, area officials, and economic development stakeholders.

Thayer County
 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy -- Goals
(Not in ranked order)

1. Promote Local Economic Activity that is Sustainable and Supports Existing Businesses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Develop existing business retention and recruitment programs ✧ Facilitate value-added and growth industry development ✧ Develop and promote tourism opportunities by building on our natural, cultural and heritage resources ✧ Enhance tourism support services ✧ Support public-private partnerships (e.g. Southeast Community College industry programs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Support efforts to develop sustainable small business assistance activities ✧ Develop an experiential education program targeting area youth ✧ Develop and enhance economic development tools available to communities and local economic development representatives ✧ Develop community facilities supporting economic activities ✧ Mitigate remoteness via distance learning and value-added opportunities

2. Retain and Encourage Increased Population Levels in Communities and County	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Encourage the return of former residents and their families ✧ Create an incentive program for returning graduates ✧ Develop and enhance recreational amenities ✧ Support efforts to enhance the provision of health care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Identify housing barriers, opportunities, and potential development sites ✧ Assess community infrastructure systems ✧ Encourage partnerships to facilitate affordable housing development and rehabilitation of existing housing stock ✧ Assess and develop secondary income opportunities

3. Support Existing Labor Force Competitiveness and Increase the Size of the Labor Force

- ✧ Expand public-private partnerships to promote industry work force development and recruitment programs
- ✧ Develop community housing initiatives to forward work force development
- ✧ Market community assets and amenities

- ✧ Develop awareness among youth about regional opportunities
- ✧ Partner with regional and state labor/work force development agencies
- ✧ Promote business and income opportunities to former residents

4. Strengthen, Promote, and Develop Quality of Life Amenities Serving our Communities

- ✧ Market regional opportunities to area alumni
- ✧ Enhance and develop opportunities for hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching
- ✧ Promote entrepreneurial education
- ✧ Partner with Southeast Community College and existing industries on work force development programs

- ✧ Showcase county assets and values
- ✧ Encourage retention and recruitment of businesses maximizing skilled employee potential
- ✧ Support distance learning opportunities
- ✧ Support Nebraska Heritage Highway Byway (US Hwy 136) programs and development

5. Develop and Improve Infrastructure to Leverage Transportation and Community Systems

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Facilitate activities that capitalize on the potential offered by regional assets and transportations systems ✧ Develop strategies to attract travelers off motor routes ✧ Develop county-wide Tourism Oriented Directional Signage and way finding programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Support Nebraska Heritage Highway Byway (US Hwy 136) activity and development ✧ Establish liaisons with U.S. highway route tourist associations (81 and 136) ✧ Support regional tourism initiatives |
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6. Create a Business Friendly Environment Conducive for Investment, Capital Formation, and Capital Access

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Enhance public services supporting business activity ✧ Support partnerships to facilitate entrepreneurial activity ✧ Collaborate with Southeast Community College and other partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Build citizen volunteer involvement ✧ Support distance learning opportunities ✧ Gather and assemble information facilitating business activity ✧ Enhance capacity of local and regional resource providers to recruit potential business prospects |
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Resources & Time Frames

Partnerships with a variety of organizations and agencies in the region are a key to successful implementation of the CEDS. Those activities which address the areas or issues of greatest need and/or best enhance the region's competitive advantages were identified through the planning process. They represent identified activities that will have positive economic, environmental, and social impacts on Thayer County and its region. The expected time frame and required resources for completion of objectives and activities are identified below.

The time frames established for completion of objectives and activities are:

<u>UTerm</u>	<u>Number of Years</u>
Short term	1 to 2 years
Mid term	3 to 4 years
Long term	5 or more years

GOAL 1: To promote local economic activity that is sustainable and supports existing businesses					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
1-1	Carleton Ethanol Facility	Support development of an ethanol production facility near Carleton, providing value added industry and jobs.	TCEDA	Public, Private	Short term
1-2	Business Retention and Expansion Initiative	Establish sustainable program to develop opportunities to retain and/or expand jobs and leverage increased economic activity.	TCEDA, Chambers	Municipal, Private, Financial Institutions	Mid term
1-3	Establish High School Entrepreneurial Program	Develop an experiential program fostering entrepreneurial skills to Jr/Sr high school students.	TCEDA, Schools, 4-H	Private, Schools	Mid term
1-4	Ethanol Facility	Build ethanol production facilities in Thayer County as part of a strategy to promoting value-added and job growth opportunities.	Private, Municipal	Investment Group, State, Local	Mid term
1-5	Thayer County Tourism Initiative	Assess and identify potential to develop natural resource amenities and support services in county.	TCEDA	NDED, Municipal, Private	Mid term
1-6	Visitors Center	Construct a visitors center off US Hwy 81 to orient travelers and provide local showcase.	TCEDA, Hebron	Private, Public,	Long term
1-7	Thayer County Small Enterprise Assistance Program	Develop, support, sustain a small business planning resources program assisting small business start-up.	TCEDA, Chambers	Private, NBDC, NDED	Mid term
1-8	Develop Artisan Markets Program	Organize specialties markets – artists, crafts-people, and merchants at Deshler location; bookend with Spring and Fall festivals.	Deshler, Private	Deshler, NDoA, Private	Mid term

GOAL 1 continued: To promote local economic activity that is sustainable and supports existing businesses					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
1-9	Biodiesel Facility	Develop value-added agriculture industrial biodiesel production facility near Bruning.	Bruning, Private	Investment Group, State, Local	Short term
1-10	Establish County Work Force Development Program	Create collaborative business assistance program focusing on work force retention and recruitment.	Public, Private	Private, Municipal, NDoL	Mid term
1-11	Community Facility Program	Develop capital facilities program to identify needs and opportunities within Hebron.	Hebron	Hebron, Private	Short term
1-12	Customer Service Training Program	Support for customer service training of front line employees - Red Carpet Program.	TCEDA, Chambers	Private, UNL	Mid term
1-13	Manufacturing Cluster Program	Establish sustainable program to attract diversified manufacturing operations.	TCEDA, Chambers	Municipal, Private	Mid term
1-14	Community Facility Program	Develop capital facilities program to identify needs and opportunities within Hebron.	Hebron	Hebron, Private	Short term
1-15	Hebron Community Center	Design and construct a community center to serve limited clientele and provide venue to host large functions in the city.	Hebron, Private	Hebron, NDED, USDA, Private	Mid term
1-16	Children's Entrepreneurial Program	Develop an experiential program designed to introduce children to entrepreneurial education.	TCEDA, Schools, 4-H, UNL Extension	Private, Schools, UNL	Mid term
1-17	Heritage Tourism Resources Program	Establish an entity to identify, document and publish information about historical events that shaped Thayer County.	Private, Public	County, Private	Long term

GOAL 2: Retain and encourage increased population levels in communities and county					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
2-1	Housing In-Fill Lot Homestead Program	Develop an in-fill and replacement housing incentive program to provide "Buildable Lot" for new housing serving work force.	Public, Private	Private, Public,	Mid term
2-2	New Housing Development Readiness Program	Identify and develop community infrastructure systems to create "buildable ready" opportunities for new housing construction.	Municipal	Municipal, Private, Financial Institutions	Mid term
2-3	Deshler Student Loan Incentive Program	Create a student loan fund pool with incentives to return home and employ education/skills in Deshler economy.	Deshler, Private	Private, Deshler	Long term
2-4	Eco-Tourism Birding Experience	Develop and market tourism information on birding opportunities in Thayer County.	TCEDA, Private	Private, NDED	Short term
2-5	Recreational Lake Development	Develop a recreational lake in Thayer County affording outdoor and off-road sport uses.	Private	Private, State, Federal	Long term
2-6	Rural Scholarship Incentive Program	Develop a post-secondary education scholarship program with contract to return to work in field of study in Thayer County for set amount of time.	Public, Private	Private, Public	Long term
2-7	Speculative Housing Development Program	Develop public-private program to encourage and assist builders to construct speculative housing on a shared risk basis.	Public, Private	Private, Public, FHLB, NIFA, State	Mid term
2-8	Market Bruning "Welcome Home" Program	Develop program to identify former residents and market opportunities to encourage return of former residents and alumni.	Bruning, Private	Bruning, Private	Mid term

GOAL 2 continued: Retain and encourage increased population levels in communities and county					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
2-9	Thayer County Return Home Campaign	Develop program to identify former residents and market opportunities to encourage return of former residents.	TCEDA, Private	Private, Municipal	Long term
2-10	Health Care Specialists Retention	Organize an agency or foundation charged with developing programs to retain and attract health care specialists.	Private, Municipal	Private, Public	Mid term
2-11	Deshler Recreation Center Facility	Build a year-round indoor/outdoor general fitness facility serving all ages.	Deshler, Private	Private, Public	Long term
2-12	Hebron "Welcome Home" Program	Develop program to identify former residents and market opportunities to encourage return of former residents and alumni.	Hebron, Private	Hebron, Private	Mid term
2-13	Deshler Community Lake Project	Develop a community lake providing city recreation opportunities and amenities.	Deshler, Private	Deshler, Private, State, Federal	Long term
2-14	Deshler Community Trail System	Develop a community trail system with multi-purpose uses.	Deshler, Private	Deshler, Private, State, NETF	Mid term
2-15	Deshler Youth Recreation Skate Park	Involve area youth in development of a skate park providing outdoor recreation uses.	Deshler, Private	Private, Deshler	Long term
2-16	Deshler "Families Invited" Program	Develop comprehensive marketing campaign to attract families to relocate to Deshler.	Deshler, Private	Private, Deshler	Mid term
2-17	Deshler Youth Center	Develop a youth activity center for individual and group activities.	Deshler, Private	Private, Deshler	Long term

GOAL 3: Support existing labor force competitiveness and increase the size of the labor force					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
3-1	Affordable Family Housing Program	Develop opportunities for affordable housing to enable one income families to afford one parent to stay home with the family.	Public, Private	Private, NDED, NIFA, FHLB, BVCA, SENDD	Mid term
3-2	Develop Thayer County "Welcome Home" Program	Develop program to identify former residents and market opportunities to encourage return of former residents and alumni families.	Public, Private	Private, Local	Short term
3-3	Affordable Housing Rehabilitation Fund	Program to leverage private and community monies to rehabilitate existing housing stock making it attractive to our work force.	Hebron, Private	Private, Hebron, NDED, NIFA, FHLB, BVCA, SENDD	Mid term
3-4	Housing Choice Opportunity Program	Utilize existing down payment assistance funds to assist/promote first time homeownership; support entrepreneurial housing activity both new and rehabilitation.	Bruning, Private	Bruning, Private, NDED, NIFA, FHLB, BVCA, SENDD	Mid term
3-5	Enterprise Opportunity Information Program	Provide technical experience and job shadowing in area enterprises for high school students to inform and educate youth about economic enterprises and opportunities.	TCEDA, Schools	Private, Schools, Municipal	Long term
3-6	Business Energy Efficiency Program	Create program to assist enterprises improve competitiveness through energy efficiencies through technical and financial assistance.	Public, Private	Municipal, Utilities, USDA, UNL	Long term
3-7	Target Technology Occupations	Develop program to identify technology-oriented economic activity in Thayer County and build on this asset to build tech-cluster.	Public	Public, Utilities, NDED, UNL	Mid term

GOAL 3 continued: Support existing labor force competitiveness and increase size of the labor force					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
3-8	Thayer County Housing Replacement Program	Develop local housing construction programs to create housing opportunities in communities to offer appropriate housing choices in our communities.	TCEDA, Private	Private, Municipal, NDED, FHLB, USDA	Long term
3-9	Housing Choice Opportunity Program	Promote and assist homeownership through rehabilitation program targeting existing housing stock adaptable for young families' housing expectations.	Deshler, Private	Deshler, Private, NDED, NIFA, FHLB, BVCA, SENDD	Mid term
3-10	Housing Replacement Program	Develop program to remove dilapidated housing and assist speculative housing efforts.	Deshler, Private	Private, Public, NIFA, FHLB	Mid term

GOAL 4: Strengthen, promote, and develop quality of life amenities serving our communities					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
4-1	Deshler Storm Recovery Program	Complete tornado recovery efforts and build on renewed efforts to promote Deshler as a place of commerce and community.	Deshler, Private	Deshler, Private	Short term
4-2	Youth Involvement Program	To encourage and support ability of youth organizations to sponsor community functions and fun events.	Public, Private	Private, Local	On-going
4-3	Big Blue River Recreation Access	Construct public access launch on Big Blue River at South 4 th Street Bridge in Hebron for water-based recreation – facet of recreation infrastructure.	Hebron, Private	Hebron, NGPC, NRD, Private, NETF	Short term
4-4	Hebron Community Center	Design and construct a community center to serve limited clientele and provide venue to host large functions (400 cap.) in the city.	Hebron, Private	Hebron, NDED, USDA, Private	Mid term
4-5	Community School Partnership Opportunity	Develop materials about area opportunities, Quality-of-Life, and heritage for integration into school curriculum to present students with information about local opportunities.	TCEDA, Schools	Private, Schools, Municipal, ESU	Long term & On-going
4-6	Thayer County Housing Rehabilitation Program	Develop local housing construction programs to create housing opportunities in communities to offer appropriate housing choices in our communities.	TCEDA, Private	Private, Municipal, NDED, FHLB, USDA	Long term
4-7	Deshler Recreation Center Facility	Build a year-round indoor/outdoor general fitness facility serving all ages.	Deshler, Private	Private, Public	Long term

GOAL 4 continued: Strengthen, promote, and develop quality of life amenities serving our communities					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
4-8	County Government Vehicle Efficiency Program	Create program to integrate more energy efficient vehicles into county fleet to economize and prioritize energy budget..	County	County, NEO	Mid term & On-going
4-9	Big Blue River Recreation Trail System	Leverage natural river amenity by developing community trail system, affording opportunities for recreation and leisure activities.	Hebron, Private	Hebron, NGPC, NRD, Private, NETF	Mid term
4-10	Deshler Community Lake Project	Develop a community lake providing city recreation opportunities and amenities.	Deshler, Private	Deshler, Private, State, Federal	Long term
4-11	Sustainable Presence on Worldwide Web	Provide technical assistance to communities for sustainable, current worldwide web presence.	Chambers, Private	Private	Mid term
4-12	Hebron Conference Facility	Collaborate with private entity to develop meeting facility in existing structure to serve area.	Hebron, Private	Municipal, Private	Long term
4-13	Community Web-based Information Program	Develop and maintain community information on dedicated web sites with calendar of events and activities to increase public awareness.	Municipal, Private	Municipal, Private	Mid term
4-14	Thayer County Housing Purchase Opportunities Program	Develop down payment assistance program to offer affordable housing opportunities in our communities.	TCEDA, Private	Private, Municipal, NDED, FHLB, USDA	Long term

GOAL 4 continued: Strengthen, promote, and develop quality of life amenities serving our communities					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
4-15	Community Sport Facility Assessment	Collaborative project to assess sport facilities in communities and develop recommendations.	Municipal, Private	Municipal, Private	Mid term
4-16	Hebron Central Business District Improvement Program	Develop and capitalize dedicated fund to incent downtown structure fascade improvements; Develop the Thayer Co. theme and utilize "Oregon Trail Capital of Nebraska."	Hebron, Private	Hebron, USDA, Private, Utilities	Mid term
4-17	Community Image Building Events	Continue community betterment efforts led by private sector actors such as the Chambers of Commerce.	Chambers	Private	On-going
4-18	Civic Participation and Engagement	Promote partnerships and work with civic-oriented organizations to increase civic engagement.	Municipal, Private	Municipal, Private	On-going
4-19	Hebron Image Building Event	Organize and host one annual major event for the city to promote community involvement and strengthen civic engagement.	Hebron, Private	Hebron, Private	Mid term

GOAL 5: Develop and improve infrastructure to leverage transportation and community systems					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
5-1	Hebron Wellhead Protection Plan	Develop community wellhead protection area to safe guard groundwater resources serving the City of Hebron.	Hebron	Hebron, NRD, NDEQ	Short term
5-2	Hebron Capital Improvement Plan	Develop a community capital improvement plan for orderly, efficient infrastructure investments.	Hebron	Hebron	On-going
5-3	Thayer County Telephony Improvement Plan	Develop a program to address telephony services (DSL, cellular) access and availability.	Utilities, PSC, County	Utilities, PSC	Short term
5-4	Bruning Fire Department Capital Needs Plan	Identify and plan for fire department needs, including recruitment, equipment, and apparatus.	Bruning	Bruning Fire Department, Fire Marshall, DHS	Varied
5-5	Deshler Manufacturing Recruitment Program	Develop and market opportunities presented by existing manufacturing cluster and transportation system.	Deshler, Private	Private, Deshler, NDED, NDoL, UNL	Mid term & On-going
5-6	Belvidere Rail Car Siding Expansion	Expand Bruning Grain's rail car siding at Belvidere operation by 10 cars to accommodate business operations.	Private, Local	Private, Local, NDED, Railroad, Federal	Short term
5-7	Bruning Capital Improvement Program	Develop Capital Improvement Program to guide community facilities investments, particularly sidewalks, water tower maintenance, sewer lines/system.	Bruning	Bruning, NDED, USDA	Varied

GOAL 5 continued: Develop and improve infrastructure to leverage transportation and community systems					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
5-8	Hebron Wellness Center Facility	Develop partnerships to build a private-public wellness facility serving community needs/	Hebron, Private	Hebron, Private, NDED, USDA	Mid term
5-9	State Highway 5 Improvement	Improve NE Highway 5 between Deshler and Byron (surface and shoulders) – State Road Program.	Deshler, Byron, NDOR	NDOR, Local	Long term
5-10	US Highway 136 Improvement	Improve US Highway 136 in Thayer County to accommodate traffic volume, especially truck traffic – State Road Program.	Deshler, County, NDOR	NDOR, Local	Long term
5-11	Hebron East Growth Program	Develop five year plan for growth along US Highway 81 corridor and annexation of commercial area.	Hebron, County	Hebron, NDED	Short term
5-12	Hebron Airport Promotion Program	Develop program to support and market Hebron airport development opportunities.	Hebron	Hebron, Private, NDoA	Mid term
5-13	Deshler – Hebron Visitor Enhancements Program	Assess and develop visitor support services to serve business activity clientele.	Deshler, Hebron	Deshler, Hebron, Private	Mid term
5-14	Thayer County Industrial Promotion Program	Develop business-assisted relationships with public and private enterprises to facilitate business development and champion promotion of business-friendly recognition.	TCEDA, Local	Local, Private, State	Mid term

GOAL 5 continued: Develop and improve infrastructure to leverage transportation and community systems					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
5-15	Thayer County Museum Operations Plan	Assess and identify organizational and operational processes to facilitate integration into tourism market – including marketing.	Thayer County Museum, County	County, Private, State	Mid term
5-16	Thayer County Affordable Senior Housing Program	Assess and development program to provide affordable housing opportunities for senior living throughout the county.	TCEDA, Private	Municipal, Private, NDED, NIFA, NHTF, USDA	Mid term
5-17	Thayer County Affordable New Housing Program	Assess and development program to provide affordable new housing in all communities in Thayer County.	TCEDA, Private	Municipal, Private, NDED, NIFA, NHTF, USDA	Mid term
5-18	Chester Community Facility Reuse Plan	Determine reuse alternatives for school and auditorium facilities.	Chester	Chester, NDED, USDA	Short term
5-19	Byron Community Facility Reuse Plan	Determine reuse alternatives for school and auditorium facilities.	Byron	Byron, NDED, USDA	Short term
5-20	Thayer County Integrated Security System	Develop a coordinated security camera system throughout the county to enable public protection agencies to monitor communities with technology thereby reducing operational costs of offices.	County	County, DHS/FEMA, USDA, State	Mid term
5-21	Deshler – Hebron Visitor Enhancements Program	Assess and develop visitor support services to serve business activity clientele.	Deshler, Hebron	Deshler, Hebron, Private	Mid term

GOAL 5 continued: Develop and improve infrastructure to leverage transportation and community systems					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
5-22	Thayer County Industrial Promotion Program	Develop business-assisted relationships with public and private enterprises to facilitate business development and champion promotion of business-friendly recognition.	TCEDA, Local	Local, Private, State	Mid term
5-23	Chester Hotel/Motel Facility Assessment	Assess opportunities to either modernize existing structure or construct new facility to provide tourism support services.	Chester, Private	Chester, Private	Mid term
5-24	Deshler Hotel/Motel Facility Planning Project	Assess opportunities to develop a business traveler – tourism support service facility.	Deshler, Private	Deshler, Private	Mid term

GOAL 6: Create a business friendly environment conducive for investment, capital formation, and capital access					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
6-1	Thayer County Industrial Promotion Program	Develop business-assisted relationships with public and private enterprises to facilitate business development and champion promotion of business-friendly recognition.	TCEDA, Local	Local, Private, State	Mid term
6-2	Thayer County Oregon Trail Tourism Thematic Plan	Identify and develop feasibly thematic campaign for county-wide marketing of Thayer County tourism.	TCEDA, Private	Municipal, Private, NDED	Short term
6-3	Thayer County Community Financing Education Series	Develop program to provide information to municipal and enterprises on routes to equity funds, TIF use, and public financing uses.	TCEDA	Public, Private	Long term
6-4	Thayer County Oregon Trail Tourism Development Plan	Feasibility assessment of Oregon Trail attractions and facilities complementing Thayer County's Oregon Trail Roundup.	Public, Private	Private, Public, NDED	Mid term
6-5	Deshler Community Business Financing Tools Program	Create a community fund for dedicated financial tools targeting business expansion and growth.	Deshler	Deshler, Private, Public	Mid term
6-6	Bruning Community Foundation	Create a community-based resource and investment pool supporting and supported by residents and businesses to promote sustainable business environment and serve a depository for existing micro lending fund.	Bruning, Private	Bruning, Private	Long term

GOAL 6 continued: Create a business friendly environment conducive for investment, capital formation, and capital access					
ID	Project	Project Description	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
6-7	Hebron Venture Capital Fund	Establish private equity capital fund for business and housing activities to be leveraged with other private-public programs and financing sources.	Hebron Community Development Corporation	Private	Short term
6-8	Deshler Capital Pool Program	Develop venture capital and relending fund pool to support business development, work force development, and housing resources.	Deshler, Private	Private, Public	Long term

3. Glossary of Acronyms

A list of acronyms used in this chapter is provided below. A brief description of an agency or entity is provided, also.

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Full Name / Description</u>
BVCA	<i>Blue Valley Community Action Partnership (BVCA)</i> BVCA is a non-profit human service agency serving a nine county core area in southeastern Nebraska. The BVCA staffs Family and Community Service Centers providing health, maternal and child, Head Start, transit and housing & rural development programs.
Byron	<i>Village of Byron</i>
Byway	<i>Nebraska Byway Program – Heritage Highway Byway</i> Communities along U.S. Highway 136 from Brownville (Nemaha County) to Edison (Furnas County) who cooperatively market tourism opportunities under the America's Byways brand.
CDBG	<i>Community Development Block Grant Program</i> Administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, the CDBG program provides grants to eligible communities for Economic Development, Public Works, Planning and Housing activities. Source of funds is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
Chambers	<i>Chamber of Commerce</i> Voluntary association of local businesses working together to enhance marketing of local businesses and commercial activity.
Colleges	<i>Colleges in the Region</i> This includes the public Peru State College and Central Community College and the private institutions of Concordia University, Doane College, and York College.
Cooperatives	<i>Cooperatives in the Region</i> This includes agriculture cooperatives such as Farmers Co-Operative Elevator and smaller, niche market associations organized as member-controlled cooperatives (eg, GROW Nebraska).
Deshler	<i>City of Deshler</i>
DHS	<i>United States Department of Homeland Security</i>

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Full Name / Description</u>
ED-RLF funds	<i>Economic Development Revolving Loan Funds</i> Business and industry loan funds operated by municipalities, ED groups and organizations. These are usually capitalized by loans or grants from federal agencies such as the USDA or Small Business Administration. Private (for profit and non-profit) local ED groups have capitalized RLF programs through shares sold to member.
EDA	<i>Economic Development Administration</i> The EDA is a bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce. EDA works with Economic Development Districts to assist industrial development activities such as provision of public works (infrastructure and industrial areas).
Entrepreneurs	<i>Small Business Enterprises</i> (usually start-up proprietorships)
FHLB-Topeka	<i>Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka</i> A private financial institution whose membership is affiliated banks. FHLB-Topeka promotes housing and community development by providing the services and rate of return necessary to attract and retain borrowing stockholders.
Fire Marshall	<i>Nebraska State Fire Marshall</i>
Foundations	<i>Private and Non-profit Organizations</i> This category includes community foundations created to support local activities and charitable organizations created by private entities to advance particular interests such as delivery of human services, community development, cultural activities, etc.
RC&D	<i>Trailblazer Resource Conservation District</i> Trailblazer RC&D is a locally sponsored multi-county organization affiliated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the Resource Conservation and Development program is to encourage and assist rural areas to plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation and development.
GROW Nebraska	GROW Nebraska is a non-profit organization, whose mission is focused on maximizing Nebraska's entrepreneurial spirit and focused on building Nebraska businesses globally by providing sustainable business environments through marketing, education, business building services and access to markets.
Hebron	<i>City of Hebron</i>
Investment Groups	<i>Private Organizations</i> Organizations of private individuals or Groups organized for specific purposes, such as an ethanol production facility and housing corporation.
Municipal	<i>City, Village, or County Governmental Entity</i> with responsibilities to provide services to their jurisdiction.

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Full Name / Description</u>
NBDC	<i>Nebraska Business Development Center</i> The NBDC at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), is a cooperative program of the U.S. Small Business Administration and UNO. Designated service areas have offices that provide business assistance such as marketing analysis and market planning services. There is a Nebraska Business Development Center located within the region in Geneva.
NDA	<i>Nebraska Department of Aeronautics</i>
NDED	<i>Nebraska Department of Economic Development</i>
NDEQ	<i>Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality</i>
NDoA	<i>Nebraska Department of Agriculture</i>
NDoL	<i>Nebraska Department of Labor (Nebraska Workforce Development)</i>
NDoR	<i>Nebraska Department of Roads</i> The NDoR administers the Transportation Enhancement Program which provides funding to local, regional and state government entities to construct and restore transportation facilities such as pedestrian/bicycle trails, development of scenic byways and restoration of historic transportation facilities.
NEDCO	<i>Nebraska Economic Development Corporation</i> NEDCO is a state-wide Community Development Corporation that offers several types of Small Business Administration Guaranteed Loans to small businesses including, SBA 504 and SBA 502 fixed asset subordinated loans for land, building acquisition and equipment, and SBA 7A working capital loans.
NEO	<i>Nebraska Energy Office</i>
NGPC	<i>Nebraska Game and Parks Commission</i> NGPC makes matching grants to political subdivisions for developing outdoor recreation projects and indoor support facilities (rest rooms, maintenance, storage, and concession stands).
NETF	<i>Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund</i> The NETF is funded through the Nebraska Lottery. Grant funds are awarded by the NETF for projects meeting their priorities -- preservation and restoration of critical habitat areas, surface water quality, ground water quality, and development of recycling markets and reduction of solid waste volume and toxicity.
NIFA	<i>Nebraska Investment and Finance Authority</i>
NRD	<i>Natural Resource District</i>

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Full Name / Description</u>
NSHS	<i>Nebraska State Historical Society</i>
Non-Profits	<i>Non-Profit Organizations</i> (human service, housing agencies, foundations, etc.)
Private	<i>All Private Sector</i> businesspersons and organizations
PSC	<i>Nebraska Public Service Commission</i>
Public	<i>All Public Entities</i> (Governmental and Quasi-Governmental, eg, cities, utilities)
Railroad ED Representatives	<i>Economic Development Agents of the Railroad Companies</i>
RCEDD	<i>River County Economic Development District</i> RCEDD is a designated Economic Development District of the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. SENDD and RCEDD are sister organizations which share staff.
REAP	<i>Rural Enterprise Assistance Project</i> Initiated by the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill, the REAP begins with a community commitment to raise seed capital funds to be used for small business loans and structured programs to provide training in business planning, management, and finance.
SBA	<i>Small Business Administration</i> The U.S. Small Business Administration offers international trade counseling for individuals and companies, with an emphasis on the practical application of successful exporting and importing procedures.
SCC	<i>Southeast Community College</i>
Schools	<i>Public and Private School Districts</i>
SENAHC	<i>Southeast Nebraska Affordable Housing Council</i>
SEND D	<i>Southeast Nebraska Development District</i>
TCEDA	<i>Thayer County Economic Development Alliance</i> The Thayer County Economic Development Alliance is a non-profit corporation which fosters economic development within Thayer County and its local communities.
UNL	<i>University of Nebraska</i> Expertise and services provided by faculty, colleges, and offices governed by the university, such as the UNL Food Processing Center's food scientists and food industry business consultants who assist food-manufacturing entrepreneurs.

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Full Name / Description</u>
UNL Extension	<i>Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service</i> Extension agents and specialists serve as faculty of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, UNL. Major areas of service include agriculture, natural resources, family living, youth development, and community resource development.
USDA	<i>United State Department of Agriculture</i>
Utilities	<i>Public and Private Utility Providers</i> (examples include NPPD, Aquila, Municipal providers, etc.)