

# NET FORCE

Nebraska Entrepreneurship Task Force

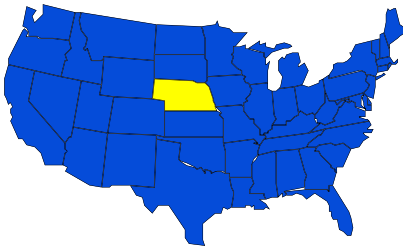
## Entrepreneurship Education at the Forefront in Nebraska

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### Background



Nebraska is a state in which **90%** of the population resides in just **5** counties (all clustered around Omaha and Lincoln). For *all* of Nebraska to thrive and grow, there are choices and directions that must be decided...then action must follow. One of those choices is that we must shift employment in Nebraska from low wage/low skill to high wage/high skill careers. Another is that economic development needs to be tied with education to meet the projected labor market demands. And, third, any economic development in our state must factor in **entrepreneurship** as a key strategy for both rural AND urban areas to grow.

Nebraska has always had a strong commitment to economic development and career education. In the last several years, key stakeholders' understanding of the importance of entrepreneurship education as an important component of economic development efforts has grown.

### The Birth and Evolution of the NET-Force

Former Congressman Tom Osborne and his staff had a laser-like focus on keeping youth in Nebraska and increasing the economic prosperity in rural Nebraska. The ultimate goal was to help young people, as well as individuals of all ages, realize that entrepreneurship is a viable career option. At the invitation of Congressman Osborne, representatives from education, economic development, support agencies, and entrepreneurship advocates were convened to explore how best to support and enhance entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education throughout the state. From this initial meeting, the Nebraska Entrepreneurship Task Force (NET-Force) has grown and flourished.

NET-Force is a collaboration of partners and key players, which is constantly growing and changing as more collaboration and understanding takes place. It might be described as "a coalition of the willing" since there is no state or federal funding directly allocated to the work of the group. The task force members convene meetings three to four times a year at members' sites to share best practices and new ideas, create and share curriculum resources, and focus on enhancing entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education statewide. Members participate "on their own dime" and even pay for their own working lunches to maximize the efficient use of time, talent, and resources. No big federal or state grant funds here; just a tremendously dedicated and productive group of passionate entrepreneurship advocates!

### Collaborating Partners

- FutureForce Nebraska
- K-12 Public and Private Schools
- Nebraska Community College System
- Nebraska Department of Education
- Nebraska State College System
- Non-profit Organizations
- Private Colleges & Universities
- University of Nebraska System

## Mission

*NET Force identifies and leverages educational resources to Educate, Engage, and Empower current and potential Entrepreneurs.*

## Original Goals

- Increasing access to and utilizing entrepreneurship curriculum
- Expanding education and training opportunities
- Identifying, coordinating and leveraging resources for ongoing support of Nebraska entrepreneurs
- Locating and securing funding to further the mission
- Increasing the marketing and outreach of entrepreneurial programs and services in the state

### NET-FORCE MEMBER PROFILE...

#### **Firing Up the Entrepreneurial Spirit Across Nebraska EntrepreneurShip Investigation (ESI) Summer Camps Engage Youth in Business Creation**

4-H entrepreneurship camps engaged young people across the state in exploring entrepreneurship as a career option this summer.

Using the **EntrepreneurShip Investigation (ESI)** curriculum as the foundation, young people were given the opportunity to meet local entrepreneurs, explore their own strengths and talents, and develop a business based on those strengths and interests.

Katelyn Larson, Extension Educator-4H Youth Development, gave glowing reviews of the Butler County experience. “The ESI camp which was held in David City, NE this past June was a great success! The kids learned a lot from our community members who served as guest speakers as well as the adults and educators who served as instructors, but above all they all had fun and a successful ESI Marketplace on the last day of camp.

Take note! These young people are the future of our local communities and the state as a whole. Nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit in our young people is alive and well through the growing number of ESI camps, classes, and after-school programs.



**Butler County 4-H hosted its second successful ESI Discovery Zone Camp this summer.**



**Central Community College-Columbus hosted a 4-H ESI Discovery Zone Entrepreneurship Camp from July 20-22.**

## NET-Force Accomplishments/Activities

- ☑ Strategic planning meetings of Nebraska community college representatives to align curriculum offerings, develop common course syllabi and titles, and create Entrepreneurship diploma and certificate programs
- ☑ Development of the two-year postsecondary course syllabi using the National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education to facilitate articulation to both secondary and four-year postsecondary schools
- ☑ Approval by the Chief Instructional Officers of all Nebraska Community Colleges of the following common course titles and syllabi for entrepreneurship course offerings, certificate programs, and degree programs:
  - Introduction to Entrepreneurship (ENTR1050)
  - Entrepreneurship Feasibility Study (ENTR2040)
  - Marketing for the Entrepreneur (ENTR2050)
  - Entrepreneurship Legal Issues (ENTR2060)
  - Entrepreneurship Financial Topics (ENTR2070)
  - Entrepreneurship Business Plan (ENTR2090)
- ☑ Annual celebrations and activities to celebrate National Entrepreneurship Week during the last week in February. National Entrepreneurship Week was established in 2006 under the co-sponsorship of Congressman Tom Osborne in HR Resolution 699. NET-Force collaborating partners annually plan an array of activities to celebrate the week that include webcasts, the MarketPlace: Opening Doors To Success Conference, Summit on Entrepreneurship, Mentoring by the Masters online seminars, community college sponsored workshops and seminars, open houses, and much more.
- ☑ Participation in the 4-H Entrepreneurship Curriculum Design Team that is engaged in developing an array of holistic, experiential-based curricula and educational resources for use by local 4-H chapters, K-12 public and private schools, home schools, community organizations, and others. The curricula cross-reference to the National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education and the Nebraska Academic Content Standards. Current projects either completed or in progress include:
  - **EntrepreneurShip Investigation** (Target Audience: youth ages 10-19) – Three units, Leaders Guide, CD, and ESI Web Site; Completed May 2008 and currently being revised to incorporate the Gallup StrengthsExplorer instrument, a validated strength and talent identification instrument.
  - **LEAP into Careers** (Target Audience: youth ages 5-9) – A career exploration activity guide that uses the Nebraska Career Education model to help young people explore career options, including entrepreneurship; In final production phase and to be offered for purchase in late 2009/early 2010.
  - **Advanced Entrepreneurship Curriculum** (Target Audience: high school age youth) – Entrepreneurship education curriculum currently in the exploration and development phases.
  - **Community Connections** (Target Audience – Community organizations, entrepreneurship advocates, and government agencies) – A web-based resource focusing on how to create entrepreneur-friendly communities and enhance linkages between adults and youth that is being developed and piloted tested in targeted communities.
- ☑ Creation and staffing of displays and distribution of NET-Force information at the Nebraska State Fair in the 4-H CyberFair building (2006-2009).
- ☑ Development of a Links to Standards “crosswalk” of the National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education to Nebraska’s Academic Standards (Language Arts, Math, Social Science, Science Standards)-  
<http://links2learn.education.nebraska.gov/>.



Tim Mittan, NET-Force Chair, staffs the NET-Force Exhibit at the Nebraska State Fair.



Tom and Nancy Osborne receive a Leadership and Advocacy Award for outstanding support of Entrepreneurship in Nebraska and the U.S.

- ☑ Creation of an Entrepreneurship Education Listserv to enhance information sharing about state, national, and international entrepreneurship education best practices, curriculum resources, and details about conferences and special events. Anyone can subscribe to the listserv at <http://lists.k12.ne.us/mailman/listinfo/entre-ed>.
- ☑ Creation of the Nebraska Entrepreneurship News newsletter (formerly E-News Monthly), a newsletter for entrepreneurship educators and entrepreneurship advocates that includes Targeted Teaching Topics lesson plans and teaching materials based on the National Standards. Access to current and past issues is available at <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/entreped/enews.html>.
- ☑ Creation of a web page on the Nebraska Department of Education web site devoted exclusively to entrepreneurship education at all levels at <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/entreped>.



Left: Members of NET-Force help judge young entrepreneurs during a Nebraska State Fair 4-H Entrepreneurship Event.

- ☑ Participation in the Youth Entrepreneurship Advisory Committee of the Hometown Competitiveness grant, a strategic partnership of the Nebraska Community Foundation, the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, the Center for Rural Affairs, Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation, Northeast Community College, local development corporations, the University of Nebraska, and private business, and others <http://www.nebcommfound.org/HTC.htm>
- ☑ Membership in the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education paid through Nebraska Department of Education Perkins Career and Technical Education targeted funding. Nebraska has been a member of the Consortium since 1984. The Consortium is a national organization of over one hundred state education agencies, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and entrepreneurship education advocates.

## What's the Long-Range Vision?

There is a never-ending stream of ideas, but never enough time or money to embark on them all. And, since the group has been existence for almost five years, review and updating of the NET-Force strategic action plan was in order. So, a survey of members was conducted to gain insight into what was of key importance, feedback on current activities, and ideas for components of a new five-year action plan.

In July of this year (2000) members convened at the Southeast Community College Entrepreneurship Center for a day-long strategic planning session. From this meeting, a new strategic vision and action plan are evolving. So, if you wish, here is a short list in no particular priority order, of what NET-Force hopes to accomplish in the months and years ahead.



Members of NET-Force are recognized during the Governor's Proclamation of National Entrepreneurship Week in 2009

## Goals and Proposed Activities for NET-Force (2009 and beyond)

- **Become Nebraska's "go-to" organization for information on entrepreneurship education and best practices for current and potential entrepreneurs**
  - Identify, coordinate, and leverage resources for ongoing support of Nebraska entrepreneurs, including scholarship opportunities
  - Develop an "ethics framework" for entrepreneurship
- **Promote increased access to and utilization of high-quality entrepreneurship education (Lifelong learning)**
  - Assess coverage of current programs and resources
  - Identify gaps in programs and resources
  - Interface with current entrepreneurial education outreach mechanisms
  - Determine connection points/articulation between education levels
  - Advocate infusion of entrepreneurship education into all Nebraska career fields/pathways/programs of study and personal learning plan models
  - Expand education and training opportunities at all levels and across all disciplines for current entrepreneurs, faculty (all levels and disciplines), and school counselors
  - Provide assistance and training for faculty and guidance counselors to enhance entrepreneurship education, including professional development workshops, seminars, conferences, and webinars.
- **Locate and secure funding to further the mission**
  - Establish a NET-Force Finance committee
  - Identify and access funding sources on an "as needed" basis including but not limited to FutureForce, Perkins Career and Technical Education, Partnerships for Innovation, and other grant programs
  - Partner with organizations (dollars or in-kind) to fund programs/efforts
- **Increase the marketing and outreach of entrepreneurial programs and services in the state**
  - Utilize the Marketing/Outreach Committee to increase awareness of the work of NET-Force and its collaborating partners

- Use existing member newsletters, news releases, and other public relations vehicles to inform key constituents and the public about entrepreneurship education in Nebraska
- Explore offering webinars to enhance entrepreneurship education awareness and provide professional development
- Develop entrepreneurship recognition processes/awards to recognize faculty, students, businesses, entrepreneurs, and/or service providers
- Develop internal and external “networks” (e.g. Facebook, Blackboard, wikis, blogs) to share proprietary information and to inform the public
- Establish communication processes between middle/high school teachers, postsecondary faculty and service providers
- Utilize National Entrepreneurship Week as a public relations tool and outreach event and develop/sponsor activities during that Week to promote the importance and value of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education
- Explore the creation of an annual “best practices” conference modeled after the national Entrepreneurship Forum

Aggressive—*you bet*? Visionary—*we think so*. Beneficial to students of all ages—*definitely!* Nebraska is reshaping not just entrepreneurship education, but education as a whole. Stay tuned to see what a dedicated, determined, and hard-working group from all levels of education (K-20), private industry, and government agencies can do when they have a common vision and a passion for success.

# NET FORCE

Nebraska Entrepreneurship Task Force

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