

White Paper Briefing
Nebraska Development Districts
Prepared for
DED Deputy Director Lara Huskey

Nebraska State Statues 13-1901 through 13-1907 defines Development Districts.

- 13-1901 Establishes the development regions.
- 13-1902 Describes how Development Districts are formed pursuant to the Interlocal Cooperation Act and defining that local government shall mean a county, city, or village.
- 13-1903 A Development District shall be governed by a policy board.
- 13-1904 Duties. 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.
- 13-1905 through 13-1907 allows direct funding to be provided to Development Districts from the State. * Note; this has not occurred in decades.

Development Districts provide statewide coverage for state and federal programs and include all the defined local governments. Professional Staff are regularly attending county, city, and village board meetings to gain firsthand knowledge of community needs as well as a program's effectiveness.

Districts partner with numerous state and federal agencies, writing and administering program grants. Districts are governed by a volunteer board of directors, composed of elected officials and business/community leaders from within the district's boundaries. Districts are recognized for their fiscal responsibility and outstanding capabilities in professional program management.

As Nebraska considers consolidation of departments, programs, and staff, the Districts have expertise to provide resources and assistance to local governments. Iowa and Missouri are examples of surrounding states that have had Department Officials reach out to their Development Districts to contract with them on specific programs to achieve an overall cost savings while continuing to provide key programs, services and accountability.

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) federally recognizes all of the participating Development Districts. The Nebraska Regional Officials Council (NROC) is an Association of the Nebraska Economic Development Districts.

Since 1969 the Nebraska Legislature and the Executive Branch has recognized the importance of standardizing the delivery efforts of all levels of government in the

implementation of planning and development assistance to local governments through a regional planning body.

Development Districts know their region and the communities they serve and collaborate as a statewide organization to provide a sounding board to provide the maximum benefit of services that can be provided with the funds that are available.

In an effort to work with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to provide those services, in exchange for funding that is allowed under current state law, we provide the following list as potential areas that can be included or expanded to meet the needs of the state and the communities we serve.

We will follow the statute as directed under 13-1907 in the implementation, reporting and accountability of the activities.

- **13-1907. Rules and regulations; annual reports; evaluation; Governor; powers.**

(1) The state administrative agency shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out sections 13-1901 to 13-1907 which shall include standardized reporting and application procedures. Each development district shall submit annual performance and financial reports to the state administrative agency which shall address the activities performed and services delivered.

(2) The Governor shall, from time to time, evaluate the effectiveness and activities of the development districts receiving assistance. If the Governor finds a development district to be ineffective, he or she may take action, including the withholding of assistance authorized under section 13-1906.

Funding criteria is based on an existing formula and the amount funded to each district would be different. Each Development District would provide services in proportion to the amount received and/or as specific programs germane to their particular district would require.

Development Districts would provide Community Development activities as follows;

- Conduct Community Needs Assessment Surveys
- Provide access to Development District data bases for implementation of announcements to communities
- Assist with training programs to communities since the Development Districts are implementing all DED programs in some form
- Provide outreach for the DED Annual Action Plan including community input to help set priorities
- Promote DED programs and provide information to communities
- Provide real world case studies for collaborative training with DED personnel of actual implementation of DED programs which allows data to provide elected officials with information to adjust programs as needed

Under Economic and/or Business Development;

- Assist DED Field Representatives with on site visits of potential projects or businesses
- Assist with packaging of businesses and projects
- Coordinate Business Retention and Expansion surveys on the local level and provide data to DED
- Identify common areas of concern such as work force development or housing as a feedback mechanism
- Produce a statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) document to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for review and approval
- Provide planning expertise to ensure that development is coordinated and efficient across regional scale

The Development Districts provide statewide coverage of DED programs and other federal programs. They are staffed with certified professionals that have experience in implementing programs and projects and are the frontline personnel in the communities they serve.

A partnership with DED would be mutually beneficial for all entities and best meets the needs of Nebraska, the counties and the communities we serve. It allows us to maximize the limited resources of all, for a more effective outcome.